Branching Out

canadian magazine for women

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Election Primer

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Branching Out

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editorial

Feminism: Wallflower in Party Politics

It was an omen of May 22nd. Marc Lalonde, The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, managed to squeak his new Plan of Action for the Status of Women in under the election wire. There is only one problem. The document, entitled *Towards Equality for Women,* is full of plans and proposals, but contains no true indication of action. The situation of women in Canada has been analyzed and studied since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report appeared in 1970, but little has actually been accomplished.

This "plan of action" first of all proposes mainly more study and analysis. Secondly, it lists the achievements of Canadian women over the last two centuries. Indeed, if one swallows the propaganda that comes with the package, women's achievements are gifts from men, and women's rights are still subject to that all-powerful giver and taker — man. All achievements are, of course, by special dispensation of the Liberal Party. Well, I for one resent the fact that government funds allocated for the special needs of women are spent in producing a booklet full of such blatant Liberal propaganda and male-oriented doubletalk. Women were not "given" the vote; they *won* the vote. The first woman to enter the RCMP was not "accepted" by their good grace; she *qualified!*

It is at this point that one must question the role of feminism in relation to the established political structure. When "the federal government's commitment to women" consists of a booklet of nebulous promises as elections plugs for the Liberal Party, our status as women reveals itself to be clearly at the mercy of a male-dominated party system. Not a comfortable thought and one reason perhaps why there is now a movement afoot in Toronto to establish a "Women's Political Party". Obviously, supporting one of the existing parties is not satisfactory. Politics in Canada are defined mainly in terms of the economic system; the role of women is totally peripheral to any party's philosophy. Everyone wants to get the feminist vote, but political parties have always used feminism to support parties, never parties to support feminism. Furthermore, the business and labour communities have an elaborate structure that excludes women altogether; they are as unyielding as the government itself. What is the solution? A women's political party sounds like a great idea, but we must ask ourselves realistically if it could function and accomplish anything within the present government structure. We are, it seems, continually trapped.

Perhaps it is necessary to re-examine our political involvement. *Branching Out* is often criticized for not being political enough. If being political means that we support one of the established and male-dominated parties, we are not. But as we hope to show in this issue, feminism is in itself a political stance and it is becoming increasingly important that we recognize this fact. We *must* understand that denying our feminism is an apolitical act and one that can only divide our strength as a political body.

The politics of feminism are "grass roots" politics. By lobbying, by working for good day care, in rape crisis centres and with battered wives, we can gain a solidarity that will become much more than a behind-the-scenes movement. With perseverance and hard work we can eventually overturn the traditions that govern politics and gain the power to legislate ourselves. Please think twice when you hear election promises that are directed at women. No one is going to rescue us but ourselves.

Aritha van Herk

letters

Eastern Alienation

For the first time since you started publishing I am reluctantly not renewing my subscription. The magazine is excellent in every way and the price is fair, however, there is a change in me. I am tired of the anger, tired of your many writers who try to whip up anger. There are pages and pages of information in *Branching Out* I never read. I look at the pictures, the poetry, the stories and the reviews. Once in a while a long article grabs me, but many of them are too wordy for me.

I have been glad to keep in touch with affairs in the west yet, sad to say, much of it seems far away from my concerns in urban Ontario.

Frieda Snee Ancaster, Ontario

Magazine Passes 'Read' Test

I have been a staunch supporter of *Branching Out* since its beginnings and I've seen it grow and expand in scope. You've attained a high quality of excellence — in political and economic articles, in poetry and fiction, in artwork, photography and layout. My test of a magazine is how much of it I actually read — and I always read *Branching Out* from cover to cover. I subscribe to a number of feminist journals, in this country and in England and America, and in my view *Branching Out* is one of the very best. I congratulate you all, and wish you all possible success in the future.

Margaret Laurence, Lakefield, Ontario

Anniversary Issue Impresses

Just a note to say how fine I think your anniversary issue is. I was particularly impressed with the article by Dorothy Smith, with Jane Rule's contribution, and with the *Glassy Sea* review. Throughout, the writing was of high standard and the illustration and layout impressive.

Sherrill Cheda, Toronto

Artwork "Revolting"

We will not renew our subscription to *Branching Out*. While the literary content has been interesting, the artwork is dreadful. Why do your artists portray women as hideous creatures? Most of the drawings of women are revolting.

May Elliot, Kingston, Ontario

drawing by Rebecca Burke, from V, 4.

Editor's note: Don't all women look like this?

Non-Sexist Songs Create Casual Atmosphere

I helped organize the Edmonton Rockers Rugby Club and was their captan for the past two years. Upon reading the article, "Can this Sport be Liberated" (V, 4, 1978), I was very disappointed. It degrades a sport that I find extremely exciting and demanding as well as degrading the people involved with the sport. Rugby, in the past and present, has been known for its grueling game and rowdy parties. Personally, I found rugby an excellent opportunity to meet many new people, travel to various cities and participate in other recreational activities.

As in any other sport played by men and women, there are various difficulties which include spectator control, refereeing, scheduling of games, team organization, coaching, availability of practice and game fields, discipline on and off the field, and basic personality conflicts among all those involved. Women's rugby in Edmonton has developed and matured at a steady rate with the help of many dedicated individuals. A team will grow properly through constructive criticism of all those interested, but, criticism that does not try to better the situation will only help destroy a team.

Presently, rugby songs in Canada and the United States are helpful in creating the casual atmosphere for rugby parties. The song mentioned in the *Branching Out* article is not a good example of the "typical" rugby song. Women ruggers also have their songs. They are not meant to be sexist but to aid in team comradship and enjoyment. The following is an example, written by the Colorado State University Hookers, sung to the tune of "My Favorite Things".

Loose rucks and good fucks and cunts that go crazy
Girls that are horny and guys that aren't lazy
Good moves make good screws for those one night flings
These are a few of my favorite things.

Edmonton Ruggers have travelled so far
To win all the trophies and hit all the bars
Poor CSU women they don't stand a chance
They will be caught with their hands in their pants.

Forwards that tackle and backs that have hands
Both work together to astonish the fans
When the game's over the party begins
Then all the studs think that we'll let them in.

When the prick grows
When the juice flows
When he's feeling grand
Just fart in his face
And tell him his place
And then he can use his hand.

The article states that the Rockers established a reputation as a winning team which played a successful, nonaggressive game. Aggression in women, in the past, has been considered an inappropriate trait. Fortunately, society is beginning to accept the aggressive woman and I feel that aggressiveness is a necessary trait for any athlete or successful person. Later, the article states that the Rockers seemed willing to adopt the violence and "dirty tackles" of the male rugby games. In the first place it is not fair to blame inexperienced high tackling by women on the male rugby game and secondly, if "dirty tackling" is intentional, or causes injury to another player intentionally, the guilty player is disqualified from the game. I have not been in or seen a game where a woman has been disqualified for "dirty play".

True, there may have been some humiliating experiences, which I don't ever expect to cease, but the encouragement and support from the majority of the men definitely outweighed the ignorant comments by the few men and women. Male rugby players helped us in our organization, coaching, fund raising and much more. In return, the Edmonton Rockers have offered as much support for the men's rugby as possible. So far, there has been a good liaison between the men and women and I hope rugby will keep growing and maturing in this way.

Shirley Lord, San Diego, California

ERRORS

On page 2 of the anniversary issue we reported receiving a grant of $2500 from the Women's Programme of the Secretary of State. The figure should have read $2800.

The photo of Betty Pederson on page 38 of the last issue was not taken by Susanne Rhyason as credited. We don't know who took the picture. Susanne Rhyason did take the photo of Leda Jensen.

The cartoon from the *Grain Growers' Guide*, reproduced on page 41 of the last issue, should not have been backwards. Hold page to mirror to see what actually appeared in the *Grain Growers' Guide*.

design by Lane Chesko

PRINTED MATTER

Immigrant Workers Championed

On Saturday January 20, more than a hundred people attended a day-long conference sponsored by the Osgoode Law Union and Women's Caucus, York Univeristy. Union representatives, para-legal workers and labour lawyers were invited to give their views on women's problems in the labour movement and what positive role the law can take in this area.

Illustration by Wendy Hancock

Evelyn Armstrong, founding president of Organized Working Women, described women's role in Canadian labour history and outlined present-day concerns. Many unorganized workers today are immigrant women working for minimun wage in sweat-shop conditions. Different languages and cultures keep these workers divided and powerless and employers take advantage of this situation. The National Film Board film *Maria,* screened during the conference, illustrated many of the problems of organizing immigrant women. This film is based on the true story of the first attempt to organize by workers at Puretex Knitting — a small textile factory in Toronto where most of the workers are Italian immigrant women.

Armstrong also spoke of the tremendous obstacles to organizing private sector clerical workers — although women doing the same kind of work were responsible for the greatest percentage of membership growth in CUPE, the public sector union.

Marion Endicott, a para-legal worker for Injured Workers Consultants, compared the situations of unionized versus non-unionized injured workers. The only redress for the injured worker in Canada is the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) which is really just a cheap insurance scheme for employers — much cheaper than safety precautions (with the result that Canada has the highest rate of industrial accidents of all the major industrial nations). Unions are the most important agencies for protecting workers' rights and the majority of working women are not unionized. Injured women face the same basic problems as men but their plight is not treated as seriously by the Workers' Compensation Board which still does not regard women as important income earners. Endicott stressed the importance of organized political action to change WCB policy: this can be carried on most effectively through unions and, specifically, through the Union of Injured Workers which was formed four years ago and now has 3000 members.

Lawyer Michele Swenarchuk provided the audience with first-hand experience of legal problems confronting workers who attempt to unionize. Legal education in all the technicalities of the process is crucial at this stage. She also spoke generally of the satisfying aspects of her work; labour lawyers must be aware of long-term policy goals of the labour movement and they have a mandate to argue cases on policy issues — a rare occurrence in other areas of law. Lawyer Mary Cornish described unions as sophisticated clients who are good to work for — they know what they want and how to get it.

The afternoon session began with a very impressive videotape on the Fleck strike made by a women's group in London, Ontario. Fleck workers are interviewed about the appalling working conditions at Fleck and the shocking treatment they received at the hands of the Ontario Provincial Police.* They go on to discuss their psychological victories, the greatly increased sense of self-worth and power to control their own lives acquired during the 5-month struggle. Following this, Al Seymour, UAW international representative, spoke about issues surrounding the strike from the massive police intimidation and political connections to the determination and final victory of the women strikers fighting for union security. Len MacLean, the lawyer who handled the legal issues of the strike, explained the problems of getting permission from the Labour Relations Board to prosecute Fleck for not bargaining in good faith. MacLean also spoke of the difficulty of bringing charges against the police because of the general unwillingness of the courts to prosecute them for problems arising in labour confrontations.

The police were more careful during the York University strike; there were only isolated incidents of muscle display.

The police were more careful during the York University Staff Association (YUSA) strike and there were only isolated incidents of muscle display. Lauma Avens, president of YUSA, discussed issues of their strike last fall: one of these was job description and this clause will be tested soon — a bookstore worker has filed a grievance against her boss for

* See *Printed Matter, Branching Out,* Vol. V, No. 3.

being told to get him his coffee; personal errands such as this are often required of secretaries at York and are indicative of the condescending attitudes towards women workers which can only be changed through union activity.

A key-note speaker of the day was Madeleine Parent of the Canadian Textile and Chemical Union who told of the courageous struggle of the Puretex workers now entering the third month of their strike. They are fighting for stronger seniority rights, more welfare benefits and a 40¢ an hour increase (most of the workers receive $3.60 to $3.75 an hour for skilled and semi-skilled work). However, most of all they want the removal of the closed-circuit TV cameras from their work place. The cameras monitor their every move and are even trained on the door of the women's washroom. The boss feels that this psychological pressure of knowing that they are being watched makes the women work harder. The workers at Puretex have tried for two years to get the Human Rights Commission to take action in this matter but to no avail. Parent ended with a passionate request that people recognize the importance of this strike to immigrant women in Canada. They must come out with some kind of a victory if they are to feel that they are on home ground in this country, that they belong here, and that they are entitled as much as anyone to dignity and basic human rights. Over $250 was collected at the conference for the Puretex strikers and many of the people who attended joined the Osgoode and University of Toronto strike-support committee.

Geraldine Sodoway

left to right, **top row:** Kathryn Moses, Beverley Glenn-Copeland, Daisy Debolt **second row:** Pauline Julien, Robin Tyler, Naomi Tyrrell & Theatre in Motion **bottom row:** Heather Bishop, Sylvia Tyson, Caroline Edwards. photos by Maureen Hynes

Bouquets for 'Curtain Call'

The wonder was that it had never been done before: a festival of Canadian women performers, a celebration of the range and excellence of women's work in music, theatre, dance, mime, comedy, poetry and fiction. A collective of women in Toronto called A Muse took the idea, named it Curtain Call, organized for more than a year, and raised the funds to bring together over forty women performers for a weekend in February.

In the field of music alone, the diversity offered was staggering: jazz, blues, folk, reggae, swing, classical, traditional and country & western. The big names, Pauline Julien, Sylvia Tyson and Rita MacNeil all delivered as much as their reputations promised. The sophisticated Pauline Julien set the mood of the weekend with the opening concert: "Women have wings to fly, but they don't know it till they make an attempt to fly." The lesser lights, the women who are, or should be, on the verge of "making it" actually proved to be more exciting than the well-established artists. Kathryn Moses gave an astounding warm-up set on her soprano sax and flute. Daisy Debolt was one of the biggest treats of the weekend; singing with Donna Louthood and playing guitar and piano, she electrified the audiences with her remarkable iridescent songs (some co-written with Michael Ondaatje). Heather Bishop, on guitar, moved effortlessly through blues, jazz and folk numbers, singing her prairie songs, early blues and hilarious send-ups of macho activity with equal dignity. The Honolulu Heartbreakers, three women from Sudbury, crooned their thirties and forties swing with

amazingly smooth harmony, and Marie-Lynn Hammond (formerly of Stringband) offered her traditional French and Acadian songs, as well as some original ones that meshed with the feminist perspective of the festival. Beverley Glenn-Copeland, on piano and drums, displayed her usual never-ending energy, singing "Welcome to the time/when anything you can do/can affect the one beside you/ . . . Welcome to the world/ where we must stand alone/ to be with one another." Hearing all these musicians in workshops with each other, comfortably sharing their impressive musical expertise, was an induplicable experience.

The performer who really set the festival on its ear was Robin Tyler, a radical feminist lesbian comic originally from Winnipeg, but now living in California. Her act is a duplication of the traditional stand-up comedy routine "except the jokes aren't on us anymore", and she claimed that the only people who are offended by her act are the ones "who deserve to be." With her philosophy of "taking personal power", she transformed a workshop on sexual harrassment into a thoughtful and funny discussion of the directions of the women's and lesbian movement.

There was a memorable mime workshop by Bibi Caspari, and a multi-media poetry performance (not a reading) by Susan Swann: "Poetry is like pate — if you get too much of it, it tastes like dogfood." In a workshop with Judith Merrill, Joy Kogawa and Gert Beadle, Susan Swann explored the sensation of body that women writers experience — the body heat, the huge pregnancy, the excretion, the by-product of caring that writing is.

The original cast presented a powerful reading of Pam Brighton's play, "Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi" which explores the combination of an instrumental, feminist consciousness with the traditional female need for children and a man's love. "That combination," she commented, "is a potential killer".

The significant elements that united all the women performers was the exceptionally high quality of their work, and the intense stimulation and thoughtfulness their performances provoked among those attending. The calibre of their art gave the lie to traditional arguments offered by promoters and managers in the entertainment industry: "We would hire more women for concerts and festivals, but there just aren't any high quality female performers." Well, A Muse found forty of them. We deserve to hear them and they deserve to be heard.

Maureen Hynes

photo by Peggy J. Durham

Greek Women

The ancient Greeks treated the goddesses of Greek mythology with awe. Their major city — Athens — was named for Athene, who defeated the god Poseidon for the position of patron Deity of that city. The mortal women of Greece throughout the centuries since have not done so well, though their struggles have left deep marks on the history, and even the landscape of Greece.

It was to introduce women from countries around the world to the long history of these struggles, and to "See Greece Through New Eyes", that the Women's Union of Greece undertook the organization of a unique tour, and invited a number of women's groups to participate. Their invitation was accepted by forty women, coming from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, England, the U.S.A. and Canada. As members of the Voice of Women (Canada), I and two other "Voices" joined the group in Athens at the end of August.

At that first evening reception, we were surprised to learn that the Union had a total membership of something less than a thousand. In its present form it has been in existence only since 1976 — all women's organizations, including the predecessor of this one, were immediately dissolved by decree in the very first days of the military dictatorship in 1967.

A woman lawyer spent one evening explaining the legal position of women in Greece, with special reference to the Dowry Act. In several villages, we had seen processions of children carrying presents to the home of the bride-groom, but we had not realized that by law a Greek father must provide a dowry for each daughter. The amount prescribed is determined by his economic situation and the number of girls in the family. A daughter can, and often does, sue her father if he does not comply with the law. The dowry belongs to the husband, although in the case of divorce the wife

can claim what is left, though not what it might have earned by interest or investment. In the subsequent discussion, the lawyer herself admitted that her husband had not wanted a dowry, but she had accepted property since her father would have suffered in pride and in pocket (because of tax deductions available to him) if she had refused. The underlying assumption of the Dowry Act, and of many other similar legal statutes, is the belief that Greek women need the protection and the guidance of men throughout their lives.

The Women's Union of Greece, with support from the official opposition in the Greek Parliament, is trying hard to get rid of the act. But, they point out, centuries of conditioning have made it difficult for women to oppose it, and many men are strongly in favour of it.

Another seminar was conducted by a woman gynaecologist who told us that the church, the government, and a large section of public opinion are opposed to sex education, birth control and abortion. Doctors are forbidden to prescribe contraceptives, but since the pill and other devices are available in the drug stores of larger communities without prescription, many women take the pill without medical supervision. In the case of abortion, the woman, the doctor, and the driver of the vehicle which transports her to the abortion can all be held criminally liable.

We received a general picture of conditions facing Greek women from a member of parliament, the speaker being one of eleven women M.P.s elected to Parliament in the last election. Since she is a member of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement Party (as is Melina Mercouri, now also an M.P.) she presented the policies of her party, which included equal pay for work of equal value, tighter laws regarding safety in the workplace, legislation to forbid the employment of children under the age of 14, and more government-run daycare centres throughout the country.

In Greece today the wage rate for women is 55% of the men's, and 97% of all female workers are characterized as "unqualified" — thus excluding them from most welfare benefits and social security. And as in Canada, most women, even the professionals, work in the "nurturing" fields.

The tour, however, was not by any means restricted to serious discussion. We spent evenings in Greek taverns and restaurants, and the last evening's farewell party was a very joyful affair. It was hosted by the Papandreou family at their home in Athens. Marguerite Papandreous and her daughter are both active members of the Women's Union of Greece, and her husband, Andreas, the leader of the opposition in the Greek Parliament, and their sons, were all present. Melina Mercouri led the Greek-style dancing with tremendous verve and vitality.

The effect of the tour, and the value of "seeing Greece through new eyes" was unquestionably positive and the Greek Women's Union are to be congratulated on their courage and initiative. I strongly recommend the tour to all feminists.

Betty Mardiros

For tour information contact: Greece Through New Eyes, The Women's Union of Greece, 34 Panepistimiou Street, Athens 143 Greece. Tour cost, $596 U.S. (travel to Greece not included).

Bookstore's Birthday

Everywomans (sic) Books, a Victoria feminist bookstore, celebrated its 4th birthday on February 17. The store operates as a non-profit collective, staffed by 20 women volunteers. Located first in a quiet section of Victoria, Everywomans began in 1975 with 2,000 dollars and 12 enthusiastic women. It filled a definite need and drew feminists and other interested browsers, including children and parents looking at a varied selection of non-sexist children's books.

The collective meets every other week at a dinner/meeting to solve problems, do scheduling and discuss the operations of the store. Members come and go but a remarkable staying power has kept the collective strong and the store open five days a week. In October 1978, they moved Everywomans to downtown Victoria, to a larger store which will reach more people. The large front window creatively displays a wide range of materials on feminism, as the store also functions as an informal information centre. Because the staff of Everywomans considers its educational role very important, Annie Weeks, Lynn Greenhough and others often take books to women's festivals, conferences, and club meetings for display and sale.

The 4th birthday party drew more than 70 celebrating people who brought the gift of continued support to a successful Victoria feminist endeavor.

Mary Anne Erickson

STEPHENSON DEFENCE FUND

Dr. Marylee Stephenson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University, has been denied tenure and is in the process of appealing that decision. We ask for your support.

For three successive years, the Department of Sociology has recommended Dr. Stephenson for tenure. The Faculty Tenure and Promotions Committee has agreed that her teaching is of above average quality and that she has been very active in University and community services. In spite of her research activities, the denial of tenure has been based on a described "absence of first class scholarship". Since that decision Dr. Stephenson has been awarded a Canada Council Sabbatical Leave Fellowship for 1979-80 which is some indication of external evaluations of her scholarship.

In the opinion of the Faculty Committee, Dr. Stephenson's editorial activities were not viewed as an "acceptable substitute for creative research". This is in spite of the influence of her book *Women in Canada*, of which there were three printings in three years and which is now in a second, revised edition. She co-edits the *Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women*, which is now in its eighth year and has an international distribution.

Our concerns are two-fold. First, Dr. Stephenson has been a major contributor to the development of the sociology of women in Canada, in addition to her other scholarly work. It is our opinion that the grounds of the University decision are too narrow and do not do justice to Dr. Stephenson's work. Second, universities are presently operating under considerable financial restraint and it is our hope that women academics and women's studies will not suffer unequally during this period. It is crucial that ground gained towards equal rights for women and an understanding of the position of women not be lost at a time of economic cutbacks.

If you are aware of Dr. Stephenson's work and its influence, you may wish to offer support. An appeal beginning in late February will be costly (in the region of $10,000 because of legal and other expenses). Financial contributions can be made payable to:
Stephenson Defence Fund,
Account #7630-013,
c/o Credit Union,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4K1

Letters of support can be sent to:
Chairperson, Marylee Stephenson's Review Committee,
c/o Mr. J. Evans, Secretary to the Senate,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L8
with a copy to Dr. Stephenson's lawyer:
Ms. Harriet Sachs,
111 Richmond Street W.,
Suite 320,
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2G4.

Broken Promises

Fresh Assaults on the Working Woman

by Carole Swan
illustrations by Sylvia Luck Patterson

Canadian women celebrated an important anniversary a few months ago in a very quiet manner. December 1978 marked 30 years since the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights declared that Canadian women share equally with men basic employment rights, including the right to work, the right to free choice of employment, the right to just and favourable conditions of work and the right to protection against unemployment. The 4.2 million Canadian women who were in the labour force in 1978 can be excused for their unenthusiastic reaction to this auspicious anniversary. The same month saw the passage of discriminatory amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act. These changes confirmed what women have always felt: that in the matter of women's rights there is a great divergence between the appearance of basic rights and the reality of their actual enforcement or application.

