



Liberated Guardian

**US**

*happy international women's day!*

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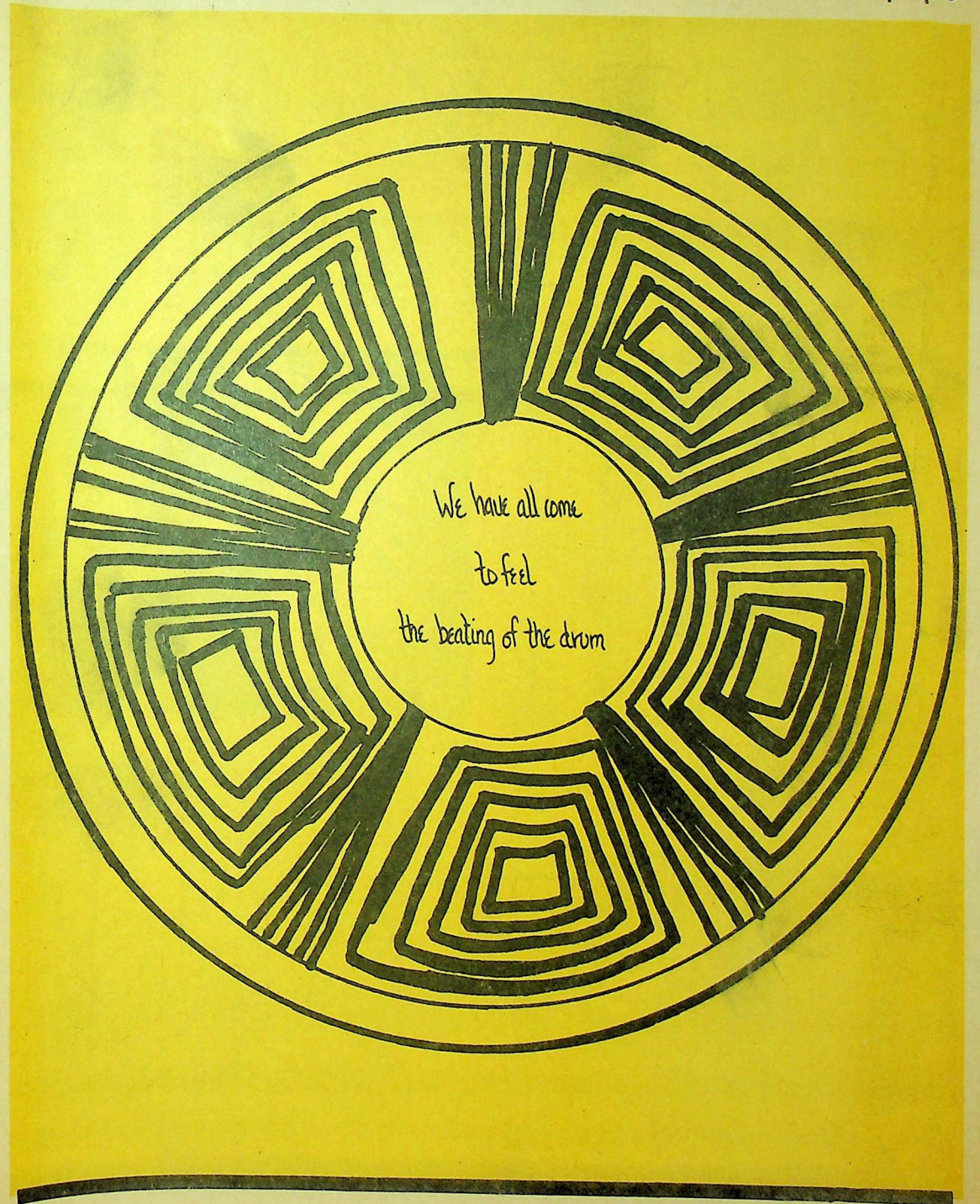
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# off our backs

a women's liberation newspaper

25¢



## a separate peace

The women who wrote the following article are both active members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. They recently returned from North and South Vietnam where they were part of a six women mission sent from WILPF's 18th Triennial Congress held in New Delhi, Dec. 28 - Jan. 4. Visiting Saigon and Hanoi were women from the USA, France and New Zealand. The group spent 4 days in Saigon and 8 days in North Vietnam.

The Women's International League was founded in 1915 with Jane Addams as its first president and now has Sections in 20 countries. The organization works to establish the political, economic, social and psychological conditions necessary to ensure peace and freedom.

We were anxious to visit South Vietnam and meet people, especially women, opposed to the war. We were familiar with statements like that of National Assemblyman Duc who said that the South Vietnamese were united in wanting the Americans to leave. We wanted to see for ourselves if this was true.

Our first experience was at the An Quang Pagoda the day of our arrival in Saigon. The Buddhists were beginning a week long Festival of Peace, uniting factions which had not previously worked together. Participants ranged from "Big" Minh, the general who overthrew Diem, to a group of taxicab drivers who had ceremoniously shaved their heads in protest to the war. More than 3000 people gathered in the streets near the Pagoda, solemnly joining in chants and releasing doves into the air. The Festival was a great success despite the absence of the students. They could not get out of the university which had been surrounded by police following an earlier anti-war protest.

Much of our time was spent with the Women's Committee for Defense of the Right to Live. Women of this Committee received some publicity last fall when they unsuccessfully tried to present Vice-President Agnew with a letter protesting the arbitrary arrest and torture of their student sons and daughters. Madame Ngo Ba Thanh, a dynamic woman who has herself been imprisoned, is the Chairwoman of the Committee.

The Women's Committee has one simple goal--survival. Not only the physical survival of individual Vietnamese, but the survival of Vietnamese society.

### DO NOT SHOOT THE ORPHANS

The women told us about the struggle to preserve the Long Thanh Orphan's Village. The Director of the orphanage is a Buddhist nun who, with the help of 150 monks and apprentices, tries to provide a decent home for 2700 children orphaned by the war. A sign on the road to the orphanage reads, "Please Do Not Shoot the Orphans." The monks showed us American mortar shells which had fallen on the orphanage.

The orphanage has been repeatedly harassed by the Saigon Government which claims it harbors Viet Cong. On Christmas day the women of the Committee for Defense went to the orphanage to deliver presents to the children. When they reached the gates, they were met by police in riot control formation with guns in hand. The women protested, left their gifts, and went away to avoid violence. Later the Director had an old building burned to the ground so that the police could not continue to hide there.

### JAILS KEEP ORDER

Political prisoners and prison conditions are major concerns of the Committee. Under the An Tri Decree, the Government is empowered to detain people up to two years without trial. There are at least 50,000 people detained under this Decree in addition to the tens of thousands of political prisoners awaiting trial, being interrogated or serving sentences. We met many women

who had been in prison and subjected to torture, including one young woman student who could no longer walk.

We joined a delegation of Saigon women in a trip to the Thu Duc Women's prison. Two women political prisoners were beaten to death there in late 1969 and a series of protests by prisoners and brutal suppressions by authorities followed. Our request to meet with the Director was met with refusal and the message that he must "follow orders." Orders did not include any discussion of the lack of progress in implementing promised reforms in prison conditions.



### WOMEN DECLARE PEACE

In the face of tremendous repression the women persist in their struggle. They met with us openly, eager to sign a declaration of peace. The final draft states, "women of the USA and Vietnam who as mothers, wives and sisters have endured much suffering and many sacrifices, must no longer be made the undeserved victims of this cruel war which has taken away their freedom, dignity and right to live;" and it pledges that "women will not cooperate with any further military activities by either the Vietnamese or US government which cause prolongation of the war."

The South Vietnamese women saw us off to Hanoi with a message: "Tell them in Hanoi that we only want all US and allied troops out. We don't worry about North Vietnamese troops because we know that blood brothers and sisters with the free flow of public opinion can work things out together for their own self-determination."

### HANOI LOOKS TO THE CITIES

When we arrived in Hanoi three days later we were amazed to learn that they had already heard about the peace declaration. Members of the Women's Union, our official hosts, were wildly enthusiastic about it, apparently regarding it as some sort of historic event. This great rejoicing over a peace declaration which was, after all, only a piece of paper, rather puzzled us. However, as our visit progressed, the reason for their enthusiasm became clearer.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government as well as the North Vietnamese place great emphasis on urban uprisings against American intervention and the Thieu-Ky regime. The vast destruction in the countryside due to the US conduct of the war has forced millions of people to flee to the cities looking for work and safety. The population of Saigon has more than tripled during the course of the war, making it the most densely populated city in the world. But the roots of the NLF lie in the countryside. Thus a broad base in Saigon is urgently needed to sustain the

struggle for self-determination. The fact that the women of Saigon felt sufficiently strong to publicly call for an end to the war by signing a declaration of peace was a very welcome indication of the strength of the urban resistance movement.

### VIETNAMIZATION = PACIFICATION

The Vietnamese conception of US strategy in the South emerged very clearly. The Vietnamese understand Vietnamization as a program to destroy village life in South Vietnam in order to force the people to flee to the cities and to refugee camps where they can be more easily controlled. Thus the backbone of Vietnamization is the pacification program.

The first step in pacification is to make the villages unliveable. Repeated bombings, mortar barrages, the use of herbicides and defoliants to destroy vegetation, mass killings such as the one in My Lai make life in a village impossible. Vast areas are turned into free-fire zones and no-man's land. B-52s are used in carpet bombing which is the term for planned saturation bombing of one square kilometre after another. Frequently, villages are destroyed by using bulldozers to completely raze everything in the vicinity. Without food to eat and farming impossible, the people are forced to surrender themselves to a controlled existence in a government-sponsored refugee center or move to Saigon.

### WOMEN IN THE VANGUARD

Women take an active part in all facets of the resistance against the American invasion. In addition to their participation in the armed forces North and South (the deputy commander of the NLF Armed Forces is a woman), women are widely acknowledged as the vanguard of the political struggle. Women are credited with having led the 1960 General Uprising against Diem.

When discussing women's roles in the political struggle, we learned that the term political struggle is used in contrast to armed struggle. Political struggle corresponds roughly to what we call non-violent resistance. For example, women of South Vietnam have on many occasions sat down in the middle of a road to block the passage of tanks and other military vehicles. A representative of the PRG explained how, when helicopters came to a village to take away the young men for the Saigon army, the women would hang on to the rotor blades in order to prevent the helicopters from flying away. We also heard how women work to raise the political consciousness of the Saigon troops by approaching a relative, husband or lover in the army and asking him to join them in fighting for independence and freedom.

### PLEDGE TO PEACE

We concluded our visit to North Vietnam by signing a Declaration of Peace with the Women's Union of the DRV and a separate peace Declaration with the Liberation Women's Union of the PRG. Both declarations state that American and Vietnamese women are not at war with each other, that both suffer from the war, that both demand immediate and complete withdrawal of US troops. Both declarations pledge American and Vietnamese women to work together to end the war.

We returned to the United States determined to carry out this pledge. We must join with our Vietnamese sisters in the struggle for self-determination, for only by struggling together can each of us succeed. The women of Vietnam are acting with courage, confidence, and perseverance to achieve self-determination. We in America have much to learn from them. They are our sisters and they deserve our support. We need each other.

By Kay Camp and Pat Samuel

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“The PRG urgently calls on the people of the world to condemn this new escalation of the war and to take action now that could check the plans for even greater escalation about to occur.”



madame binh

february 4, 1971

in a telephone message to the ann arbor conference

# irish is one thing but socialism is another.

## bernadette devlin speaks to the ruling class

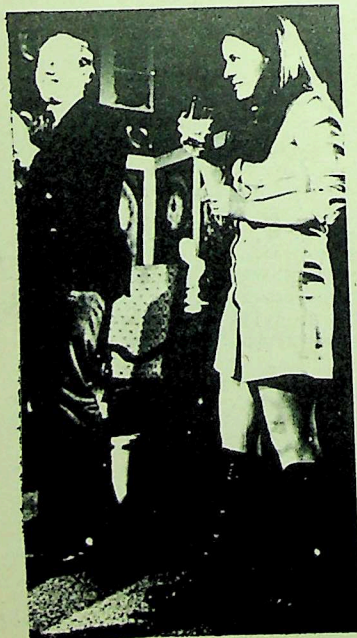
Bernadette Devlin, radical activist of Northern Ireland's Catholic minority and at 23 the youngest member of Britain's Parliament, was speaking at Georgetown University at 8PM. We decided to leave home very early so we would be sure to get inside. Lately it seemed that every speaker of any interest in the city is scheduled to speak in a hall that holds only about 30. So off we left at 6:30, just to be sure. We arrived and were told there was absolutely no room inside. You could only get in if you had a "ticket" or a "special invitation." It seemed a paradox that a woman who speaks of the working class was tonight at a meeting which required tickets or special invitations. We decided not to give up and snuck past the first group of student pigs. We were stopped again but luckily we saw a straight man and woman go down a small hall way. We followed them fearing it would take us out of the building instead of in to the hall where she was speaking. But fortunately they went up an elevator, around another corner and finally to the entrance of the hall. "Excuse us," we said "We're here to tape Miss Devlin for off our backs." And we were finally in.

We were amazed at what we saw inside. Down by the stage where we were there were rows and rows of empty seats and the balcony was filled with students. At one point we heard chants outside the door; "let us in! let us in!" One fellow broke through the doors and everyone applauded him.

We were in the front row with our cameras and tape recorder waiting for Bernadette to come out and speak. A young Georgetown man dressed in a fancy vest and tweedy suit came up and started yelling to his friend four rows back. "She was just in my room, man. Way up there in Copley 409. I got her purse here cause she left it in my room. She said she was tired so I said go right up to my room, dear. "Probably the first chick you've been able to get up in your room," said his friend.

We looked at each other. Poor Bernadette. If she has to put up with pricks like this the whole time its no wonder she is tired.

She came on stage and she was fantastic. She appeared really different than we thought. She is small--like probably a size 7 dress. And she wore a short blue dress, not an offensive mini-skirt. She



wore plain brown leather boots, no jewelry, no make-up and her hair hung long down her back. She couldn't reach the microphone so one of the TV men gave her a box to stand on. When she spoke it took a few minutes to understand her beautiful accent, but once you got used to the accent there was no problem because what she was saying was clear, concise and together.

She spoke of the struggle of the Irish working class and said that the turmoil in her country is a class conflict of rich against the poor, workers against owners, rather than simply of Catholics against Protestants. She called for a system not only in her country but in all countries, where workers control the factories and students control the universities.



As Georgetown is a Catholic University, she spoke to the descendants of Ireland; "If the Irish American has made it in this society," she said, "then let him remember that few rich Irish came here....that it was poverty and the fact that his ancestors were working class that brought him to America."

She asked particularly that Irish-Americans understand the Black Panthers, whom she described as also being members of an oppressed, impoverished minority group, seeking to improve its status. She also stated that Angela Davis was not being tried for what she did but because she is Black and a Communist.

She finished saying, "They say the working class hasn't the wisdom to control the world, but God knows it couldn't make the mess that has been made by the Capitalists." While the audience gave her a standing ovation a woman in the balcony gave her a women's liberation fist and Bernadette returned it. Her face and her eyes smiled beautifully.



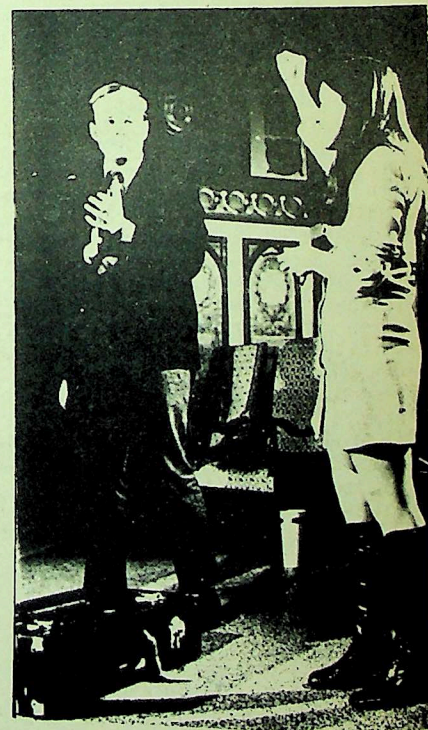
photos by Regina Sigal

She left the hall and went outside and answered questions in subfreezing cold to about 1,000 people, many of whom had not gotten into the speech.

Before we left the hall the guy that talked about Bernadette before her speech came over and yelled to his friend that he didn't like what she said but she was a nice lady. He also told his friend that there was to be a reception.

We went over to the fancy room where the reception was to be held. The room was filled with food, liquor, and cokes (my passion) waiting for all the guests. We waited, feeling a little conspicuous in our long underwear shirts and work shoes but also feeling excited that maybe we could talk to her personally. We thought she probably would enjoy talking to some movement women instead of to Irish-American capitalists. A man came in and said the reception was cancelled because of security. We thought it was more likely because she was tired and fed-up. We ripped off six big hunks of cheese and went home.

by joanne zonis kovacs



demonstration,  
menstruation,  
cooptation

The invasion of Laos screwed up my weekly schedule. As we sat eating French pastries and wine, watching this latest horror, T.V. commentators threw down the gauntlet. They said there was no reaction to the invasion. So we had to react. To march once again. Oh, the irony of it all. Nixon invades his yearly Indo-Chinese country, and we have to perform our yearly ritual of getting a little gas or some cracks over the head (although the Washington D.C. police force is very sophisticated at riot control techniques, and gas and cracks over the head are last resorts). We have to perform this yearly ritual because we don't know what else to do, and we have to maintain some self-respect. To think of oneself as totally powerless to stop the insanity is to think of oneself as a piece of drek...

The day before the ritual demonstration, I feel like the original marginal man (coiners of sociological terms, are, of course, some of your basic sexists). I feel out of place at strategy meetings to determine the course of the demonstration, annoyed when I'm read the latest touching telegram from Madame Binh, the head of the North Vietnam delegation to Paris, encouraging us to demonstrate. I have developed what is probably a totally irrational hatred of Mme. Binh which I nurse along with some perverse pleasure (as Chicken Lady said, "How come she's called Mme Binh, and I'm called Chicken). Yet I would feel equally out of place listening to my friend Nancy talk about her boyfriend Ira, her beadmaking, her analyst, her sons---carrying on as usual. I think about Nancy and Ira - my friends, people I love - I feel resentful that tomorrow will be business as usual for them. Are they collaborators? Like the Germans in Hollywood movies who say, "Ve did not know, Ve vere not political."

Who's out of touch with reality? Am I becoming like those elderly Communists who remained totally involved in their little cells, waiting for American workers to unite and throw off their chains--always around the corner--as the American labor movement which had long since kicked them out got fatter and more conservative. They continued going to the weekly meetings, put out those same old leaflets while the world went by...

In the middle of the night I get my period. I know that cramps will follow. I now have an excuse to avoid the demonstration. I almost always hate demonstrations--perhaps because groups of more than 10 almost automatically turn me into hostilewoman. I feel it necessary to be in opposition to the consensus of groups, perhaps because I fear the tyranny of numbers. There are always those endless speeches, full of metaphores like "the system will fall through its own weight or its internal contradictions." But systems don't fall like buildings--and I never know what the rhetoric means or entails. I have never been able to chant "Ho-Ho-Ho- Chi Minh. The NLF is gonna win." Chants drive me into paroxysms of self-consciousness. Yet I almost always go -- from that first March on Washington in 1963, onward. And come the morning I am eating Handfuls of Calcium pills (recommended by Adelle Davis in Let's Eat Right to Keep Fit for periodic pain), and force-feeding myself cups of boiling hot tea...