Nowhere is this divergence more evident than in the area of employment. The right to participate in the paid labour force on the same terms and conditions as men is a precept fundamental to the struggle for equality. Yet it is in the labour force that the lack of commitment on the part of the relevant players (including government, employers and some unions) to improving the status of women is most obvious. Increasingly, too, women are being cast in the role of "scapegoats" for present labour force difficulties.

Increasingly women are being cast in the role of scapegoats for present labour force difficulties.

Women comprise an ever increasing part of Canada's paid labour force. In 1978 almost 48% of adult Canadian women were either working, or looking for work. Women make up nearly 39% of the Canadian labour force. Many bureaucrats and politicians have expressed the view that the entrance of women into the work world will gradually diminish "partly because many of the women who want to work are now in the labour force."* However, there are persuasive indications to the contrary which point to the continuing movement of women into the labour force. Government labour market experts have badly underestimated the growth and the staying power of the female labour force. Only recently the federal Department of Finance prepared an analysis of medium-term economic trends on the basis of a slowing in the growth rate of the female participation to about 49.5% in 1990. Revised forecasts indicate that we will have surpassed this estimated female participation rate by the mid-1980's. We have already (only a few months into 1979) surpassed the 1981 projections of the Finance Department. This phenomenal miscalculation indicates a lack of understanding of the factors which are motivating women to work.

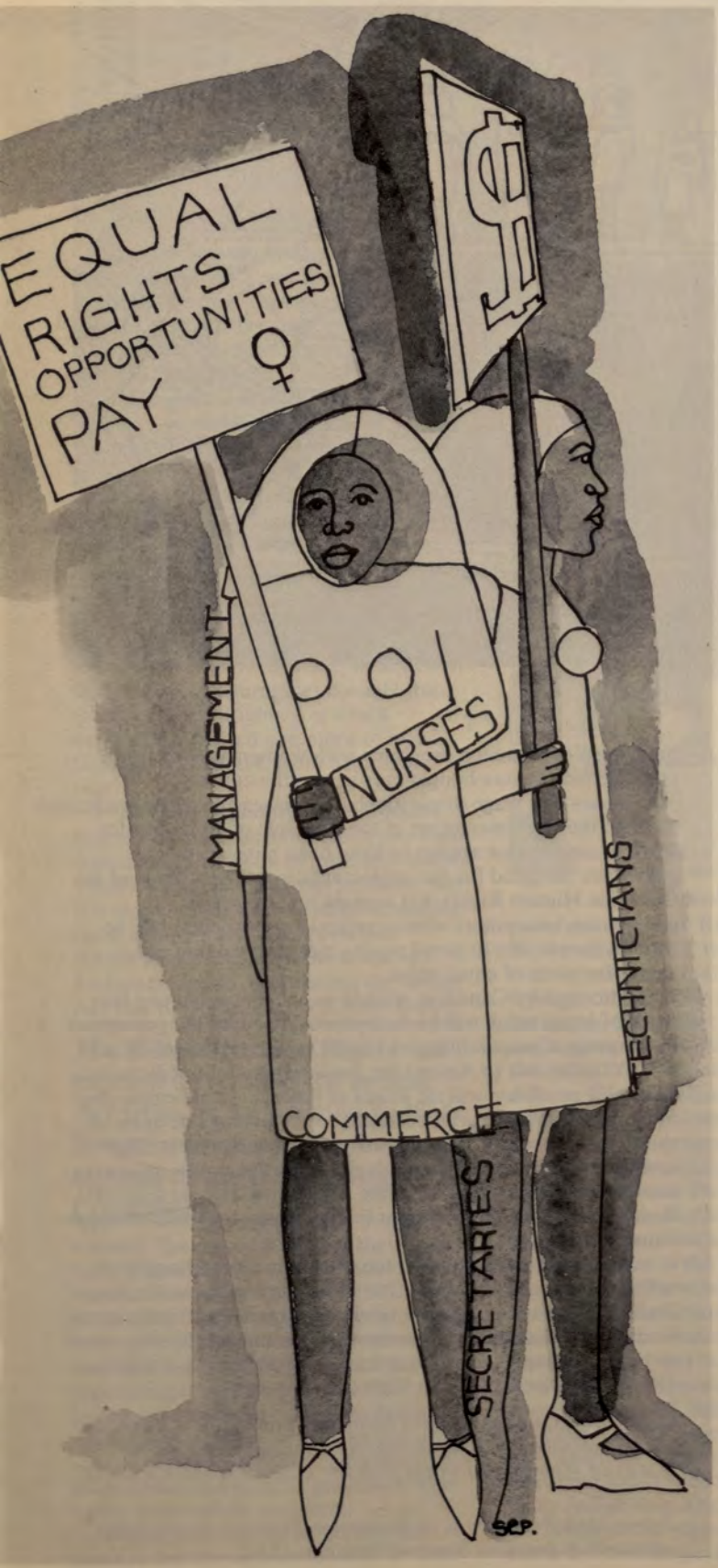
* From the 1976 Economic Council of Canada's study, *People and Jobs*.

Women work for the same reasons that men work — out of economic necessity (as is increasingly the case) but also from a basic motivation to achieve personal satisfaction. Almost 40% of Canadian working women are either single, divorced, widowed or separated. Many married women work to keep family income above poverty levels. Our most reliable statistics clearly indicate that the element of economic necessity is the major component in the decision of many women to enter the paid labour force. However, it should be forcefully stated that we risk doing our cause great disservice if we allow the argument of economic necessity to obscure a larger issue, namely, that employment is a basic right. Providing the stimulus for full employment is a government responsibility. Employment is not something to be parcelled out according to an abstract formula based upon official conceptions of "perceived need". Are only 30% or 40% of women to be allowed to work because the official wisdom has it that only 30% or 40% "need" to work? Downplaying this basic principle of work as the right of all adult members of society can lead us into dangerous waters — such as the principle of "one job per household".

Against the backdrop of economic need, the federal government has done very little to reduce the chronic unemployment rate among women. This rate reached nearly 10% in 1978*, compared to a rate of unemployment for men slightly over 7%. At the same time, the government has fostered certain myths surrounding women and employment. These myths provide a convenient rationale for the lack of a serious attack on high unemployment among women. These myths serve to explain the presently fashionable approach which blames women for the unemployment problem. Witness an event in early February when Jean Chretien, the Minister of Finance, was quoted in an Ottawa newspaper as blaming the serious unemployment problem on influences outside government control: the baby boom and the "sudden influx of women into the workforce." By this reasoning, those looking for work are the cause of unemployment. Clearly, however, it is the economy's inability to respond to the needs of a growing work force which is the culprit. Instead of asking why so many women cannot find jobs and what can be done to provide work for them, the policy approach has been to pretend that women workers, especially married women, are only marginally attached to the labour force. Hence there is no need to worry if they lose their jobs and no urgent need to provide unemployment insurance benefits for them if they are out of work.

Research carried out by the C.D. Howe Research Institute in conjunction with Statistics Canada demonstrates that this view of women as marginally attached to the labour force is incorrect. The analysis indicates that more and more women outside the home have a permanent attachment to the labour force.

* Many more are the "hidden unemployed," those women who want to work but who have stopped looking and are therefore not counted in the official unemployment estimates.



Another convenient myth labels women as "secondary earners". The use of this term by politicians must be seen for what it is: an effort to downgrade the importance and necessity of work to women. The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) has defined a "secondary earner" as "one in a family where there is another earner who contributes a greater proportion of family income". Of course, so long as women do not receive equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value, and are segregated into low-paying job ghettos, they will invariably be "secondary earners" by this definition. The average income of a working woman is about 53% of the average that working men make. In 1976 — the latest information available — women who worked in the labour force for 50 to 52 weeks during the year had an average income of only $8,652*. The average income of men who worked for 50 to 52 weeks was $16,292.

Because the federal government has failed to recognize the realities of female participation in the labour force its job creation schemes operate at the expense of women workers. A consistent pattern is emerging: a pattern of discriminatory legislation and policies which will prevent women from participating in the Canadian labour force on the same basis and with the same advantages as men.

We risk doing our cause a great disservice if we allow the argument of economic necessity to obscure the fact that employment is a basic right.

Recent changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act (Bill C-14) provide perhaps the clearest example of discriminatory legislative pressure. As a result of these amendments, those people most in need of protection against unemployment — young people and women re-entering the labour force — will have their benefits restricted. There are three main changes which will have adverse effects upon women workers: increase in minimum insurability, higher entrance requirements for new entrants and re-entrants, and reduction in the benefit rates.

Increase in minimum insurability: Amendments to the UI Act provide that part-time workers who work less than 20 hours per week will not be eligible for UI benefits. About 22% of women in the labour force are "part-time" workers compared to just over 5% of men. The average number of hours worked by part-time workers in 1978 was 15, which falls below the UI eligibility cut-off.

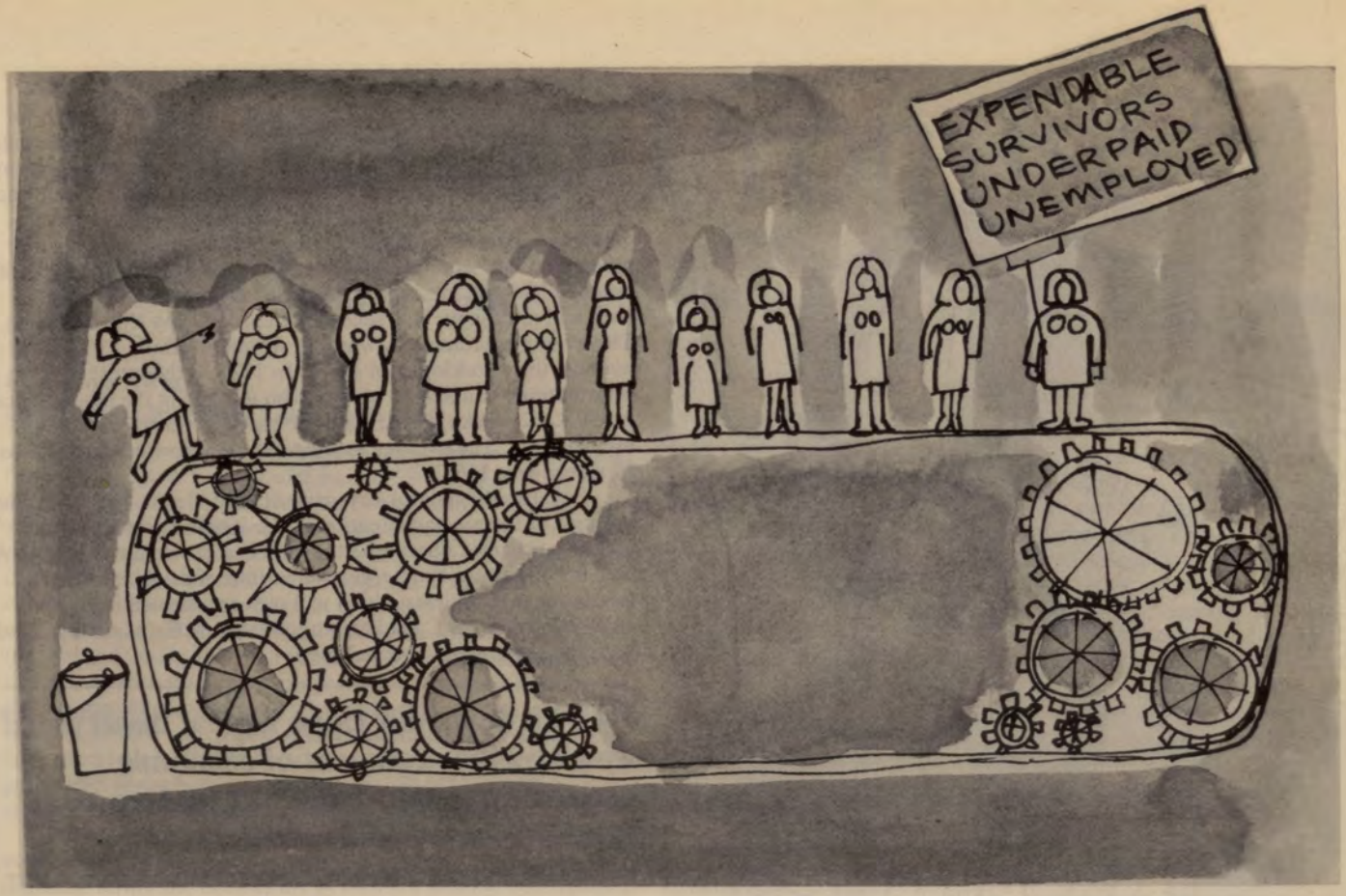
Higher entrance requirements for new entrants and re-entrants: This amendment creates unequal and strict policies for treatment of new entrants and re-entrants who are usually young people and women. New entrants and re-entrants must now work for 20 weeks in order to qualify for benefits. Other workers require only 10 to 14 weeks of insurable earnings out of the preceding 52 weeks in order to qualify.

Reduction in the benefit rates: Decreases in benefit rates from 66-2/3% to 60% of average weekly insurable earnings will hit low income earners particularly hard. Women, almost invariably at the low end of wage scales, will be the ones to suffer most.

These amendments will make it harder for women and young people to receive UI benefits and could have the effect of discouraging them from entering or re-entering the labour force.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration, Mr. Cullen, has claimed that the impact of the UI amendments on men and women will be virtually the same, amounting to a reduction in

* Statistics Canada: Income Distribution by Size in Canada, Catalogue #13-207.



total benefits (in dollar terms) of 20.1% for women and 19.8% for men. Considering that women earn, on average, 53% of what men earn, unemployed women will consequently collect smaller UI cheques. It appears then that more women than men will be affected.

Referring to the new entrants to the labour market who will be denied unemployment insurance coverage, Mr. Cullen stated that " . . . it is far preferable . . . that they be given meaningful work experience rather than just income maintenance." Presumably such work experience will come as a result of the "significant redistribution of the employment strategy" which, along with changes to the UI program, are supposed to form the two prongs of the government's "revision of priorities". The federal government has not announced any specific job creation measures directed at women, however, job creation benefits for women which occurred last year were centered in the community, personal (for example, babysitting or housecleaning), and business service industry, an industry characterized by low wages. The creation of jobs in low-paid female job ghettos is hardly "creative" or substantial job creation.

There have been other policy and program changes which seem designed to exclude women. Changes in Manpower training allowances mean that married women who have to return to the labour force will now only be eligible for $10 a week training allowance (previously it was $45 a week) if they have an employed spouse. This amount is insufficient to cover the bare expenses which might be involved in undertaking training, such as transportation and child care.

Clearly the CEIC refuses to identify women as a target group in its employment policies. The dropping of women as a target group under the current policy guidelines of the Outreach program is one particularly blatant example. Women's Outreach programs provide specialized counselling and placement services for women to help them overcome job barriers. Yet Outreach programs with women as their prime clientele face severe budget cuts across the country.

Hopes that wage disparities based on sex would be eradicated through the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value appear to have been misplaced. The guidelines designed for the implementation of Section II of the Canadian Human Rights Act contain no fewer than 7 exceptions, exceptions which can and (one expects) will be used by employers to avoid paying men and women equal wages for work of equal value.

Attempts by Canadian women to achieve equal pay for work of equal value will be further weakened by the provisions for Average Comparability of Total Compensation (ACTC) in Bill C-22, the Act to Amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act. This provision will tie wages of federal female employees in clerical and secretarial positions to the average of those of their largely unorganized, private sector counterparts. The comparison of wages in one job ghetto (in the public sector) to another job ghetto (in the private sector) will not aid federal female employees in their fight for equal pay for work of equal value.

As this analysis reveals, the Canadian woman worker is still far removed from a position of equality in the work force. Present government policies seem to be taking us farther away from this goal, and indeed, in times of economic difficulty, seem to be subjecting us to the very kind of discrimination that the UN Declaration of Human Rights condemns.

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Sylvia Luck Patterson is an Edmonton artist whose work has appeared in previous issues of Branching Out.

Human Rights: Indian Women Need Not Appeal

by Kathleen Macleod Jamieson

Regaining their Indian rights has begun to seem like an impossible dream to the women who have been fighting to regain the status they lost through marrying non-Indians. In the past two years especially, their hopes have been so often raised and then cruelly dashed by the government that they are numb, though still fighting. Now, despite a plethora of promises, proposals and discussions on changes to the Indian Act this Parliament has ground out its last days and nothing, absolutely nothing, has been done to change or alleviate the situation of the Indian women who are affected by the discriminatory sections of the Indian Act. Indeed their legal situation deteriorated when, in March of last year, the government brought into force a Human Rights Act which expressly excluded one piece of legislation, the Indian Act, from its jurisdiction.

To be excluded from the Human Rights Act and thus deprived of any legal resource in Canada was for many Indian women a grim and unexpected blow. But it is distressingly clear to anyone reading the Parliamentary debates on this Human Rights Act that the intent of Parliamentarians in excluding the Indian Act was to prevent appeals from Indian women. They were sorry but they had made a gentlemen's agreement with the National Indian Brotherhood (N.I.B.) not to allow changes to any section of the Indian Act while it was being revised through a joint N.I.B.-government negotiating process begun in 1975. Indian women could not be permitted to disrupt this business by making importunate demands for human rights from the federal Human Rights Commission. Few voices were raised in dissent.

The federal Human Rights Act expressly excluded the Indian Act from its jurisdiction so that Indian women could not make appeals to the Human Rights Commission.

There did seem to be hope in the distance and throughout most of 1978 the members of Indian Rights for Indian Women (I.R.I.W.), the national association representing Indian women who are trying to regain their status, were extremely optimistic. In the first place some powerful people appeared to be on their side. The Minister of Indian Affairs, Hugh Faulkner, had from the outset of his appointment in late 1977 appeared to be sympathetic to their cause. Previous ministers had all refused to hear their case. The Human Rights Commissioner, Gordon Fairweather, denounced the "blatant discrimination" against women in the Indian Act and promised that he would demand that Parliament take action soon. The President of the National Indian Brotherhood, Noel Starblanket, despite a total lack of support from his all male executive council, initiated a tentative dialogue with the women's groups in late 1977 and took a stand on their behalf. His stand legitimized the concerns of many Indian men who had previously not given public support to the women's cause but now began to do so. Many status and non-status Indian women who had not been supportive also began to take an interest and give assistance and encouragement.

Members of Alberta IRIW attend a workshop, February 1978, in Edmonton

After the total breakdown in April 1978 of the N.I.B.-government committee which had been attempting to negotiate changes to the Indian Act, Hugh Faulkner said he would take matters into his own hands. The members of I.R.I.W. were, in Spring 1978 and for the first time ever, given funding by the Department of Indian Affairs (D.I.A.) in order to prepare a brief detailing the changes they would like made in the Indian Act. (This "conscience money" appeared on the heels of the Human Rights Act.)

The brief was presented in June at a breakfast meeting hosted by D.I.A. in Ottawa and attended by Cabinet minister, senators, sundry senior bureaucrats and the press. The Indian women were exhilarated. Success seemed within their grasp. But at that breakfast Faulkner dropped a bombshell. Sex discrimination, he said, would be removed from the

Jenny Margetts, president
Indian Rights for Indian Women

Indian Act but the change would not be retroactive: neither those Indian women who had lost their status, nor their children, would ever recover their Indian rights.

Tremendous optimism turned in a few hours into bewilderment, disbelief and dismay. As government proposal after proposal on changes to the Indian Act was prepared, submitted to and rejected by the N.I.B. throughout the summer and fall of 1978 it became clear that Faulkner was adamant in opposing retroactivity. No documentation was advanced to support this position. In his October proposals, Faulkner stated, "There is concern that retroactivity in whatever reasonable way it is recognized may lead to further inequities" and retroactivity might "set a precedent for demands from other groups." The proposals were to go before Parliament in the fall session — it is not clear in what form. In any case after the N.I.B. and I.R.I.W. rejected these proposals nothing more was heard of them and no changes to the Indian Act have been brought before Parliament.

The recently released (March 1979) federal Action Plan on the status of women, *Toward Equality for Women*, has only ten empty sentences on the future of Native women in Canada and, as a not too subtle reminder of their marginal status in Canadian society, they are bracketed together with immigrant women in the introduction. Unlike every other section, there is no date mentioned for completion of goals for Native women. More seriously, however, there seems to be an attempt to cloud the issue of their exclusion from the Canadian Human Rights Act by stating that this exclusionary section of the Human Rights Act "could be" repealed after the discriminatory legislation is removed from the Indian Act. Surely it is while the discriminatory legislation is in effect, not after it is repealed, that Indian women most need the protection of the Human Rights Act. Given that this Action Plan is meant to have international as well as national exposure, it is hard not to conclude that this is a deliberate cover-up. This conclusion seems substantiated by the "chronology" of important events at the beginning of the booklet. Curiously, the list includes the date in 1978 that an Indian woman, Sandra Lovelace (not Sarah — they got her name wrong), appealed to the United Nations for justice since no redress exists in Canada. The impression gained from reading this might well be that the Canadian government endorses her stand. In fact it is this same government which forced her to go to the U.N. by excluding her from the Canadian Human Rights Act. Protocol to which this country is signatory requires that Canada must reply. Many months have passed since the deadline set by the U.N. for Canada's response but no reply has been forthcoming. There is, after all, no justification for Canada's blatant violation of Indian women's human rights. In the meantime, Canada's inaction prevents the case from proceeding at the U.N.

It seems unlikely that if the Liberals are re-elected there will be a more propitious climate for action on women's rights for some time. What if the Conservatives form the next government — are they going to take a different position?

M.P. Flora MacDonald, who has been the Indian Affairs critic and is a staunch supporter of the Indian women who have fought against Indian Act discrimination, seemed surprised that I should ask her whether the Conservatives had any policy on eliminating the gender-based discrimination in the Indian Act. She said that a Conservative government would have to study the whole issue before they could make any changes. She also felt that a new stand being taken by Native groups on Constitutional entrenchment of special rights made negotiating much more complex and problematical.

What then are the Indian women themselves and other women going to do about it? According to Flora MacDonald it is absolutely essential that Native women keep lobbying the federal government although, as she admitted in an afterthought, that's clearly not feasible given the very few resources that Indian women can mobilize. They have no ongoing government funding for their associations as do male-oriented Indian groups and must rely on single projects to keep going so that there is really little hope of retaining staff with expertise. They are scattered geographically and financially straightened so getting members together for meetings, let alone lobbying federal M.P.s on a continuing basis, is extremely difficult.

It would appear then that neither Liberals nor Conservatives are more than minimally embarrassed by the situation of Indian women. N.I.B. participation will be extremely difficult to obtain as well, since the N.I.B. has indeed significantly changed its whole position from focusing on the Indian Act to demands for changes in the Constitution. The N.I.B. has completely rejected in principle all other proposals for change and the government has affirmed on many occasions over the past five years that it will not effect changes to the Indian Act except in consultation with the official Indian organizations. So we have a deadlock.

The Indian women cannot achieve justice without the help of other Canadian women.

Everyone will continue to turn a blind eye to the situation of women like Margaret MacGowen who in March was forced out of her home on Caughnawaga reserve with her five children because of provisions of the Indian Act. Mary Two Axe Early, an Iroquois Indian grandmother and pioneer of the Indian women's movement, fears that she will never be allowed to reside on her reserve in peace or have the right to be buried there. She is constantly asking women to send letters, to lobby and pressure the government in any way they can to correct this terrible situation. The Indian women cannot achieve justice without the help of other Canadian women. They are a minority within a minority. We Canadian women must ensure that it is not some half-loaf justice they get, despite the Department of Indian Affairs' claim that retroactivity is impossible and without precedent (it isn't). We must insist that those women and their children who were involuntarily deprived of their status through discriminatory legislation be given full reinstatement of all their rights.