Gulping tea, I remember being a sociology student in the early sixties. I was taught that the function of radical groups in the U.S. has been to introduce new ideas and issues into the political arena. But these radical groups never get to power, or get a chance to implement their issue or ideology on any kind of major scale. Their issues are absorbed

EMILIANO ZAPATA AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

Even after dictator Porfirio Diaz got the boot, reforms were slow in coming. Too slow for Zapata. He wanted communal lands restored to the peasant, he wanted an end to serfdom, he wanted water and schools for his people.

He didn't wait. He swept through seven states, burning the haciendas killing the



haciendados, and dividing the spoils among the poor. Many of his reforms were carried out. But he refused to lay down his arms until full land reform was accomplished.

Truth and Soul is another kind of reformer. We're putting down fashions that are behind the times. And bringing out the look that's ahead of its time.



or taken over after some time lag, and are implemented in greatly watered down or perverted form by the powers in control, as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence. That's cooptation--something that the U.S. government and power elite do extremely well--and, according to my sociology teachers, why there would never be a revolution in the U.S. There are some reasons to believe that cooptation (despite Nixon's recent "power to the people" speech) will not work for very much longer. We face ecological disaster; the U.S. economy has reached the point where it must make waste or war in order to survive; governments on all levels are losing their legitimacy. But I am not optimistic. I'm afraid I still believe (as much as I now hate to do so) that if the U.S. survives, radical movements will continue moving the center or the government closer to its ideologies by fractions of inches....

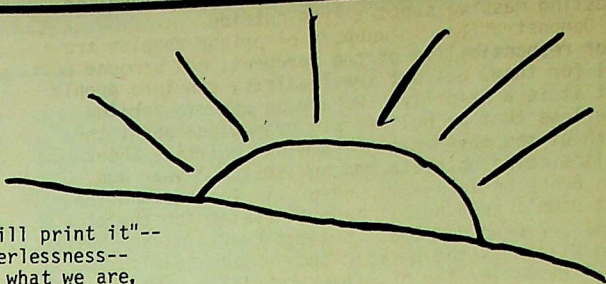
I walk to the demonstration light-headed and strange-feeling, because of two shots of tequila, a final token effort to deal with my cramps. It's as we used to say in pre-women's liberation days, colder than a witch's tit. Pig Nixon wouldn't of course wait till spring to invade Laos. Is he really the ultimate politician? I believe he will win again in '72, perhaps only so I won't be so disappointed if he does. I thank whatever gods that be that there are only two short speeches--and then the 800 or so people that were there (the 6:00 News reported only a hundred people) slowly made their way down Pennsylvania Avenue--stopping at red lights--chanting half-heartedly, until we got to the White

House. Once we got there, nobody knew quite what to do. So we stood and milled around and made comments to our friends about how we were opposed to having movement leadership but without it we seemed to be lost. I am now stone cold sober, and crampy from the 20-degree weather.

Soon the police start coming in great numbers, marching in formation, in flotillas of motor scooters and in paddy wagons. They announce that we are in violation of a hastily-passed (by Congress who makes the D.C. Laws) ordinance that not more than 100 people can demonstrate in front of the White House. Numbers of people begin to move across the street--the police begin to clear the area--arrests are being made. I am across the street. People in back of me are running--I am running too. I'm not sure why. A few blocks up I stop to see what's happening. People start running again, and I do too. I decide to go home--thinking that I am still afraid to throw rocks, to get arrested--thinking that I am still a good German. But at least my cramps have stopped.

by Bobbi Goldstone

# New Morning



Changing Weather came to us a long time ago--"Every underground paper will print it"--and it went back into the copy box. We are tired, numb, casual from our powerlessness--the townhouse explosion was almost a year ago--we must be serious about who, what we are, who, what underground people are--we decide to print Changing Weather even if it seems "late". The beginnings of them talking with us--they are vulnerable--we feel we can, should talk back to them. We are beginning to learn--weatherpeople are beginning to learn--there must be a balance between love and hate. The importance of communication between people in the underground and people overground--we will inform them, help them learn more--we will gain more strength from mutual support.

December 6 1970

This communication does not accompany a bombing or a specific action. We want to express ourselves to the mass movement not as military leaders but as tribes at council. It has been nine months since the townhouse explosion. In that time, the future of our revolution has been changed decisively. A growing illegal organization of young women and men can live and fight and love inside Babylon. The FBI can't catch us; we've pierced their bullet-proof shield. But the townhouse forever destroyed our belief that armed struggle is the only real revolutionary struggle.

This is a communication for our friends. We've sent it to those in the underground media we feel closest to. So we need your help in circulating it by sending it to all the underground and college newspapers in your area. If you want to, hold a press conference about this.

There have been several statements that have appeared recently, claiming to be from the Weather underground. The article that appeared in Chicago claiming to have been from someone involved in the second bombing of the Haymarket pig statue is not accurate or from anyone we can identify. Likewise the statement that appeared in Berkeley last Thursday, signed Bernardine, did not come from us.

At one time we thought that it didn't matter if people sent out false communiques, as that would confuse the enemy. But now it seems that this is not a good tactic. It undercuts our ability to be clear about who we are and what we are doing; it makes it more difficult to struggle with people with whom we may have differences. We may be able to help others avoid mistakes we have made. So we will probably indicate if a statement is false and we'll try to be clear about authenticating ours.

It is time for the movement to go out into the air, to organize, to risk calling rallies and demonstrations, to convince that mass actions against the war and in support of rebellions do make a difference. Only acting openly, denouncing Nixon, Agnew, and Mitchell, and sharing our numbers and wisdom together with young sisters and brothers will blow away the fear of the students at Kent State, the smack of the Lower East Side and the national silence after the bombings of North Viet Nam.

The deaths of three friends ended our military conception of what we are doing. It took us weeks of careful talking to rediscover our roots, to remember that we had been turned-on to the possibilities of revolution by denying the schools, the jobs, the death relationships of what we were "educated for". We went back to how we had begun living with groups of friends and found that this revolution could leave intact the enslavement of women if women did not fight to end and change it, together. And marijuana and LSD and little money and awakening to the black revolution, the people of the world. Unprogramming ourselves; relearning Amerikan history. The first demonstration we joined; the first time we tried to convince our friends. In the wake of the townhouse we found that we didn't know much about each others' pasts -- our talents, our interests, our differences.

We had all come together around the militancy of young white people determined to reject racism and U.S. exploitation of the Third World. Because we agreed that an underground must be built, we were able to disappear an entire organization within hours of the explosion. But it was clear that more had been wrong with our direction than technical inexperience (always install a safety switch so you can turn it off and on and a light to indicate if a short circuit exists).

Dianna, Teddy and Terry had been in SDS for years. Diana and Teddy had been teachers and both spent weeks with the Vietnamese in Cuba. Terry had been a community organizer in Cleveland and at Kent; Diana had worked in Guatemala. They fought in the Days of Rage at Chicago. Everyone was angered by the murder of Fred Hampton. Because their collective began to define armed struggle as the only legitimate form of revolutionary action, they did not believe that there was any revolutionary motion among white youth. It seemed like black and third world people were going up against Amerikan imperialism alone.

Two weeks before the townhouse explosion, four members of this group had firebombed Judge Murtagh's

house in New York as an action of support for the Panther 21, whose trial was just beginning. To many people this was a good action. Within the group, however, the feeling developed that because this action had not done anything to hurt the pigs materially it wasn't very important. So within two weeks time, this group had moved from firebombing to anti-personal bombs. Many people in the collective did not want to be involved in the large scale, almost random bombing offensive that was planned. But they struggled day and night and eventually, everyone agreed to do their part.

At the end, they believed and acted as if only those who die are proven revolutionaries. Many people had been argued into doing something they did not believe in, many had not slept for days. Personal relationships were full of guilt and fear. The group had spent so much time willing themselves to act that they had not dealt with the basic technological considerations of safety. They had not considered the future: either what to do with the bombs if it had not been possible to reach their targets, or what to do in the following days.

This tendency to consider only bombings or picking up the gun as revolutionary, with the glorification of the heavier the better, we've called the military error.

After the explosion, we called off all armed actions until such time as we felt the causes had been understood and acted upon. We found that the alternative direction already existed among us and had been developed within other collectives. We became aware that a group of outlaws who are isolated from the youth communities do not have a sense of what is going on, cannot develop strategies that grow to include large numbers of people, have become "us" and "them".

It was a question of revolutionary culture. Either you saw the youth culture that had been developing as bourgeois or decadent and therefore to be treated as the enemy of the revolution, or you saw it as the forces which produced us, a culture that we were a part of, a young and unformed society (nation).

In the past months we have had our minds blown by the possibilities that exist for all of us to develop the movement so that as revolutionaries we change and shape the cultural revolution. We are in a position to change for the better. Men who are chauvinists can change and become revolutionaries who no longer embrace any part of the culture that stands in the way of the freedom of women. Hippies and students who fear black power should check out Pap Brown's Die Nigger Die and George Jackson's writings. We can continue to liberate and subvert attempts to rip off the culture. People become revolutionaries in the schools, in the army, in prisons, in communes and on the streets. Not in an underground cell.

Because we are fugitives, we could not go near the Movement. That proved to be a blessing because we've been everywhere else. We meet as many people as we can with our new identities; we've watched the TV news of our bombings with neighbors and friends who don't know that we're Weatherpeople. We are often afraid but we take our fears for granted now, not trying to act tough. What we once thought would have to be some zombie-type discipline has turned out to be a yoga of alertness, a heightened awareness of activities and vibrations around us -- almost a new set of eyes and ears.

Even though we have not communicated about ourselves specifically before this, our actions have said much about where our heads are at. We have obviously not gone in for large scale material damage. Most of our actions have hurt the enemy on about the same military scale as a bee sting. But the political effect against the enemy had been devastating. The world knows that even the white youth of Babylon will resort to force to bring down imperialism.

The attacks on the Marin County Court House and the Long Island City Jail were because we believe that the resistance and political leadership that is growing within the prisons demands immediate and mass support from young people. For all the George Jacksons, Afeni Shakurs and potential revolutionaries in these

jails, the movement is the lifeline. They rebelled expecting massive support from outside.

Demonstrations in support of prison revolts are a major responsibility of the movement, but someone must call for them, put out the leaflets, convince people that it is a priority. We are so used to feeling powerless that we believe pig propaganda about the death of the movement; or some bad politics about rallies being obsolete and bullshit. A year ago, when Bobby Seale was ripped-off in Chicago and the movement didn't respond, it made it easier for the pigs to murder Fred Hampton. Now two Puerto Ricans have been killed by the pigs in the New York jails, in retaliation for the prisoner rebellion. What we do or don't do makes a difference.

It will require courage and close families of people to do this organizing. Twos and threes is not a good form for anything -- it won't put out a newspaper, organize a conference on the war, or do an armed action without getting caught. Our power is that together we are mobile, decentralized, flexible and we come into every home where there are children who catch the music of freedom and life.

The women and men in jails are POWs held by the United States. When an Amerikan pilot is shot down while bombing North Vietnamese villages, he is often surrounded by thousands of people who have just seen their family and homes destroyed by the bombs he was delivering. Yet the man is not attacked and killed by the Vietnamese but is cared for as a prisoner. Nixon is now waging a last ditch moral crusade around the treatment of these Amerikan war criminals to justify all his impending atrocities.

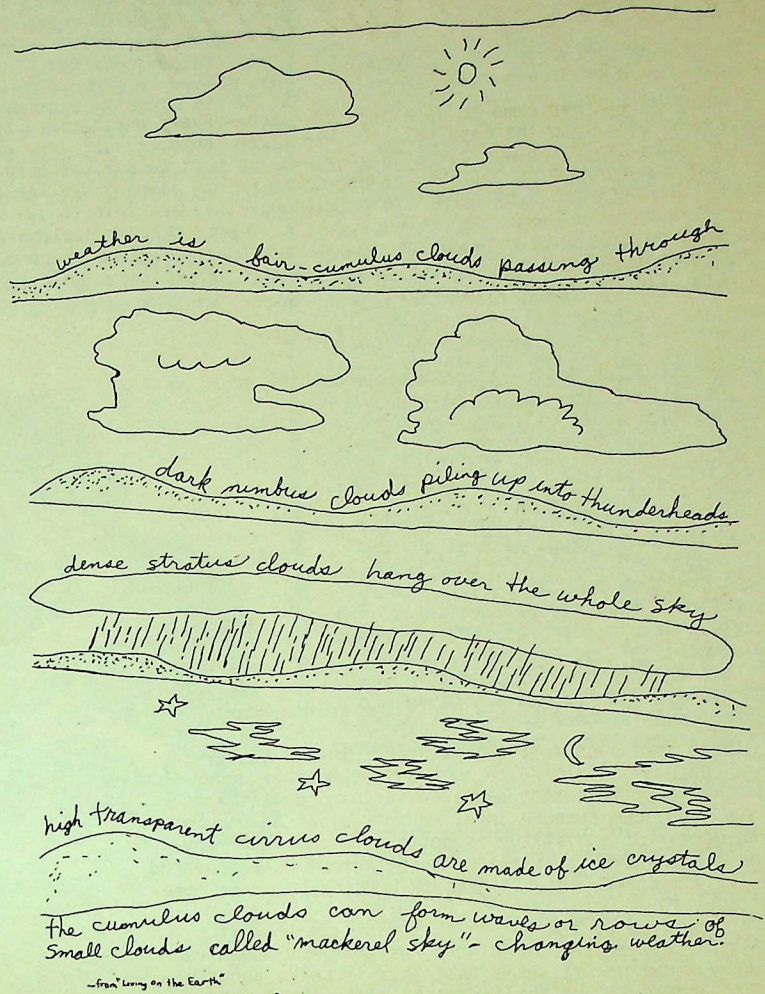
The demonstrations and strikes following the rape of Indochina and the murders at Jackson and Kent last May showed real power and made a strong difference. New people were reached and involved and the government was put on the defensive. This month the bombings could have touched off actions expressing our fury at double-talking Laird and his crew--war research and school administrators and travelling politicians are within reach of our leaflet, our rallies, our rocks. Womens Liberation groups can find in Ngyuen Thi Binh a sister for whom there is love and support here. Her proposals for peace must be explained and Bloody Dick's plans to use more bombers to replace the GIs who are refusing to fight exposed as the escalation and genocide it is. Vietnamization Indianization limited duration protective reaction suppressive fire hoesshit. It seems that we sometimes forget that in Vietnam strong liberated women and men live and fight. Not as abstract guerilla fighters, slugging it out with U.S. imperialism in Southeast Asia, but as people with values and loves and parents and children and hopes for the future.

People like Thai, a fighter in the Peoples Liberation Armed Forces who was in Hue during Tet and at Hamburger Hill a year later, or Than Tra, an organizer in the mass women's organization and the students' movement in the cities, who had not seen her lover in nine years. They travelled for a month to come to Cuba to meet with us, to sing and dance and explain how it is in Vietnam. There is nothing brutal or macho about guns and bombs in their hands. We can't help thinking that if more people knew about them, the anti-war movement would never have allowed Nixon and Agnew to travel to so many cities during the past election with only the freaks at Kansas State and the people of San Jose to make our anger at his racism known to the world.

The hearts of our people are in a good place. Over the past months, freaks and hippies and a lot of people in the movement have begun to dig in for a long winter. Kent and Augusta and Jackson brought to all of us a coming of age, a seriousness about how hard it will be to fight in Amerika and how long it will take us to win. We are all beginning to figure out what the Cubans meant when they told us about the need for new men and women.

People have been experimenting with everything about their lives, fierce against the ways of the white man. They have learned how to survive together in the poisoned cities and how to live on the road and the land. They've moved to the country and found new ways to bring up free wild children. People have purified themselves with organic food, fought for sexual liberation, grown long hair. People have reached out to each other and learned that grass and organic consciousness-expanding drugs are weapons of the revolution. Not mandatory for everyone, not a gut-check, but a tool--a Yacqui way of knowledge. But while we sing of drugs the enemy knows how great a threat our youth culture is to their rule, and they employ their allies--the killer-drugs (smack and speed)--to pacify and destroy young people. No revolution can succeed without the youth, and we face that possibility if we don't meet this threat.

People are forming new families. Collectives have sprung up from Seattle to Atlanta, Buffalo to Vermont, and they are units of people to trust each other both to live together and to organize and fight together. The revolution involves our whole lives; we aren't part-time soldiers or secret revolutionaries. It is our closeness and the integration of our personal lives with our revolutionary work that will make it hard for undercover pigs to infiltrate our collectives. It's one thing for pigs to go to a few meetings, even meetings of a secret cell. It's much harder for them to live in a family for long without being detected.



One of the most important things that has changed since people began working in collectives is the idea of what leadership is. People--and especially groups of sisters--don't want to follow academic ideologues or authoritarians. From Fidel's speeches and Ho's poems we understood how leaders grow out of being deeply in touch with movements. From Crazy Horse and other great Indian chiefs we've learned that the people who respect their tribe and its needs are followed freely and with love. The Lakotas laughed at the whites' appointing one man to be chief of all the Lakota tribes, as if people wouldn't still go with whichever leader they thought was doing the right thing!

Many of these changes have been pushed forward by women both in collectives with men and in all womens' collectives. The enormous energy of sisters working together has not only transformed the movement internally, but when it moves out it is a movement that confuses and terrifies Amerika. When asked about the sincerity of Mme. Binh's proposals Ky says, "Never trust a woman in politics." The pigs refuse to believe that women can write a statement or build a sophisticated explosive device or fight in the streets. But while we have seen the potential strength of thousands of women marching, it is now up to revolutionary women to take the lead to call militant demonstrations, to organize young women, to carry the Viet Cong flag, to make it hard for Nixon and Ky to travel around the country ranting about POWs the same day that hundreds of women are being tortured in the prisons of South Vietnam.

It's up to us to tell women in Amerika about Mme. Binh in Paris; about Pham Thi Quyen, fighter in the Saigon underground and wife of Nguyen Van Troi; about Mme. Nguyen Thi Dinh, leader of the first South Vietnamese Peoples Liberation Armed Forces unit uprising in Ben Tre in 1961; about Celia Sanchez and Heidi Santamaria who fought at Moncada and in the Havana underground; about Bernadette Devlin and Leila Khaled and Lolita Lebrun; and about Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur, and Mary Moylan here.

We can't wait to organize people until we get ourselves together any more than we can act without being together. They must go on at the same time. None of these changes that people are going through are rules and principles. We are many different regions of the country and are building different kinds of leaders and organizations. It's not coming together into one organization, or paper structure of factions or coalitions. It's a New Nation that will grow out of the struggles of the next year.

## genocide

The following is part of a fifteen page paper entitled, Birth Control and Abortion, Some Things to Worry About. We strongly recommend that you read all of the paper. It is available for 25¢ from St. Louis Women's Collective, 4372 Westminster Place, St. Louis, Missouri.

One of the major aims of the Women's Liberation movement has been to secure and insure the right of women to control our own bodies. Although this goal is unattainable in the fullest sense until global consciousness and social organization are restructured on a massive scale, it is still an urgent issue. Without control at all, or with the minimum we have been "granted" in the past, we are collectively impeded from organizing and acting to meet our needs and obtaining our rights.

Understanding this, groups of women all over the country and without any centralized national leadership have begun to fight for free and legal birth control and abortion. Some groups function at the legislative level; some are service groups doing counselling and referrals, and still others act as pressure groups dealing with health centers and hospitals. Using our own experiences and our own needs, we have generated a real live grass roots movement.

### SO WHY WORRY?

As a force for social change without centralized dictation, we all have to commit ourselves to a continual examination of our work in both a local and a national context. The traditional role of leadership has been exactly that--to worry about national priorities and how to apply them to local situations. Thus, it makes sense to step back from our daily struggles to assess how that work fits into the larger scheme because sooner or later we are all personally affected by the national drift of our movement's activity.

### A SNAG SITUATION--AGAIN

In the past year or two a division has opened and grown between the Women's Liberation movement, still predominantly white and middle class, and the organized, male dominated Black Liberation movement on the subject of birth control and abortion. Neither side has seemed willing to understand the other's position and both groups rightly felt unheard. Black women find themselves caught in the middle.

Most black women experience their oppression primarily as black people in America. A few black women equally identify with the Women's Liberation movement. NEITHER movement seems to have been able to fully understand or represent the interests of the most exploited, most oppressed, and strongest (from centuries of needing to be strong) dissident minority. It seems like the old days of abolition and suffrage when both women and blacks found it easier to compromise with their powerful oppressors--the white male elites--rather than work from their own mutual interests together. Black male chauvinism and white female racism help each other maintain the status quo and have been leaving black women with a grotesque choice.

### WHY WE HESITATE

Charges of racism and genocide from our birth control and abortion campaigns seem contrived to hurt us:

\*They are our best, most broadly organized issues.

\*The campaigns have released, next to rap groups, the most clear outrage and energy.

\*The demand for direct control over our reproductive function is a morally unsailable right of all women and accessible birth control and abortions are key to that issue.

\*Our own consciousness has grown around these struggles for not only has the power

and misogyny of doctors, judges, legislators, and husbands emerged as we demanded our rights, but the interests of drug companies and medical industries in the workings of our lives have been made clear.

\*While birth control and abortion rights won't liberate women in and by themselves, tactically they are essential for those of us who won't have the time, energy, or health to continue to fight for our freedom.

The charge of racism is even more suspect to many white women because it comes from a distinctly male-dominated black movement. While they are telling us that birth



control and abortion are GENOCIDAL for black people, women of all colors are dying on abortionists' tables, and black women, particularly welfare mothers, are saying "right on" to the services we propose. It is all very confusing.

### RECONSIDERING ANYWAY...

1. The first major symptom of our confusion is that we have been quicker to question the political motivations of black males OUT OF POWER than the good will of white ruling males IN POWER.

The government talks alot lately about "zero population growth," about controlling the world's population. It is one of the very few issues around which all major ruling factions--liberals, conservatives, business, and establishment "reformers" are united. A quick glance at the history of economics and power is in order here:

a) In the past, when industrial technology was less sophisticated, ruling elites wanted and NEEDED a large surplus labor force to get the work of profit-production done and to keep wages down by making sure that the number of people looking for jobs was greater than the number of jobs. Now, with the mechanization and computerization of major industry, the rate of growth of the industrial labor force is slowing down while the growth rate of population holds steady. This means a growing number of people with "nothing to do." There's work to be done, of course; it's just not profitable in a capitalist system to lay out the capital to get it done. This means more and more "social dynamite," people who know that their needs are not being met and who are prevented from meeting them. These groups have the potential to

take power and legitimacy from the state and to use it in their own interests. The government wants to eliminate deprivation, not as a condition, but as a threatening social force. By limiting the numbers of people there is some hope that more can be assimilated into a liberalized system and the remaining unfortunates and dissidents can be isolated. This is an international strategy: in Vietnam population control of uncontrollables takes the form of outright genocide, but in Latin America, India, here, and in American colonies birth control is the favored method.

b) But what about the argument that there "isn't enough food, room, or air for all those people". That one isn't too solid either. Our tax money currently pays a small fortune to farmers to keep food prices up by growing less; food is systematically being devalued in terms of nutrition and tastes in favor of more marketable qualities--color, size, packageable shape. Air is being polluted in vaster quantities by inessential consumer and military industries and by cars taking people to work in them then it is by human lungs. Enormous arable tracts of land yield a fraction of what they could, given an international effort to circulate agricultural knowledge and equipment and whole nations, like Cuba, Santa Domingo, and Brazil, are forced by U.S. controlled world markets to devote their land to coffee and sugar, two totally non-nutritional food products.

Population may have to be limited eventually, but it will have to be limited by masses of women with a full grasp of their (our) eco-political situation. As it stands now, the population control program is a boondoggle to maintain white male ruling power by controlling women and eventually, popular power. IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT IT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NEED VARIOUS FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION FACILITIES, LIBERALIZED LAWS, PROPAGANDA, AND SERVICE WORKERS.

c) We may have been using our energies wastefully, for present government strategies suggest that cheap, legal birth control and abortion will be made available shortly to women of all classes whether we fight for it or not. The major resistance we have encountered has been from the church and church controlled groups, politicians, drug manufacturers, hospitals, groups with vested interests in the status quo. It is emotionally satisfying to see the dinosaurs defeated, but it is a wasteful project to fight them ourselves, since their own brothers will whip them into line within the next few years. In 1968 the state of Massachusetts was threatened by the federal government with a cutback in relief funds if it did not liberalize its laws forbidding public distribution of contraceptives. Hawaii with the largest non-white population in the United States opened up its abortion laws without any Women's Liberation action whatever. The American colony of Puerto Rico is a similar case.

2. The birth-control/abortion struggle we have been fighting has always been correct in its general aim--to obtain the right of all women to freely choose if, when, and why to bear children. The problem is that the dynamics and structure of male control differs for each different race and class of women. Consequently no simple strategy insures all groups of women of this key right.

This is true for normal methods of birth control alone. All women are oppressed by the male medical establishment which mystifies, misinforms and underinforms us about our bodies and the effects of birth control products on them; but the mystification is usually more intense for poor and non-white women who are usually rushed through assembly-line clinics without any explanation whatever.

By juggling prices and laws the white male power structure makes birth control devices available, unavailable, or compulsory for women. At first, contraceptives

continued on page 9...



## genocide con't

were the privilege of rich families, then middle-income ones; in the decades since the Second World War market prices have remained on the high side for middle-class people but are shipped overseas through the U.N. and philanthropic agencies in vast quantities and are increasingly being made available cheaply or free to poor, "freaky" and non-white women in the U.S.

Women are being "turned every which way but loose." The "free legal birth control and abortion on demand" program is grotesquely naive when offered as a basis of "free choice" for all women as long as each child is the personal responsibility of its genetic mother, as long as children are "expensive", as long as state, medical, and religious power is controlled the world over by white U.S. males who can and do manipulate women's available choices to suit their own interests.

3) The last area of our confusion concerns the nature of the black woman's situation, and its relation to ours and our movement.

The charge of racial genocide, direct or preventative, is DEADLY serious, no matter who it comes from. We haven't tried to understand if-whether-why black WOMEN, admittedly faced with the possibility of race war in many large American cities would identify more strongly with black men, whom they KNOW will fight with them for group survival than with white women whose spunk, militancy, and opposition to racism is still unproved.

We have tried very little to understand the nature of black male-female dynamics within the black community. What are the power differentials? What circumstances created them, black economy or white economy? How real is black female strength within the community? On what is it based? If black Americans could win political independence would black women accept a

secondary role in rebuilding the future?

In our struggles against male chauvinism we often encounter men who are eager to fight male supremacy - as long as they can control the terms of its definition. We will have to learn about the liberation of black women from black women. The ability of black women to develop female liberation consciousness across race lines moreover, will depend a great deal on the ability of women's liberation movements to respect and consider the needs of black women as allied to the needs of black people.

SO . . .

In reconsidering our situation we find that a portion of our fight has a reactionary as well as a progressive potential. We have been trying to open up laws around birth control and abortion without moving to effectively (!) control its use. The vulnerability of black, poor, and most non-white women is increased by the way we've structured our struggle. WE HAVE BUILT NO ORGANIZATION OR APPARATUS TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE GAINED MUCH IN MOMENTUM AND AWARENESS OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS WE ARE PERHAPS FURTHER FROM REAL FEMALE CONTROL OF REPRODUCTION THAN WE WERE WHEN WE STARTED.



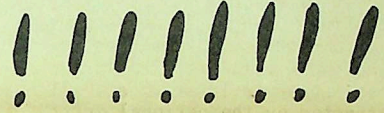
## think of spring

We are going to the Pentagon, March 27, with our sisters from all over the country. We feel a real urgency right now that reflects our fury at the expansion of the Indo-Chinese war and our rage at the repression of our black and brown sisters. We also feel the incredible potential force of the women's movement this spring.

Following is a temporary list of contact people which came out of the Ann Arbor conference--women who want to work on any aspect of the action--who have ideas, comments, suggestions or criticisms should get in touch with each other through one of these contacts.

Washington D.C.: 202-462-4142 -- off our backs  
 New York City: 212-874-6696 -- West Side Women's Center  
 627 Amsterdam Ave.  
 Baltimore: 301-685-6575 -- Women on Outcry  
 Boston: 617-666-1243 -- Kathy  
 Vermont: 802-454-8311 -- Women's Center  
 Goddard College  
 Ohio: 216-673-3708 -- Nancy, Kent U.  
 Indianapolis: 317-924-2982 -- Betty or Nancy  
 Chicago: 312-472-9061 -- Susan

Soon we would like to get together with women from other cities to make more specific plans and coordinate our efforts.



## j. edgar's latest wet dream

The arraignment for the targets of Hoover's latest conspiracy charge was held in Harrisburg, Pa., Monday, Feb. 8. Four women are among the accused. Sister Elizabeth McAlister, one of the six defendants, is a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary from New York. Three of the seven "co-conspirators" are Sister Jogues Egan, Liz's former superior, and Sister Beverly Bell, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur and Marjorie Shuman, both living in D.C. They are charged with conspiracy to blow up underground heating units for government buildings in D.C. and to kidnap Henry Kissinger. The possible sentence is life imprisonment.

At a press conference Monday afternoon, Liz read a joint statement which denied the charges and turned the accusation to the government and FBI. "Our anguish for the victims of the brutal war (in Southeast Asia) has led all of us to non-violent resistance, some of us to the destruction of draft records. But, unlike our accuser, the government of the United States, we have not advocated or engaged in violence against human beings. Unlike the government, we have never lied to our fellow citizens about our actions. Unlike the government, we have nothing to hide. We ask our fellow citizens to match our lives, our actions, against the actions of the president, his advisors, his chiefs of staff, and pose the question: who has committed the crimes of violence?"

"It is in fact, the government which has engaged in kidnapping on an enormous scale: the deportation of millions of Vietnamese--and now Cambodians and Laotians--from their ancient homes by force; the abduction of American young men from their families under the selective service laws, sending them across state lines and



international borders to be killed or maimed. It is the government which has not only conspired but carried out the destruction by explosives of three countries: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, crippling these defenseless people with napalm and pellet bombs, destroying their forests and rice fields. If one is concerned with crimes against humanity, it is the officials of the U.S. government who should be on trial."

When asked if she thought this charge meant that more sisters were coming forward in active peace involvement, Liz smiled and said, "Remember, we didn't do this.

But, each of us has already in one form or another taken a strong anti-war stand and each of us sees that as compatible with our commitment as religious women." Sister Elizabeth is having to ask for a leave of absence from her teaching position at Immaculate Heart College in order to work on the defense. The case has similarly interrupted the work of teaching and serving the poor that others in the group are doing.

Sister Jogues, 52, former provincial and president of Marymount College, was called before the grand jury in Harrisburg on January 26 and jailed for refusing to answer any of the questions. Under the new immunity statute, constitutional rights to refuse to answer self-incriminating questions are suspended and jail sentences up to 18 months may be given without trial or appeal. After four days in jail, Jogues was temporarily released to the custody of her order. She described the harrassment of the hearing as a "fishing expedition." Solid evidence is apparently non-existent, but the jury is working hard to concoct something to save Hoover's face and jail movement people without trial.

Both Beverly and Marjorie accepted responsibility for the destruction of draft files in New Haven, Connecticut at the time of Panther Lonnie McClucas's sentencing last September. They have not been prosecuted for their declaration. They maintain that the destruction of property that destroys human life is a necessary step in preventing its use by an irresponsible government and a means of reducing the people's fear of that government. Their concern is with stopping war and preventing killing, not with bombing and kidnapping.

The D.C. Defense Committee for the group is located at 245 2nd St., N.E. (543-1457).

Friends

With all manner of difficulties

I have been pursued.

These I fear not.

Still

Alive I am.

Council Song of Encouragement

Teton Sioux

On March 8th women around the world will be celebrating International Women's Day. A fact that few women know about this day, is that its origins lie in New York City. On March 8th, 1857, a group of garment workers picketed for better working conditions and recognition of equal rights for women. On March 8th, 1908, women workers in the needle trades, again demonstrated in New York City. So it was in 1910 that Clara Zetkin, a German socialist proposed at the Second International that March 8th be observed each year as International Women's Day in memory of these first struggles. Her proposal met with enthusiastic endorsement.

This March 8th women from all over the United States will be doing things to mark this date once

again.

Washington D.C.: a march on the women's house of detention has been proposed

Boston: on the 6th and the 7th small groups of women will talk to other women on the college campuses, in hospitals and co-ops, with a festival leading up to a big demonstration on the 8th. The demonstration will be to the State House where women will issue a statement.

New York City: there is a demonstration on the 6th at the Women's House of detention

International Women's Day March

Philadelphia: a demonstration will be sponsored by the Women's Peace and Freedom. There will be dinners at the dinners will be held at the Health Institute in Haverford. Baltimore: There will be a Festival with rallies and demonstrations, also trying to get a demonstration in Chicago. In the city of Chicago, there will be planning

ment

Sioux

Day March 8

Philadelphia: a customary Vietnamese meal will be sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The donations that will be collected at the dinners will be sent to the Maternal and Child Health Institute in Hanoi. (LNS )

Baltimore: There will be a Womens Dance and Festival with rallies at jails with petitions for jail needs, also trying to gain support for Erika Huggins.

Chicago: In the morning there will be a teach-in, with various types of workshops; in the afternoon there will be planning sessions around abortions and

day care centers.

Detroit: there will be local organizing of women around the peace treaty and there will be some gorilla theatre

Berkely: there will be discussions of women as prisoners in homes, jails and country's at war

March 8th is really only the beginning of new on-going actions. The general feeling that I got from women that I talked to across the country was that the actions planned weren't going to be your general run of the mill one day demonstrations. They will be part of an on-going process that will continue to build and grow, a process that will have an increasing flow of energy put into the new momentum created.

# struggle

## droppings...

**BIGGEST MALE CHAUVINIST PIG OF THE MONTH--** Milton Caniff, author of the reactionary "Steve Canyon" cartoon strip in which the hero is the bravest of the brave, for maligning W.L. and stereotyping women as being stupid, ineffectual, and easily won over by men.

This kind of sexist humor has got to be stopped immediately, especially on the comic page which is read daily by children. Milton, back to the drawing boards.

**NEWS--**"Mother Lode" is a new publication put out by women in S.F.W.L. and is designed to reach women not already in the movement--\$1.00 for 6 issues. Write P.O. Box 40213, S.F., Ca. 94140--"A Change is Gonna Come" another new women's paper designed to reach working women. They need articles, graphics and of course \$. Write Change, 1489 Sanchez, S.F., Ca 94131. "Goodbye to All That", a W.L. newspaper from San Diego--\$4.00 per year--write P.O. Box 3092, San Diego, Ca. 92103--"Women's Press" newspaper from the U of Oregon, write P.O. Box 3306, Eugene, Ore. for more info.--And from the East, "The New Carolina Woman" from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, write P.O. Box 954, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. And from the far East, new magazine from Japan "Rentai" (solidarity)--learn what's happening in Japan, if you can read Japanese, otherwise send them articles, books, ideas so that those who read Japanese will hear from you--P.O. Box 5250, Tokyo, Japan.

ANONYMOUS IS A WOMAN

**NOTES--**New hours at Women's Counseling Service, Minn., Minn., Monday and Tuesday noon to 9--Wednesday and Thursday noon to 6. Regional W.L. center to serve all of SW Ohio, located in Dayton, looking for articles, films, tapes, etc. that will be relevant to women in the area--Kingston, R.I., W.L., Spring 1971 women's event at the U of R.I., films, lectures, meetings--contact Tally Kamper at the Art Department--S.F. W.L. and Bay Area W.L. are not the same--Seattle Radical women meetings every Friday 8 P.M. Freeway Hall 3815 5th Ave. NE, Seattle, Washington 98105--all women welcome.

**WILL THIS MARRIAGE LAST--**Masters and Johnson?

**FESTIVALS--**Ithaca Women's Festival, weekend of Feb. 18-21--For info on housing etc Shotaway Bookstore, 107 S. Aurora St., Ithaca, N.Y.; 607-273-1815--Women's Week, Hampshire College, Amherst, Mass., Feb. 14-20th, contact Judith Stein at Merrill House.

**WRITE-IN--**Women in Illinois interested in working on such things as revamping the vocational and educational training of women in Ill. penal institutions or investigating primary grade textbooks for sexist bias should contact Central Hdqts., Equal Rights Alliance, 2140 N. Magnolia St. Chicago, 60614--Three women will be teaching a class at Sacramento State College on "The Image of Women in the Popular Arts" looking for articles, plays, tapes, newsreels on the subject. Also send ideas, info etc. to E. McDonald, 2016 Sloat Way, Sacramento, Ca 95818--W.L. tapes available through Radio Free People, 133 Mercer St. New York or S.F. Women's Media Group, 225 Corbett St., S.F., Ca. 94114. Price is \$4.00 plus postage. If money is a hassle, let them know.--Maria Maxfield, 11 Westcrest Trail, Fayson Lakes, N.J. 07405 is collecting brief autobiographies of women of all ages and all walks of life. Autobios. may be anonymous, but must be true. For more info, contact Maria.

**LET'S HEAR ABOUT HOW YOU WANTED TO HELP FIGHT AIR POLLUTION UNTIL SOMEONE REMIND-ED YOU THAT YOUR PA WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST OFFENDERS--**"I think you are right in picturing me as a very happy housewife. That's what I like to do best." said Ann Ford Uzielli at the conclusion of an article describing her luxurious N.Y. apartment on Park Ave. complete with nursemaid and servants, her weekend home in Southampton and her move to the Antilles along with her plans to commute between the Caribbean and the U.S. Detroit Free Press, November 8, 1970.

**REMEMBER--**The lettuce boycott? Don't buy Iceburg lettuce. Check for the union label--the Mexican Eagle--on each head of lettuce. When in doubt, don't buy.

**RIGHT-IN--**Help to get the Peace and Freedom Party on the ballot for the 1972 election. For info on how you can help write P and F.P. Nat'l Organizing Comm., 1727 W. Washington Blvd., Venice, Ca. 90291 (213) 392-8975.--KNOW Inc.P.O. Box 10197, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232 has an incredibly complete list of publications--write for their list. Times Change Press 1023 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10018 has quite a few good booklets on W.L.--Write for more info.

**THANK YOU--**Norman Mailer for sending us Harper's with your article on W.L. After reading it, we definitely won't vote for you, buy your books or see your next flick. In fact we totally sympathize with all your ex-wives.

Forever yours,



*Chicken lady*



**sieze the time**

## lesson in co-optation

**LIBERATION NOTE--**The Ladies Home Journal is going to get a little mileage out of that women's lib take-over last summer. The group prepared and edited an eight-page section in the August issue that brought in considerable reader mail. From the mail, the magazine learned the temper of its readership.