As a postscript, there is a curious development which may have important implications for Indian women who lost their status through marriage. In 1979 the so-called "double mother" rule, Subsection 12(1)(a)(iv), brought into the Indian Act in 1951, has begun to be applied.

(Section 12 is the section which states who is *not* entitled to be a registered, i.e. status Indian.) The application of this section deprives of status many Indian men and women who have grown up on an Indian reserve believing they were Indians. On reaching the age of twenty-one they are suddenly and without warning declared non-Indian. The criteria for this new way to lose status are (i) to have both a non-Indian born mother and grandmother who gained status through marrying Indian men and (ii) to be the child of a marriage which took place after the 4th of September, 1951.

There is naturally great consternation, shock and real unhappiness in Indian circles that men should lose their status. The N.I.B. moved almost immediately on behalf of those affected and asked that a section of the Indian Act which permits the Cabinet to strike down any section of the Act by Order-in-Council be used to eliminate this subsection 12(1)(a)(iv). When Noel Starblanket was asked in a telephone interview whether this was not inconsistent with the Brotherhood's stand on 12(1)(b) he had nothing to say. A member of his staff, however, deserves top marks for sophistry. He argued that since eliminating the sexually discriminatory 12(1)(b) from the Indian Act was part of Faulkner's October package proposal which was rejected in toto and in principle by the N.I.B. they *could* distinguish between the two pieces of legislation and call for the removal of one and not the other of the sub-sections of section 12. It will be important to determine if and when this "double-mother" rule is suspended because if it is, 12(1)(b) can be too.

There was great consternation when men began losing their status by the "double-mother" rule. The N.I.B. asked that Cabinet remove the subsection from the Indian Act.

Kathleen Macleod Jamieson wrote the book Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus, *which is available from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R5. Ms. Jamieson is a freelance writer and researcher living in Ottawa.*

Photos courtesy of Edmonton Indian Rights for Indian Women.

The Wife

She had never been anywhere
other than here
and before that
the farm.
One of her arms was limp but long
and the tips of her fingers
touched the pale enamel of
the stove, cold.
The other, she had fallen on
in such a way
it looked as if it tried
to lift her, but could not.
Her legs were crossed,
no – laid over one another
the right one strayed a little
longer than the left
and her toes met the
refrigerator door
cold, same as before,
same as the fingers
on the stove.

Her perimeters were mean
as I have said,
but have I told you
that she bled?
Yes, those who saw it
said she bled
as they had never seen before
from an open throat
around her head
over the blade
of the butcher knife
toward the oven door –
bright esplanade of blood
exotic and astonishing
though she had never been anywhere
before, other than the farm
as I have said.

Edna Alford

Edna Alford lives in Calgary, Alberta. Her poetry and short fiction have appeared in The Fiddlehead, The Journal of Canadian Fiction, Poetry Toronto, *and other publications. She has appeared on the Calgary television programme,* Poet's Touch *and is co-editor of* Dandelion Magazine.

Visitation Street

fiction by Jane Saible
illustration by Maureen Paxton

Sometimes when Amelia has been drinking too much cheap red wine out of one of those gallon jugs, something strange happens to her. Her lips and tongue, even her teeth to some extent, seem to turn black, and I'm reminded that despite our long and close friendship, a great gulf separates us.

On those long, hot nights when I visit her, I find it hard to communicate my deepest thoughts about her. I sit looking at her across the smooth surface of the table, and think back over the seven years I have known her, reflecting on what my life would have been like if we had never met.

"Amelia," I said one night when we were sitting after dinner drinking wine (she in her old red dress and her feet up on the kitchen table, and I more sedate with one arm over the toaster), "I think you've destroyed my innocence."

She opened her mouth to laugh and I saw that it resembled a deep black hole. Soon she was giggling quietly with her head on the kitchen table.

I stood up and walked into the next room. Outside in the dark a garbage truck was creeping up the street, clanking its gears and whirring its engine at every stop. The garbage men were making their graceful, rhythmic throws. Every minute or two they whistled to the driver to move ahead another few yards. I watched them from the bedroom window while Amelia sat in the kitchen.

What a place for her to end up, I thought, with her wilting though still exotic beauty. Dark and thin, there is something of the Latin American rainforest about her. She has a face like a female satyr, if such a thing can exist: small, slanted eyes, high cheekbones, and delicate features drawn back from her face in a persistent kind of grin. At twenty-seven she lives the same sort of life she led as a student: unpredicable, passionate and poverty-stricken. I have always been a little star-struck by it. It has seemed to me like something luminous and outside the normal stream of love and hate.

"Amelia," I said, coming back from the bedroom to find her asleep with her face in a pool of wine.

I shook her by her bony shoulder.

She sat up suddenly and stared at me with intense hostility. One half of her face was stained with dried wine and resembled an enormous bruise.

"What made you do it?" she demanded.

"Do what?"

"What made you . . . you know. When you knew how much he meant to me."

It was incredible. She was starting it all over again. It didn't faze her that the "betrayal" had occurred a year after their final separation. It was hardly less significant for that. She viewed it as something inevitable. She had been waiting for it to happen ever since we first met.

"I always knew," she said, "right from the time I introduced you to him that afternoon in 1970."

The passage of years meant nothing to Amelia. Jealousy and infidelity had been built into our friendship right from the first day, placed there by God, and in her mind there was nothing we could do about it but submit to fate and endure the consequences.

"Well," I said. "We waited a long time. We waited years in fact. Don't forget that there were plenty of chances when we were all living together on Visitation Street."

"I haven't forgotten that," she said.

~

I still believe I was brought into their lives less as a friend, or even "political contact", than as an emergency measure, to help preserve their relationship, which they dimly understood was being threatened by their constant fighting. At the time when we formed our strange alliance, this fighting was beginning to become almost legendary. The stories were told at parties and over coffee in restaurants with a kind of awe. They were the sacred events in the charmed life of Amelia and Richard.

There was the most famous one: the time they almost killed each other one afternoon in Trafalgar Square, in full view of hundreds of Londoners, who had come with their families to feed the pigeons. This was during the first few weeks of their world-travelling, when they were starving and freezing in a little flat in Soho. It took them less than a month to conclude that they hated England. The English were too neurotic, and the student life without central heating was simply not worth living. So Richard notified the university of his intention to terminate his studies there, and to take up political theory at Nanterre. It was 1969 and Paris was still turbulent with little upsurges. The May Revolt had not completely died down.

"A revolutionary has no private life," Richard warned her, in a series of rapidly-written, polemical letters from Paris, but Amelia followed him there three weeks later. She said she wanted to see the Louvre.

Their reunion was happy at first but soon deteriorated. What had come over the man she had met and fallen in love with less than a year before? She tied the letters he had written to her, full of painstaking and incomprehensible rhetoric, together with a little red ribbon. In her free time, or while dreaming over her art history books, she set about adjusting herself to changed circumstances.

Sometimes Richard got very worked up, waxing eloquent and predicting a return to the events of 1968. She absorbed his fantasies and, in her own way, tried adding to them. She pictured them on the barricades together, making love under canopies of barbed wire. In the mornings, when the teargas had evaporated, when the fighting had subsided, when only a few sirens and shotguns could be heard off in the maze of Paris streets, she would prepare simple but delicious breakfasts on the camp stove they had brought with them from North America. It would be like the canoe trips they had taken together before they left Quebec: romantic, with a slight hint of danger. With a few differences, of course — like the interminable meetings which she forced herself to attend.

It was around that time that she began applying herself to the fulltime job of faking an interest in politics. During the first delirious weeks, there were two near-riots, and once a demonstration in which they were marching was teargassed by police, who swept through the student district clearing the streets ahead of them as they went.

But in the lull which followed that peak of excitement, they were forced to admit that the events they had hoped for had not quite materialized. They were still revolutionaries in search of a revolution, six months later, when they came back to Montreal. And their relationship was in worse shape than when they had left.

While she was away Amelia had kept up a correspondence with me, in impressionistic letters which described her physical surroundings and her state of mind in vivid detail, but omitted the troubles between her and Richard. She adopted the literary stance of an older sister, well acquainted with the mysteries of life. Sometimes she called me by strange pet names: "My skinny ghost," "my brainy Catherine," "my dreamy friend." At eighteen I still lived at home. I was bookish, withdrawn, procrastinating — everything Amelia wasn't. She seemed to cherish this difference between us.

I kept her letters, rereading them through the winter until it was spring again and I was working in a factory to finance my next semester at university. Amelia called me up one evening, a week after their return. I was overjoyed to hear her voice. It was clear to me almost from the first hello how much she had changed.

She had taken to using phrases like, "That's very right on," and she referred to the women she had met in Paris as "sisters." When she learned of my factory job, she seemed to take a renewed interest in me.

"Why don't you come over for supper some night?" she suggested. "I know Richard would love to meet you. He's very interested in getting involved in organizing workers now that we're back in Quebec. He read a lot about conditions here while we were in Paris. Maybe you'd like to talk with him about organizing the women in your factory."

Her invitation provided me with an event to nail my hopes to. And I was dying to meet Richard. When Amelia and I had studied together, he had been a mythical hero whose deeds were reported to me at regular intervals.

"At the demonstration last week," she would say. "You must have seen him. He was the one who climbed on the roof of the police car with the bullhorn, just as the riot cops were arriving."

According to Amelia, Richard was beyond doubt the most intelligent, the most cultured, the most deeply human, the most passionate man in the world.

"Come on now," I used to say, but I was aware that disbelief was a habit with me, a way of sneering at life. Secretly, I believed everything she told me. In a way I was attracted to Amelia by the intensity of her infatuation with Richard.

I had waited a year to meet Richard, and when the time finally came I wasn't disappointed. He was then twenty-four. With his wire-rimmed spectacles and upright growth of curly black hair — the image of the young Jewish politico — he had a way of seeming intensely sensitive; and when he talked he alternated between warm floods of words and an air of deep, critical brooding.

They were staying at a friend's apartment near the centre of town, in a building which has since been torn down — as many things have now disappeared which were so essential to our lives back then. The two of them seemed very much at home together, under the poster by Ben Shawn and the Kollwitz lithograph of a woman holding a dead child. Maybe it was the wine, or Amelia's wonderful cooking. Or perhaps it was Richard's caressing tone as he discussed some ideological nuance. But something magical seemed to happen that evening.

Three weeks later everything was sealed, and it was too late to undo what had been decided. They came for me in a rented truck, and helped me move my few belongings from my parent's house, under my father's mute and outraged gaze, while my mother wept in the kitchen.

It was overpoweringly hot that day. We tried to feel elated, drinking orange juice from a bottle, driving through one congested neighbourhood after another. Downtown seemed less friendly to me now that I was about to start living in it. I felt that Richard and Amelia were observing me very closely, as if having second thoughts. We came to a street near Parc Lafontaine, and parked in front of a little red-brick building.

There was an enormous church at the corner of the street, and as we sat in the truck the bell began to ring, and people stepped out of the arched doorway, dressed in summer pastels. The bride and groom had their picture taken near the sign announcing the weekly Bingo night.

I remember we laughed at them surreptitiously as we unloaded our belongings. Outmoded institution. While we scaled our front stairs carrying chairs, tables, boxes of books, the neighbours watched with suspicious interest from the doorways of steamy little flats, from balcony railings and window ledges.

Then, to celebrate our arrival Amelia put on her new red dress (bought at the Salvation Army) and we walked, the three of us, to a restaurant. Amelia and I sat side-by-side, like twin sisters, elbows barely touching. Richard was across from us. He was talking about the May Revolt in Paris.

Amelia interrupted him in the middle of a short political speech.

"How do you like my new dress, Richard?" she asked, eyeing him.

Richard drew in his breath and paused to have a look.

"Yes, it's very nice," he said, coolly. He shifted his eyes to my face and resumed.

Amelia shot me a sideways glance.

"What do you think of these ruffles? Do you think they're too much?" she said, lifting the hem to show him. There was a flash of black lace.

Richard stared at her. "Can it be that you're actually reverting to that?" he said, focussing his attention on her for a few uncomfortable seconds, as if willing her to change into some other sort of woman. As if that were his duty to her and his great gift.

"Will you stop being so condescending?" said Amelia, with an effort to control her voice. I had never seen them fight before. They argued through most of the meal. Richard finished his dinner with his self respect intact, but Amelia came off less well: emotional, vulnerable, uninformed, scattered in her defences. I felt sympathetic and alienated at the same time; but I was in accord with Richard on the basic premise: Amelia needed to have her consciousness raised.

Through most of her life Amelia had had few close women friends. Richard knew this, and wanted to encourage our friendship. So the official arrangement was that Amelia and I were to live together in the flat on Visitation Street (there was barely room for two in the place) while Richard rented a room by the week two streets to the east of us. It was not a "separation", he assured Amelia. It was just a way of giving them both a little space to breathe.

Everything began according to plan. But then Richard failed to hit it off with his first landlord ("a despicable little petit bourgeois"), and after four nights in the second place, huge red welts appeared on his body. "Bedbugs," he explained, with a diffident, manly shrug, but this experience seemed to shock him. Within a week he was boarding with us.

He was unemployed, and spent his free time talking to our neighbours, or visiting his political acquaintances, or just riding around the city on a borrowed bicycle. Amelia was working night shift in a mental hospital. During her days off, she devoted her time to fighting with Richard.

Sometimes when Amelia wasn't there, we talked. But some evenings, in a haze of exhaustion, I would come home from the factory and find the two of them standing stiffly in the kitchen, with strained faces and a manner that said, "Why don't you spend the evening somewhere else?"

Often at night I would wander around the neighbourhood, which was without parks or lawns. The rows of little brick buildings came flush to the sidewalk, and outdoor life was confined to the balconies and the street. The only restaurants within walking distance were little snack-bars which doubled as poolhalls, and sold only *patates frites* and pogo hotdogs.

On weekends I used to sit on our balcony and watch the family directly opposite, whose ground floor window provided entertainment for the block. Inside was a big kitchen table with a television at one end and a few quart bottles of Molson's at the other. In a way I felt I envied this family, but they disturbed me. Richard was very fond of them, having talked to the father and some of the kids a few times, and held their activities in high esteem. He considered them representatives of working class culture, he said, and a pocket of resistance against U.S. imperialism.

"U.S. imperialism?" I said. "On Visitation Street?" I tried to grasp these complexities. I didn't want Richard to know that I was frightened of our neighbours, because they spoke French, because they were poor, because their lives seemed not to lead anywhere. I wanted to show him that I had depths of feeling, that I could understand what oppression was, that I was ready to fight against the system that created it. It was just that living in the midst of it drove me to despair, day after day. And how could the neighbours party so much? Didn't they see the shabby horror of their lives?

I used to question Amelia casually about Richard.

"What does he say about me? Does he like me?"

Amelia was evasive. I had to plead with her to report the basic drift of their conversations.

"She's a nice girl," was Richard's expressed view.

"Woman," Amelia would correct.

"Excuse me. *Woman*. Cathy's a nice *Woman*."

"She's quite intelligent, too."

"Yes, I think she's very intelligent," Richard would agree.

"But she's so messy."

"Don't be so narrowminded."

"Don't be paternalistic."

"Don't throw these catch phrases back in my face all the time. That's not what I taught them to you for."

Sometimes I missed my parents. There were days at work when I thought I would die if I spent one more minute on the assembly line. I told my fellow workers (lesbians with Elvis Presley haircuts, and middle-aged mothers with lined faces) how I would give anything to work in a mental hospital — ANYTHING but a factory which repaired telephones.

One day I had an inspiration. I wrote "A BAS LE CAPITALISME" in black telephone paint on the wall of the women's washroom. I dumped the rest of the can down the toilet.

I went back to my place at the line and fainted.

A man carried me to the nurse's office. I felt stupendously light. Psychedelic entertainments were playing on in my head, and I heard wild laughter coming from the machines. I knew suddenly that a deep chaos in my body was threatening to break out and destroy the factory.

The nurse gave me something for my menstrual cramps.

"You look very unhealthy," she said. "You can't be eating properly. And I think you should pay more attention to . . . personal hygiene." I told her that shaving one's legs was not organic.

I could ignore criticism back then. But I had a great capacity to be moved by slogans and majestic-sounding generalities.

When I think of the early part of that summer it always seems to be evening. A crowd of people with flags and banners are gathering in the park. Someone begins the Internationale and suddenly everyone is singing. We stumble over the unfamiliar verses, confident when we come to the chorus: "C'est la lut-te finale!" A man is climbing the statue of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and a woman climbs after him. People are hurling their pickets like javelins at police, and setting small fires in garbage cans. We are marching up Visitation Street and people applaud us from windows, gesturing with beer bottles, waving. At the top of the hill, I look back from near the front of the parade, which fills the whole width of the street and the sidewalk. There seems to be no end to it. I am walking in a line of twenty people, behind a wide banner. Our arms are linked and we are singing.

But by August I noticed a strange new calm in the air. Richard was home less often and now he and Amelia talked in whispers in the next room, while I read in the evenings. I went for long walks late at night and it was as if ghosts were stirring in all the alleys and the old brick houses.

It was September, 1970. Amelia and I were not getting along. Richard was worried about his future. He was contemptuous of universities, but he had nothing else he wanted to do. The weather was getting colder.

All during the summer we had slept with the doors open because our little flat was so hot and airless. Towards the end of August, spiders began crawling into the house from the shed in the back. Now they were biting me in my bed at night.

I woke from a dream and felt spiders in my bed. I jumped up, shook out the sheet. Did something run across the pillow? I shuddered and draped myself in my sheet, and stood in the doorway of the kitchen, looking down at the breathing shape all rolled up in his blankets.

Amelia was on night shift.

"Richard," I said. "There are spiders in my bed."

Their bed in the kitchen was very narrow and lumpy, but there weren't any spiders in it. I squeezed in, leaving my sheet on the floor like a skin I didn't need any longer.

I showed him the bites on my arms. He said they were nothing compared to bedbug bites. His arms surrounded me, he covered me with the blankets. I squirmed and pressed close, surprised to discover he had such muscles. He said I was pretty,

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but skinny, like Amelia. He talked until I fell asleep, and woke me the next morning before Amelia came home from work.

I decided that our living arrangement could not function without complete honesty. I told this to Richard the next time we were alone. He cringed and turned white. She would make his life hell, she would throw me out of the flat.

"Me?" I said. "My name's on the lease." Our night together was innocent, I reminded him.

"Then why mention it at all?"

I ignored the question. Furthermore, I told him, jealousy was a very counter-revolutionary form of passion which had to be eradicated. I found his undisguised horror a bit antiquated, a bit of a "contradication", as we used to say back then.

Everything changed so quickly that I hardly knew what was coming. One day the soldiers weren't there, the next day they were on every corner.

Political kidnap; murder. It filled all the papers. For several days we saw nothing of Richard. Then one morning the name of one of his friends appeared at the bottom of a list of "known subversives". Amelia spent hours calling people and saying as little as possible, convinced that everyone's phone was tapped.

He came next day by the back door for a few of his belongings: his packsack, a sleeping bag. He had an airplane ticket for California. Amelia cried hysterically. I left them and the flat and went for a long walk.

For several weeks afterward there were phone calls every few days from booths in San Francisco. Then the calls stopped, and winter came early. Snow blew in under the back door, forming little drifts on the kitchen floor. We lived in the kitchen to be near the oven. I stayed away as much as possible. Amelia slept whenever she wasn't working. Things deteriorated.

I told Amelia I was going to live in Toronto for a few months, maybe a year.

"And if it's all right with you, I'll just leave most of my stuff here, until I can decide where I'm going to live."

For a while I was happy in my new, neutral surroundings, where jobs were plentiful and the streets were clean, and life had a controlled quality. Then one spring day, near the University of Toronto, I ran into Richard. His face said, "No questions." I didn't ask about his travels. He had just come from Montreal, and now that things had cooled off a little, he was thinking of going back to school.

On one point he was very outspoken: he hated Toronto. Systematically, all-inclusively, almost fanatically. "It's the symbol of everything I despise," he used to say, with the old, persuasive conviction. I felt something in me rise to his assurance. We would laugh conspiratorially, like exiled Bolsheviks plotting a foreign revolution.

I could see that he missed Amelia and the reassuring frenzy of their life together.

"Which is over for good now," he told me.

We saw each other rarely, and spoke only occasionally on the telephone. Then one evening he called me at home.

"Sit down," he said, in the honeyed imperative that Amelia had always found hateful and irresistible.

"Something very serious has happened to someone we both love, but before I tell you anything I want you to know that it's over now, and she's all right."

I knew he meant Amelia.

"There's been a fire," he said. I tried to imagine it: the place blackened, everything gone.

"Everything," said Richard, "except your old desk and the letters I wrote to her from Paris."

Richard and I met for a drink near the university. For the first time we relaxed a bit, we relived old times, understanding suddenly how everything had been leading up to this moment. The fire. This bar. We saw our lives spread out on the table like a clear, magical diagram. Beautiful lives, significant lives.

"You look so much like Amelia," Richard said.

It was the next morning and I was putting on my coat. The leaves had all fallen in the night. There seemed to be little to talk about, so I said I was leaving in a day or two to see Amelia, to help her find a new apartment.

'Give her my love," Richard said with a nod and the long, warm look he saved for the ends of conversations.

"I will," I promised, and suddenly I felt I needed to get away someplace, quickly.

Times change, and ideas fare badly. What endures is betrayal and its after-effects.

"Yes, it was very brave of you," said Amelia. "Very brave to leave town like that. And very neat the way you arranged your reunion in Toronto."

"Wait a minute," I protested. "It was NOT arranged. Don't forget you had already split up, and we were both very lonely and miserable living there."

"And don't forget I was also lonely and miserable. You weren't the only ones who were lonely and miserable."

"But it didn't last very long," I added quickly. "As you know."

"It never does, does it?" said Amelia, more to the table than to me but it stung all the same.

"Still," I continued, "the news of your fire was a great shock to Richard."

"My fire," she repeated, as if she knew what I was about to say.

"He was profoundly shaken," I persisted. "He told me that it made him realize the possibility of a life without Amelia."

"Ha," said Amelia. "I bet he did."

"Those were his exact words. He took it very seriously. I remember he made me sit down while he read me Jean-Paul Sartre's essay on death of Camus. That's how profoundly . . ."

"I'm sure," she sneered. "You always did have a cosy intellectual rapport, I noticed."

"But at the time," I insisted, "we both looked to you. We expected everything to change. We thought you'd come to Toronto to see us. But you didn't come. So we more or less fell into each other's arms."

"You make it sound almost noble," said Amelia, emptying the last of the wine into our glasses.

Somehow it always comes back to this.

"Well as a matter of fact, it was," I said, gulping down my wine. "It was noble. It was the best thing I ever did in my life. I wanted to for years and when the chance came, I made the most of it. It was fantastic. It was great."

Amelia was watching me through narrowed eyes. I knew she was feeling in the back of her mind for a weapon. I knew she had found it.

"That's not what Richard told . . ."