Spreads, twice monthly in Advertising Age will take up the cry starting with, "Liberation Begins At Home."

That'll be the headline and the copy will note, "And a great deal of her freedom is achieved with the help of her women's magazine." The L.H.J., that is. *New York Times*, January 28, 1971

## PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE RELEASES REPORT ON ADULT BREAKDOWNS

Nearly one in every five Americans (adults) has had or felt a nervous breakdown coming on in one form or another. In addition:

More women than men reported nervous breakdowns.

More black women than white women reported breakdowns.

More married persons (especially white women) reported breakdowns.

More housekeepers (their word) and retired men reported breakdowns, compared with working men and women.

## shop-in

**MILWAUKEE, WIS. (LNS)--**In Wisconsin there are 40,000 children receiving welfare in the Aid to Dependent Children Program (ADC). This winter, most of them are without warm clothing because the \$50,000 fund for children's clothing has been frozen.

Milwaukee Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) has turned to the big downtown department stores for donations. In early January, between 200-250 WRO members and supporters went to the Boston Store, one of Milwaukee's largest. Other department stores say they are waiting for Boston's answer to WRO before they make any decisions. The owners of Boston have refused to meet with WRO members.

The group went through the store selecting piles of needed clothing. One man who was there described the scene.

"Minutes after we entered the store shoppers came pouring out, frightened of mass media horror stories. Today it was our turn to go shopping."

First floor women's department. Dresses, coats, pants and hats snatched off the hangers and piled on the checkout counters. Shelves and racks left bare.

We take the escalator to the third floor children's department, leaving more piles of clothing, covering mannequins, instead of children. Someone turns on the juke box in the teen department (bright, fashionable, with-it glad rags) and everyone--mothers, children, college students, hippies--dance to Creedence Clearwater."

When the store closed, the people left empty-handed. They will present lists of their selections to the Boston Store.



consumer beware

# 1

ENZYME DETERGENTS ARE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH, BUT THE CLEANSER INDUSTRY SOFT-SOAPS IT

Enzyme detergents produce respiratory diseases in detergent industry workers, reported a special study group of the American Academy of Allergy and will produce the same illness in housewives who use the stuff.

The Soap and Detergent Association, on the other hand, says it is "perfectly willing to have all these things explored," but they insist anyway that there is no evidence of a health danger to consumers of their products.

The next time an advertisement makes you really mad, why not write a note to the pig corporation. Don't put a stamp on the envelope, let them pay the postage. Probably, your letter won't stop the offensive ad or change the nature of the company, but you might get a free product in return.

Here is a list of the most requested addresses:

Proctor and Gambol Co.
Howard J. Morgan, President
301 E. 6th St.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Purex Corporation Ltd.
William R. Tincher, President
5101 Clark Ave.
Lakewood, Calif. 90712

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
Alexander H. Galloway, President
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101

Ortho Pharmaceutical Corporation
W. Vincent Abrahamson, President
Princeton, N.J. 08869

Maidenform, Inc.
Beatrice Coleman, President
90 Park Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10016

Dow Chemical Co.
Herbert D. Dean, President
Midland, Michigan 48640

Bristol-Myers Co.
Richard L. Gelb, President
345 Park Ave.
New York, New York 10022

Colgate-Palmolive Co.
George Leech, President
300 Park Ave.
New York, New York 10022

Lever Brothers Co.
Thomas S. Carroll, President
390 Park Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10022

connie trimble

ST. PAUL, MINN.--Connie Trimble, an eighteen year old black woman, is now being held in Ramsey County jail on charges of murdering a St. Paul policeman last year. The police and court authorities treatment of Connie is typical of the treatment given all female and black prisoners. The bail, set at \$50,000 insures that she will remain in jail. This means that she is not allowed to visit with her fifteen month old child. At her pre-trial hearing, when her mother came into the courtroom with the baby, Connie cried and asked to hold him. The court refused.

Despite the seriousness of the charges, the evidence presented by the prosecution in pretrial hearings is very questionable. Their main pieces of evidence are two voice prints they are trying to match up. Voice-prints are very unreliable. One person's voice can make two different prints and two people's voices can make similar prints.

The print of Connie's voice was obtained in a typically sneaky way. At the request of the St. Paul police, Connie's welfare worker called her into his office saying he needed more information to decide on her welfare status. While there, Carolyn Baily, a policewoman posing as a welfare statistician called to talk to Connie and made several tapes of her voice. By helping the police in this trickery, the welfare department showed its true face.

The crime of Connie Trimble is that she has stepped out of her role. Connie is a black woman who has engaged in political activity in her community, something women are not supposed to understand and blacks are not supposed to do.

100 Flowers, Minneapolis, Minnesota
January 29, 1971

b.c.

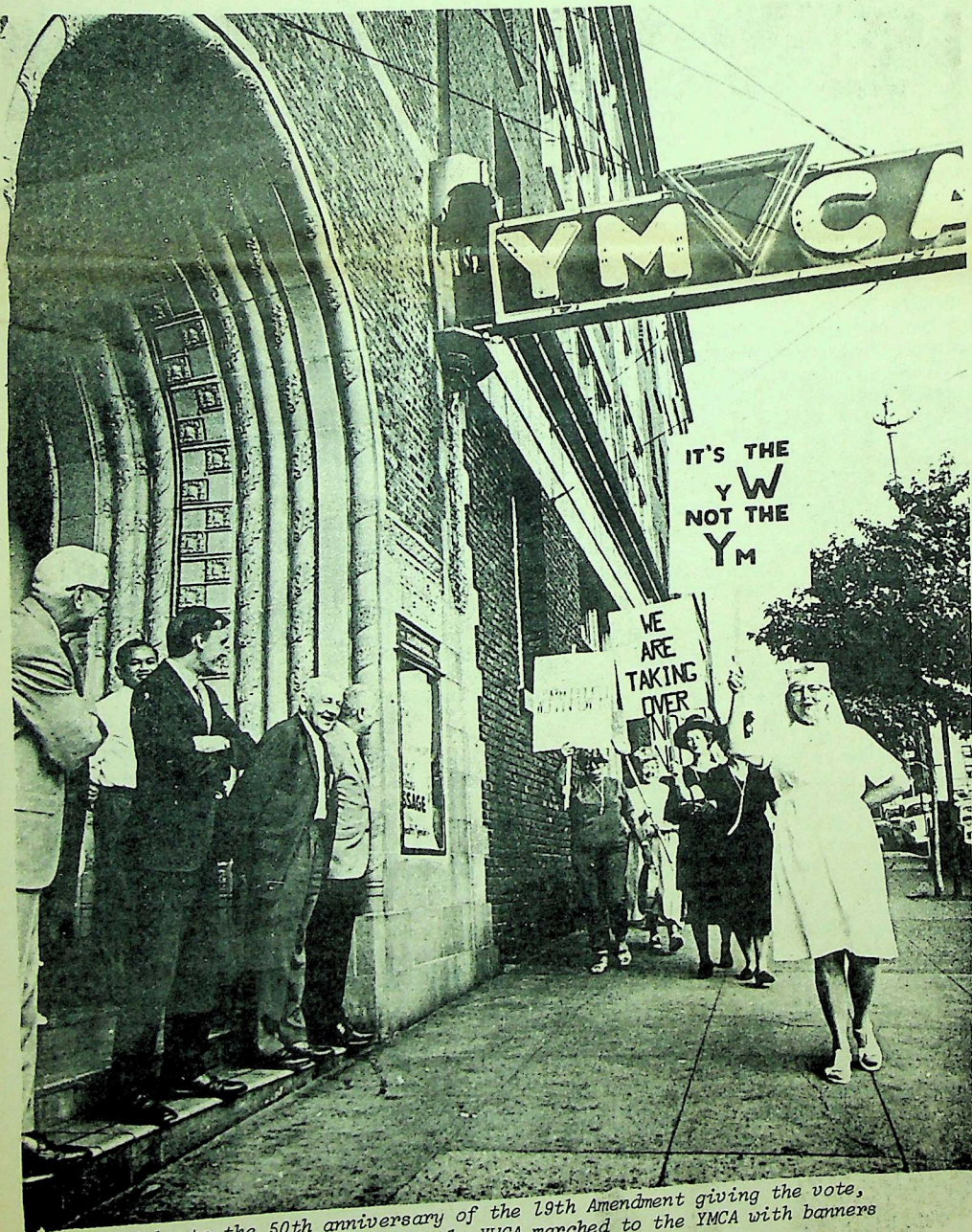
VANCOUVER, B.C. CANADA (LNS) If you are a middle class citizen, your school children are protected with crosswalks and flashing lights in their neighborhood. However, if you live in Raymur Place, a low income housing project in Vancouver, city officials don't move very quickly to protect your children.

So mothers acted instead. In early January, a group of women from Raymur Place started sitting in on a railway track owned by Great Northern Railroad--a track which their children have to cross on the way to school. They are blocking the tracks in the morning, at noon and in the afternoon.

Caroline Jerome, one of the organizers of the demonstration, said that trains often stopped, blocking the road which children must cross to get to school "the kids get panicky when they hear the school bells ring," she explained. "it is only a matter of time before a child is killed trying to cross the track."

According to Mrs. Jerome, the trains are allowed to wait at the crossing for 3-5 minutes (though many are there longer) while other trains ahead shift out of the way.

Though the Great Northern Railroad warned the women that they would be cleared off the tracks and possibly arrested if they started demonstrating, the women responded in a leaflet: "We are not prepared to sacrifice the lives of our children to the Great Northern Tracks."



Seattle Times Photo by Greg Gilbert from the YWCA Magazine

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment giving the vote, volunteers and staff of the Seattle YWCA marched to the YMCA with banners aloft.

Susan V.
Anthony
February 15, 1820

heed the warnings

1.

Dear sisters,

It's strange that nobody tells you how much it hurts. No. That was facetious. I know that it is involved with the whole dependency-dehumanization process perpetrated by the medical profession. That's the general reason. But then it comes down to a specific doctor and a specific woman (me) and a specific experience. And that is what I want to tell you about.

I went to a doctor in Venice, Calif. for an Interuterine Device (I.U.D.). Previously, I had been taking pills--for eight years. And then one day, it was discovered that I was susceptible to breast cancer, and also, that I might be infertile because of the prolonged use of the pills combined with the irregularity of my periods. I might also add here that my sister has just recovered from cervical cancer--(they burned out her ovaries with radium pellets).

I've never had children and because of this Dr. Bayer said that there was a 20% chance that my body wouldn't accept the coil. And that's all he said. Not a word about pain.

So on the second day of my period I went to have the IUD inserted. I was on the table, feet in stirrups. Still no forewarning about pain. And the coil, held by some long, silver instrument passed between my legs, into my vagina, and then into the cervix.

And suddenly...my god, it was so painful...as he tried to push this little plastic thing into my uterus. He pushed and pushed (my cervix was barely dilated) and he said smugly, "Ready to give up yet?" And I said, "No." Because, mistakenly, I thought the pain would stop once he got the thing in. So he pushed some more and suddenly it got through the narrow cervix, and it sprang into my womb. And that was the worst moment.

Really, the worst moment in all of my bodily experience. It was explosive, instantaneous, death-like pain, and I screamed and cried and almost fainted and almost vomited and almost died, all in that moment. And I kept thinking, "It's going to stop now or now or now..." But it didn't.

Pain is indescribable. It is a dark void. It engages you in a very primitive struggle to survive. You are no longer you. It takes you out of yourself, reduces and humiliates you to a moaning, squirming organism which has been victimized and is helpless.

The doctor sat on the edge of the table and simply said, "The sooner you get up and get dressed and get dressed the sooner you can get your pain pills." Then he left the room.

I couldn't believe what was happening to me. I was angry but also beginning to get ahold of myself in hopes of gaining some mastery over my body and the pain that was going all through it. I decided I must be in labor because my swollen uterus was systematically and involuntarily pushing and relaxing and pushing again. And I thought about natural childbirth exercises but didn't know how to breathe. Nothing worked and the pain was there. After fifteen minutes I decided to get up and dressed and get the fuck out of there. I eased myself off the table, onto my feet... and the pain which had been at the center of me shot down my legs until I couldn't stand up at all and I fell to the floor. From the waist down I was naked and covered with a cold sweat; I had a handful of hair pulled from my head sometime during the struggle. It was humiliating to be lying there like that, so I pulled myself back on the table (as if that would make things better!) and searched for a position that would relieve the internal pressure. (Nothing worked). Another fifteen minutes went by. Then the door opened and a nurse came in and asked me how I was doing. (Wasn't it obvious?) So I moaned. She left the room. Ten minutes later she re-entered with one codeine pill which I took eagerly. The nurse left again and I waited again. And waited. Gradually the pill took effect and the pain subsided

somewhat (relatively, that is). I got up, dressed myself and drove home. I was in bed for two weeks and took enough drugs to put me out of it, to help me repress the whole experience until I could cope with it.

Then I received a bill for \$50. And that really did it. Fifty dollars for five minutes of a doctor's time, a tiny plastic thing worth about 2¢ (that subsequently fell out), two weeks of severe pain, and an experience that has traumatized me physically, emotionally, and sexually. How can I cope with that? How can any woman?

Let me tell you now, a couple of months later (bill still unpaid) what I am thinking about all of this.

First of all, my body speaks. It feels it has been abused. It is afraid. There has been no sexual activity since that day. Secondly, (and briefly), I think about the burden and consequences put upon women for the sake of contraception--and you know what these burdens are: they are economic, physical, emotional. And I know they are implicitly connected with a country and a medical system run by men. And I know why there are no oral contraceptives for men on the market and even if there were could I ever trust them to take them??? Could you?

I think also of the doctor himself, Robert Bayer, and how he treated me like an object which in no way was connected with emotions, intelligence, or sensations of pain. And I feel this great rage.

I've written this as a warning -- first, to the women who might, mistakenly, be victimized in the same way; and secondly, to Dr. Bayer and others like him...they're going to be hearing from us...and we're going to release ourselves from their vulgar, obsessed grip.

Gretel Ehrlich Fletcher  
118 Fraser  
Santa Monica, Calif.  
90405

2.

Dear Sisters:

Beware the Majzlin Spring!

I had one of these IUD's put in after a bad experience with birth control pills. Since I had not had a full term pregnancy, the doctor recommended the Majzlin Spring, saying, "I think this will work out fine for you." What he didn't tell me is that there has been a high occurrence of problems with this IUD. Since so many women who have not had full term pregnancies spontaneously expel other kinds of devices, the Majzlin Spring has been used frequently. The problem is this: the device sure doesn't fall out - in fact, it won't come out.

I decided to have the IUD removed (not knowing these problems) partly because it was causing fairly severe cramps and lengthy, heavy periods, and partly because I had decided to have a baby. When the doctor found out what kind of device I had, he said casually, "Oh, we've had a lot of problems with those. The last woman I saw who had one had to have a D & C to get it out!" Encouraging...

Anyway, I was "lucky," I didn't have a D&C, the doctor managed to remove it by giving me a saddle block. But of course it didn't exactly feel good, and now I must go through a couple weeks of bleeding and pain, and run the risk of infection since the device had become embedded in the muscle.

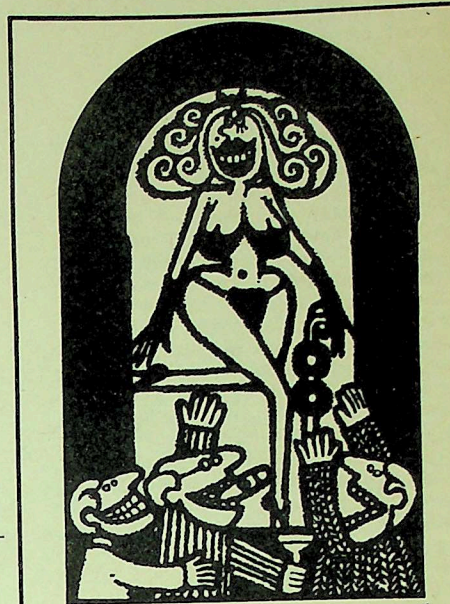
Please try to print this as a warning to sisters who may have been contemplating an IUD as an alternative--its not at all a good one!

Love and Power.

Cindy

Sisters:

The two women's accounts we've printed here are important for us all to hear, but we are trying to include in future issues the personal experiences of other women with IUD's who've had more positive results. Let us hear from you.



A sister recently bought a new sweater and attached to it was the above label. We were being exploited. As women we are used to being exploited, so after much deliberation we decided not to sue them for a million for using our name. That's only playing their game anyway. We've decided to print the label and to spread the word not to buy their capitalistic rip off product!

a sister & her mate

Dear Sisters of off our backs,

Luckily I found you way down low in a stack of assorted publications at a friend's house. I am not presently working and talking to other women (meetings etc.) as I am concentrating a whole lot on working these things out for myself. I prefer living with just a few people in the woods and spending most of my time sharing experiences with my mate. I do need help, though. I am developing a strong consciousness and need the opinion of other women to know that it is not just my paranoia out of hand. Day Care Centers are not my trip. I never subscribe to magazines and newspapers, I have already arranged to share this one with three other women in three states. Thank you. Also do you know anything of a chance to talk with Vietnamese sisters visiting in Canada? I heard about it via Putney, Vt., but no one had details.

Ann Rodgers  
Star Poute  
Chelsea  
Vermont

I need to communicate with you, feel that I need to learn as much from you as Ann. My male ego, after twenty-one years of concentrated social development, prevents me from feeling a good deal of humanity. Revolutionary love to you. Peter

stupid movement!

Dear Madames:

Please remove my name from your mailing list. I do not know where or how you obtained it--but not from me.

I do not choose to have my mail box cluttered with your unsolicited filth. Should you continue to send it unsolicited I shall ask the post office to revoke your postal privileges.

I happen to be happily married, currently employed in a professional capacity, and helping sustain two sons in college. I have no sympathy whatever with your stupid movement.

Sincerely yours,  
Isabelle Higgins

oob

## the belly of the beast..

Let's face it, a lot of us do like to cook and most of us like to eat. So why not make the cooking enjoyable and fairly simple, the eating pleasurable, full of discoveries, and healthy.

Most ordinary recipes can be made healthier and more interesting by a few substitutions or additions. Use whole wheat flour and other kinds of flour (graham, soy, gluten, buckwheat--but not too much if they have a strong flavor or are very heavy). Use lots of wheat germ, raw or toasted in baking, in cereals, in scrambled eggs, and in rice. Throw in a little brewer's yeast for extra proteins and well-balanced amounts of B-complex vitamins. Use less sugar than the recipe calls for; in most cases it will still be plenty sweet.

Use your imagination and experiment. Most recipes aren't so delicate that they can't be changed a bit. Most measurements don't have to be precise, so don't waste time carefully sifting and leveling off measuring cups.

Last May off our backs printed, "Let's Keep the Crap out of the Kitchen" giving some facts about bad things done to food by the growing and processing industries. Finding safe food to buy is a drag in most places but once you get it, here are some good ways to cook it and keep the nutrition in:

### GRANOLA

1 1/2-2 1/2 lbs. oats (steel cut are best)  
1 c. sunflower seeds  
1 c. crushed nuts  
1 c. raisins  
1/2-3/4 c. oil  
1 c. wheat germ (raw)  
1-2 c. unsweetened coconut  
any fruit *grated* or *chopped*  
molasses, honey, maple syrup or raw sugar to taste

Mish it all together so everything is coated with a little oil. Bake in a shallow pan 45-60 min. at 350°F. Use the middle rack and stir occasionally. Cool and bag it. Can be cooked some more if not crunchy enough.

### HELEN'S SUPER DRINK

1/2 c. bananas or soft fruit  
2 T. soy bean oil  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 c. milk  
Honey, if desired

Blend the ingredients. Add 1/2 c. non-instant powdered milk, 1 T. brewer's yeast and blend again. Add 3 more c. milk.

### BEAN SALAD

2 c. each green beans, wax beans, kidney beans, sliced water chestnuts, and bean sprouts.  
1 green pepper, chopped  
1 onion chopped  
1/4 c. raw sugar  
1/3 c. safflower oil  
2/3 c. vinegar  
1 1/2 tsp. salt (or more)  
1/2 tsp. black pepper

Mix everything and chill overnight.

### YOGA BREAD OR SUSIE AND MAC'S BREAD

7 c. whole wheat flour  
1/2 c. safflower oil  
1 1/2 c. water  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 c. honey or molasses  
Nuts raisins, dates, apricots, etc.

Beat oil and water till there are bubbles. Add the flour, salt and honey and knead. Add other stuff and bake at 350°F for one hour. Great to pack around because it's flat and durable and doesn't spoil.

### WHEAT GERM MUFFINS

Sift together:  
1 c. whole wheat flour  
1 tsp. salt  
4 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 c. non-instant dry milk  
Add and stir only enough to moisten:  
1 c. raw wheat germ  
1 c. sweet or sour milk, buttermilk or yogurt  
2 eggs  
1/4 c. honey or molasses  
2 T. vegetable oil  
Raisins, nuts dates etc.

Fill greased tins almost full. Bake at 400° F 15-20 min. Makes 12 big muffins.

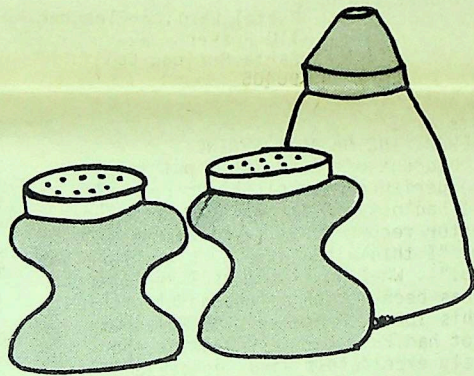
### GOOD VEGETABLE IDEAS

Cook grated beets or sweet potatoes in orange juice. Cook grated carrots in milk (to almost cover); add marjoram, thyme or mint, grated cheese and salt. Cover and let cheese melt.

### APPLESAUCE CAKE

Cream 1/2 c. soft margarine and beat in 1 egg  
Sift together and add:  
1 3/4 c. whole wheat flour (tastes good also if substitute some soy flour or gluten or carob flour for part)  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. soda  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
1/2 tsp. cloves

Add raisins, nuts, and 1 c. thick fresh applesauce  
Bake in 2 loaves or 9x9 pan at 350° F.



### GARBAGE SOUP (Adapted from Adelle Davis and others)

If a vegetable hasn't been crapped up with a lot of pesticides or preservatives, then the best part is the outside peelings which people usually throw out. Wilted vegetables, vegetable tops and insides like the insides of peppers also have a lot of good vitamins and minerals. So... save all that "garbage" plus table scraps and the water in which the vegetables cooked for making really great tasting healthy soup stock. And don't worry about the germs; they get boiled away.

Stock: Combine 3 lbs. soup bones with or without meat, 3 qts. water, and/or vegetable water, 1/2 c. vinegar, 1 tsp. salt. Simmer covered for 3-4 hours. Take out the meat. Simmer uncovered for a few minutes to cook off the vinegar smell. Add "garbage" and simmer covered 20-30 minutes. Strain. Best if you have time to chill it and remove the fat that hardens on the top.

Soup: Steam any combination of vegetables in water or tomato puree till almost done. Add however much stock you want, meat and spices (bay leaf, peppercorn, garlic) and cook 15 min. more. If there is not meat you can add bits of raw hamburger the last 5 min.

### ZIBDI TOMATOES (Arabia)

4 tomatoes  
1/2 c. plain yogurt  
1/2 c. breadcrumbs (toast whole wheat bread and mash up)  
1/2 c. grated cheese  
chopped onion, salt, pepper  
Cut a slice off the top of each tomato, scoop out the insides and mix with other ingredients. Stuff mixture back in tomatoes and bake 400°F for 15 min.

### SUPER COOKIES

Start with the oatmeal cookie recipe on the oatmeal box. Use whole wheat flour. Add a bunch of wheat germ, some brewers yeast (careful not too much), nuts, raisins, chocolate chips, toasted sesame seeds, grated orange rind, anything else you like.

### TIPS

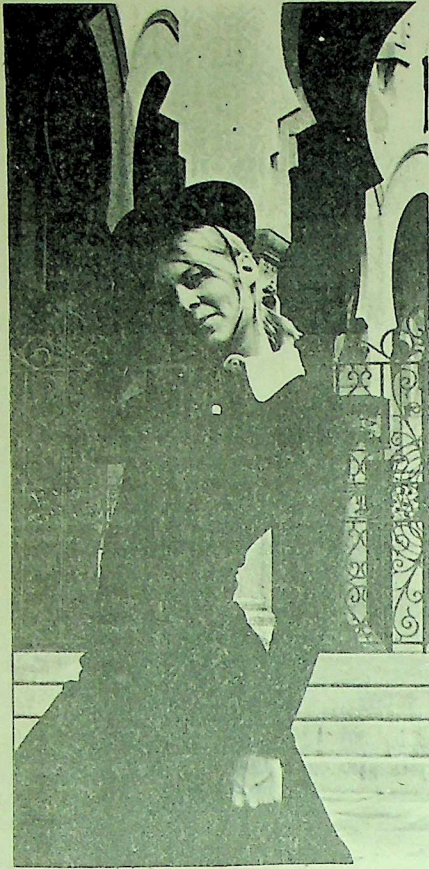
- 1) Whenever possible use organic foods that are grown without pesticides or fertilizers and packaged without additives or preservatives.
- 2) Vitamin C (orange juice) and vitamin B<sub>2</sub> (milk) are destroyed by light so be sure they come in brown glass bottles or wax containers.
- 3) Start using less refined foods such as brown rice, whole wheat flour, raw sugar and wheat germ. Most of the good nutrients are closer to the surface and therefore removed by refining or destroyed by heat used in processing. Also some dangerous chemicals like bleaching agents are used.
- 4) Non-hydrogenated fats such as oils are better than hydrogenated such as butter, animal fat and commercial peanut butter. Of the oils, olive oil is the least nutritious. Soy, safflower, sunflower, corn, peanut and cottonseed should be used alternately. Oils can go rancid in just a few days, and rancid oils destroy certain vitamins in the bloodstream. So...refrigerate oils and organic peanut butter immediately on opening and stay away from those little bottles of oil and vinegar in restaurants and the popcorn at movies.
- 5) Non-instant powdered milk, which has a fine not gritty consistency (as in instant powdered) should be used to fortify regular whole milk or as added protein to cereals and baked goods. Used on its own, powdered milk does not supply needed calcium or essential fats.
- 6) Steam vegetables quickly in small amounts of water so you save nutrients that would be destroyed by heat or dissolved in the water. Save the water to use in soups, stews and gravies.
- 7) Copper pots destroy Vitamin C and aluminum pots are considered dangerous by many for the minute amounts of aluminum that come off into the food and for adverse chemical effects of the aluminum. Oven-proof glass is best for cooking.

If all this turns you on, here are some good sources of recipes and facts:

Adelle Davis, Let's Cook It Right.  
Let's Eat Right To Keep Fit.  
Let's Have Healthy Children.

Kathleen Hunter, Health Food and Herbs.  
J.I. Rodale, The Health Finder.  
J.I. Rodale, ed., "Prevention" (a magazine) \$.60/month, write Circulation Dept., Prvention, Emmaus, Pa., 18049  
Beatrice Trum Hunter, The Natural Foods Cookbook., Pyramid Books.

by Marcia Kopit with some help from Helen Hildebeitel and Sue Finzel, also Karel Weisberg



Susan last fall, posing for the back-to-school center spread in the September issue of *off our backs*. At the arraignment, Judge Korman's upper middle class foundations shook with outrage when he learned that the felon before him was a college graduate.

## it can happen here

A member of the *off our backs* collective was arrested February 11 by 15 undercover types (long hair, beads, beards) while she was visiting friends in a women's commune.

The day before she'd read a brief statement at the rally before the demonstration to protest America's invasion of Laos.

The authorities are claiming that

undercover agents saw her break two windows in downtown D.C. after the demonstration.

It was 10:30 pm when they picked her up. You can't find a bondsman at night or a thousand dollars to make bail on a felony charge--*breaking windows, a felony?*--maybe--or maybe these days it's just being conspicuous in a protest action.

## when it's someone you know 2/11/71

One of my sisters was ripped off to-night--you know, busted. Yes, that big, foreign, faraway thing that happens only to certain faraway people--people you may even know -- but always far away and happy never really touching you.

Fifteen undercover pigs--(yes and for me one of the first times I can call pigs--PIGS--and mean it from the gut) busted into our house where my sister was visiting us; with a warrant, mind you, and took her away--completely surrounded by fourteen men and one woman--they took her away. All fucking undercover agents, dressed in beards, bell-bottoms and long hair. Why so many? "A tribute to women's liberation," they told us.

For me, this is the first time the pigs have struck that closely. The reality of what I'm involved in is rapidly coming to me and this bust has added another dimension to that reality. I was scared when they started swarming in the door; my whole inside froze. I was confused as to what the best thing to do was--and most of all, I had this surging anger flowing through my body--an anger which I couldn't show--

so that it was a burning, frozen, fearful anger inside me.

Susan--how you must feel, you were ashen--i know you were shaking inside--but the pigs didn't know. I felt closer to you knowing that, right now at 1 am after the house has quieted down and the rest of the women have gone to bed, you're still in a detention home--what your insides must be going through. Everyone here can go to sleep in their own warm bed--but you're still in that reality of jail, along with all of the other people we can so easily forget.

For your bust, tomorrow in court will bring new information as to how serious the charges are going to be. Because of what happened tonight, the fear I felt, my commitment to the movement is complete. It started this past September and has taken awhile to jell inside of me--this is the final push--at least on this level. This push has sealed my commitment.

In love, strength and struggle,  
Sue

## child care ...in virginia

Sisters in Northern Virginia are trying to get together a play group for two or three days a week. The women feel that at present, it does not seem possible to operate a fulltime center. If you are interested, send name, address, phone number and names and ages of children to Judy Oshry, 212 E. Howell Ave., Alexandria.

## ...and in maryland

A group of women and men organizing a day care center in Takoma Park, Md., are now looking for a house for the facility and for additional children and parents who would like to use the center.

After several meetings, the group has decided to operate the child care cooperatively with both men and women working at the center. Each family in the group has already agreed to pledge a set amount each month (determined by what the individual felt she/he could pay) to operate the center.

Anyone interested in joining the group should call Chris, 587-5193.

## mad women

Many of us are turned off to the oppression of women in therapy and we want to change all that shit. We are forming a group of women who want to explore ways of openly expressing our feelings toward one another. What we do and how often we meet will depend on what all of us in the group want. Possibilities are creative movement, touching, psychodrama as well as consciousness raising. If you're interested call Pam or Sharon, 546-7048 or Pat, 659-9364

## better than nothing?

The Washington Hospital Center recently opened the area's first outpatient abortion clinic. The Washington Post said that as a clinic it "will make it easier and less expensive for a woman to end unwanted pregnancies."

To date, making it easier means: 1) calling the clinic many, many times before you even get an answer, 2) an almost absolute need for a doctor's referral to be considered for an abortion, 3) a positive pregnancy report when you go to the center (shouldn't this testing be part of a clinic's health care?), and 4), naturally, your hard, cold \$200, (an abortion can be performed for about \$20 to \$30.) Finally, the hospital requires that you get Mom or Dad's ok if you are under 21, or if you are married, you have to get hubby's.

The anesthesia used is only a paracervical block (a shot) with no additional tranquilizers. There can be some discomfort--women need to be prepared for that. Therefore, there is a need for counseling before the abortion is performed. There is none at the clinic presently. There is no available bed space for recovery. There are no facilities for any other anesthesia to be used.

Women deserve better care than this place is prepared to give.

## mountain music

JUBILEE!--formerly billed as the West South Central Appalachian Heartland Grassroots Fairly Musical Old Rock Coal Camp Reflections on Youtopia and Fiddlers Convention--will be a weekend (Feb. 19-21) of workshops on mountain music, model communities' work and community health organizing in Appalachia. It will be held at 1538 Highland, Knoxville, Tenn. If you go, take sleeping bags. In Knoxville, call Marge Gregg or Kathy Gibney, 517-523-3367, or Mary Herr, 617-584-7987. In D.C., call Jan Hackman, 234-9382 for more information or rides.

## w.a.c. conference

Women in the Academic Community--a regional conference for academic and professional women from Boston to Washington--will be held at the University of Pennsylvania on Saturday, February 27, 1971. Registration is scheduled from 8:45 to 9:45 at the Christian Association, 36th St. between Walnut and Spruce, Philadelphia.

Morning speakers to be held and afternoon workshops in professional and legal action, as well as workshops specifically for undergraduate women, graduate women, black women, working mothers, secretaries faculty wives, and administrators.

To register by mail send a check for \$3.00 to Women in the Academic Community, Christian Ass'n, U. of Pa., 3601 Locust St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104. Specify workshop preferences. More information available.

## why we are

Your newspaper, *off our backs*, is really great but I think you should print addresses and phone numbers of places in the D.C. area where a person can write for information about the Movement.

I'm really interested in the Movement and I would like to send away and read all I can so I can spread the word to some misinformed people I know.

More Power to You!  
Pat Piper

Dear Pat,

Now there is a place in *oob* for news and reports of local meetings and information about what is happening in D.C. We need everybody's help and communication, so send us news, information about meetings, etc. in the local area.

bringing it home staff

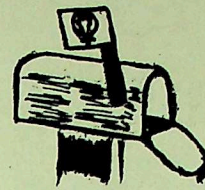


## women and the law

The law as it affects women will be one of the courses offered in a new program to train counselors to aid local movement lawyers. Designed to train law aides, the courses will probably be taught in Adams School several times a week. Courses offered include the law and juveniles, landlord and tenant law, military law, and street law.

The law course which concerns women will cover such areas as divorce law, domestic relations law, marriage, separation, custody, adoption, support and property settlements. John Karr, an attorney in private practice is the teacher.

People interested in more information can visit or phone the offices at 1724 "S" St., N.W., 387-5760 or call Brint Dillingham at 652-3682 or David Gespass 362-1711.



## needed info

D.C. Women's Liberation is holding political discussions on the women's movement on alternate Mondays at the WL office, 1840 Biltmore St., N.W., Apt. 10. Call the office, 232-5145, for more information... WL orientation and discussions are being held Tues. at 8 p.m. at the WL office and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at Montgomery Jr. College, Takoma Park, Md., Science Building, Rm. 10. For more information, call the WL office, or Kay or Chris, 587-5193... Sexism as a source of oppression is the topic of discussion at the Gay Liberation Front meetings on Thursdays at 8 p.m. at 1620 S. St., N.W., 265-2181.

The Alliance of Union Women will meet Weds., March 3 at noon at the A.M.E. Church, 1518 M St., N.W.... "The Stereotyping of women in the nation's schools" will be the title of a talk by Jo-Ann Evans Gardner at the Washington EdPress meeting Thurs., Feb. 18 at the Ambassador Hotel. Women who do not wish to attend the luncheon may come at 1:00 p.m. to hear Jo-Ann speak...

Idamae Garrott, president of the Montgomery County Council will speak at the meeting of the D.C. Area NCW at 10 a.m. Sat., March 13, Cleveland Park Public Library, 3310 Conn. Ave., N.W. D.C. Welfare Rights Organization meets every Monday at 10 a.m. at 941 N. Capitol St. For information, contact Bobbi McMahon, 546-7083.

An all women's dance will be held Feb. 27 at All Souls Church from 7 to 11 p.m. featuring refreshments, slide show and the New Haven Women's Pock Band. Donations will be requested to pay for the band's expenses to come to D.C.

FREE CLINIC -- Open Mon. - Fri., 7-11 pm. and Sat., 9-5. The Free Clinic is located in Georgetown Lutheran Church, Wisconsin and Volta Pl., N.W., Phone is 965-5476  
 ABORTION COUNSELING -- Women's Liberation Call 483-4632 for an appointment during the following hours: Mon. 9-12 am.; Tues. 1-4 pm., 7-10 pm.; Weds. 10am - 4pm.; Thurs. 10 am. - 1 pm.; Fri. 1-4 pm.; Sat. 10 am. - 4 pm.  
 EXHIBITS

"The Genteel Female"--Lithographs depicting the romantic view of the American women of the 19th century. Thru Feb. 16. Arts and Industries Bldg.--Smithsonian.

150th Anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D.--first woman medical doctor of modern times. West Foyer Ground Floor, Main Bldg. Library of Congress. Thru April 30.

Gabriela Mistral: Life and Works of Latin America's First Nobel Prize Winner. Works by one of the most outstanding Spanish-American poets of the 20th century. 1889-1957.--poet, essayist, teacher and diplomat. On view in Hispanic Foundation second Floor, Main Bldg. 8:30-5:00p.m. Monday-Friday, thru Aug 31.

Emerson Gallery--Paintings by Dorothy Hult. Feb 2-27. Tues-Sat., 11 a.m.-11p.m. 6822 Poplar Pl. McLean, Va.

Erlebacher's Gallery--Cover portraits of contemporary women from Time magazine. 5512 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## among the garbage and the flowers



Second-hand  
Rose

*This is the third of a series evaluating services and programs in Washington affecting women. If you have a suggestion, write.*

If you live in the Washington, D.C. area, you have an alternative to the overpriced and nutrition-poor food which is sold in the chain supermarkets. GLUT, a food co-op sells wholesome food practically at cost. Most of the flours and grains are purchased from the Mennonite "Better Foods Foundation"; the produce comes from a local wholesaler. Not all of the food is organic but it has been handled less and is fresher than the food sold in the supermarket.

Besides flours, grains, fruits and vegetables, the co-op also has eggs, cheese, dried fruit, nuts, cereals, meat, bread, natural cider when it is available, peanut butter and honey. Actually, there are very few foods which are not available at the co-op. Examples of the low prices are: bread .20 a loaf, a dozen eggs .51, and oranges .07 each. A five percent charge added to each order which includes D.C. sales tax.

Those who shop at the food co-op are encouraged to help with unloading, packing, check-out etc. In fact, one person per order is asked to choose a job which takes one-half day each month. If you don't want to work, an additional 5 percent charge is added to your order.

The food co-op operates on an order-a-week-in-advance schedule. You order your food one week, pay for it, pick it up the next week at which time you again order for the following week. Presently, there are three locations where you can order your food:

Grace Episcopal Church, 1014 Wisconsin Ave., in Georgetown, Thursdays, 4:00 to 8:00 pm.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 16th and Newton, Sts., N.W., Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 pm.

University of Maryland, Newman Center, Knox & Gilford Sts., College Park, Md. Thursdays, 6:00 to 9:00 pm.

GLUT, which considers itself to be a workers co-op would like to see other neighborhood buying clubs start. If you are interested in starting one for your neighborhood or organization, call 462-2818 or 234-6288.