But I was halfway down the stairs. I was on the sidewalk breathing in the neon night. I was shutting the door on the woman I had almost loved, knowing this wasn't the end. It wasn't even near the end.

Jane Saible is a Montreal writer.

Maureen Paxton is a Toronto artist whose work has appeared in the last two issues of Branching Out.

illustration by Sylvia Luck Patterson

A beginner's guide to political involvement

by Jo Evans

"Do you think the miserably low proportion of women voting is a woman problem, or just part of a general apathy?" This query was posed by a long-faced provincial female candidate whose enthusiasm for our February election clinic was not matched by the hoped-for hoardes of neophyte women campaign workers. In the face of our lack of power and the absence of people in legislatures who are responsive to women's demands, one is almost tempted to say, "Who cares?" But perhaps women's detachment from the political process and our relative lack of success within the political system are both manifestations of the same sad information gap. We don't know how to participate effectively.

This article is meant to provide a survey of things women can do if they wish to go beyond voting and become active in elections and beyond. There are some difficult decisions to be faced by any woman even so much as dabbling in political activism. The following guide is meant for the zealous new political participant determined to have, at the very least, a government responsive to her needs.

1. *Deciding What You Want.* You will not get very far unless you are clear about exactly what you want. Maybe you simply want the fulfilment of your favourite political philosophy and a party exists for that purpose. If so you can skip to step 5. Perhaps you feel strongly on one or two particular issues. In this case, bone up thoroughly on them; be able to spout facts and logic in the face of every slick verbal trick. If you have trouble

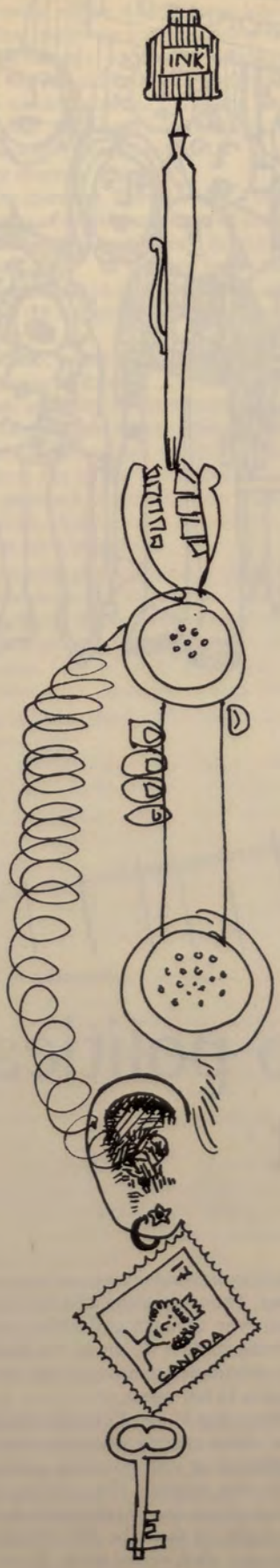

illustration by Sylvia Luck Patterson

deciding on specific issues, find out what the National Action Committee or the Advisory Council on the Status of Women have identified as important this time around. Maybe your provincial organization can help; most status-of-women groups provide some kind of issue sheet or are able to provide background evidence to strengthen your case.

2. *Educating Candidates*. Your next step is to explain the issues you've decided on to all the candidates and ask clear questions about what they will do if elected. In Alberta we found politicans abysmally ignorant on matters such as battered women, rape crisis centres, daycare and matrimonial property. Once the provincial status of women committee publicized the issues we were raising for the election, however, we got many requests from politicians for more information. Aim to educate all the candidates; you don't always know which will win. By enlightening each one, women's issues may thereafter be deemed a little more important by them all.

Many unpractised political activists (especially women) feel in awe of politicians, as though legislators were rulers instead of representatives entrusted with serving our needs. If you feel intimidated, think of gathering some sympathizers to share the job of educating. An evening of telephone calls to candidates by four or five women with wine and cheese may well yield humour and solidarity, as well as political results.

Many people feel in awe of politicians, as though legislators were rulers instead of representatives entrusted with serving our needs.

Private meetings with candidates are probably better than a public forum when you are trying to convince them your issue is legitimate, or if you are trying to find out their true attitudes towards your issue (and perhaps toward women or constituents in general). The private meeting is also good for building your political confidence. Public meetings, on the other hand, may be more intimidating, but are excellent for pressuring candidates and educating the general public on women's concerns. It is certainly worth developing strategies for these occasions. Although some candidates may listen to your ideas and give straightforward answers to your questions, there are plenty of slick politicians who will be quite adept at evading the point or, worse, making you appear ignorant or even ridiculous. Again, you can try group support. One strategy is for several of you to attend a public meeting and sit separately. Plan to have the most confident ask the first question. Let a few more questions go by, then have a second person stand up and say, "I was really interested in your response to that question on women. Would you mind elaborating on your answer?" This gives the issue importance and reinforces it in the mind of others in the audience. Supplementaries can be planted this way throughout the evening. Even if the candidate is hostile to women's issues, you can at least force him to respect your power to expose him to the crowd. Beware of being seduced by a chance to crucify the candidate, however. It may be great fun, but the audience will probably hate you and you certainly won't nurture any enthusiasm for your issues.

One problem you will almost certainly have to deal with is the meaningless pleasant response: "That issue certainly concerns me . . . if elected I will look into it." Pin them down. For example, say you're running an ad naming people committed to a particular policy, such as pro-choice, and just see how quickly the insincere ones will backpaddle!

3. *Judging and Choosing*. It may be easy for you to decide whom to support; if so, you are lucky. It is much more likely you will have to evaluate candidates' responses in terms of which

person is most likely to get the best legislative results. By working in groups, you may be able to pull together clues about the candidates' sincerity. A group of women who did this in Alberta's recent election campaign became disillusioned with one candidate who had been appealing, as a woman, to the women's vote. She was overheard saying to her campaign manager, "I see those libber types are out tonight."

For the Alberta election, the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee asked each party for its official stand on each of our issues. The responses made it clear that no one can make wise political choices without knowing the issues thoroughly. As an example, Peter Lougheed wrote to us saying that the Progressive Conservatives saw no problem with existing daycare facilities, since the province had added $6 million to the daycare budget last year. We then found, first, that $3 million of that came from the federal government anyway, and, second, that the money was to be merely injected into the inadequate existing system of predominately *private* daycare facilities with prices so high, and legally acceptable standards so low, that municipal public programme administrators were choking. So be prepared to make some effort in evaluating candidates promises and claims. Phone experts on the issue and ask people working in that field for their side of the story.

A more serious dilemma may be whether to vote for a feminist candidate if she belongs to a party whose policies you do not like. Lynn McDonald mentioned the problem in the last issue of *Branching Out:* women politicians have often not agreed with the policies of their chosen parties. In the recent election in Alberta, quite a large proportion of Liberal candidates were women, yet the party was on record as rejecting the main demand of Alberta feminists — a minister responsible for the status of women. At least one candidate spoke in support of the women's portfolio; could she have opposed her party if elected? The problem also works the other way. What if you choose the party with the policies you support, then discover that the candidate in your riding is not especially sympathetic to women's issues? Will you be able, for example, to educate an otherwise superior candidate who makes sexist remarks? You should also look at the realities of power in your particular constituency. Is there a race between only two of the candidates? If so, what are the personal commitments of each candidate, and how well could you live with the policies of the parties concerned?

You will almost certainly have to deal with the meaningless pleasant response: "That issue concerns me . . . if elected I will look into it." Pin them down.

You might have to choose between a powerless back-bencher and a vocal opposition member. Another headache may be the danger of splitting the opposition vote. One Alberta voter reported she was torn between a "sincere and sympathetic" Socred candidate who was almost certain to lose, and a stronger NDP candidate she thought "took himself too seriously." All she was sure of was a desire to get the PC incumbent out. Her choice was between wasting her vote on a

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lovable loser or supporting unenthusiastically the candidate with the greatest ousting power.

Judging and choosing candidates may not be easy, but much of the political know-how and information you gather this time will stay with you, so that you are more likely to be a more sentient political being at the next election.

4. *Supporting the Candidate*. You can do a lot more than vote, once you've made your choice. To begin with, share all that hard-won knowledge with others who may not have had enough stamina to pursue it themselves. If you have a bent for getting attention, try getting press coverage by making your store of information newsworthy. This is a must, of course, for any politically active interest group. One way of arousing press interest is by contrasting party stands on a specific issue, mentioning your candidate by name.

You can also present yourself to the campaign manager of the candidate you have chosen. Whether you end up in the enthralling and frustrating process of canvassing, or on a publicity committee, or helping to get the vote out on election day, you are guaranteed to end up with a new perspective of the so-called "democratic process." Some campaign managers may be good at evaluating your skills and giving you challenges, but watch out for the tendency to stick you with stereotyped female jobs.

Above all, cajole any apathetic women you know to vote too. If women *en masse* do not express their preferences at elections, we will all suffer.

5. *Lobbying*. When election day is over, you can focus your efforts at education more narrowly. There is now only one person you must motivate to serve your needs and he or she is eventually accountable to you for this . . . well, sort of! For guidance at this level, get hold of the kit *Sharing the Power* produced by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The Post Office will not forward your magazines when you move!

Perhaps the most effective ways of lobbying are with personal visits (in groups) and letters. Prepare well for your visit by setting up an agenda and sending the politician background information which justifies your position. You are more likely to get clear results — good *or* bad — if you ask support for a specific proposal. Present the proposal in writing, and after your meeting write to confirm your understanding of what has been established and promised. Finally, set a clear target date for accomplishment of the goals and make an appointment for another meeting.

You will have to choose sides in yet another dilemma. Several experts point out the importance of your credibility in winning a sympathetic ear; they say that if you are not dressed impressively and conservatively, or if your assertiveness is perceived as aggression, or if you are too beautiful, sexy or charming, then the politician's attention will not be entirely on your issue. Appearance and manner may put the candidate off your issue. Indeed, beneath a statespersonlike exterior may lurk downright distaste or hostility to your cause. So, they urge, if you want results you must manipulate your manner and your image accordingly. However, many women at an Alberta election clinic thought it better to be oneself, not pandering to politicians' emotional weaknesses, and instead being firm and clear in one's demands.

Letter lobbying takes less time, commitment and preparation, and it doesn't require the victim's consent. Keep it simple and direct, and make the action you want explicit (and realistic!) Send copies to feminist organizations and other relevant groups such as opposition parties and the press; this helps to intimidate would-be arrogant respondents and allows some coordination among activists.

6. *Follow-up*. Monitoring politicians' activities is clearly essential if you mean business; this might mean subscribing to Hansard (at $65.00 per session), making friends among Parliamentary press people, or simply writing or phoning the politicians themselves to ask what's been done about promises. Once you're this far into the game, you should have become a regular current affairs analyst, gathering clues from the media every day.

Feeding back your observations to the politicians is worth the effort; rewarding even the mildest public comment in your favour should make the politician at least marginally keener to do more, and carefully-presented negative feedback may be the only way to educate some politicians. By all means, publicize inaction; but bear in mind that a person you've publicly sneered at and declared an enemy is not likely to help you enthusiastically later. Your publicity will yield most public sympathy if you communicate moderately, relentlessly exposing inaction but in calm, factual terms. The credibility argument certainly holds water here; the public is not noted for reacting to your image and your issue independently. I would not, however, wish to deprive you of the pleasure of shocking headlines, for no-one will read on unless your press release grabs. The announcement of our low-key election clinics was headed "*Women On The Warpath*", and we got one hundred percent coverage in city media.

You are almost certain to enjoy political activism because it offers a chance of improving women's lot. You may find you have bitten off more than you can chew if you become a leader of other women in the exercise. But no matter how amateurish people's efforts may be, to encourage others in the arts of educating, choosing, lobbying and evaluating are bound ultimately to increase any government's responsiveness to women's demands.

Jo Evans is on the Executive of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. She teaches in applied arts at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

poetry

by Linda Pyke
illustrations by Alina Wrobel

deja vu: memoirs for my mother

i

exorcism
is not what i'm after

look at my hand
opening
palm upward

there are hills
valleys
lines that spell
my history

we could draw a map
trace the stars'
position

what balanced force

or we could zero in
between the lines
to cells

each cell containing
remembering
what you were
and are
(through me)

what i am become

ii

and now i wear
your wedding ring

and now i write
your poems

deja vu

that sudden burst
we share
a common
memory and vision

this is not magic
mother
it is here in my hand

palm of hand
holding past
holding future

this is life and death
mother and daughter

when one turns into two
then back again
to one

ALINA WROBEL 79

reunion

if i went now to the victoria
hotel found a musty man
behind the desk

if he produced a ledger
for the year
(your names the room)

if i went up . . .

and if i bathed and lay
this autumn afternoon
between your sheets
inhaling scent
of after-shave
a tin of macdonald's
by the bed

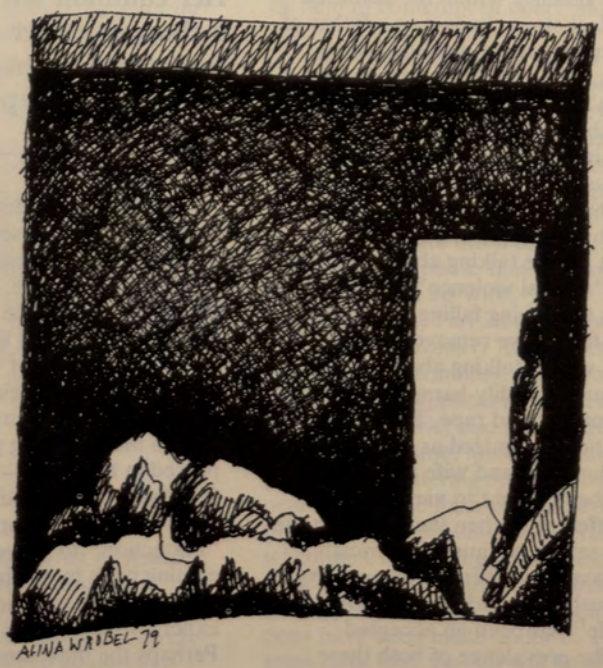
and if i viewed
the flowers on the wall
upside down
(as you did)
sunlight as through gauze
the window-dust

and if i knew you breathe
within me
your voices washed until
transformed
i gave
received each new caress

your child your vessel
flesh of flesh

Toronto poet Linda Pyke has been published in numerous magazines including The Canadian Forum, The Tamarack Review *and* Saturday Night. *Her work has also been broadcast on CBC radio's "Anthology."* Prisoner, her first volume of poetry, is published by Macmillan of Canada.

Alina Wrobel is a student in Fine Arts at the University of Alberta.



law

Battered Wives: The Gagged Victims

by Marie Gordon
illustration by Anne Quigley

It has often been said that laws arrive too late on the scene to bring about just results in society. The law is indeed a reactionary animal — it creeps out into the light long after a situation has demanded some sort of redress. In certain situations, the power of law is brought into swift and forceful operation, (remember the *War Measures Act?*), but this usually happens when a powerful group is directly threatened.

Matrimonial violence has rarely received this kind of attention. For centuries women have put up with physical abuse from husbands without the aid of legislative intervention. The need has been hushed; the victims effectively gagged.

In fact, our law has actually condoned violence within the domestic setting. Blackstone, known as a father of English jurisprudence, talked about a husband's right to practise "moderate correction" on his wife. At old common law, a husband was allowed to beat his wife with impunity, so long as the weapon (usually a stick) was no thicker than his thumb. Hence, the expression "rule of thumb".

What are we talking about when we speak of "marital violence"? It has been treated as something falling short of a crime. In fact, if we remove the cloak of marriage, we are talking about assault, assault causing bodily harm, attempted murder, murder and rape. Rape, of course, is not recognized as a criminal act between husband and wife in Canada. We have been taught to view these crimes differently when they occur in the domestic setting because, historically, women have been seen as the property of their husbands, and a man's home as his "castle" has been an accepted notion. The prevalence of both these attitudes has made women unique victims; victims who feel the need to hide their wounds.

Wife-beating has been the object of an unending stream of jokes, but seldom the subject of serious concern. A male rock band named "The Battered Wives" rises to popularity; wife abuse continues to be the source of a lot of jokes for cartoonists. As a result, very few people realize how many women live in daily terror of a violent spouse. As a legislative priority, the problem of wife abuse doesn't even make the list. Battered children, yes; battered women, no. The law is loath to intervene into this area of human relations, even though those "lovers quarrels" can and do end up in broken jaws, facial lacerations, miscarriages and deaths.

Canada's laws do little to alleviate marital violence. The remedies that are available are not tailored to the needs of battered women. In comparison with recent legislation in Britain our laws are a disgrace.

Her common law husband kept a chopper under the bed and threatened to chop her body and put it in the deep freeze.

In 1975 the British House of Commons set up a select committee of its members to investigate the topic of violence in marriage, and its report called for urgent steps to be taken to protect women. Traditional legal remedies, it was found, were not working; they were cumbersome, inaccessible and simply did not help women in crisis situations.

In the following year, a new act was passed in England — the *Domestic and Matrimonial Proceedings Act*. This Act allows a woman to apply to court for an "injunction" to prevent a husband from coming back to live in what is considered their "matrimonial home" after she has experienced physical abuse at his hands. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of this English Act is that it seeks to protect not only married women, but also women living in common-law relationships. This recognizes, as most sensible people would, that an unmarried woman can bruise just as easily as a married woman can.

Jennifer Davis, a 21 year old Englishwoman and her 2½ year old child lived in a flat with her common law "husband" until his repeated beatings and threats forced her to flee to a battered wives' refuge run by Erin Pizzey (author of the widely-acclaimed book, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*). Before finally leaving her flat, however, Jennifer Davis had been threatened with a screwdriver and terrorized with promises of a brutal death and having her body dumped in the river. Her common law husband kept a chopper under the bed and threatened to chop her body and put it in the deepfreeze.

Her stay at the battered women's shelter was a short one; the house was pathetically overcrowded with other women who could not return to their homes for fear of continued beatings. With the help of a lawyer, she then applied to a county court under the *Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act* asking that she be able to return to her flat, and that the man she lived with be forced to leave it. An order to this effect was granted by the judge, but before long her common law husband had appealed to the courts on the ground that they had no power to oust him from his matrimonial home. His arguments succeeded, and he was allowed to return.

Finally, the case was appealed to the English Court of Appeal, and was heard by five judges who reinstated the original injunction. Lord Denning, one of the most outspoken of the five, offered a strong and lucid judgment in favour of Ms Davis. He overruled two previous decisions of the same court which had refused to grant injunctions in very similar fact situations. In legal circles, judges are more or less bound by former decisions of their own court, and seldom dare to walk all over their brother judges' findings. Lord Denning interpreted the Act in a liberal and broad manner, and this decision stands as a

strong legal precendent for English judges in the future. (The decision of the Court of Appeal was subsequently affirmed by the House of Lords, the equivalent of our Supreme Court of Canada).

It is an exceptional case for a number of reasons. It was the first time in England, or anywhere for that matter, that a court effectively kicked a man out of "his" home because of his violence to a woman who was not even his wife. At common law, separating a man from his property is something like scratching fingernails on a judicial blackboard; it is just NOT done in well-respected legal circles. In this case, not only is the man being separated from his residential property interest; the law has stepped in to interfere with his proprietary interest in his "wife". As the Davis case demonstrates, British law-makers and judges are beginning to realize that the problem of wife abuse in the 1970's is real and that it merits genuine concern.

Canada has no laws that offer a battered woman as much protection as the British one discussed above. Because *Davis* v *Johnson* was decided on the basis of that English Act, it has no value whatsoever in Canadian courts. Not only are the Canadian laws inadequate, but the people charged with enforcing them do not seem to demonstrate the zeal for law and order evident in many other situations. Legal remedies available to women in Canada include the peace bond, the charge of common assault, and a restraining order.

The Peace Bond

A peace bond is one legal weapon in the hands of battered women. Section 745 of our Criminal Code says that any person fearing "that another person will cause personal injury to him or his wife or child or will damage his property, may lay an information before a justice" (note the wording of this section). A judge who receives such an information arranges for the people in dispute to appear before him. If he is satisfied that the fears are well-founded, he can order that the threatening party enter into what is called a "recognizance" (simply a promise or undertaking) to keep the peace and be of good behaviour and comply with any other conditions set out. If the person fails to do so, the judge has the power to jail him for up to twelve months or fine him.

On the face of it, this sounds pretty good. What happens in reality, however, is quite different. First of all, a woman may not know enough to ask the police how to obtain a peace bond, and it is rare that police will volunteer information to women that this remedy is available. Secondly, the time gap involved in obtaining a peace bond all but destroys its effectiveness. A peace bond does not mean immediate protection for a woman at three in the morning; she must often wait some time for a "trial date" to be set. During that time and even after the peace bond is granted, the man will not be forced to leave the home.

Not only are the Canadian Laws inadequate, but the people charged with enforcing them do not seem to demonstrate the zeal for law and order evident in many other situations.

Police and Crown counsel often complain about women wanting to withdraw a charge after a day or two, and it is often said that battered women are a lost cause — "they just don't follow through". This is not because women aren't desperately in need of help, but rather because of the inadequacy of the remedy. The woman's boyfriend or husband will inevitably find out that she has gone to the police to complain and more often than not, she will be under pressure to withdraw the charges and "keep the peace" within her own home. It takes strength and determination to see a prosecution all the way through, and battered women seldom receive any support along the way.

Again, there is nothing necessarily in a peace bond to order a man to stay away from his wife or girlfriend — it is only after she is hurt again, perhaps more severely, that the peace bond is of any value. The police can then arrest the man and put him in jail or fine him. One positive aspect of this remedy is its availability to anyone — whether married or not. A second advantage is that no lawyer is required. A woman can go to the police station and ask to lay an information before a justice of the peace. The prosecution is then taken over by the Crown Counsel, and the woman's role becomes that of witness for the Crown.

The Common Assault Charge

A woman can charge her husband or boyfriend with common assault or assault causing bodily harm. Police are hesitant to lay such charges themselves, and a woman may have to go down to the police station if she decides to proceed with the charge. This remedy suffers from the same problems as a peace bond. A considerable amount of time may elapse before the case even comes to trial, and if conviction results, he may only be fined unless he has a record of similar crimes. A jail term is going to put the man out of work, and if it will mean welfare for the wife and children, there is not much chance of lengthy imprisonment.

If a serious assault has been committed and the man is arrested, it is possible that one of the terms of his release on bail will be that he refrain from contacting or molesting the woman. This must be requested, however; it won't be granted as a matter of course.

A restraining order is a very different legal remedy, and has many advantages over a peace bond or a charge of assault. It is a type of "injunction" the court may grant and, as with other injunctions, it must accompany another main action such as divorce. In Britain, such an injunction can be granted on its own, as we saw in the *Davis* case.