All people interested in the future of the co-op please come to a meeting at Grace Episcopal Church on Sat., Feb. 20, at 3 p.m.

## vd...are facts enough?

The myths surrounding VD are numerous and have come to my attention at the Free Clinic in Georgetown where I counsel VD patients. One of the major problems is that many doctors and men believe that good girls can't get or give the disease. I have heard stories of people being treated for (non-existing) appendicitis, when in fact individuals had gonorrhea. If asked, most men will name one "chick" from many who he is sure is the infected one. This male will probably find it very hard to tell a "good chick" that he had the disease. Some people suggest that although G.C. may be obtained from one contact, frequency of contact gives one more of a chance of having and spreading the disease, therefore "bad" girls are more suspect.

The only sure way to know if you have VD is to be told that someone with whom you had relations was infected at the time of contact.

The signs of gonorrhea in a woman can go unnoticed for months by her and by her gynecologist. Why are the symptoms so difficult to notice? Women normally have a discharge because of the amount of bacteria that is present in the vaginal tract. If gonorrhea is contracted, a thicker, more yellowish discharge is caused, but it may not be noticeable. A test called a culture may be given by a gynecologist, but there is no guarantee that he will test the area infected, since the area is localized, or be able to see through the other bacteria and organisms usually present.

In a male the sexual and urinating tube is the same and therefore when the gonorrhea organisms mature (3-7 days after contact) and the formed pus sores break open urination is extremely painful. Not many men wait more than a few hours before getting help.

Because many people take antibiotics for ailments, the gonorrhea organisms may be resistant to them. To be sure that one is cured it is necessary to be re-checked even after symptoms have disappeared. One cannot always get a positive reading on a test of a woman who may have gonorrhea, but because there is a good percentage who can be diagnosed as positive, it is well worth one's trouble to be checked every six months. Resistant strains are more difficult to treat quickly, but all have been treated by one antibiotic or another, and often with stronger doses of antibiotics.

The amount of time in which one should not have sexual contact after treatment is generally two weeks. Some people may be cured in four days but others may take several weeks.

Available free (or minimal pay) treatment centers are: Public Health Dept. at Upshur St. N.W., Free Clinic in Georgetown, and hospital out-patient clinics.

# bringing it home

## tell it like it 'tis

This is the third of a series of articles about Washington area women of different backgrounds, ages and life situations.

The following was a taped interview from a local university law student who has experienced prejudice against her as a black and as a female.

Q. Why did you want to go into law?

A. I've really seen a lot of people get messed up. And I've seen my father get messed up in terms of some of the bad deals he's gotten from a lawyer in S.C. and I've seen a lot of problems in communities which could have been solved had there been some kind of legal counseling. Not only legal counseling but someone who was interested in the particular problems involved.

What I'm interested in is community-type law - working with people who are not the types to consult lawyers because they don't have any money.

I really dislike hearing a person say, "Well, this is the way it's always been and there's nothing I can do about it." Or, "I don't have the time, the money and besides nobody's interested anyway." So, I would like to combine working with the community with my work as a prosecuting lawyer.

Q. You would be doing this with a lot of subjectivity because of what your family has gone through?

A. I must admit I feel very subjectively about what I want to do because a lot of things which have happened to me wouldn't have had to have happened. They did because I wasn't knowledgeable about many things. There was no one to help me either.

Q. What has happened as far as legal injustices?

A. Well, my father was in an accident in his car which wasn't his fault. He got a traffic ticket. The way people work it done there they wrote it up like it was his fault. But who was there to fight it for him?

There was one black lawyer down there and he sold him out when he had another accident. He fell at the A.&P. flat on his back and tried to consult this lawyer to get money for doctor's expenses. The store had insurance but tried to say it was my father's fault. If this guy had been an effective lawyer he could have proven without a doubt that it wasn't my father's fault.

Q. Why didn't he fight it?

A. It was to the lawyer's advantage not to. I guess being black in a predominantly white city was the reason. Too much to lose.

My mother took a course which was to guarantee her a job. This was about five years ago. She never did get a job but people who were white and 20 years older than her got jobs. I know she didn't get the jobs because she was black. Now this was federal money involved in this project and certainly there was something that could have been done about it. But who did anything -- nobody!

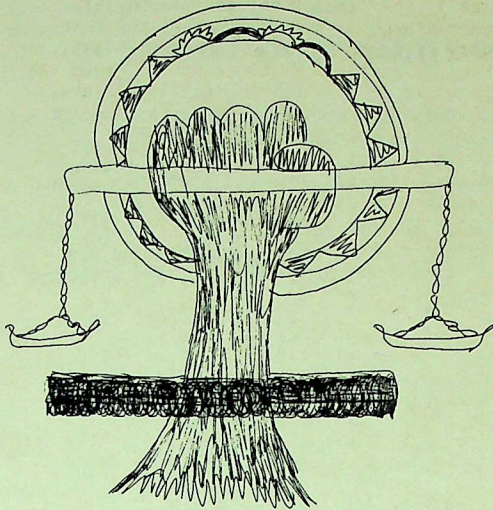
Q. Why have you decided to work from within the system to bring about changes?

A. How can anyone fight or change anything until he understands it or knows how it operates. I can't fight the system if I haven't begun to know the little ins-and-outs. That's why I'd rather be a prosecuting lawyer than a defense attorney.

In working in the community I'd like to expose, not only expose but try to do something about, social inequities. That's why I want to combine community work with being a trial lawyer. If I uncover something, I can take it into court myself. That's the main reason why I wanted to have a legal background because I didn't want to have to sit back after having discovered something and wait for somebody to decide it's worth taking into court. I want to be able to do it myself.

Q. At the law school here in D.C. have you felt any prejudice against you as a woman?

A. I've noticed lots of times when some of the women speak, the professor might



look at some of the men, and depending on what answer the woman might give, the professor might openly laugh or some of the men might.

Q. Maliciously?

A. Oh sure. I don't know if you've heard about the Women's Rights Organization over at school or not. Some of the things we talk about are really revealing of this prejudice.

Some professors will say things like they're not used to having women in their classes. Little subtle comments. One instructor said one time when one female said something, "Well, what else can you expect from a woman?"

Q. Are all the women in the women's group graduate students?

A. No. It involves secretaries, under-

grad. law and grad. law students. Anyone who's interested.

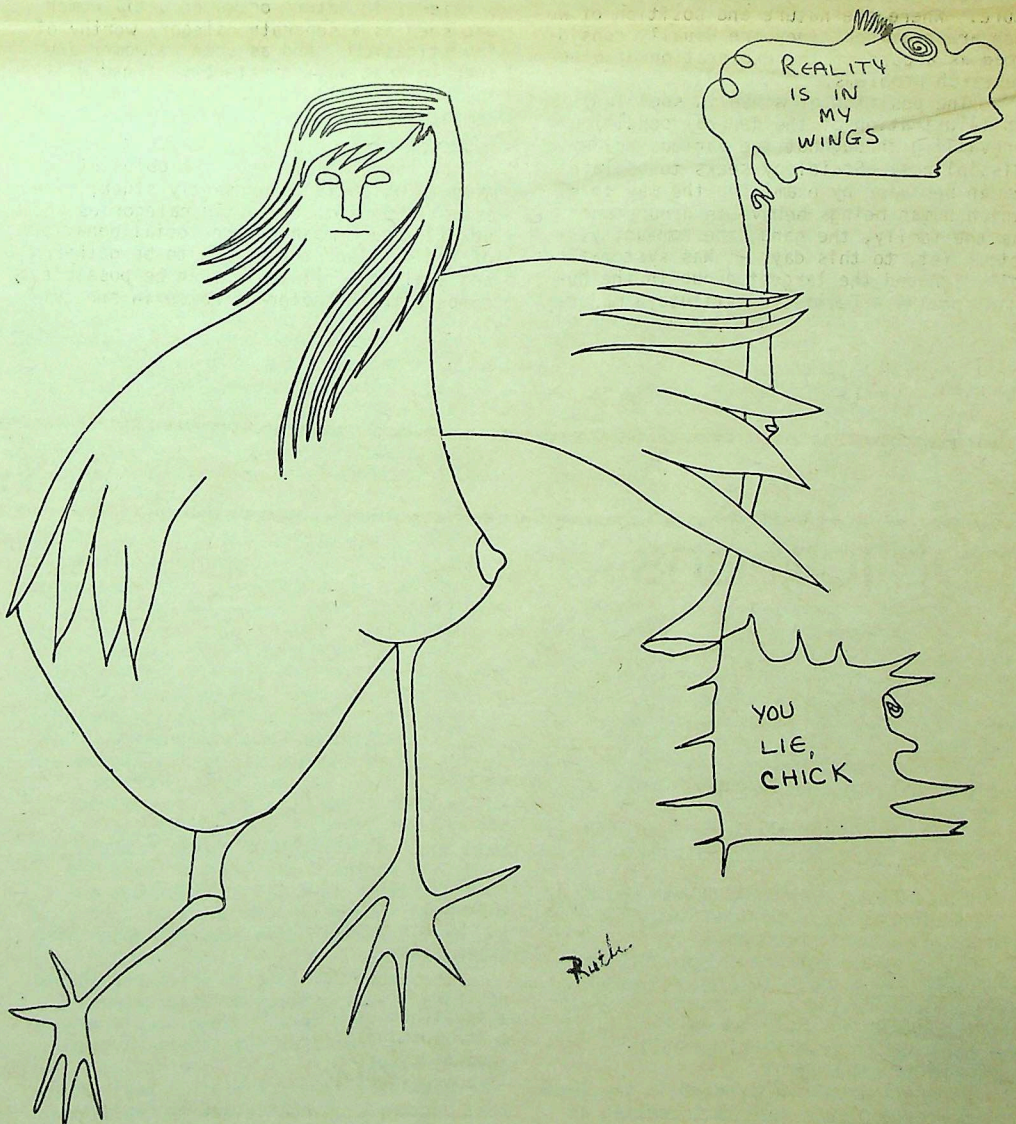
At the beginning of one of my classes recently, the instructor was talking about women who are unmarried being selected as jurors, and how sympathetic a woman of 29 (unmarried) would be sitting on a jury for certain types of cases, about her frustrations, and all the usual things people say about women who aren't married. So then he said, "If there's anyone here from Women's Lib., I'll give her equal time." We took a break about then. I stood up and told him in front of some of the class that I wanted to comment on what he'd just said. Which I did. Ever since then I've been known as a very strong advocate of Women's Liberation. A lot of women came up to me after class and said they were very glad that I didn't let him get away with that.

Q. In terms of being prejudiced against as a woman, are you as a black?

A. My law school has some of the most subtle forms of discrimination you've ever seen, in terms of the instructors and students.

Some of the guys can't seem to get it together that there are women, especially black women, sitting in the class right next to them, studying the things they're studying, taking the same exams, doing as well or even better than them. Some of them flip out on real ego trips trying to handle it at all.

Finally, I've just had to tell several of them, "Look, we're both here to get a professional education and that's the level I'm meeting you on. I'm not interested in what's in your pants but with what's in your head."



## international institute of women studies

The International Institute of Women Studies has been created to encourage, advance and finance research and thought on the subject of women's nature and behavior. It seeks to focus specific attention on women in all disciplines--anatomy, biology, physiology, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, sociology, literature, history, law, etc.--and to bring about an exchange of information and dialogue between the disciplines on the subject of women.

The creation of the Institute is a response to the complaints of scholars of women that there is a paucity of accurate information about women and that the research which has been done on women is, in the main, of poor quality. Women scholars also report difficulty in acquiring information which they need about women from disciplines removed from their own.

Women have not been the subject of much scientific research or analysis. Where the phenomenon of the female existence is not ignored, it is frequently handled with exceedingly low levels of analysis. These include the ever popular tautological approach--women behave as they do because women are like that--and explanations of female behavior based upon folklore. In the social sciences descriptive analyses of female behavior have been highly personalized and fail to relate their behavior to the physical, economic, social and psychological conditions giving rise to it.

Simone de Beauvoir pointed out that men are regarded as mankind and women as individual, ancillary persons who appear in certain routinized capacities as mothers, lovers, daughters, friends and so on. "Humanity is male", she writes, "and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him." The female is "the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other." This conception of women has been reflected in the scholarly literature. Where the nature and position of women are examined, they are usually considered as a part of the exploration of other research problems.

The position of women in sociology is an illustration of the general condition prevailing throughout the various academic disciplines. Sociology seeks to explain human behavior by examining the way in which human beings behave in groups such as the family, the gang, the community, etc. Yet, to this day, it has systematically ignored the largest group in the human species. Females constitute a major-

ity of the human population and are numerically the largest category in society. When viewed as a social group, the category of women is larger than any class, racial, national or other social group recognized in the sociological literature. This complex social group has had no recognition as such in the history of sociology. Women are not even a category. It is not an accident or oversight that the discipline concerned with group behavior has, for more than one hundred years, failed to identify for scientific investigation the largest human group. It is a reflection of the atomized way in which female behavior is viewed in the general social and scholarly thinking.

The nature and behavior of women is not only segmented in the scholarly literature, these are frequently approached in a manner which prohibits scientific inquiry. Women are studied, as Blacks used to be, as a "problem". The Women as a social, economic, psychological "problem" studies often reach ludicrous dimensions. Inclusion of women in sociological courses entitled Minority Problems is a case in point. Women are not a minority group; men are. This illustrates the common failure to use, or use accurately, the most rudimentary tools of analysis in dealing with women. The minority-majority conceptualization is confused, in this case, with the totally different sociological concept of dominant-subordinate groups. Men, like whites in South Africa, are a dominant group in our society, but they are numerically a minority of the population.

Evans Pritchard observed that in the nineteenth century anthropology was thought to be the study of "oddments and fetishes." The study of women is presently on the same level. It is composed of sociological, anthropological, psychological and economic findings and tidbits garnered by ransacking investigations concerned with something else. There can be no comparative data of a scientific nature on women until women are seen as a separate category worthy of investigation. And as soon as women are seen in that way, a category of men will follow. It will follow for obvious and comparative purposes, and the formation of two such categories will remove the study of the sex variable from the obfuscating mire in which it is presently stuck. The establishment of these two categories would permit data comparing the social behavior of the male and the female to be gathered and analyzed. It would then be possible to compare the behavior of women in one cul-

ture, class, familial pattern, etc. with that of women in another. Women would no longer be seen as the Other, as that which has a peculiar persistence for behaving differently from the alleged norm of the human species, men. What uniqueness, if any, they possess, would be revealed and the social forces which condition their behavior could be analyzed. Why have men historically exploited women and been successful in doing so? We do not, to this technological day, know and we cannot know until we examine these groups in their own right.

The idea of the Institute grew from correspondence on women studies between scholars in the United States, France, Sweden and India. It was felt that correspondence was inadequate to the task of getting the study of women out of the primordial ooze and into a period where it will be subjected to intellectual rigor. The first researchers of the Institute are the studies of a cluster of women undergraduate and graduate students at American University. Courses on women have been taught at American University for the past four years and they, and the research facilities in the Washington, D. C. area, have attracted a coterie of young scholars concerned with research on women. The Institute is an outgrowth of this small, self-selecting intellectual community. The local scholars whose research work led to the idea of forming an Institute, most notably Janice Pottker, Juanita Weaver, and Billy Ann Stultz, have been energetic contributors to the work of planning the Institute. It is hoped that the Institute will have a broadly based, egalitarian structure and come to be an international community of scholars devoted to advancing scientific knowledge about women. Fund raising is in the beginning stages and the organizers hope to attract funds from diversified, largely private and female, sources.

The Institute will be an independent non-profit organization devoted to sponsoring, compiling and supplying scientific knowledge about the nature and behavior of women. It seeks to encourage speculative and theoretical thought about women as well as to spawn empirical investigations. It is hoped that within its seminars and publications the hard and difficult questions concerning women's nature and condition will be raised and addressed. All persons wishing to be in touch with its activities or affiliated with it are encouraged to contact the Institute at its present address: 1615 Myrtle St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012.

by Barbette Blackington

## advertisements

### publications

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW	14 Charles Lane New York, New York 10014	A monthly magazine of revolutionary struggle. It brings to its readers significant literature produced by the women's Liberation movement. Special March issue on International Women's Day.
LIBERATED GUARDIAN	14 Cooper Sq. New York, N.Y. 10003	A liberated nt'l publication. Pead Write. Sell. Subscribe.
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION	1445 Stockton St. San Francisco, California 94133	A Socialist pub. dealing with the problems of the movement. \$6 for 6 issues or \$1.50 per issue
THE LADDER	P.O. Box 5025 Washington St. Reno, Nevada 89503	Magazine published by lesbians for lesbians and for all women concerned with full human rights.
UPPITY WOMEN UNITE	KNOW, INC., P.O. Box 10197 Pittsburgh, Pa. 15232. Write for Price list. Also send stamped self-addressed envelope for 3 free lists.	The women's Free Press announces publication of Tobias' FEMALE STUDIES-I, syllabi, reading lists in the Social Sciences, \$2; Howe's FEMALE STUDIES-II, syllabi, reading lists in literature and the arts, \$4.00; CARNELL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, \$2.50; SIXTEEN REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, \$2.00. Peporters you can trust, Publications of the Women's Movement, Articles on Women's Role

## Troops Frisky as They Entered Laos

Senators Criticize Blackout  
—Aiken Says People 'Fear  
and Expect the Worst'

Washington Refuses Comment

Fulbright Committee Seeks  
to Penetrate Blackout of  
News on Allied Drive

Nixon, at Prayer Breakfast, Bids  
Nation Seek an 'Understanding Heart'  
U.S. Aides Also Say Nixon  
Has Not Yet Decided on  
Invasion by Saigon

Nixons to Fly  
To Fla. Today  
For Weekend

The invasion brought North Vietnam-  
ese-Saigon hostilities into the third Indo-  
china country, but the U.S. and South Viet-  
nam said this didn't mean an enlargement  
of the war.

Bank to Promote Space Data  
Spend, Spend, Spend

January  
Jobless  
Rate 6%

5.4 Million Out  
But U.S. Sees  
Improvement

Budget Promise  
Could Be Mirage

Nixon as War President

ABC Says Dead GI  
In Viet Uniform  
Airlifted From Laos

Army Refines Its Anti-Riot  
"Crime dropped 62%  
when General Electric  
joined the Syracuse  
police force."

Nixon Hails Moon Walk Success  
Euphoria on Laos  
Copy of the Bible  
Is Placed on Moon May Be Transient

Army Buys TV Time  
To Attract Enlistees  
American Stock Exchange

3 GIs Indicted  
In Bombings  
At Wis. Base  
CALLEY IS RELEASED  
AFTER SANIT YCHECK

SCD 21 272

Volume II, Number 9  
May/June, 1972  
Washington, D.C.

# off our backs

a women's news journal

35¢



### OOB NEEDS CORRESPONDENTS

We started out as a local paper, as such we could call ourselves a woman's news journal in good conscience. Since we now reach out to women outside the Washington, d.c. area that title has bothered us. We would like to be a news journal but we don't have the funds to travel around the country giving good coverage to the events that interest us as women. So now we are asking you for volunteer correspondents - women to send in news in finished or unfinished form so that we can begin to make struggle a real reflection of what women are doing. Send us your name and address for our files and you can be a regular - or just send us some news, marked NEWS for fast attention, when you think of us.

**off our backs**

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## for tallulah bankhead

She was no human victory

This Mighty Mouth

Drilling squads of adjectives

In declensions of abuse.

She rented her life to the theater

Playing inflection against meaning

And lost her art

Swallowing sulfuric pancakes for a laugh

Until the vulgarity of chronology

Eroded her face,

A withering husk of degraded flesh,

No woman's victory.

Oh Tallulah!

Why?

Because some dragon never slain

Lived in her heart and fed on her brain.

rita mae brown

### oob regulars

6- WOMAN'S STUDIES  
7-9 CULTURE VULTURE  
16-17 STRUGGLE  
18-20 BRINGING IT HOME  
21 SURVIVAL  
22-23 LETTERS

### oob specials

2-3 PSYCHOSURGERY  
4-5 VIDEO CONFERENCE  
10-11 POETRY  
14-15 WOMEN'S center



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one more time the poem credited to Ericka Huggins on the centerspread of our April issue was written by Sandy Boucher of San Francisco---We are really sorry Sandy.

### US

frances chapman, onka dekkers, tacie dejanikus, margaret devoe, carol edelson, kathie garner, chris hobbs, georgia jones, norma lesserdolores neuman, emily orzech, nancy polatty, fran pollner, gale samuels, bobbie spalter-roth.

### FRIENDS

mariette wickes, frances lang, sue strauss, nancy ferro, linda lillienfeld, joann malone, joanne kovacs, heidi steffens.

notice! In recognition of the fact that they are members of an alive and well matriarchy in the midst of a patriarchal society, Bobbie Goldstone of oob (along with her four female first cousins - Eleanor Rappe, Barbara Black, and Susan Ratzkin) have taken Spalter-Roth, a combination of their grandmothers and mothers maiden names. From now on then Bobbie Goldstone will be known as Bobbie Spalter-Roth.

## lobotomies again

Dr. Peter Breggin, a practicing psychiatrist in Washington, D.C. and a faculty member of the Washington School for Psychiatry, gave a talk on psychosurgery sponsored by the Medical Committee for Human Rights. The Washington Post announced it and about 100 people showed up at George Washington University to listen for free. His enormous self-pride at being the first to publicly fight psychosurgery drove one of my companions out the door and even though we'd been warned that Breggin was no feminist supporter, I lost my second companion when he started talking about how he makes his women-housewife patients aware of their oppression. But his message is more important than his personality and his message is clear: "psychosurgery is a crime against humanity"; he thinks it is unethical, scientifically unsound and should be completely outlawed. His lecture and two articles printed in the Congressional Record explain why.

## definition

In defining psychosurgery, Breggin uses big, ugly words like mutilation, destruction and atrocity and describes patients who have had psychosurgery as emotionally blunted and behaviorally controlled. Breggin says "psychosurgery is any surgery which mutilates or destroys brain tissue to control the emotions or behavior without treating a known brain disease. In 99% of the cases, the brain surgery will actually attack normal tissue. In a few cases, some brain disease will be present, but in these instances, the brain disease will have nothing in particular to do with the symptoms which the surgery is attacking...it is simply a mutilating operation whose effect is to destroy the individual's ability to respond emotionally."

There are many different kinds of psychosurgical operations and techniques. The most well known is the lobotomy which attacks the frontal lobes (see diagram). It is assumed that the frontal lobes are responsible for people's creativity, empathy, foresight and abstract reasoning abilities. A cingulotomy is "the creation of precisely placed lesions (cuts) in the cingulum of the frontal lobe." Also being attacked are the lower structures of the limbic system--the hypothalamus, the thalamus and the amygdala--which are supposedly the seat of the emotions. Amygdalotomies are beginning to replace lobotomies because there is apparently less damage to one's intellectual capacities. However, as Breggin points out, the brain operates as a whole so that even partial destruction of the brain affects its overall functioning.

The operations can be performed with a surgical knife, ultrasonic energy, radiation or electricity through implanted electrodes.

Any liscened doctor provided he (in both of Breggin's very full bibliographies I've found only one woman's name) can find a patient and a willing hospital can operate.

It's no surprise that women are special targets of psychosurgeons. Breggin believes that psychosurgeons dislike the importance of feelings to women. For example, one psychosurgeon, Robert Heath, Chairman and Professor of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Tulane, writing in the Journal of Neuropsychiatry, states that Einstein's level of thought was higher than Einstein Keeler's (she was involved in a scandal with British politicians in 1963) because his thought was less pervaded by "emotions and wishes."

Another, perhaps, more important reason is that, according to Breggin, "psychosurgery is much more effective on women than on men because women can more easily be returned home to function as partially crippled, brain damaged housewives, while there are no social or occupational roles for partially crippled, brain damaged men".

Psychosurgeons claim the operation relieves myriad mental problems: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, delusions, obsessive-neurosis, homosexuality, frigidity in women, alcoholism, drug addiction, agoraphobia (fear of open spaces) and narcolepsy (sudden and uncontrollable attacks of deep sleep).

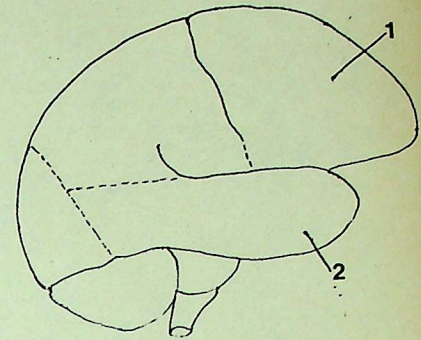
But, according to Breggin, the reason psychosurgeons can sometimes claim to have solved some of what they define as mental problems is that the person's ability to react to her/his surroundings has been blunted and her/his behavior pacified. He lets the psychosurgeons speak for themselves: Dr. William Scoville of Hartford Hospital and Yale University, admits that any lobotomy is destructive and Lothar Kalinowsky, Professor of Psychiatry, New York Medical College in New York City, describes modern lobotomy patients as sometimes blunted and subdued, often with shallow feelings and impaired sense of self. The father of American psychosurgery, Dr. Walter Freeman, writes:

"Theoretically, on the basis of personality studies, creativeness should be abolished by lobotomy...A few patients can run their own business or resume their professional status--medicine, law, etc... although they may not become leaders in their own professions, they serve adequately and comfortably".

He also adds that lobotomy should be recommended more cautiously for professionals than for those in business and commerce because the former need to more deeply appreciate other people's feelings.

Patients who have undergone psychosurgery not only have a high mortality rate and often die from normally detected ills such as fractures, coronary occlusions and perforated ulcers, but can also suffer schizophrenic-like psychosis and memory loss from surgical lesions.

Psychosurgery is also being done in Canada, Australia, France, Spain, Italy, West Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, Thailand, and India. The world's leaders are Japan, England and the United States.



1 frontal lobe

2 temporal lobe

## in the beginning

Lobotomies were first performed on a large scale by Egas Moniz in Portugal in 1936. The results: psychosurgery was banned in Portugal; Moniz was shot five times by a patient; he received a Nobel Prize for his work and god only knows what happened to his victims.

An American neurologist, Dr. Walter Freeman, former chairman of the George Washington University Department of Neurology and president of the D.C. Medical Society carried on Moniz' work. His book, *Psychosurgery*, is the standard text for students and he was recently named honorary president of the two-year old International Association for Psychosurgery. However, some of his patients also attempted to shoot him and he was eventually banned from operating at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, the largest mental hospital in Washington, D.C. Some of Freeman's most interesting observations result from his experiences at St. Elizabeth's. He describes the before and after reactions of his very first patient:

"Who is that man? What does he want here? What's he going to do to me? Tell him to go away. Oh, I don't want to see him." Them she cried out and the nurses were barely able to hold her.

- After surgery Freeman asks her:  
Q. Are you content to stay here?  
A. Yes.  
Q. Do you have any of your old fears?  
A. No.  
Q. What were you afraid of?  
A. I don't know. I seem to forget.

Another woman patient whom Freeman describes as "300 pounds of ferocious humanity" became so docile after her operation, Freeman could slap her behind "without eliciting anything more than a wide grin or a hoarse chuckle".

The early lobotomies (it is estimated that 50,000 were done in the U.S. between 1936 and the mid-fifties) compared by Breggin to "swishing an ice pick around behind the eyeballs to destroy portions of the brain's frontal lobe", left many patients in a near "vegetable state".

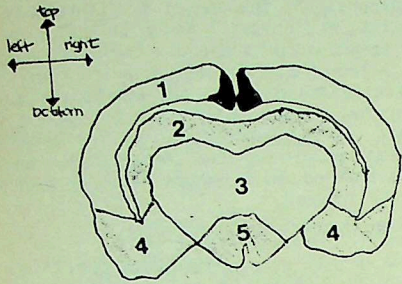
## a resurgence

Breggin offers several explanations for the renewed interest in psychosurgery. Shock, insulin, and drug therapy have not been the panaceas for mental problems that they were once hoped to prove. He also suggests that psychosurgery, now armed with more precise surgical methods, presents an alarmingly simplistic answer to those who recognize violence as a political issue but hope to solve it "at least in part, technologically."

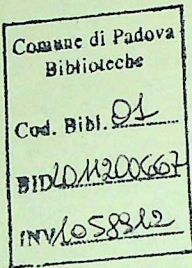
Some psychosurgeons are fully aware of the political potential for controlling the "problems" of our society. In fact, Freeman describes the four best types of patients as older, female, black and having a "simpler" occupation. He considers black females the best group.

## special targets: women

Psychosurgeons are quick to work on women. The Kingston Psychiatric Hospital in Ontario refused to allow psychosurgical operations on males because of adverse publicity about lobotomies after the publication of a critical study but 17 women weren't as fortunate. A San Francisco doctor, Peter Lindstrom, discussing a series of 60 psychotic and 154 neurotic patients wrote that 72% of the psychotic and 80% of the neurotics were women. An article by Shobe and Gidea in the Journal of the American Medical Association, October 7, 1968 mentioned a study by Shobe with 18 women and nine men. Another series of patients operated on by Dr. H.T. Ballantine, Jr. at the Massachusetts General of included 26 women and 14 men. In a 1968 report by Drs. M.H. Brown and Jack Lighthill of Santa Monica California they describe the results of operations on 110 cases, 71% women. Not surprisingly, Breggin has found, that the psychosurgeons never comment on possible implications of such an obvious majority of women patients.



- 1 neo cortex
- 2 hippocampus
- 3 thalamus
- 4 amygdala
- 5 hypothalamus



## children too

Adults are not the only victims of psychosurgery. Children as young as five are being subjected to brain-blunting by Dr. Orlando J. Andy and Marion Jurko at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine. Claiming to treat three symptoms, hyperactivity, aggression and emotional stability, Andy admitted in a letter to Breggin that "in relation to the operative results, the category under aggression appears to be alleviated to a much greater extent than the other two categories [hyperactivity and instability]."

## studies

What relief psychosurgery does exactly provide compared to other methods or no treatment at all is almost impossible to determine because, according to Breggin, since the beginning of psychosurgery there has never been a single projective controlled study anywhere in the world. (A projective study would match data simultaneously on a group with similar symptoms, one who would undergo psychosurgery and another who wouldn't.) However, there have been three retrospective studies, all of which concluded that the patients who had had psychosurgery weren't greatly improved. In a 1962 study of 229 lobotomies and an equal number of controls retrospectively matched, Dr. Robert Vosburg concluded that the lobotomized group had obvious brain damage and noted that "the patients appeared to be withdrawn and hostile. In short, they act as if they had been hurt". Five years after surgery, only 19 percent in each group had been released from hospitals.

## political implications

While Freeman's list of most desirable kinds of patients and the obvious preference for women patients makes clear a not very subtle inclination to take advantage of the oppressed, some psychosurgeons either ignore or don't care about the political implications of their work. Others do. After the 1967 Detroit riots, Drs. Mark and Ervin in a letter to the Journal of the American Medical Association attempted to explain why only some ghetto residents destroyed property and shot at police.

Their explanation, apparently based on nothing, was brain damage. They hypothesized that probably five to ten percent (or 10 to 20 million people) in the U.S. have brain damage and suggested that a screening system could be devised to root out these people before they commit their violence. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the Justice Department and the National Institutes of Mental Health thought their proposal was interesting enough to grant them \$108,930 to do exactly the type of research their letter suggested. According to a Justice Department summary, they will study: "The role of neurobiological dysfunction in the violent offender. Specifically the grantee will determine the incidence of such disorders in a state penitentiary for men; establish their prevalence in a non-incarcerated population; and improve, develop and test the usefulness of electrophysiological and neurophysiological techniques for the detection of such disorders in routine examination."

## mind control

Such an examination probably would become routine (perhaps, on the first day of kindergarten along with a social security number, maybe special numbers for violence-prone people) if the dreams of Jose Delgado, M.D., Professor of Physiology at Yale, are ever fulfilled. (He is currently setting up an institute in Spain with Franco's blessings.) Breggin says that Delgado advocated in his 1969 book, *Physical Control of the Mind, "Toward a Psychocivilized Society"* that the government establish a NASA-like agency to familiarize and popularize mind control research through the mass media and "to co-ordinate plans, budgets and actions" for physical control of the mind. Breggin calls Delgado's plan the "ultimate lobotomy". In experimenting with electrical stimulation of the brain (ESB) using implanted electrodes, Delgado has been able to "evoke, modify or inhibit aggression, dominance, mounting and other social interactions in colonies of cats and monkeys". His experiments on human beings have demonstrated that "brain stimulation during surgical interventions or with electrodes implanted for days or months has blocked the thinking process, inhibited speech and movement, or in other cases has evoked pleasure, laughter, friendliness, verbal output, hostility, fear, hallucinations, and memories." Delgado has also been working on "a two-way radio [which] could be established between the brain of a subject and a computer. Certain types of neuronal activity related to behavioral disturbances such as anxiety, depression, or rage could be recognized in order to trigger stimulation of specific inhibitory structures".

Delgado thinks his research will eventually lead to "a happier, less destructive and better balanced [society]". He assumes electrical stimulation of the brain will be used by some groups to control others for such purposes as preventing generals and armies from fighting wars (he doesn't question the desirability of social control), but denies any possibility for bad social control.

## ethics?

Just as with Delgado and his mind control research, almost all the psychosurgeons believe that their work can only prove beneficial to their patients--at least some of them sometimes--and society. However, there are some neurosurgeons and psychiatrists who don't like psychosurgery but believe that as long as it is performed with voluntary consent, it's o.k. Breggin says that not only is the line between voluntary and involuntary consent so vague as to be almost an unworkable distinction, but that psychosurgery should be looked upon as partial murder of a human being and therefore, be declared illegal just as helping someone commit suicide is also equally murder. He is now working on

a bill to present to Congress to abolish psychosurgery (as the Russians did in 1951 although their ban hasn't prevented them from using other psychiatric methods to control undesirable behavior). Congressman Cornelius Gallagher from New Jersey presently under indictment for tax fraud has published in the Congressional Record two of Breggin's article which many other medical journals have refused.

Whatever the implications for women's fight for survival and redefinition may be if Delgado's psychocivilized society becomes a reality, it is clear that psychosurgery much be fought now.

## conclusion

Everyday women are subjected to a million small pricks and large jabs of mutilating degredation and our souls have been damaged. Psychiatrists, for the most part, said our misery was from our families and in a way they were right. They said there was something wrong with us and that only we could change ourselves and again, in a way, they were right. They usually told us we weren't happy because we resisted our womanly roles in society. Still, again, they were closer than they knew, but they didn't really know the answers and the more honest among them admitted that they were confused. I wonder how honest the psychiatrist was who recently diagnosed the condition of a woman who killed her two small children and tried to kill herself as "suffering from a psychotic depressive reaction". He said she was depressed over the recent separation from her husband. The court found her not guilty by reason of insanity and sentenced her to a mental institution. Perhaps her suicide note to friends gives a fuller picture. She wrote "I'm sorry. I just can't face any more of this..living in this insane world with a broken heart is more than I can face."

I was foolish to think I could bear a lifetime of ugly supermarkets, dreary suburbanitis, a culture that thinks cleanliness is next to godliness while living on mental garbage. So to kind souls who reach out many, many thanks."

Now this woman has been caught and will probably sit out some, if not all, her life in a mental institution, unless some psychosurgeon should decide she would be a perfect candidate for an operation. Then she would be with less hope, her soul and mind blunted, pacified or maybe destroyed and the healing of wounds and the preparation for a different kind of society would be so much harder for her and for us all.

tacie dejanikus

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(If you know anyone who has undergone psychosurgery or have any other information about it, please send it to oob.)



## april video tape conference

We entered the world of video tape and cable television when oob was asked this past fall by the Community Video Center in Washington, D.C. to testify before the city council. D.C.'s appointed city council was putting together a licensing ordinance prior to granting franchises to cable operators. The Community Video Center (a branch of Federal City College) was hoping to bring community pressure on the council to postpone writing up the ordinance until much more community education around the subject of cable TV could be accomplished.

### city council

Our brief testimony was as follows:  
*off our backs, a women's news journal put out in Washington, D.C., the last colony, reminds the city council of handicaps under which women operate with reference to the issue of cable-TV. We have been denied access to technical knowledge. We have been actively discouraged from having confidence in our abilities. We have been excluded from all decisions on the matter. We are dealt with as potential markets, not people. Until all women, not just a few token professional women can consider ways to ensure that we can use this media for our own benefit and the benefit of our children, we insist that the city council defer any decisions about licensing, but instead examine their own motives and vested interests.*

### livingston

Winter came and went, and by spring we were disappointed in our lack of progress in learning about cable TV. So we decided to attend the April Video Conference and Jamboree, a conference planned as a result of conversations at the February National Cable Television Association-sponsored college conference on CATV and including such groups as the Alternate Media Center, N.Y., the Video Collective, N.J., and Raindance, N.Y. The conference was held at Livingston College of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., a mainly black college, which a former New Brunswick townie tells us was designed by Rutgers to siphon off third-world students from the rest of Rutgers.

What follows will be a brief report on the conference and some basic information concerning the technical, political, cultural and aesthetic implications, especially for women of video tape and cable-TV.

"Our goal is to demystify video for you, to explain its uses and their implications, to help you acquire an involved perspective on the conference as a whole," the letter inviting oob announced.

Because of various transportation hassles, we missed the Friday workshops which trained novices like us in the use of 1/2-inch video tape equipment, also presumably the print/radio workshop which the letter of invitation suggested should be "the first thing" for us.

Because the conference was free-form with ample opportunity for inputting, it was difficult to know just what workshops were being held, added and cancelled. Also there was no real push to make workshop reports at the general sessions (we missed those held Friday evening and Sunday afternoon). Originally scheduled were workshops on software, where people are putting their energy; economic survival, how to write proposals and how to get to get to where you don't need to write proposals; legal workshop; cable system economics; information exchange, establishing a distribution system; hardware, techniques and technology; Democratic and Republican convention planning; and planning for the May National Cable TV Association Conference on public access. Other impromptu workshops happened during the conference and included cross-cultural, anthropological uses of video tape; tape

transmission; and community organizing.

At the cross-cultural conference we learned that aside from the obvious advantage of having a visual record of anthropological and sociological data across cultural lines, video tape put into the hands of members of the culture being studied can extend the possibilities, through the use of instant replay, for what one culture can tell another about itself through non-verbal communication.