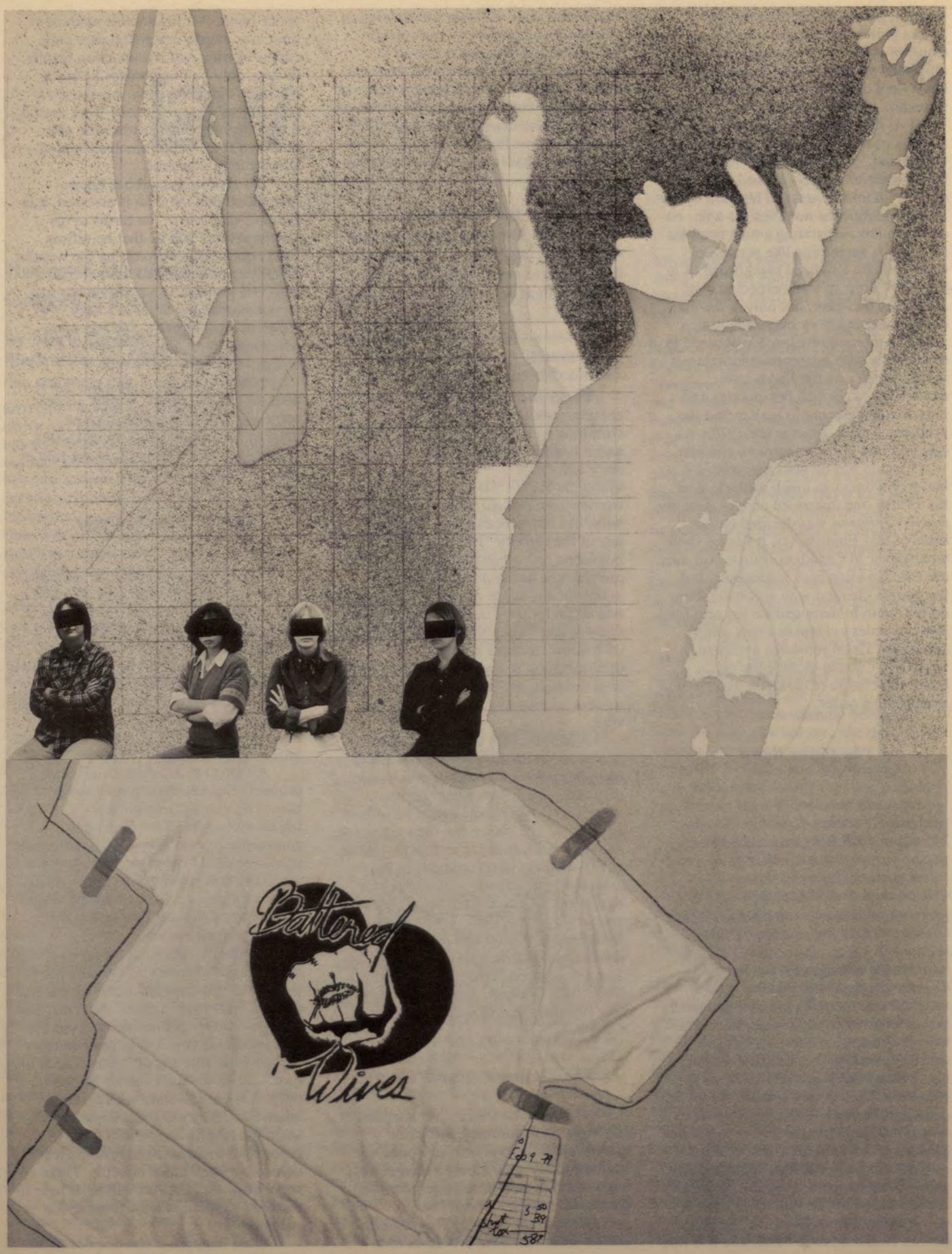
The Restraining Order

Restraining orders can be obtained much more quickly than peace bonds; in an emergency situation a lawyer can launch an action and apply for a temporary order within a day or two. The usual restraining order will prohibit a husband from entering the home and harassing his wife. Should he breach the conditions set out in the order, he may be held in contempt of court and can be jailed.

Although restraining orders are probably the strongest protection a battered woman can obtain, they're not the final answer. The woman must commence a main action such as divorce or civil assault before she can apply for an order. It is never granted automatically, and judges are often reluctant to turn a man out of a house that he owns himself or with his wife.

In Alberta, Part 2 of the new *Matrimonial Property Act* makes provision for a "matrimonial home possession order". Upon application, the Court has the power to evict one spouse from the matrimonial home, and to restrain that person from entering or "attending at or near" the home for a certain period of time. It is hard to state with certainty when the Court will grant these orders, since the Act just came into force in January of this year, and few applications have been made under it. There is some hope that the Act will be of help to battered women, at least those living in Alberta.

What happens if she decides to


Battered
Wives

CONCLUSION

Canada's laws offer piecemeal protection to women in desperate need of it. Existing remedies, for the most part, do not correspond to the needs of battered women. Legislative neglect presently smacks of the attitude "if we don't do anything about it maybe it will go away".

The British House of Commons and courts came to the realization that instead of going away that incidence of domestic violence is escalating at a frightening rate. American statistics estimate that 60% of all marriages involve at least one incident of wife abuse. British legislation and case law show a concern about the plight of battered women that our government and courts have not yet recognized.

The U.S. Senate voted last summer to authorize $150 million for a five year program to curb wife-beating and other domestic abuse.

Here in Canada we need a serious re-examination of existing legal remedies that focuses on their effectiveness and accessibility. We need continued and generous government support of shelters for battered women and we need community support for women who start saying no to physical abuse.

Until we overcome the myth that battered women are willing victims, and that violent husbands are merely exercising their rightful marital perogative, we will be condoning terrorism within the home.

The women who need help most, however, are in no position to make their concerns known; their own personal tragedy demands all that they have. They cannot raise their voices to their husbands, much less to their legislators. Our laws should meet, rather than dismiss, the needs of people in such situations. The law should not treat marital violence any differently than it does any other crime in the community. Until we overcome the myth that battered women are willing victims, and that violent husbands are merely exercising their rightful marital perogative, we will be condoning terrorism within the home. The need will remain hushed and the victims will remain gagged.

Marie Gordon is a third year law student who is currently involved in research on battered women in Canada.

Battered Women: How to Use the Law *is a pamphlet written by several law students in conjunction with Edmonton's "Women In Need" House. Designed to help battered women understand more about legal remedies available, it is available free of charge from Student Legal Services of Edmonton, Law Center, University of Alberta (ph. 432-2226) and from Calgary Legal Guidance, 100A-315-10 Avenue S.E. Calgary (ph. 265-5545).*

Wifebeating Analyzed

book review by Doris Wilson

Conjugal Crime: Understanding and Changing the Wifebeating Pattern, by Terry Davidson. New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1978. Cloth, $9.95.

Conjugal Crime is a study of the hidden violence which is estimated to affect as many as 50% of all American marriages, and of society's inadequate response to the problem. Davidson documents the legal system's connivance with society in failing to protect the victim of such crime, while the full resources of the law are available to anyone attacked by a stranger in similar circumstances. The only parallel known in the law is its reluctance to give rape victims a fair hearing, yet wifebeating is estimated to occur three times as frequently in the United States as does rape.

While Canadian research has not been as extensive, preliminary studies indicate the problem is equally serious here.

The crime of wife beating is viewed by Davidson from several angles: the character of the beater, the character of the victim, the legal and societal reinforcement of this crime throughout history, the effect on children. Her conclusions and suggestions are based on her own documented experiences with domestic violence.

A useful section for the American readership is the list of shelters and other assistance for battered women and their children in one of the appendixes. Canadian readers will find helpful the list of recommended publications, and can refer to the "legal procedures" section for an idea of how complicated the very similar Canadian actions are.

Perhaps the most useful service this book provides is in its analysis of wife beating as a crime. Davidson stresses that only when it is recognized that society has contributed to the woman's fear and helplessness, and that she is staying in the marriage out of economic necessity and a lack of places to turn, will progress be made towards legislative remedies to correct the situation.

Some further practical solutions proposed by the author include provision of funding for shelter for the victims and children, marital counselling, better educational programs for the police with an emphasis on handling domestic violence, child care courtroom facilities and provision by the courts or social agencies of advocates to represent the victims' interests and to provide information and support.

Davidson's book provides a valuable perspective on wife beating as a criminal offence. It is useful reading for the victim, the helping professions and those interested in legal reform. Although its focus is American, parallels can be drawn with the problem experienced in Canada.

Doris Wilson is a third year law student who is currently doing research on battered women in Canada. She regularly assists in editing the law column.

Legal Notes

by Louise Dulude

THE FRINGE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

There is something to be said for being a feminist in a country where women aren't allowed on the streets without a thick veil and two bodyguards. The issues are simple (you don't need a B.A. to understand polygamy), the way ahead is clear (there's nowhere to go but up), and the injustices are so flagrant one might even be willing to die for "the cause".

In contrast, one of the hottest feminist battles in Canada right now is being fought in the area of fringe benefits. That may not sound very exciting, but as most of us have children and all of us who last long enough will get old, it can be argued that maternity leave/benefits and equal pension rights are as relevant to our lives as the right to vote.

Three recent developments demonstrate how wide-ranging and diverse fringe benefit issues can be.

Stella Bliss v. The Attorney General of Canada

Spunky Stella Bliss does not give up easily. Fired from her B.C. office job because she was pregnant, she fought to be reinstated only to be fired again four days before giving birth to her son.

Even though she had not held her job long enough to qualify for maternity benefits, she asked to be given regular unemployment benefits because she was able and available for work.

That didn't matter, she was told, because section 46 of the Unemployment Insurance Act categorically forbids the payment of regular U.I. benefits to otherwise eligible claimants during the period starting eight weeks before delivery and ending six weeks after it.

Pleading that section 46 is unfairly discriminatory and should be declared invalid as contrary to the Canadian Bill of Rights, Bliss successively took her case to the U.I. Board of Referees, an Umpire, the Federal Court of Appeal and finally, two years later, the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court decision, concurred in unanimously by a panel of defenders of yesterday's status quo, quotes approvingly the lower court judge who found that: "If section 46 treats unemployed pregnant women differently from other unemployed persons, be they male or female, it is . . . because they are pregnant and not because they are women".

"Any inequality between the sexes in this area", adds the Supreme Court on its own, "is not created by legislation but by nature". In other words, women are welcome but people with uteruses need not apply.

Having a Baby in Quebec

In the great tradition of "the last shall be the first", Quebec's newly-proclaimed first maternity leave provisions are the best in Canada.

As well as guaranteeing the usual leave of absence with protection against dismissal, they allow pregnant women working in physically unsafe environments to request a temporary transfer to another job.

If the employer refuses to comply, the leave of absence is lengthened accordingly. In all cases, reinstatement in the same job after the maternity leave is guaranteed.

To top this off, a unique maternity allowance programme was introduced on January 1, 1979. It gives a flat-rate allowance of $240 to all Quebec residents who qualify for U.I. maternity benefits.

Sex and Pensions

Although federal labour and human rights laws only apply to 10% of Canada's workforce, they often have considerable influence on the provincial laws that cover the other 90%. This explains the importance of the Canadian Human Rights Commission's (C.H.R.C.) forthcoming regulations in the fields of pensions and insurance.

The C.H.R.C.'s draft regulations, forwarded to interested groups last fall with an invitation to comment, are best described as middle of the road.

In the case of pension and insurance plans to which employers contribute, they call for identical benefits for men and women but allow differences in contribution levels by sex. When such contribution differences exist, they must be paid for by the employer.

This means that women, who live longer than men, would not have to pay more to become entitled to the same pension benefits. Conversely men, for whom life insurance is more expensive because they die sooner, would not pay more for equal coverage.

The Canadian Life Insurance Association, in its brief on behalf of the industry, deplored the Commission's decision to impose equal benefits for men and women because, it said, many employers will terminate their plans rather than replace them with same-benefit arrangements.

At the other end of the spectrum the Canadian Association of University Teachers, presenting the feminist viewpoint, was dissatisfied because it believes that different rates by sex should be banned. If differences in costs due to sex were shared by all participants as are differences arising from race, health condition, smoking, social background, heredity, etc. . ., C.A.U.T. argues, the problem of deciding who will pay the additional cost would not exist.

As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year: "To insure the flabby and the fit as though they were equivalent risks may be more common than treating men and women alike; but nothing more than habit makes one 'subsidy' seem less fair than the other."

Louise Dulude is an Ottawa lawyer. She will be contributing regularly to Legal Notes.

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The Evolution of the Women's Movement

In Germany, Britain, Russia and France national politics have exerted great influence on the women's movement.

by Lynn McDonald
Part II

In the last issue of *Branching Out* I discussed what seemed to me to be the distinguishing features of the Canadian women's movement — its organizational strength, weakness in theory, solidarity across class lines, its progressive/reformist stance, and the commitment to working within the ordinary political process within existing parties. These conclusions can be seen more clearly by comparison with the women's movements of four European societies, considering where they stand in these same respects.

The countries I have chosen to examine are Germany, Britain, Russia and France. The British women's movement is important to us partly because it had direct ties with the Canadian, while the French movement is important for its theory. Germany has had a highly organized and conflict-ridden women's movement which was one of the strongest in Europe. It shares with France the honour of being a source of theory for the rest of Europe. The Soviet Union is distinguished as the first country to make improvement in the status of women official government policy.

Germany
A Strong Movement that Failed

From its earliest years, the women's movement in Germany was split on class and party lines. Early women's organizations, dating from the mid 19th century were formed by middle-class women and were largely concerned with such issues as secondary and higher education for girls (women were not allowed either in the academic secondary schools or universities at that time). There were attempts to 'reach' working-class women to improve their morals, and some bourgeois women were prepared to offer practical help on a philanthropic and apolitical basis.

Working-class women, led by Clara Zetkin, in time founded their own organizations connected with the Social Democratic Party. When the German Federation of Women's Associations was formed in 1894 the socialist women were not invited. There is some excuse for this in the threat the socialists posed as a political organization. Until 1908 women in certain parts of Germany were not allowed to hold, speak at, or even attend political meetings. The socialist women were unmistakably political, while the bourgeois could hide behind their philanthropic activities. There is much to suggest, however, plain class prejudice as a motive for excluding the working-class women. Zetkin is said to have resisted even the slightest hints of reconciliation after the initial exclusion. As committed to the cause as one could ever be, she considered it her duty to point out the errors of the bourgeois movement. She attacked the 'feminists' (feminism was a pejorative term to the socialists) as vigorously as she did male capitalists. The bourgeois women were not noticeably more charitable in return. The liberal Marianne Weber, herself with some competence on Marxism, dismissed August Bebel's classic work *Woman Under Socialism* with brief, biting sarcasm.

Socialist theorists, male and female, saw the struggle for women's rights as inextricably bound up with the struggle for socialism: there could be no emancipation without socialism. Bourgeois attempts at reform distracted from the main issue, weakening its chances of success by taking away potential recruits. All the while socialist women were badly treated by their male colleagues. They were under-represented on party executives and the editorial boards of party publications. When women finally won the right to be candidates few were nominated. Efforts to have women appointed as party secretaries were frustrated. The women protested, but always gave way when their male colleagues would not be moved. They were often bitterly disappointed. Even such highly respected women as Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg felt they always had to work harder than men and received less credit for their efforts. The German Social Democrats, incidentally, may have been the first to revise sexist terminology. In 1892 'party representative' became *Vertrauensperson* from *Vertrauensmann*.

When World War I broke out women had not obtained the vote, and the bourgeois movement was divided and weak. There was a truce in suffrage activities throughout the war, most women devoting themselves to the war effort. The bourgeois organizations instituted a Women's Service, so that women would be seen to be performing comparable service to men in the military. The Service also brought women into close contact with local government officials and generally helped to give women credibility as competent political actors. Only a few internationalists (including Zetkin) continued the anti-war struggle.

Social theorists in Germany saw the struggle for women's rights as inextricably bound up with the struggle for socialism.

The vote came suddenly in 1918, as one of the demands of the workers' and soldiers' revolution. The Weimar Constitution of 1919 included equal rights for women generally, and in such specific matters as equal treatment in the civil service. These promises were not respected in practice. The Civil Code, which made wives legally subject to their husbands, and gave fathers exclusive rights of control over their children, remained in force. The Social Democratic Party broke up. An explicity Marxist Communist Party split off from it, taking with it many of the leading women, notably Zetkin and Luxembourg.

In the 1920's a few advances were made, but there were more defeats. Women were elected to the Reichstag (Parliament) in relatively significant numbers, almost ten per cent in the first election in which women could run, but in lower proportions thereafter. These women, except for a very brief attempt at collaboration, did not join forces on women's issues. The radical movement was not able to reverse the trend against it. The bourgeois 'moderates' and the

Social Democrats both became more conservative in their demands, effectively accepting the 'separate sphere' view of women. Within the Social Democratic Party, women were pushed into an auxiliary 'social work' role, deemed more fitting with their nature. Zetkin was forced out of the editorship of the socialist women's publication *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), which proceeded to move in the direction of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. The Communist Party was the only party consistently to support women's issues. Few women were prepared to support it, however, because of its vehement condemnation of religion, and its general radicalness. The liberal parties, which so many of the bourgeois women supported, did not reciprocate. The relationship between organized women and the political parties was, in short, such as to do neither side much good. The Social Democratic Party was the largest single party in post-war Germany so that its failure to deal justly with women is of particular importance. Admittedly it was in coalition with the Catholic Centre Party, which was in principle opposed to women's rights.

It is probably fruitless to speculate as to what might have happened if the Social Democrats had lived up to their promises. Certainly what did happen was disastrous. When women got the vote they were less inclined to support Social Democracy than were men. Further, their support dropped off faster than did men's in the period of the 1920's. There were anti-Nazi women in both the socialist and bourgeois movements, but they were as unable to co-operate in any stage of Hitler's rise to power as were the men.

The tendencies on voting preferences should not be interpreted as a general antipathy of women for the left. The proportion of women voting socialist the first time women had the vote was as high as men had taken forty years to reach. Clearly many women who voted initially for socialist candidates changed their minds. Rather than concluding, as many male socialists did, that women 'did not know how to use the vote', we might consider they had their reasons. Women lost their jobs in the 1920's in higher proportions than men. To some extent this was due to a decree to make jobs for returning soldiers, but very often women were fired with no such replacement. Male trade unionists, many of whom were Social Democrats, were often the instigators in these firings. The Social Democratic Party had voted for the decree. Only the Communists had opposed it. Social Democracy gave women the obligation of doing paid work, but less chance than men of getting a job, and much less pay when one did. All the while women had to do the great burden of the work at home, and accept a subsidiary role in the party. What Hitler offered women might have seemed an improvement for many — a return to the single burden of the home, and job security for the male breadwinner. No one knew at the time that Hitler's policies regarding women would differ from his promises.

What Hitler offered women might have seemed an improvement for many — a return to the single burden of the home and job security for the male breadwinner.

If women in Social Democracy became conservative in the course of the 1920's, women in the bourgeois movement became reactionaries. The 'separate sphere' policy was vigorously advanced by the major bourgeois leader, Gertrud Baumer. Women should not seek to compete with men, but should find equality in appropriate recognition for women's peculiarly feminine contributions, in motherhood and the supportive professions like social work. The conservative Housewives' Union and the Association of German Evangelical Women's Associations came to dominate in the Federation of German Women's Associations. The ideology of National Socialism entailed an even greater restriction to the separate sphere, and coercion in achieving it, than did the women's organizations, but the differences are of degree, not kind. Anti-Nazi women were purged everywhere. The large women's organizations were forced to join the Nazi Frauenfront, or dissolve. The Federation of German Women's Associations and the teachers' associations, among others, dissolved; the Housewives and the Evangelical Women joined.

Women, *qua women*, lost a great deal when Hitler came to power, but the erosion had already started. Women were forced out of senior civil service positions, and after 1936 were excluded from the bench and prosecution. A quota of women was established for university places. The curriculum at girls' schools was changed to reduce academic work, especially science and mathematics, in favour of domestic science. The Nazis were not able to implement their policies full-scale, however, for women were badly needed in the labour force as Germany began to re-arm, and even more so in the war.

The early German women's movement produced an impressive amount of publication. There were full-scale books of analysis on women's issues, from far left to far right, and other reforms were advocated that do not fit into any left-right continuum. The major women's organizations had their own periodicals. In the pre-war period the circulation of the largest periodicals reached over 100,000. Canada compares very badly both in the quality of writing achieved and the size of public reached. A consequence of having this rich store-house of material has been extensive contemporary work on the early movement. Again, Canada is far behind in scholarly work on its own history. In contemporary journals and magazines, however, the two countries are roughly similar.

England
A Separate Women's Union

In England, the early women socialists faced effectively the same problems as the German, but responded differently. Rather than sacrifice their commitment to the women's cause they broke with socialism. Emmeline Pankhurst, the leader of the militants, was herself a socialist when she began to work on the suffrage issue, as were the first women who gathered with her to form the Women's Social and Political

Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst

Union (WSPU) in 1903. The immediate circumstances which motivated action was recession in the Lancashire cotton industry, which particularly affected women. Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia were apparently persuaded that a *separate* organization was needed when they discovered women were excluded from certain groups of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The ILP met in a hall dedicated to Emmeline's late husband, the person who first interested her in both feminism and socialism. The WSPU initially got considerable support from the Independent Labour Party, especially M.P. Keir Hardie. When the ILP failed them, however, in 1907, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst

and others left. Women who remained with Labour could also belong to suffrage associations, and many did. There was never the bitter hostility between 'bourgeois' and 'socialist' women as on the Continent. This is quite clear in early analyses of socialism and the woman question. Even Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, who was born and raised in England, was willing to concede that the bourgeois feminists had done some good, although otherwise her position was in the strident socialist mold of the Continent.

The WSPU soon departed from its working-class connections. Its first supporters, when the organization moved to London, were East London women, workers and wives of strikers. Not long after the move, however, it began to recruit increasingly from the middle and even the upper class. People like Annie Kenney, a cotton mill worker and one of the first to move into militant action, soon became a small minority. Sylvia Pankhurst continued to build a women's organization in East London, but Christabel succeeded in having it ejected from the WSPU. Sylvia went on to become a member of the British Communist Party, while Christabel became a travelling evangelist, preaching the imminent second coming of Christ. Emmeline Pankhurst was a prospective Conservative candidate in a hopeless East London constituency when she died in 1928.

In England there was never the bitter hostility between 'bourgeois' and 'socialist' women as on the continent.

The British movement is important for the Canadian movement as a very direct model. British suffrage activities were widely reported in the Canadian press. The visits of British suffrage leaders were used effectively by Canadian organizations to publicize the Canadian cause. British suffrage leaders, militant and moderate, were well received by Canadian audiences.

The influence of British writings on women's rights is more difficult to ascertain. It is not clear if even such prominent writers as John Stuart Mill were much known in Canada. The women's colleges, established because women were not permitted in men's, produced excellent scholarship on women. Nothing has been produced in Canada of the calibre of Lina Eckenstein's classic *Woman under Monasticism*, or even Viola Klein's *Feminine Character*.

A widely distributed British suffrage postcard.

Russia
Equality as Government Policy

The Russian women's movement has quite a different history again. There was the same split between the bourgeois and socialist movement in Russia as in Germany, but this time the socialist side won. Very little information is available about the Russian bourgeois movement, although enough to show it was responsible for remarkable achievements. The woman question began to be discussed in the 1840's and 1850's in Russia in connection with other questions of social reform, especially the emancipation of the serfs. The serfs were freed in 1861, other reforms following rapidly. A system of secondary education for girls, equal to that for boys, was established, well in advance of other European countries. The 1860's was a time of great advance for women, many of whom left their families for the cities, sought advanced education, and generally challenged the old conventions. The novel, *What Is To Be Done?* by revolutionary writer Chernischevsky became a model for young women to use *pro forma* marriages with sympathetic men to escape their father's authority. Communal living and working arrangements (not involving promiscuity) were tried. Women succeeded in getting university courses opened to them, on an auditing basis, professors giving their time to teach evening courses for them. They were not allowed to enter the men's universities, however, and even auditing privileges were later suppressed. Russian women then became prominent in the universities of western Europe, especially Zurich, where they came into contact with anarchist groups. In Russia women were allowed to do medical training. While not given the same degree as men, and confined to practice with women and children, large numbers of women did become doctors.

The first women's organizations, as elsewhere, were philanthropically oriented, and controlled from above. In 1905 a more broadly-based organization, the Union for Women's Equality, was formed, which grew to eighty branches before its demise. Linked with the liberal parties, it vigorously pursued the Duma, (the Parliament) with non-militant means, for the right to vote. It succeeded in getting reforms of inheritance laws and the passport regulations. In 1912 a suffrage bill was passed by the Duma, but vetoed by the Cabinet. The bourgeois groups were staunch supporters of the war effort, expecting, as did the British, the vote as the reward for their services. The bourgeois organizations supported also the provisional government established in 1917, which did promise them the vote. They dissolved after the Bolshevik coup, never to re-appear.

Women were prominent among the terrorist movements for socialism from the 1870's on. They have been said to be excellent terrorists, the traditional qualities of devotion to duty and self-sacrifice standing them in good stead. Further, the need being for action rather than words, their relative lack of education was not a handicap. In 1881 a woman, Sofia Perovskaia, led the assassination of Czar Alexander II for which she was hanged. Women contributed

as much as a third of the membership of the People's Will, the terrorist organization in which Perovskaia worked. There was, also, one all-women revolutionary group, the Fritschi, formed by women studying in Zurich.

Women were less prominent in the Marxist groups which developed in the 1890's. Among these the Bolsheviks were relatively late in organizing women, and less open to them than Mensheviks, the more moderate wing of the Social Democratic Party. The Bolsheviks were markedly more interested in gaining the support of workers — male — in such industries as metal-working, and considered women textile workers backward. (This estimation of the textile workers was proven wrong by later events, as will be seen.)

Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, was the first Russian Marxist to write on the woman question, in 1900. Interested as she was in such women's concerns as education and child welfare, though, she was far from being a feminist. Alexandra Kollontai, a Menshevik until 1914, was the first real feminist of the Marxists. In 1908 she published an extensive analysis of the issue, *The Social Bases of the Woman Question*. She did a thorough comparison of provisions for maternity leave, which was later used in establishing the very advanced Soviet system. Kollontai was as vehement an opponent of bourgeois feminism as Clara Zetkin, whom she knew from being in exile in Germany. Kollontai led the delegation of women workers to the first large Russian congress of women, in 1908. Equal rights was not the issue, she declared, but 'a morsel of bread'. She was successful in preventing the development of a cross-class organization of women. The Russian and German socialist movements were very similar in opposing any kind of cross-class cooperation. Insofar as comparisons can be made they both contrast sharply with British practice and, even more so, with the Canadian.

The first Bolshevik activity on the woman question occurred in 1913, with the first celebration on Russian soil of an international Women's Day. The following year there was another celebration and the launching of a journal, *The Working Woman*.

The incident that triggered the February revolution in 1917 was actually the work of women, undertaken against the opposition of all the parties, including the Bolshevik. Provoked by overgrown breadlines women textile workers called a general strike on the occasion of International Women's Day. Men workers came out in support only when it was clear the troops would not fire. Women fought on both sides of the civil war. According to Lenin, the most effective battalion defending the Provisional Government, in 1917, was a women's. Canadian women have had no such dramatic interventions, or even assassinations, to their name.

The reforms instituted by the new Soviet government were radical indeed. The new government was genuinely committed to bringing women into the mainstream of society, and especially into productive work. The double burden was well understood, to be dealt with through communal child-care and housekeeping facilities. The legal disabilities of women were promptly legislated away. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children was abolished. Divorce was available and cheap. Birth control and abortion were legalized. A Women's Bureau was established, to encourage women to enter male jobs, and to defend women workers in cases of exploitation by male bosses.

Alexandra Kollontai writer and politician

The 'sexual revolution', failed, however, and the authoritarian family was re-established. Women suffered particularly from the abuse of sexual 'freedom'. They were not, in fact, as able to support themselves as men, especially with the high unemployment of the New Economic Period in the 1920's. Yet men had been freed of this obligation. Child care facilities, and many other planned reforms, could not be provided in the poverty, famine and disorder of the civil war and its aftermath. If Lenin was less than a convicted feminist Stalin was far worse. In 1930 the Women's Bureau was dissolved. In 1936 legislation to reverse the earlier reforms began to be introduced. By the second world war, the position of women in the Soviet Union was much the same as in Nazi Germany.

The failure of the 'sexual revolution' in the Soviet Union has usually been blamed on lack of theoretical preparation, with material conditions accorded only a subsidiary role. (Wilhelm Reich argued this, and more recently Kate Millett.) Leaders have been said not to have paid sufficient attention to the practical implications of emancipation,

The problem in the Soviet Union was not lack of projected programmes but that those advanced were not accepted by the leading male Communists.

an explanation not wholly adequate in my view. Alexandra Kollontai had done extensive theoretical work on the subject, both on the legislation and social services needed for the emancipation of women and their integration into the paid economy. Kollontai was, notably, the first minister of Social Welfare in the new Soviet regime, which made her also the first woman Cabinet minister in history. The same Kollontai was also later the first woman ambassador, when she retreated into a diplomatic career after disillusionment with the regime. The problem was not lack of theory or projected programmes for the emancipation of women, but that those advanced by Kollontai, and other such women as Zetkin, were not accepted by Lenin or other leading male Communists. Thus, despite the fact of some important advances, and despite the fact of a major feminist attaining high political office, the position of women in the Soviet Union is not, overall, better than in other countries. The shortage of men has meant a demand for women in the labour force, and commensurate provision for the education of women. Women are better off in terms of occupations than women in the west, and considerably better off in terms of maternity leave and so forth. The shortage of men, on the other hand, has meant a shortage of husbands, a situation obviously to men's benefit socially. Women in the Soviet Union are much worse off than women in the west with respect to the burden of domestic work. In political power (or the lack of it) their positions are probably about the same.

The official ideology is that equality for women *has* been achieved, except for some bad attitudes that remain. Unfortunately, communist parties of the west have felt obliged to accept this doctrine, critical as they have come to be on other aspects of Soviet policy and practice.

Consequently there has not been any advance in Communist thinking on women in the west in decades. Communists were an important source of theory in the late nineteenth century but those who are still read (like Engels and Bebel) are now badly out-of-date. As to what contemporary Soviet women are doing outside official organizations on women's issues we have no ready knowledge.

France
A Leader in Theory

The pattern of theory and practice in French feminism is quite unlike any other. Feminist writing has a longer history in France than anywhere in the world. There have been notable, but brief, periods of activism as well. The contrast with English Canada could hardly be stronger: we have had no notable feminist theoreticians in the ninety years in which there has been feminist activity here. Even with the greater proclivity for theory among French Canadians the differences are very great.

Theoretical discussion in France goes back at least to the seventeenth century, when there was considerable discussion of the nature of women and the relative importance of biology and education in determining women's social roles. (There is even one fourteenth century book, Christine de Pisan's *City of Women*.) The debate became sharp in the eighteenth century. Most of the great 'Enlightenment' figures had something to say about the nature of women, most of it negative. Except for Condorcet and Helvetius these writers would not accept women as serious political or intellectual actors. Rousseau was one of the worst offenders, but even more liberal writers, like Voltaire, under-estimated women's abilities and contributions. (And Voltaire had a major women collaborator, Emilie du Chatelet, who had taught him calculus and explained Newton to him!) Prominent women writers there were, but they were not really feminists. Thus much of the pro-feminist writing came from unknowns. The one significant exception here is Condorcet, a respected intellectual and revolutionary leader who wrote in favour of feminism. Curiously, his work was little known and is yet to be reprinted.

By the time the French Revolution broke out in 1789 there had been considerable debate about the woman question. Women were active in the Revolution. Women's delegations to the Convention were numerous, on matters both of their own rights and other issues. Women fought in the revolutionary army. Women's clubs (not necessarily feminist) sprang up all over France, and women took part in mixed political clubs as well. They made some gains, notably with respect to inheritance laws. Equal rights to divorce were established. Educational reforms improved girls' schooling as well as boys'. Reaction set in early, however, and the women made a number of tactical errors. The women's revolutionary clubs were suppressed in 1794, on grounds of being counter-revolutionary. Poor women were the major instigators of the bread riots of this time, which resulted in bans of any women meeting together. The few legal advances were also short lived, since Napoleon's civil code entrenched some of the worst abuses of patriarchy. The major women leaders themselves came to sorry ends — exile (at the best), imprisonment, madness and the guillotine. Women who were executed were subsequently cited as examples of what happens to women who dare to hold political opinions.

The socialists formed governments in France in the 1930's but declined to give women the vote. De Gaulle finally did the honours and was well rewarded for it.

Women next emerged as spiritual saviours. This was the Saint-Simon movement. No feminist himself, Saint-Simon in his later years devised a new religion in which feminine characteristics happened to be crucial. He argued that women's greater spirit of co-operation and self-sacrifice were precisely the qualities needed in the emerging conflict-ridden industrial society. After Saint-Simon's death the sect went to the logical extreme of seeking a female Messiah. A search party duly set out for Constantinople, but without succeeding in the quest. Women members of the sect were in general badly treated. Concerned rather with the more practical aspects of life they produced a number of periodicals, all of them, however, short-lived.

Some major French theoretical works appeared in the nineteenth century. Avoiding the extremes of the Saint-Simonists, they nevertheless reveal a strong religious bent. This is true even of the great socialist writer and organizer, Flora Tristan. A major source for Clara Zetkin, and through her the whole course of German and Russian theorizing, Tristan was too religious for Marx. Less well known, but excellent, work was done by Jenny d'Hericourt, in 1860, or work published before John Stuart Mill's. Hericourt, a physician, was a major influence on Mikhailov, who introduced feminist thought to Russia in the early 1860's.

The French suffrage movement, like the German and Russian, was split on class lines. Unlike those two other countries, though, there was never any attempt to build a mass movement connected with a left-wing party. Neither did the bourgeois groups build any strong, mass organization. Women's rights groups remained small, elitist organizations, contributing to enlightened discussion of the issues. Within parties of the left there has been the usual insistence that women's emancipation was to be achieved through the establishment of socialism, the position Simone de Beauvoir took in *The Second Sex*. The socialists did form governments in France in the 1930's, but declined to give women the vote. Resolutions on women's suffrage were passed in the National Assembly, but rejected in the Senate. It was de Gaulle who finally did the honours, and he was well rewarded for it. Evidence from voting polls indicates that, once enfranchised, women did not vote the same as men. If they had, the left would have been in power continuously from the end of World War II, and de Gaulle never. Left wing political parties have failed to accept the working-class wife as an equal member, and have not thought it necessary to put her needs on their party platforms. They pay for this mistake by remaining out of office. Feminist socialists have been too embarrassed about these facts to do the proper research on them, and consider the political implications.

When the women's movement re-emerged in the 1960's French women activists had nowhere to go. The staid bourgeois women's rights organizations were irrelevant to them. Although most of the activists were far left in their political views there was no home for them in any leftist political party. So they took to the streets in massive numbers, where the police bashed in their heads the same as they did men demonstrators. The current President of the Republic, Giscard d'Estaing, was astute enough to see he might make something out of the situation. With the narrowest margin over his leftist opponent, Francois Mitterand, he had nothing to lose. He appointed a secretary of state for the 'feminine condition' to take charge of a reform programme. Some very important concessions were made in the areas of greatest public concern: abortion and contraception. Numerous legal inequities were also removed, but no progress was made on equal pay,

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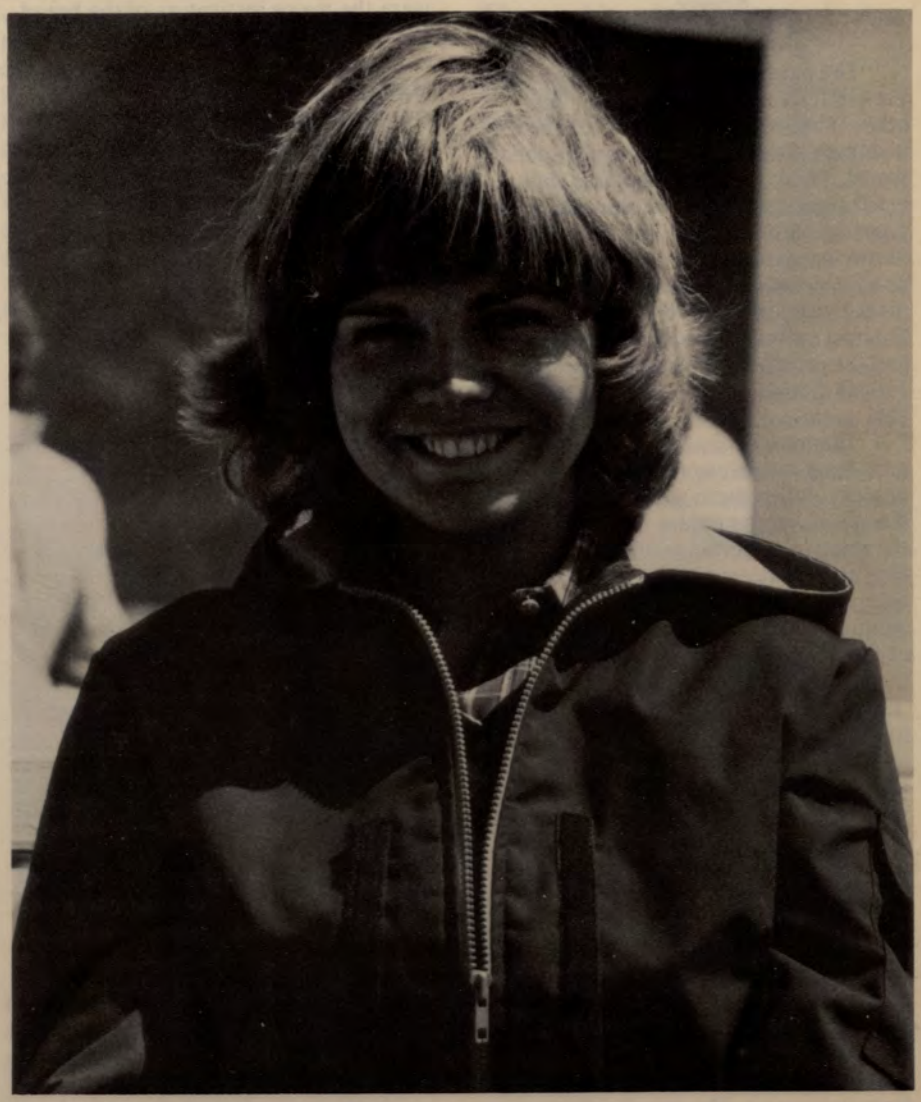
film

The Central Character: An Interview with Patricia Gruben

by Margaret Cooper

Independent filmmakers need to be a tenacious breed: the constant struggle to produce their work and the simultaneous search for material self-support often result in a demanding double life. An independent active in Toronto for several years, Patricia Gruben is not atypical. Moving from commercial movies to television for employment, she has directed her independent energies toward the making of experimental film. Her most recent work, The Central Character *(16 minutes, black & white), was screened in August 1978 at the Edinburgh Festival in a programme of Canadian experimental films which is currently touring Britain and the United States.*



Patricia Gruben

Margaret Cooper: *How did you first get into filmmaking?*

Patricia Gruben: I got a B.A. in Anthropology in 1968 and felt a strong impetus towards social documentary. I didn't want to go to graduate school in Anthropology, which was about all I was skilled for. So I decided to go to film school. It was a graduate school but also something more. I felt I didn't know how to do anything practical; I'd always been good with my hands but never developed any of those skills. I saw film school as a challenge: I didn't know anything about filmmaking, I hadn't even done much still photography at that point. So I went to a university which had a very unfocused film department.

Where was that?

The University of Texas. I thought I wanted to work in educational television. But once I got into it — there was a small station linked with the school — and saw the endless bureaucracy you faced trying to get anything done, I lost interest in educational television as well as social documentary and got more interested in doing scripts.

There was no one else in the department interested in writing, so I quit after doing all my course work and before writing my thesis. I moved to Houston and got a job with a guy who had a small commercial production company. I worked for him for about 4 months and did everything: assisted on camera, edited commercials, put together a multimedia show. Then I moved to Toronto in the spring of '72. I made a short film that year.

That was the last really independent production I did for several years because I was getting immersed in commercial film.

What were you doing?

I cut negatives. That's the worst job. For me, anyway. Just a matter of doing your math properly, making good splices, and being quick about it. Then I started working on features. I built models on a Hollywood film, an underwater disaster movie called *The Neptune Factor*. I was a plain production assistant then. That's a catchall term for somebody who's not particularly skilled. This film had a crew of 90 people. A big American production starring Ben Gazzara and Yvette Mimieux. I was so excited! . . . The first day I spent cleaning out the fish tanks.

In Toronto?

Yeah. The producers came to

Canada to save money. In the film a submarine gets lost somewhere in the Caribbean. Another rescue pod goes to find it and gets lost in this earthquake area where all the fish are giants. Simplest gimmick in the world. You get a lot of tropical fish, shoot them through aquariums, and do rear projection of guys fighting gargantuan eels. That's why I was changing sand in fish tanks. The next day the producers came through and said, "We read your resume and want to put you in the art department building models." It turned out I got the title of Assistant Mechanical Consultant and worked with one other guy. With no experience I was building five and ten-inch models of submarines — we'd look at snapshots of small submarines the Canadian navy had — which were blown up in Panavision to 100 feet long. I was paid one hundred bucks a week with no overtime to do it. You see, they'd used up all their money. They had an art director from Hollywood who was supposed to have built everything in California. He spent most of the budget doing radio control models that were picking up police cruiser radios instead of doing what they were supposed to. He also built coral reefs out of urethane, which floats. So another part of the budget had to go for lead weights to hold all the stuff down. By the time they got to Canada, there was no money left.

How do you feel about The Neptune Factor *now?*

I suppose the film rested on its technical accomplishments. When production got behind schedule, the producer would come in and tear pages out of the script. When I finally saw the film, I realized he'd torn out the page which explains the giant fish. There's not one line of dialogue that says, "These fish are giants because radioactive wastes were set off." Nobody ever asks or explains it, yet you see a man being devoured by giant eels. Actually, I carved the man myself out of a scallop.

A scallop?

Yeah. We starved the eels for a few days, then threw this man-shaped scallop into their midst. The eels went wild. They give us carnage in the water. That's the climax of the film.

After Neptune Factor *did you get into props full-time?*

Yeah. I love going into an empty studio and putting something together! Just the accumulation of evidence and objects and making it look real. Of course, I was still trying to get whatever work I could. I was hired on a couple of low-budget Canadian films to do props and eventually art directing. One was released; it played in town for a week and shut down. Then I got a job with TV-Ontario, the educational station, on a show supposed to be like an FM radio d.j. show. We would see this guy spinning current hits. Then while the music was playing, we'd move in on the turning record. Or pan over the plants in the background, then cut to close-ups of the guy's beard. My job was to acquire some stock footage and slides for visual accompaniment to the music. It was frustrating because the music was so stupid. With a lot of schlock-o love songs, what can you do? You've got to have schlock-o stock footage to go with it. The show ran five nights a week for two years, so I gave up all my residual ideas of making independent films and got totally immersed in that programme and that station. When the show was cut down to one night a week, the budget got a little better. There were also guests who came on for interviews. So the third year I said that I wanted to make some films to go along with the guests. They gave me a $10,000 budget to shoot film. Then, halfway through they took my budget away. But I *did* manage to do a few things that year, about seven or eight little 16mm films which were either relevant to the guests or things I was interested in around town.

When production got behind schedule, the producer would come in and tear pages out of the script. When I saw the film, I realized he'd torn out the page which explains the giant fish.

Was this about the same time you made Jumbo The Elephant: No Match for a Locomotive?

That was probably the main thing I did at TV-Ontario which made me want to get back into filmmaking. One of the features I'd worked on a few years earlier had been shot on location in St. Thomas, which is a few miles south of London, Ontario. I was art director on the film and spent a week or two before the rest of the crew got there wandering around the town, trying to find what I could draw on for the set. I kept noticing pictures of this elephant around town: a beautiful old print of a dead elephant lying on the railroad tracks surrounded by men in bowler hats. Gradually I got the impression that this was the biggest thing that ever happened in St. Thomas. In fact, it turns out that the whole word, the concept of "jumbo" comes from this elephant, who was the biggest in captivity at the time. He was bought by P.T. Barnum and was the star of the circus. Somehow he was hit by a train after a performance in St. Thomas in 1885. This was a sensational event, and the photograph that I kept seeing went around the world.

Well, I went back to St. Thomas to talk to some people. Not the ones who remembered — the event happened so long ago that no one would really remember — but people who saw it as important. I interviewed an old man who had held the 50th anniversary celebration of Jumbo's death. Another guy was a sign collector with all these metal signs and pop bottles with Jumbo's picture on them. A young guy, sort of the unofficial historian of the town, had all the facts. He started off the film giving the factual background. Then others filled in their personal obsessions with Jumbo. But they all said that there was nobody left alive who'd seen what really happened.

So they were actually transmitting a local legend . . . . .

Right. The last guy interviewed was 105 years old and he said, "I saw the whole thing. Couldn't have been more than seven or eight at the time." This guy who claimed to be the only eyewitness told a beautiful story entirely composed of the mythology that had grown up over the years. Things like, "Jumbo dies because he was trying to save his baby son. His baby son was on the tracks, and the train was bearing down on him. There was one opening to get out of, and Jumbo pushed that baby down the embankment so that he'd get away. Then Jumbo turned and faced the train and charged it. It drove his tusk right up in his brain. He knocked that train right off the tracks and fell." It was wonderful! In the end I felt that although he never was there, he believed he was. Because he *had* to have been: he was the oldest guy in town, the only one who could carry on the myth.

Getting back into independent filmmaking has probably meant facing new problems. What are they?

Well, I never quite know how to reconcile making a living with making film. I've also had to decide what kind of films I can do. When I was surviving by doing props and some writing for kids' shows, I spent a lot of time trying to get projects together. Things that were relevant to women's interests. I was in a short-lived production company with Sylvia Spring, Roz Michaels (who's now Roz Schuster and writing for "Saturday Night Live"), Alexa De Weil, and three or four other women. One of our projects was a series on women in different countries. We were all writing proposals and taking things around trying to raise money. The series was a very ambitious project and was going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to do thirteen hours. Eventually one part did get done, the

Cuban film we intended to do as a pilot.

That was Buenos Dias, Companeras.

Yeah. Sylvia finally got that together with Vivienne Leebosh in Montreal and they went to Cuba and did the film. I didn't work on the film itself, only on the proposal. I wrote two feature film scripts and a couple of half hours for television which we tried to get going. When Global Television started, we hit them with about twenty proposals. We were so idealistic and full of energy! But we didn't know anything about marketing. It was really frustrating. Plus, deep down this really wasn't what I wanted to do. I put a lot of energy into it but there was something missing. I felt a conflict of interest between my commitment to working with a group of women and my own "private point of view." So I put my point of view aside. We had a lot of good ideas, things which weren't being done and I felt should be done. But my approach was different from everyone else's. The whole group was made up of very different people from different backgrounds, but we were all committed to promoting a positive view of women. Because of that, we really wanted to avoid conflict among ourselves. That led to a lot of wasted time and energy. In retrospect, I feel I stifled a lot of ideas because they just weren't working in a group situation.

Most of what we're exposed to inculcates and reinforces individualism. That means that collective work inevitably requires radical readjustments. Do you feel these were as much a problem as the "difference in approach"?

If politics were my first priority, I think I would have made any sacrifice to work within the group.

What do you mean by "politics"?

It seemed that in all our projects we were starting from a political point of view, then trying to disguise it. We'd say, "We have to show women in a positive light, so let's do a film about two women who are really good friends and have a falling out and get back together again." Then we'd try to partially disguise it by making the thing entertaining . . . I finally reached the point where I felt I had to choose what I wanted to do, so I decided I wanted to do small films on my own. I still have a commitment to feminism but see it more in terms of an aesthetic. I also feel that if I work from my own experience, I'm representative enough of certain middle-class North American women that my concerns will be more relevant to women than to men.

Has this happened with The Central Character?

Women do respond to it in a different way than men. They see this woman as trapped by housework. In the early scenes she's scrubbing floors and trying to cook dinner but she's unable to because of this biological entropy that's attacking her. I mean, her system is breaking down because it's counter to the natural order, and once she starts to question it, she loses control.

How did the film originate?

It started with an image I had when I was still in school. I lived in a house with an overgrown backyard and a flagstone terrace. I lived there alone while writing my first script. I was going through a very meditative period. I used to sweep the leaves off the terrace where the stones were set directly into the dirt. I'd start thinking that I could never have it absolutely clean, like my kitchen floor. Your kitchen floor, you can get every speck of dirt off and not let anybody walk in and have it absolutely clean. But that sense of absolute cleanliness is limited. It can only be temporary and confined to a small place. The whole idea of housework is cyclical; it's a fight against entropy. You clean up, it gets dirty again. I don't have an obsession with cleanliness but I do have an obsession with that idea.

That's why the vegetation takes over in the film. At the end we see the woman leaving her space, her little human sphere, completely.

Losing consciousness. She loses her ego, so she disappears into the landscape. Order disintegrates for her because it's not absolute.

What about the film form? You mix text, still photos, and drawings with live action footage. Yet there's a kind of formal progression from beginning to end.

The whole film is structured in terms of different media and how "civilized" they are. I find that print is the most "human" and abstract because of the symbolizing you have to go through to put something into words. The film begins with text, with print crawling up the screen telling a story. Gradually the narrative breaks down, just like all the woman's attempts to give herself order break down. Toward the end there's no more print. The still photographs and drawings at the beginning of the film, they're transitions toward the live action footage. They also disappear. The latter part of the film is mostly live action. It's meant to be a sort of objective correlative.

I felt a conflict of interest between my commitment to working with a group of women and my own "private point of view."

photo courtesy of Ian Birnie

The Central Character

In other words, the form directly expresses what's going on with the character.

Right. You know, I tried shooting this film about two years ago with pretty much the same script but all live action, where you actually see the woman in the kitchen fixing vegetables. It was disastrous! It was partly a backlog of my experience in commercial film. I was unable to break out of it and let the form fit the idea. That idea was too abstract to be seen. I finally had to use print for the abstraction because I realized I couldn't make people believe it was really happening. This sort of mental breakdown, it doesn't happen in real life so that you can see it.

Women who've been exposed to experimental films usually don't have trouble with The Central Character. *What about the ones used to straight narrative?*

The first group I showed it to was a bunch of women in Caledon, Ontario. These were all women comfortable enough not to have to work. Living in Caledon, they hadn't seen much, if any, experimental film. When it was over, nobody said anything for a while. Then one woman was kind of hostile. She said, "What was *that* supposed to be?" As if I'd tried to put something over on them. I showed them another thing I'd done that was stylistically different, a documentary. I also explained why I made The Central Character the way I did, why I had to deal with this idea in a new way - to make a mental state concrete. When you really get into how the mind works, you find that straight narrative drama is really just a convention that's developed. It's no more natural or realistic than what I've done. We got into a really lively discussion. They also started talking about the whole issue of the film: the breakdown in rational perception. It seemed to make complete sense to them.

Do you think that the way they finally came to see your film indicated a change in their general expectations of all film?

Well, they ended up saying, "Why can't they do a television program where we could see more experimental film?" They got excited about it!

Still photos and text are also incorporated in your new project, Sifted Evidence. *How is that taking shape?*

It's moving along in almost the same way *The Central Character* did. My original idea was more conventional formally. The script is the story of a woman telling about something that happened to her when she was travelling in Mexico. In the early versions it was pretty straightforward. Now it's becoming more like a puzzle assembly effect. I'm going to shoot most of the film in a studio.

Here in Toronto?

I think so. It's a story that's reconstructed, and I want it to look a little artificial. The point is that it's an unpleasant incident the woman can't quite justify. She can't analyze her motives for behaving the way she did. She was on her way to an obscure archaelogical site and was picked up by a man who told her he'd help her get there and never did. It's a voluntary kidnapping. She's free to go but she doesn't, for very mixed reasons. The film begins with her being rather evasive, talking about her trip. So I want it to look as if she's put together a version after it happened, not as if it's happening while you're watching it.

You worked with a very small crew on The Central Character. *Will you be using more people for* Sifted Evidence? *It's more ambitious . . .*

With *The Central Character* there were several people who worked on it in different capacities and others who did favours for me. But no one else worked on it from start to finish. I'll have to have a larger crew with *Sifted Evidence*. I want a producer this time who can stay with me right along.

Are you planning any other films now?

The next project I want to do is about someone with brain damage, how he perceives the world. He has to put together with deductive reasoning what other people are able to simply perceive and forget about. The idea came from a lot of sources but specifically from a guy I met who'd been hit by a car and had amnesia. This and *Sifted Evidence* are the only two I'm trying to get done now. I don't want to stockpile a bunch of pie in the sky projects. That makes each one less important. I also like to have a lot of time with the work, making sure something looks good, then going on to the next step.

Do you sense a development in the way you work?

In film school people said I was too ambitious, that I was trying to do Griffith's *Intolerance* all the time. I think what I've learned from *The Central Character* — and even with *Jumbo* and my other work — is to start with an idea that's almost impossible to portray and recognize its limitations. Then make the film about the limitations.

Patricia Gruben presently works as a freelance propsmaster and art director in Toronto. The Central Character *is available through the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre. Margaret Cooper works in Media Programmes at the Art Gallery of Ontario. She was film editor for* Branching Out *from 1977-78.*

FRANCE

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which had not been a subject of demonstrations. Giscard's reforms succeeded in getting women off the streets, and so far they have not returned. The next move of the major feminist organization 'Choisir' was to run women candidates in the legislative elections of 1978. None was elected, but planning is going ahead for the elections to the European Parliament. A joint minimal platform is being worked out with women's organizations in other European countries.

The Quebec movement, not surprisingly, shows more of the French love for analysis than the Canadian, although in general it is closer to the Canadian than it is to the French. Quebec publications on women's issues typically give more attention to theoretical perspective than do English Canadian. A good recent example is the Quebec Status of Women Report, *Egalite et Independance*. A most impressive document, it offers an explanation as to why and how sexist practices have developed, as well as making detailed recommendations for reform. The *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women,* in its own right an important landmark, gave its recommendations with only the briefest factual description of the problems. The Quebec report, by a government-appointed council, openly calls itself feminist. It urges the 'de-sexisation' of Quebec society, including the restructuring of the most basic roles in the family.

My own view is that the Canadian movement would benefit considerably from theoretical analysis. It is true that devotion to theory has in other countries been associated with divisiveness, but there is no reason to think this will happen in Canada. Surely our history of organizational co-operation is strong enough to withstand some analysis. It is at least arguable that a good theoretical perspective would help reduce the divisions that do exist. At the moment the divisions focus on the relative importance of economic and non-economic issues, for example equal pay and violence against women. Yet it is the same woman who is raped on her way home from work who faces discrimination on her pay cheque. A theoretical perspective which would relate economic and social autonomy as objectives, and exploitation in the paid and unpaid sectors of life as problems, could be very helpful.

Lynn MacDonald is a sociologist and president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

books

A Balance Between Darkness and Noon

review by Dorothy Livesay

Two-Headed Poems, by Margaret Atwood. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978. Paper, $3.95.

Poets do know what is happening in the world. They do warn. Also, they do affirm. I have been highly critical of the seventies poets in Canada because, with a few exceptions such as Milton Acorn and Patricia Lowther, they have buried their heads in their own private agonies; or they have been flatly and boringly autobiographical — everyday diarists, dull as dishwater. Margaret Atwood has never fallen into either trap. She was obsessed, not by personal relationships, but by these as symbols of the human condition. Her acute sense of economy in the use of language and her unerring gift for analogy saved her. In logic, it may be risky to argue by analogy. In poetry, it is salvation. Atwood has used it as a means to search for her own identity. Paradoxically, however, she uses it also to hide her identity and the result is irony: often pointed and bitter. Her landscapes have been solidly grey, colourless; her view of people was that of the cartoonist.

Now, on looking into *Two-Headed Poems* I am happy to say, with D.H. Lawrence, "Look, we have come through!" In this latest collection Atwood has found a balance between darkness and noon. There are even some wisps of warmth in her family poems; there is even some colour. In the lovely lyric about her daughter, "Today" she speaks of colour as an adult's "danger":

> The lure of eleven birds
> on water, the glitter
> and true shine, how can I tell her
> that white, that bluegreen gold
> is treachery?

but in a later poem, "A Red Shirt" she states the opposite:

> Children should not wear red
> a man once told me.
> Young girls should not wear red.
> But red is our colour by birth-
> right, the colour of tense joy
> & spilled pain that joins us
> to each other.

Likewise, in the last section of "Five Poems for Grandmothers" we find a tenderness:

> Goodbye, mother
> of my mother, old bone
> tunnel through which I came.
> You are sinking down into
> your own veins, fingers
> folding back into the hand,
> day by day a slow retreat
> behind the disk of your face
> which is hard and netted like an ancient plate.
> Even if I send them,
> You will never get these letters.

The book is separated rather arbitrarily into two parts. In the first there is a continuum deriving from well-known Atwood symbols: references to the body, the immediates of eyes, ears, skin, heart. Especially one is drawn to the theme of "Five Poems for Dolls." where

> A doll is a witness
> who cannot die,
> with a doll you are never alone.
> Or did we make them
> because we needed to love someone
> and could not love each other?

Even in this more personal section of the book there are significant political poems, such as "Footnote to the Amnesty Report on Torture" and "Marrying the Hangman." There's a thrust into a new mode, that of the historical documentary. The poem "Four Small Elegies" is reminiscent of Atwood's power of evocation, so memorable in The Journals of Susannah Moodie. This one commemorates violence in Ontario's sordid past, at Beauharnois and Glengarry:

> Those whose houses were burned
> burned houses. What else ever happens
> once you start?

The ancient biblical theme of "The right hand knoweth not what the left hand doeth" dominates several poems. It is implied in the paradox of the siamese twins in "Two-Headed Poems." This is the most political poetic statement Atwood has made regarding Canada and the U.S., Canada and Quebec. She explains:

> The heads speak sometimes singly, sometimes together,
> sometimes alternatively within a poem.
> Like all siamese twins, they dream of separation.

By poem "ii" we are deep into the contradictions:

> Those south of us are lavish
> with their syllables. They scatter,
> we hoard. Birds
> eat their words. We eat
> each other's, words, hearts, what's
> the difference? In hock
> up to our eyebrows, we're still
> polite, god knows, to the tourists.
> We make tea properly and hold the knife
> the right way.

The U.S. reply is equally shattering:

> we make too much noise,
> you know nothing about us,
> you would like us to move away.
> Come to our backyard, we say,
> friendly and envious
> but you don't come.
> Instead you quarrel
> amongst yourselves, discussing
> geneologies and the mortgage,
> while the smoke from our tireless barbecues
> blackens the roses.

illustration by Sylvia Luck Patterson

Without being labelled neatly "the bilingual question", language is the topic that most concerns Atwood in these poems:

> We wanted to describe the snow,
> the snow here, at the corner
> of the house and the orchard
> in a language so precise
> and secret it was not even
> a code, it was snow,
> there could be no translation.

(Mon pays, c'est l'hiver)! And finally,

> Your language hangs around your neck,
> a noose, a heavy necklace,
> each word is empire,
> each word is vampire and mother.

But perhaps the most memorable of these Zen sayings (written for the benefit of John Robert Columbo?) concerns the prime minister:

> He traps words.
> They shrivel in his mouth,
> he leaves the skins.
> Most leaders speak
> for themselves, then
> for the people.

In this political poem Atwood's final coup de grace is again written in the oriental 3-lined verse form, so telling in its effect:

> This is not a debate
> but a duet
> with two deaf singers.

Others, poems in the main body of the book, are freer in their verse patterning but nonetheless adroitly controlled. There are treasures here also, but of a more homespun kind. Atwood is a woman at home in the universe, yet sitting in her kitchen with man, with child, with ancestors. There are always windows in her house, windows onto the garden where she invites herself to dig, in happy health. As she says herself, she is still searching for "a repertoire of untold stories, a fresh beginning."

Dorothy Livesay is a founding member of the League of Canadian Poets and is currently working on her third book of memoirs. She lives in Winnipeg.

Untold Story Should have Stayed Untold

review by Cathy Hobart

Emily Carr: The Untold Story, by Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher. Saanichton: Hancock House, 1978. $24.95.

Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, the author of *Emily Carr: The Untold Story,* was a close friend of Emily Carr and, according to the title page of the book, "her only sketching partner." Interest in Carr is currently very high and new information about this important woman and Canadian painter would be of particular interest to feminists. Hembroff-Schleicher promises just that information. Inspired by "the realization that so many errors about (Carr) and her work were in circulation", the author set out to "rescue" Emily from the authorities who had "badly neglected" her. Hembroff-Schleicher asks, "Dare I, a non-professional, attempt to do what the Vancouver Art Gallery had failed to do? My qualifications were not formal, nor recognized." Yet she asserts that "her long association with Emily, as a close friend and companion in the field and studio, was a unique asset." Unfortunately, the book suffers from Hembroff-Schleicher's lack of scholarly discipline. Except for a few relatively unimportant points, such as the date of Carr's baptism, most of the "corrected" information is poorly documented. The footnotes often contain anecdotes instead of dates or sources. We are asked to accept the author's word on faith because she was an eyewitness. Even eyewitnesses, however, must provide solid evidence, and Hembroff-Schleicher does not.

In her introduction to the chapter "Notes on Six Emily Carr Paintings", Hembroff-Schleicher exposes her attitude and the approach she took in writing this book:

> The "Notes" that follow found their way into my book by sheer chance . . . I feel they are too useful to discard or stow away in a filing cabinet . . . and have therefore decided to reproduce them here, in the full knowledge that they may be of little general interest. I apologize for any repetition. (p. 257-8)

Notwithstanding her apology the book remains repetitious and gives the impression of having been randomly patched together. Illustrations, some drawings by Hembroff-Schleicher, and selections from Carr's previously unpublished sketchbooks are scattered throughout the book with no apparent relation to the accompanying text. The Carr sketches would have been far more useful had they been reproduced with notes on at least probable location and dates.

Even worse than the book's poor documentation of factual "corrections" is the poor documentation of allegations made against organizations and individuals. In one case, Hembroff-Schleicher accuses the Emily Carr Trust of gross mismanagement concerning the sale of five paintings to provide funds for the Emily Carr Scholarship Fund:

> In order to foster the talent of a few, the paltry sum of $10,000 was accepted for the five paintings sold to Glenbow. The sum was minimal, and many of the scholarship recipients are forgotten today.

The footnote to this reads:

> The Glenbow-Alberta Institute declined to divulge the price paid for their paintings. I found it elsewhere and apologize to the Institute for making it public.

The book strays so far from the author's goals that serious questions must be raised about her reasons for writing it.

Hembroff-Schleicher does not indicate where she did find the figure, nor does she present any evidence that the price was not fair market value at the time of the sale. Mere assertion, even by a friend of Emily Carr, that the sum was "paltry" does not constitute proof of mismanagement.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is the principal target of Hembroff-Schleicher's fury. She makes several allegations of wrongdoing, yet her only evidence is that she was denied access to the gallery files and archives, and that therefore they must be concealing something. In the course of levelling her charges, the author reveals that at one time she offered her services to the gallery as a personal friend of Carr's and was turned down. Since her evidence is so slim and she admits to feeling slighted, I wonder if Hembroff-Schleicher's accusations are merely an effort to gain revenge.

Eventually the author gets down to

Shoreline, 1936 by Emily Carr.

personal bickering, antagonistically addressing her remarks to individuals by name. "How about it Charlie? (Charles C. Hill)". "Also, Mr. Lord, (Barry Lord) Emily did not go east in 1931." The sections in which these sentences appear leave the reader with the uncomfortable feeling that she has just inadvertently read someone else's hate mail. Name-calling is no substitute for the facts.

This book's big problem is that it fails to supply the promised authoritative biography of Emily Carr. The picture Hembroff-Schleicher draws of Carr as a cheerful and well-liked woman, rather than a socially ostracized bohemian, is attractive and one that I would like to believe. It is unfortunate that the book is not sufficiently credible in other areas to warrant acceptance of this new portrayal. The book strays so far from Hembroff-Schleicher's stated goals that serious questions must be raised about her real reasons for writing it. Is she simply trying to discredit the accepted authorities and establish herself as a leading Emily Carr scholar? If so, she fails at that too. Her attempts to embarrass prominent art historians and institutions are weak and incredible. Her book is petty and amateurish.

Emily Carr: The Untold Story turns out to be the story of Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, a woman frustrated because she has been neglected as a source of information on Emily Carr. It is the story of the author's attempts to settle old grudges and get her revenge. Emily Carr is simply used as a back-drop for the real play. This untold story need not have been told at all.

Cathy Hobart is a Toronto printmaker and a graduate of the Ontario College of Art.

Worship Thy Father?

review by Gail van Varseveld

Judith, by Aritha van Herk. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Limited, 1978. Cloth, $10.00.

> "If you can explore a woman with a reasonable amount of intelligence, sensitivity and realism and if you are offering an alternative, I think you are writing a feminist novel."
>
> "I've described [*Judith*] as a feminist novel but I would qualify that and say it's not a radically feminist novel because I don't think it offers a lot of solutions to the situation of women now."
>
> (Aritha van Herk, interview in *Branching Out*, V:2, 1978)

While all definitions are to be treated with great quantities of caution, the criteria van Herk suggests offer an interesting approach to feminist fiction (realist mode) in general and *Judith* in particular.

If solutions to the problem were the only criterion, *Judith* would hardly qualify. Judith herself shows little awareness of the situation of women as a whole and no concern for solutions to any but her own alienation. Her instincts are good — independence, a willingness to be different, strength in the face of her own uncertainty — but her consciousness, in the current argot, is hardly raised. Even her alternative, raising pigs in rural Alberta, is an individual one and offers little to improve the condition of women in general, although her personal style certainly does some consciousness-raising in the people around her.

Non-feminist characters need not prevent — indeed, may be more effective in presenting — a feminist analysis but the author must take care to avoid sacrificing her character to her critique. Sensitive and intelligent treatment must translate into credibility; symbols are sometimes useful but rarely loveable. Van Herk manages better than might be expected in a first novel to avoid preaching a gospel but her attempt to work her critique into the structure of the story is not totally successful. As a result, the effectiveness of both character and story is diminished.

Judith's story is revealed in flashbacks interspersed throughout the "present", her first winter on her farm. Generally the flashbacks work well, spinning off without ceremony, as memories do, from the events which trigger them. Yet these flashbacks, and not the pigs, are the source of Judith's credibility problems.

While memory, by nature, is fragmented and selective, the author building a character by means of memories has to make very deliberate and carefully-timed selections. Although the reader is quickly made aware that Judith's father is the driving force in her life, Judith herself, despite constant childhood memories of him, doesn't seem to recognize this until very late in the book. On closer examination, one discovers that the passage wherein she articulates her awareness of his influence is a flashback — she has known all along. This delayed revelation diminishes her credibility as an intelligent character and alienates the reader's sympathy.

Judith's mother seems to have had so little impact on Judith that she scarcely remembers her.

The memories of her city life often have a somewhat unreal air, which may suggest psychological distance, but also undercuts rejection of that life as a motive force for Judith. What could be a very effective feminist critique of the exploitative nature of such a life is considerably weakened as well.

A more important failing with the flashbacks is the presentation of Judith's mother who, unlike her father, seems to have had so little impact on Judith that she scarcely remembers her. At most Mother is a gesture not to be imitated, a fate — farm-wife — to be avoided; her

> "every request was simple and familiar, repeated at paced intervals, an unvarying rhythm. Reliable. But her father's demands were more complex, frightening in their dimension. And she knew there was more to it than just a simple accomplishing of her task; he expected so much more, her father."

Mother was too simple; no mystery, no attraction. It is possible that Judith's mother had so little influence on her daughter, but it seems unlikely. Given her obsession with her father, one would at least expect more of mother as Clytemnestra.

photo by Diana Palting

Aritha van Herk

These "credibility gaps" serve to accentuate Judith's relationship with her father, by far the most complex — and problematic — relationship in the novel. In the *Branching Out* interview cited above, van Herk describes the relationship as "very good" in that he "influences her more than anyone in her life." But the quality of that influence must be questioned.

Certainly, there was much that was good in the father-daughter connection: he taught her everything that, in farm tradition, he would have taught a son being groomed to take over, and he defended her against suggestions that he (and she) would be better off and happier were she a boy. On the other hand, when his age forced the issue, he wanted her to come "home" and run the farm for him, and the guilt she felt in refusing was surely not all of her own making. He defended her independent behaviour in opposition to her mother's more conventional advice and over matters, such as breaking off with a boyfriend, that directly concerned sexuality and role behaviour.

Judith's father definitely influenced her more strongly than anyone else in her life; indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say he determined her life — her escape to the city and her dissatisfaction with it, her return to farming, her attitude to men and so on. While feminists have been mainly concerned with finding their mothers, it cannot be forgotten that fathers also influence their daughters. Yet, even allowing for literary hyperbole, Judith is rather obsessed with her father, and in a feminist novel, one would hope she would out-grow such an obsession. It is not clear to me that she does. In fact, Judith's thoughts at the emotional climax of the book suggest she is growing *into* the obsession:

> "That was how she could immortalize him, could worship and long and ache to have him take her, father and daughter in their complicity, their mutual preservation of the lie, casting themselves forever on the mercy of their ideal. And so it was that she could love him, father/god perfect always, showing her only birth and death and never the sordid in-between, the soiled and rumpled edges of what others were so eager, so pleased, to show her. Within that discrepancy she came to hate him and then to idolize him, and then again full circle to her childishness, trying to please him."

Despite this, there is some positive growth in Judith. Her self-assurance in dealing with the pigs, then the neighbours and finally the townspeople increases rapidly until, at the end, she is able to greet the disapproving glare of the postmaster with a great belly laugh. She acquires what seems to be her first female friend and the warmth between the women is a genuine emotional attraction. The physical labour of caring for the pigs strengthens her body and her discovery of her newly-hard muscles coinciding with a re-discovery of her own sensuality is a particularly pleasing moment in the story.

There are some less pleasing images around Judith's sexuality however. Castration is a necessary evil if you are raising pigs, but the image of the castrating female is laid over the developing relationship with her future lover and overcome only with an appropriately feminine response: tears. It might be argued that Judith transcends the image by becoming the reality but that seems to me to be stretching things. "The savage witch of pragmatism" she dubs herself angrily, but with an undertone of satisfaction.

In the developing affair with the neighbour's son, there are faint hints of romantic agony and in the end she waits for him to come to her, a process which takes sufficient time that she is almost able to meet him on equal ground. Her sexuality is still male-determined however: her ex-lover's brutal, unsatisfying passion is preferable to masturbation.

Yet taken overall, *Judith* is a very readable portrait of a strong woman growing stronger. Judith may not be much of a feminist but, in the present at least, she is an appealing character. Her father, real and internalized, may control her life, but it still takes considerable courage to face spending the winter alone with ten newly-bred sows and to face the people who think her crazy for doing it. She still feels she "wants too much" but she wants with less guilt than she once did. She is ready to stand and fight for her own ground — literally even, as in the pub. There is something irresistable about the image of a woman tossing glasses of beer in the faces of a bunch of burly loudmouths. And this too is an important aspect of feminist fiction: we need to create our own mythology.

Gail van Varseveld is a founding member of the collective which publishes Room of One's Own, *the Vancouver-based feminist literary quarterly. She is now living in Waterloo, Ontario.*

The Joy of Running

review by Patricia E. Loverock

The Complete Woman Runner, by Runner's World Editors. Willowdale: Nelson, Foster and Scott Ltd., 1978. Cloth, $14.75.

A new cult is sweeping across North America. The parks and pavements of both Canada and the U.S. are alive with women, men and children, their hearts pulsing and their faces aglow with the joy of running. Running shoe and book sales are soaring. Best seller, *The Complete Book of Running,* by James Fixx has sold over 500,000 hard cover copies. *The Complete Woman Runner* is yet another publication exalting the joy of running.

If you are a member of the running cult you will devour the book like a true disciple, finding inspiration and enlightenment with each word. If you have never owned so much as a pair of (God forbid) $3.98 canvas sneakers, the book will leave you questioning the sanity of individuals who claim:

> Running is the most beautiful gift, and it cannot be given. All of us must give it to ourselves, must know for ourselves what it is. It is like love that even words, gestures, looks can never truly express.

Phew! Watch out Webster's Dictionary which defines running as simply, "to go steadily by springing steps so that both feet leave the ground for an instant in each step."

Each chapter deals with an aspect of the woman as a runner, confronting the issue boldly and completely. "Dealing with the Family," "Injury Prevention," "Safety for Women Runners," and "Coaching for Women," are just a few of the practical topics. These combine with

fifty moving testimonials by American women runners to make the book a compelling combination of poetry and fact. The authors admit that it is difficult to articulate the running experience.

> Every major treatise on running attempts to deal with the subject but has difficulty explaining the phenomenon. Yet every runner has experienced the good feeling that running produces.

Like sex, running is easier to understand once you have tried it. The book does succeed in answering many questions about the effectiveness of the female as a runner and the mechanics of running.

According to Dr. Ernst van Aaken, "Women are biologically tougher than men." A woman's muscle, protoplasm, fatty acids, and spinal discs are well suited to endurance running; and when Dr. van Aaken says "endurance running" he isn't kidding. He tells of how one hundred kilometer specialist, Eva Westphall is almost never injured, because her connective tissue gives her "special protection from muscle tears and tendonitis." Biology aside, many readers may be contemplating running 10 kilometers, but 100 kilometers, never!

photo by Peter Jamieson

The information on long distance training, marathon world records, metabolic rates and the psychology of competition is simply what makes this commentary on women's running complete. The reader should remember that you don't have to run one hundred kilometers to be a complete runner.

The chapter entitled, "History of Women's Running," by Dusty Rhodes, (yes, that really is her name) shows distance running is a microcosm of the women's movement. Women such as Nina Kuscik and Sara Mae Berman are pioneers in a field that found its routes by women leaping out from behind bushes and dressing up as men to dupe the Boston Marathon officials. The first official female entry in this, the "Mt. Everest" of running events, was Katherine Switzer. She received her number by submitting her application under the name of "K.V. Switzer," the organizers "never dreaming 'K' stood for Katherine."

> Wearing her hood helped preserve her anonymity until the press saw her. The melee that followed will go down in history. Race Director Cloney tried to catch her but couldn't. Co-Director Jock Semple tried to rip her number off and Katherine's boyfriend went after him, sent Semple reeling into the curb . . . Katherine Switzer finished in 4:30 (four hours thirty minutes). Perhaps not a winning time, but a victory nonetheless.

Today there are over five hundred women-only races in the U.S., with the ever growing Bonnie Belle Series attracting over thirty thousand entrants to the ten thousand metre event. Distance running for women has moved out of the realm of the eccentric few. Women of all ages are lacing up their shoes and setting out on this very special journey. Beyond feminism, world records, fame and glory, women are discovering the deeper, more transcendent reasons for sweating out the miles.

> Running . . . leaves the female runner alone with her true self. It is *her* breathlessness alone. *Her* pounding heart. *Her* tired legs, *her* weariness, *her* own determination that tells *her* she *will go on this one lap or this one mile or ten*, and then proceed to do it. All of us must be able to say to ourselves "I can do it," and on doing it thrill in the joy of accomplishment.

So, reader, get a move on, you are just a few steps away from a marvellous discovery; you, the complete woman runner.

World of the Dumbbell

review by Patricia E. Loverock

Starbodies: The Women's Weight Training Book, by Drs. Franco and Anita Columbu. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Ltd., 1978. Paper, $7.75.

Women have discovered weight-training. They realize strength is beautiful, strength is efficient, and strength is there for the woman who is willing to venture into the world of the dumbbell.

The Columbus have written a weight-lifting programme designed specifically for women. In doing this they make two fairly condescending assumptions. The first is that there is a special need for a woman's weight-training programme because, unlike men, women "want to change their proportions and THEN, perhaps, increase their strength." Second, they assume that "the main reason for women's reluctance to add weights to their exercise programs is their fear of developing bulging muscles." God forbid we should have bulging muscles.

Condescension aside, the *Starbodies* programme can be challenging and effective. The exercises are clearly explained and photographed. The trainee is told exactly which muscles groups she will be firming-up when she does each exercise. The average sedentary woman is promised that if she follows the Columbu programme she will turn her flab into firm, fat free muscle. The actual text of *Starbodies* sometimes reads like an ad for an 1890 elixer.

> Flabby thighs can become firm, or even rock solid . . . Stand with your legs together. Your calves should touch, if they don't they will, after a program of Columbu exercises with weights.

It all seems too good to be true. In fact, like any side show, there is more than meets the eye.

The Columbus describe their programme with such nonchalance that the trainee would feel like a fool should she so much as perspire while performing what are, in fact, arduous exercises. For years now, I've been rather self-righteous about by ability to maintain a high level of fitness and a low level of flab. Although it was the height of the fattening Christmas

season, the chapter "Getting Ready to Lift" seemed innocent enough for my shortbread stuffed body.

In fifteen minutes I was to complete 24 backhand stretches, 20 standing side bends, 40 bent leg raises, 100 lying-side leg raises, and 30 bent-leg sit-ups. These, and assorted other "simple exercises", soon transformed me into a lifeless mass on the rec room floor.

As I lay recovering, I was discouraged to read that the exercises I had barely completed are merely to provide "an effective transition from a sedentary, inactive life to the beginning weight-training programme described in Chapter Four." In fact, the authors suggest that "if you have been following a home or health club exercise programme in recent weeks, skip directly to Chapter Four." So much for self-righteousness.

Pain, too, is handled very lightly by our zealous authors.

> You will certainly be aware of stiffness and soreness during your first weeks of exercising with weights, but, instead of dreading the slight pain, you should welcome it as a sign of revitalization.

A person following the *Starbodies* method exactly will experience fatigue and discomfort to the point of considering permanent residence in a hot whirlpool. When muscles are being overtaxed they hurt, a lot, and the trainee should be prepared for this.

Caution should also be taken before following the authors' suggestion that one should "never skip a workout if your partner does not appear." When weight-training it is essential to either have a partner or be in a facility where help is just a groan away. Once a lifter spent 10 hours pinned underneath a weight in his own living room until, luckily, a friend dropped by and found him.

The Columbus' weight-training programme is highly structured and the beginning lifter may find the rigidity of the sessions boring. Remember, the programme is an excellent guideline, but, it would be discouraging and even dangerous for the reader to take it too literally.

For example, the authors suggest that you train six days per week, weight-lift between 2:30 and 4:30, do 20 wrist curls, complete your workout by hanging upside down for five minutes. Clearly, time schedules, strength levels and pain thresholds vary. To find success, the Columbu programme must be adapted to meet the trainee's special situation.

Despite the fact that *Starbodies*, in its euphoric description of the sport, does not create a realistic picture of weight-lifting, the program can be effective. Specific lifts deal with specific problems such as firming of the breasts, thighs, or buttocks. Every muscle in the

Six days a week between 2:30 and 4:30: Do twenty wrist curls then hang in your gravity boots.

body can be toned through the programme except one: the heart. Unfortunately, so little mention is made of cardio-respiratory exercise to strengthen the heart muscle that the reader could easily forget to tone this, the most important muscle of the body. On the positive side, the programme is enchanced by a chapter on "Weight-training for Improvement in Sports" and another dealing with "Eating and Exercise".

Most weight-training rooms smell like five day old sweat socks and sound more like a steel mill then an exercise area. Even in this setting the Columbu programme can work, provided the trainee receives some expert guidance and the sessions are tailored to meet her special needs and capabilities. Strength is beautiful and attainable. Weight-lifting may not be quite as easy as it seems in *Starbodies*, but to the interested woman, it can be a new and challenging adventure.

Patricia E. Loverock is an Olympic athlete who retired from track and field following the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton last summer. She is now working in Vancouver and in the fall plans to study journalism at the University of Western Ontario.

Victorian Age "New Woman"

review by Helen Melnyk

Kit Coleman: Queen of Hearts, by Ted Ferguson. Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1978. Cloth, $12.50.

With their banal societal pitter-patter, endless meatloaf recipes and fashion spreads, the womens' pages have become an anathema to feminists today. But in the late 1800's when a special women's section was first introduced on a Canadian newspaper by the *Toronto Mail* (now the *Globe and Mail*), it provided a voice for the pioneering feminist of the time. The "New Woman", as she was called, had burst upon the Victorian scene, rejecting the concepts of ladylike gentility to smoke cigarettes, ride bicycles in bloomers, leave behind her chaperones, talk politics and demand entry into male dominated professions.

To fatten the newspaper's circulation, the Mail's managing editor hired Kit Coleman, a fiery, red-headed Toronto free-lance writer, to write the "Woman's Kingdom" column. What he had in mind was a hodge-podge of recipes, fashion stories and etiquette which he reasoned must appeal to even feminist readers. Coleman had other ideas, however. Within months she had turned the column into one of the liveliest and most controversial pieces of journalism in Canada with her views on everything from politics to the arts. She was the forerunner of Ann Landers with her column for the lovelorn which offered a curious mixture of hard-headed, perceptive analysis and home remedies (she once advised a reader to try mice dung as a cure for baldness). She interviewed everybody from Sarah Bernhardt to William Randolph Hearst (who she despised) and was one of the first woman journalists to receive accreditation during the Spanish-American war. Impervious to her appearance, she dismayed her colleagues by the lengths to which she would go to get her story.

Kit Coleman: Queen of Hearts is an anthology of her columns with a brief biographical introduction. The columns are loosely grouped by topic into chapters, with a few paragraphs to fill in historical background. Ted Ferguson would have produced a far more interesting book if he had devoted less space to her columns and instead written an in-depth biography of Coleman within the context of the puritanical Victorian times. Many of the articles he includes in the book are dated and repetitous.

Coleman's personality and her influence on feminism and journalism are of greater interest and importance today than her actual columns. Ferguson offers a few tidbits about her colourful character but these are just enough to pique the reader's curiosity. He mentions the time when Coleman, wielding a pair of scissors, chased an elegantly attired, irate gentleman out of the newsroom. The angry reader had not only dared to accuse her of being immoral and irresponsible but had the effrontery to demand an apology for her behaviour the next day. In reply, Kate wrote that she could understand what an affront to his dignity it must have been to have an "irrational, angry" woman threaten his beautiful beard. "I assure you sir, that I had no intention of harming your beard. I was aiming for your nose, which I felt required trimming, as it was so large it could not help poking into other people's affairs".

Twice widowed at 27 years of age with two children to support, Coleman was forced to earn her living and writing was ideal since it allowed her to work at home. Despite her support for equal opportunities for women in the work force, she still affirmed that women should not strive for equality in their private lives and that marriage was the greatest career a woman could aspire to. Although she endorsed many of its aims, Coleman did not throw herself wholeheartedly behind the feminist movement. Her support was ambivalent. In one column she wrote: "I am not a stickler for women's rights but I am for women's pluck and independence."

As Ferguson concludes, Coleman's writing was often overly dramatic, her theories too simplistic and her prose awkward but she never bored her readers. This collection won't bore you either, but it does leave the real story of Kit Coleman, intrepid reporter, yet to be told.

Helen Melnyk is an Edmonton journalist.

Light Nosh

review by Cora Taylor

True Confections, by Sondra Gotlieb. Don Mills, Ontario: Musson Book Company, 1978. Cloth, $12.95.

There have always been some books that to me meant food. I suppose it started with the 'curling up with an apple by the fire' reading tradition, but it has persisted so that there are writers (Ngaio March, P.G. Wodehouse, Dorothy Sayers) whose works I blithely categorize as 'cucumber sandwich' books because they call for that sort of snack. *True Confections (or How My Family Arranged My Marriage)* would have to be categorized as a borsht-blintze-strudel book. There are problems here for the eat-and-read crowd but then who's got Schaum Torte, Rhum Baba and Melting Moments around the house to nosh on whenever they like. Not everyone has a mother like Verna's.

Verna is the heroine of *True Confections* and Verna's mother suffers from what Verna's aunt Zora calls Overcook:

> "Your mother circles the neighbourhood on the sly with covered casserole dishes, and offers them to anyone who'll take them off her hands. She's Fanny, the Human Horn of Plenty, Fanny the Feeder."

Verna, of course, has problems other than her weight in her teens. Boys for instance: the one she likes doesn't like her, and homely Harvey, whose graduating picture is entitled "Most likely to succeed as Axe Murderer" in in love with her.

> Harvey's worst defect was his face. Small head big features — eyes, nose, mouth, all fought for prominence, but the outcome of the battle was delayed by a smidge of a moustache that Harvey had grown into the fray.

There are problems with relatives too. Uncle Lord Rex Winograd is not your average rich eccentric even in Winnipeg. And then there's Anka, the 'eminence grise' in her Uncle Miller's household.

Sondra Gotlieb is the author of two previous books: *The Gourmet's Canada* and *Cross Canada Cooking*, so in this, her first novel, the food descriptions are in the hands of an expert. Fanny's fridge is one of my favourites. Gotlieb's success as a writer of humour, I think, depends in part on the reader's expectations. I firmly agree with E.B. White who said that "humour can be dissected as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind." *True Confections* is not the funniest book you ever read and I would be very surprised if it wins the Leacock Award for Humour. It is not the devastatingly witty and satiric story of a Jewish Princess whose parents are destroying her by their constant pressure to marry or of her ultimate rebellion (that was Gail Parent's *Sheila Levine is Dead and Living in New York*). This is a milder tale. Gotlieb writes, not with Parent's biting satire but with a gentle humour. The book is amusing, not hilarious. It is what it is stated to be in the title, a Confection.

It would be possible, I suppose, to delve into the unfortunate lot of girls whose mothers believe that their most important job is cooking for the family or whose fathers hold to the Eastern European maxim: "When you marry a daughter a hump is off your back" but the book does not pretend to be a social document. It is not a tragedy, Verna lives happily ever after with her 'picked' husband and a lot of us manage to choose the wrong husbands without parental guidance! You needn't have been a Jewish Princess from Winnipeg to read *True Confections* and find it pleasant. Like Fanny's cooking — Enjoy! Enjoy!

Cora Taylor is an Edmonton writer.

Numbers and Lives

review by Beverley Ross

Growing Up Dead, by Brenda Rabkin. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978. $7.95 paper.

Pregnant and Alone, by Anne Ross. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978. $5.95, paper.

"Adolescent suicide has increased 200% in the last 20 years."

"In 1976, over 70% of single mothers kept their babies."

The impact of these figures is brazen — it shocks but it doesn't have significance. In our complex, acquisitive society, we are becoming immune to statistic. We don't think of our own lives as numbers; consequently, we tend not to appreciate those numbers as lives. Statistics supported by human histories are more compelling than lists of numbers, however lengthy. Bleeding-hearts lack believability but a skillful social observer can achieve a balance between statistics and the stories behind them.

Describing both facts and faces, Rabkin and Ross have organized their work on adolescent suicide and unwanted pregnancy respectively, with a similiarity of approach that makes comparison inevitable. For the case histories in *Pregnant and Alone*, Ross uses "not single experiences, but a combination of women and circumstances." Thus, a composite woman or girl and her story is used to introduce the factual material in each section. Unfortunately, "My Defences Were Down", "I Took a Chance and Lost", and "I Depended On Him, Too" read more like excerpts from a "true confessions" magazine than appropriate prefaces to the serious consideration of

the diaphragm, the pill or rhythm as methods of birth control.

Ross juxtaposes these over-dramatized incidents with "hard-hitting" facts; however, her intent is foiled by the choppy presentation of nothing new. Compared to *Our Bodies, Our Selves* or the *McGill Handbook On Birth Control,* the information is sketchy: illustrations of female and male genitalia are conspiculously absent, side-effects and complications of the various methods described are seldom adequately explained, the medical profession, the law, abortion and V.D. are tucked into thirteen thin pages entitled "Afterthoughts".

A reading of *Pregnant and Alone* arouses two questions. First, who is the book meant for? Few professionals would credence the clumsy "case histories" — the information is more accurately available elsewhere. Few teenagers, hungry for facts, would bother to glean them from the text. Those in search of heart-rending truth would fare better at the bookrack in the corner drugstore.

Although there is no mistaking Anne Ross' concern for the women she counsels, she expresses their plight in a whine. Had she explored new areas of birth control research or given the reader some concrete criteria for choosing a gynecologist or a hospital, had she outlined what to expect from birth control counselling (on the plus side, she does list the offices of Planned Parenthood across the country), rather than reworking tired material, then the book may have shouted with the potency the topic deserves.

Rabkin's case histories succeed because she allows them to talk for themselves. Journals, letters, poems, recollections of friends and family — the book is peopled with voices, arranged and connected by Rabkin's script. Lack of an overview by experts in the field prompted Rabkin to question adolescents and their parents herself. This field study combined with extensive research and her own probing, journalistic attitude affords Rabkin the opportunity to be upset by what she unearths while maintaining her objectivity.

Where Ross, the veteran social worker, bows to the inevitability of her clients' suffering, Rabkin tries every angle:

> It is very easy to speculate on the causes of suicide among young people, but it is precisely this easy speculation that makes it very difficult to build a case against suicide . . . if we feel cut off from past or future, and the present is painful at worst or meaningless at best, then isn't suicide a reasonable solution? Why should we cope? And is coping really better than not coping? (pp.11-12)

Growing Up Dead is approachable on many levels. For professionals, it's an annotated digest of current thought. For adolescents and their parents, Rabkin wrestles an understanding out of a largely undocumented field. That her initial exploration of adolescent suicide was for radio is a telling fact. Working in that medium, Rabkin has learned to balance the voices of intimacy and anonymity.

Beverley Ross works for the Edmonton Runaway Project and does freelance radio work.

Clear and Cohesive Chronicle

review by Mary Ann Prychoda

Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education, by Phyllis H. Stock. Toronto: Longman Canada Ltd., 1978. Cloth, $14.25.

At last. The definitive answer to that obviously naive, but somehow hard-to-handle question: "If women are as intelligent and competent as men why have there been so few truly important females throughout history?". Of course the answer to that question lies in unequal opportunities, the traditional female role of child-raising, and general sexual repression, but until now, I at least, was embarrassingly bereft of enough cold, hard facts to back up my arguments.

Phyllis Stock's history of women's education provides the reader with a clear and cohesive chronicling of women's education, concentrating on the western world during the period from the Renaissance to present. In so doing she reveals that the important factors relating to women's status in the world have little to do with ability or potential but quite a bit to do with social, economic, and political environments — not to mention the influences of misogynistic myths dating back to Plato and Aristotle.

All of these factors have combined to produce theories on female education which perpetuated the status quo but were of little benefit to intelligent, inquisitive girls. For the most part, throughout history women have been educated to ensure that they were chaste, moral wives, suitable mothers, or, as in the Renaissance aristocracy, "for the adornment of social life." For the majority of girls this meant no education at all until the early twentieth century. The extent of training most girls received was in domestic skills and came solely from their own mothers.

Much of the book, then, deals with the elite few who could afford tutors and expensive boarding schools or convents. Even for these girls education was often provided reluctantly. Too much education was feared for a variety of reasons. In the sixteenth century Silvio Antonio wrote that learning would cause women, who were by nature vain, to want to take over the household; Giovanni Michele Bruto believed that allowing women to read the ancient authors would expose them to tales of adultery and fornication sure to corrupt their already weak characters; in the eighteenth century Rousseau felt learning would result in women neglecting their feminine duties and acting like men.

Political factors have also had their influence on women's education. One of the most interesting cases of this is Nazi Germany. After the first world war and the depression, the birth rate in Germany had greatly decreased. Because the creation of the "super race" was so important in Nazi ideology a low birth rate was seen as something of a national crisis. The role of motherhood was glorified by the state while prejudice against professional women was increased. Eventually, a quota of 10% was imposed on women's university entrance. In 1939, however, when most men were off fighting in the war the government found itself having to do an embarrassing about face on party policy. In order to fill the gaps in business and industry caused by the absence of men, women were encouraged to pursue careers — an activity which only a few years before would have been scorned as "Jewish intellectual" or "liberal-democratic Marxist."

Throughout history situations such as this occur where education for women is determined, very often negatively, by the climate of the times. This produces a one-step-forward-two-steps-back effect and, for centuries at a time, progress is almost imperceptible. Indeed, the chapter on the twentieth century is titled "Limited Victory" and makes the point that although there is little formal discrimination against women, females remain woefully under-represented in the "prestige professions." Perhaps, even today we are having to continually disprove the negative benediction bestowed on us by Plato, the grandfather of philosophy, when he concluded, ". . . all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man."

Mary Ann Prychoda lives in Toronto.

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