A third-world and women's, but no gay caucus arose spontaneously at the conference. Responding to the various levels of women's consciousness represented was like going up and down on an elevator. The caucus began on the elementary level of agit-prop against the sexist promotions of the hardware manufacturers; who would be using buxom models to demonstrate video tape equipment while men answered technical questions at the NCTA convention, a group characterized by one woman as the "Lions' Club" of video tape. An action against this practice was discussed, but a short course in video tape for women who would be coming to the conference with "their" men was also proposed as a more constructive tactic. Women were there who had taped a session with lab technicians who demonstrated pregnancy testing at a health conference. Another group represented at the caucus were women who were not "women-oriented," but were interested in self-expression with women.



frances

At the general meeting, Saturday evening, the most dramatic event was a collection taken up to replace a Livingston College Library monitor that had been ripped off during the conference. Insurance coverage was doubtful. Somebody knew how to get a monitor, running \$300 retail, at cost.

Various announcements were made. Radical Software, the glossy alternate video tape rag, said that it would like to farm out issues. It was suggested that video people buy tape and equipment co-operatively (ala the food co-op) to cut costs of video tape production. Political convention organizers, still shifting gears from San Diego to Miami, put out feelers for an electronics freak who would design a transmitter to broadcast alternate TV coverage and for people willing to risk breaking the laws prohibiting channel takeovers.

Better distribution is the most urgent need, seemed to be the consensus of the meeting. A complete listing of tapes on hand, an inventory of sources and processes, a listing of stuff to put on tape, and a catalog of needs were suggested.

As the sole representatives (and as the week-end progresses, we feel increasingly like the last survivors) of the linear media, we plunged into a whole new world, with its own vocabulary, technology and world view.

The main gathering area for the conference is a carpeted library basement done in motel modern. Despite the decor, the message of the conference is organic. There are not notes asking people to reuse paper coffee cups, thousands of free oranges and a \$1.50 per person midday meal catered by Manna Fest Station, an organic diner in New Brunswick.

The conference room was divided into talking areas where the workshops met and playback areas where video tapes were continuously shown. Rock music was piped over the loudspeaker with intermittent interruptions as announcements were made from the microphone.

The conference participants for the most part were alternate video people, who

appeared to feel at home in this multi-stimuli environment. Some groove on doing things like converting brain waves into video tapes and replaying them at 9-second intervals of reality; cultural anarchists (challenging the authority of the dominant culture), TV guerillas, and cultural and political organizers turned on by video and cable as people's media. Almost all the men carried their own hardware: video cameras, portapacks and monitors in carrying cases. But it was the amount of software and the length of a group's video catalogue rather than the amount of hardware that determined which groups had been around video the longest.

### open access

How an open access community cable system might work can be seen from one proposed and being carried out by the Mafundi Institute, a black cultural center in Watts. As designed, the project will provide a two-way cable system with outlets in homes, storefronts and regular meeting places. Fifteen portapack video-sound systems will be distributed throughout Watts enabling any part of the community to make video tapes. From 50 to 100 portable units will be available throughout the community, which will allow anyone who wants to do live broadcasts over the cable channels. Videofreex has brought a local TV station to an isolated upstate New York valley, which would not otherwise have good TV reception. Through the use of portable units and non-video feedback (people phoning in to the station) they have created TV that is responsive to the needs of the community it serves.

Video tape and CATV possibilities as a "people's media" is enhanced by a number of factors:

First, it's easy to operate a video camera. A few demonstrations and some practice enable anyone to be able to make tapes or do live or mixed broadcasting.

Secondly, unlike regular television, cable is capable of two-way transmission through coaxial cable. The potential exists for people unable to get to a community meeting to still express their opinions, making TV more than a passive viewing experience.

Thirdly, CATV makes possible what has been called the "T" of abundance, with coaxial cable able to carry up to 40 channels. Broadcasters continue to use much of the radio spectrum and keep channels in scarce supply, thus maintaining vast advertising revenues.

Despite video and CATV's great potential as a populist media, it is not the alternate video people, or community people, and it is clearly no women who are deciding the media's look.

For years, the fate of cable TV was determined by grim political and economic war waged by the giant corporations whose power CATV could potentially challenge.

Most of these corporations are involved in buying up all the franchises they can and clearly have no interest in maintaining small scale, local or neighborhood systems, with many open access channels. A late report from the May NCTA convention has it that their response to open access is to buy tapes made by community-oriented groups. Nor have they been too interested in wiring poorer communities. In Charlotte, N.C., and San Diego, white areas are wired but black areas are not.

Subscriber fees quickly pay off the investment of setting up a cable system. Often the poles along which telephone lines run or coaxial cable already laid by the telephone company are leased by the cable companies.

But a lot of alternate video people keep on trucking to prevent this technology from being added to the corporate hegemony.

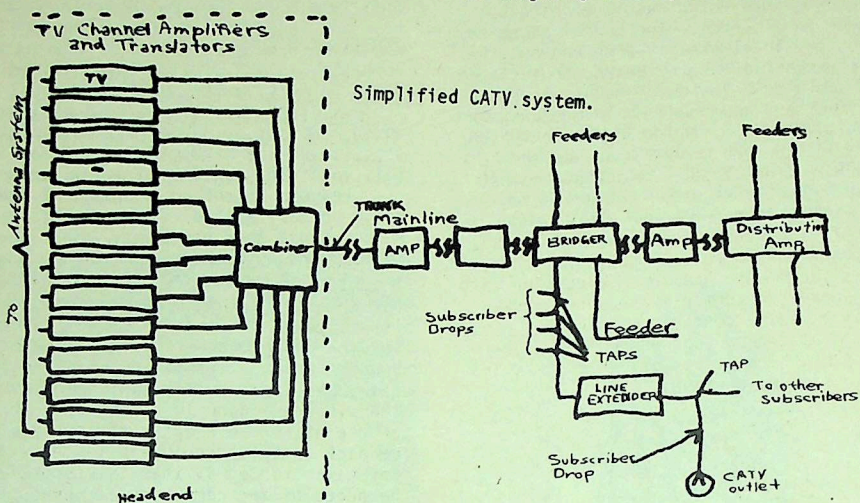
There are groups in cities like Milwaukee, where ordinances and franchises are still open questions, that are attempting to get as much "community input" as possible into licensing requirements.

In Cape May, N.J., where Teleprompter, the local franchise holder, provides at least one open access channel, the local alternate video group is doing broadcasting and teaching its skills to community residents.

The major difficulty is getting funds and equipment to make video tapes. The Cape May group has attempted to pressure the local

video(cont)

government to give community video groups a percentage of the franchise fee that Teleprompter pays the local government in exchange for the franchise, so far with little success. No money is forthcoming from Teleprompter either. Ironically, the cable company uses the alternate video group in their promotional efforts. In a workshop we attended, representatives from this group advised alternate video people that making tapes for the cable companies was a rip-off.



systems.

But the considerations go beyond technology. The very spontaneity of the tape sets restriction on the use of it in very formal art. By its very nature, it undercuts the theatricality which lends spectacle to the stage play or dance concert.

Women

Is video tape access a women's issue? Yes, first because it is another reflection of our lack of control over technology. A course in video tape editing for women is to be taught by a male, because there is no wom-

(vacuum aspiration method) directed by the woman who was having it. The tape opens with the woman asking how women are informed about birth control and abortion. There is a shot to a wall poster warning about oral contraceptives. There is horseplay with the male doctor. The woman-director/abortion patient sets up the cameras, worries about the angle. She and the paramedical, a motherly black woman, exchange a few words about the men behind these abortions. The paramedical observes that one of the problems is that men feel no responsibilities within their sexual relationships. Our heroine however defends her man, who is "more upset than she is about the abortion." The lady is cool, too cool. The sound track during the actual abortion procedure is dubbed over with Mahler. A bout of vomiting after the abortion is shot lyrically in slow-motion. The woman tells us later that she made the tape so that a man could sit through it comfortably. Hysteria can be cool detachment: "let me see the bottle [of fetal parts and uterine washings]." It enrages to witness a woman driven to hysteria, even of this form.

A happier tape was the karate tape. It was a less than successful hybrid of a training tape and a documentary. The sound wasn't good enough so that one could learn very much about karate from it. Too many forms were covered and too fast. Nice touches were a child's voice in the audience in the karate studio and the board-splitting sequence which was a demonstration of the karate spectacle by a woman who was not afraid to laugh.

There were no tapes specifically about or by lesbians.

Women must make video tape part of women's culture too.

by bobbie spalter-roth and frances chapman  
thanks to m. devoe for diagram and some glossary terms

an available to teach it. Women can operate the equipment, but generally it is men who understand and confidently utilize the technology.

Also, we must make video tape our issue because of the great potential in video tape to cater to macho, masturbatory ego-tripping. Turn one's ego into an abstract principle, play it back at nine-second intervals, and have mental orgasms.

At an alternate media conference video workshop I attended over a year ago, someone commented that it took most people over a year to get over ego tripping and start making worth-while tapes. One definition of pornography is the cold viewing of others' physical experience without being emotionally involved, in the case of video tape, looking at oneself as other. This form of pornography is more dangerous than the dirty booksellers some feminists would have us shut down.

Mostly video tape is women's issue because of things it can do for us as women. We can make tapes that allow us to share skills and knowledge. A local video woman is interested in doing straightforward instructive tapes on medical procedures and problems so that women do not have to sit around in a doctors waiting room waiting for their doctor's mystification. A women's video tape woman-on-the-street interviewing team could be patterned on Harlem Prep, a black group whose street interviews on the credibility of news coverage of Attica we saw at the conference.

Another example of video tape interviews is the tape on the Buffalo Creek flood disaster. This video tape is to be transferred onto film, hence you can benefit from video as an unsurpassable on-the-spot-reportage media without being bound by aesthetic limitations. A member of the Appalachian Film Workshop in Whitesburg, Ky., showed tapes of interviews done with the survivors of the Buffalo creek flood. These interviews are to be incorporated into a film directed by Mimi Pickering of the "Apple" Shop.

The flood was clearly do to negligence of the Buffalo Creek mine company, a subsidiary of the Tiston Co. The governor of the state however called it an act of God and not anybody's fault.

In the most incredibly moving set of interviews, the "Apple" Shop people asked the survivors who lost everything from homes to families if they agreed with the governor of West Virginia.

They didn't.

But the two specifically women's tapes we saw at the conference had a long way to go. The most spectacular tape we saw at the conference was a tape of an actual abortion

Funds are of course a major problem. Foundations are not a likely source of funds, since they regard alternate video people as unorganized, non-tax-exempt freaks.

Some groups have set up their own video theatres (the Groove Tube in D.C.; the Global Village in New York) in an attempt at being self-supporting.

issues

A very different issue from the politics and economics of accessibility is that of privacy. Closed-circuit TV in stores gives us the creeps and we have walked out of stores that make use of it for security and shop-lifting prevention.

The issue of privacy must be considered with every new proposal. The phone system, operating as a common carrier for telephone communication, it has been proposed, should operate in the same capacity with video tape transmission, a ploy which would circumvent leasing and franchising hassles. Anyone could use the modified lines of the ATT system to transmit video tape programs just as anyone with the bread can make a long distance call. The specialised private lines of ATT can already do this. Yet the phone company allows the FBI to tap our phones. With video tape, not only our phone conversations, but our most unconscious body gestures would be under the surveillance of the authorities. The specter of 1984 television screens watching for social deviance seems very near, making the struggle for community access that much more important.

But there are also the subtle cultural and aesthetic considerations. Would the world cease to happen live? Would we comfort our children, gossip, court, and hold meetings by sending tapes we had made back and forth and thus lose face-to-face contact, the ritual handshake, the supportive hug? We all know the experience of having close friends we only talk to over the phone and seldom see. Would it be even harder to see through the sham intimacy if we could "see" such friends via video tape? Milton Berle may come into our living rooms, but he can't share a meal with us or get us a beer from the fridge.

Further, do we always want total information feedback? Would we have to agitate against the cruel and unusual punishment of having to watch the clumsiest, most humiliating moments of our lives as well as having to live them in the first place?

There are aesthetic problems with video tape too. The tapes we saw in New Jersey had a home-made quality. Partly this is due to the high cost of editing and the felt need to keep tape resolution compatible with commercial

glossary

CATV

The original meaning was Community Antenna Television, but gradually it has also come to mean cable television.

Coaxial Cable

A cable of pencil thickness with a copper wire at its center, like the lead of a pencil. Surrounding the wire is plastic foam which is encased by a jacket of knitted aluminum covered by a durable plastic sheathing.

Combiner

Device which accepts signals output by the headend equipment and combines them for delivery to the cable.

Franchise

Agreement between individual, corporation or organization and an authority which permits it to install equipment within a political subdivision.

Hardware

The physical production equipment in video programming: cameras, recorders, switchers

Headend

Center of origin of a CATV system. The headend refers to the equipment which receives TV signals and processes them before transmitting to the trunk (main) cable of the system. A videotaped program may also be processed and transmitted directly by the headend equipment.

Software

The programming contents, talents, scripts, direction production ideas, the backbone of local origination (programming originating from within the cable system).

sources & resources

Electra--women's tape group  
1839 Mintwood Place NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
(202) 7-2213

Radical Software  
Suite 1304  
440 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10016

Videofreex  
Maple Tree Farm  
Lanesville, N.Y. 12450  
(914) 688-7084

## feminism: a philosophy of knowledge

*off our backs continues its series of articles on women's studies by marilyn salzman-webb. This is the second of four articles.*

Feminism studies comes from a different place than most "departments" or "programs" within universities. We have an analysis and a direction for change. By university definitions, we are hardly "objective" (read: willing to take what is as immutable). But we should not crumble before this charge because we are doing profound and scholarly thinking in areas never touched by most university scholars, only we have a context in which to fit our research. It is the fact of having this context that makes what we are doing so crucial.

Feminism is a philosophy of knowledge, not another topic or subject for investigation, but a total world view. Marxists speak about history in terms of a "dialectic." By this, they mean that all understanding or knowledge is the product of a relationship between what an individual brings to a situation (physically as well as past experiences) and what is happening that involves her or him. Those who have specific group experiences come to see reality in a particular way common to all of them and come to have similar concerns, ideas and life quests.

### colony

Because women have historically been a colonized group in that we have been treated as property within family units and given second-class status in society, our experiences and perceptions are similar; they have emerged out of similar living conditions. But because we have been isolated in family units, we have not, until recently, become aware of the existence of a female cultural identity, a collective history that we all share. We have not come to understand that we share a view of the world as a class, that we look at events from the underside of history as well as out of our biologically given condition.

Given this new group awareness, feminists are beginning to respect that class view and develop a common sense of how to approach the world and act on it.

As a philosophy of knowledge feminism is a dialectical understanding, in the Marxist sense. Among any colonized group a dynamic develops between those aspects of the situation produced by the colonized state and those aspects inherent in their collective identity and produced out of struggle against colonization. In black history we have some good examples because scholars have been focusing longer on this dialectic. For example, much of what we call slave culture was created in response to captivity. Uncle Tomism is a survival tactic. Yet a large portion of slave culture is actually part of a religious and social heritage created in Africa and developed for resistance purposes. This is part of a larger black-African identity that has been successfully hidden from white observers for centuries, mainly through secret societies throughout the Americas.

### female culture

Likewise, we have no sense yet of what part of female cultural identity is created by captivity, and what part is indeed created out of some notion of female principle strengthened by collective resistance, empathy, for example, as a female trait. We really don't know what the true nature of the female experience is outside of the colonized state. This can never be known until patriarchy ends. What we can attempt to understand is what body of knowledge has been created out of female experience, and this body of knowledge will constantly change as our situation changes. This is our collective philosophy of knowledge.

Feminism is the intellectual understanding of the historical struggle between domination and submission, between what Kate Millet

calls that group of people born to rule and that born to be ruled. Some questions are as current today as they were in prehistory. What are the forms of passive and active resistance used to combat a colonized state? What are the basic units of social organization that develop systems of authoritarianism?

As a philosophy of knowledge, feminism is concerned with the forms and functions of power and how it has been wielded. Such a philosophy cuts across so-called "disciplines" to include psychology (both of the individual and in groups and of the colonizer and the colonized), sociology (social forms of power and class development), economics (uses of power with varied economic bases in history), biology (is there such a thing as biological inferiority?) and, of course, the study of history, literature and the arts. But this study is from a wholly different context. It is the history of what was created both by the dominated and the dominator to sustain or struggle against that domination.



majority report

What is the female cultural form emerging from our position? I keep having to leave this work to do other things. For instance, it is hard for me to sit and write for long periods of time. I notice dust on the floor and have to get out the vacuum cleaner and clean it up because it makes me nervous to work if the room isn't clean. My desk is a wreck since my little girl likes to scribble on my equally important notes to myself. She comes home from nursery school in a little while, so half my mind is on whether her father or I will pick her up today. Now I can hardly imagine what my writing would be like were these things not on my mind. If I had a house slave as most male writers do, to do all these small services I might be able to pay attention to more lofty thoughts, and so my work would be totally different, probably more rarified.

### human nature

But is that a work of true human nature, or just the work of one group of humans who manages to so stultify thought by having a slave class that they are out of touch with the nitty gritty of life in their works. Who is to say that such work is more valid than that of women?

In our cultural history research, art and literature that is called great stems from a tradition that rests on a slave class. Look at any book on your bookshelf. Most say, "And last but not least, I am grateful to my wife who protected me from any intrusions and suffered alone with the incantations of this budding author." Now we all know what that means! He stayed locked in his study thinking while she took care of the kids, made him meals, shopped, kept his house and perhaps even did all his transcribing, typing and editing, as well as mailed his manuscripts and corresponded with publishers. Whew! Terrific of him to thank her. But this is just the surface. How can such a situation not affect the work he produces? He rarely ever experiences life, or if he does, he knows only a narrow portion of it. So his reality is blinded by his position.

Now should his wife get some time to herself to write we might see a totally different version of what life is, of what the universe is, of her thoughts in relation to other life forms, etc. Or she might not think about that at all. Given free rein, we do not yet know what questions we would have of the world. Historically research has grown

only as there was a need for it economically and socially. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Friedrich Engels shows that with changing forms of social production, research in different areas of science was needed. Knowledge of astronomy was necessary for agricultural production, but complex physics and chemistry is necessary for the large-scale production we have today under modern capitalism. Perhaps out of female culture would come great advances in ecological research.

In any case, if a woman were to get some time, her writing both in form (since she would only have a few minutes to scratch something here and there) and content, would be in another dimension from her husband's. Now supposing both the man and wife were equally in touch with the nitty gritty of life as well as with the philosophy of it. We have no idea what would come out of either of their works, since there are hardly any societies in which this condition applies to use as examples.

Kenneth Pitchford, husband of feminist Robin Morgan, writes of this in his poetry. He has found that his poems, once long, now can only be written on one page. That is all the time he has for concentration; their young son would rip up what he had down as quickly as he could type a second page.

To paraphrase a line from one of his poems: How can these men claim to speak of life when they have never, not even once, been in touch with shit in a pumper. Ah men!

All this rambling is merely to say that we have to take a fresh look at the works women have created. They are usually in the form of letters, diaries or short poems, writing that takes short periods of time to produce. From there we'll develop an understanding of female conditions through history. But we can only fantasize now what scholarship might be like where there is no slave system to support the scholar.

Our first task should be to recognize that we have a specific female cultural condition which we have shared historically with women through the ages and out of this condition has come a specific view of the world. We should begin to respect that this culture has co-existed alongside of another, a ruling class culture, and begin investigating what the forms and content of this culture have been physically and intellectually and see where our future actions and research must go from this collective consciousness.

marilyn salzman-webb

*The third article in this series on women's studies is "What Do We Teach?". Look for it in next month's oob.*

## san diego

*Although we don't have the space to reprint the original letter, we would like to give the Women's Studies Program at San Diego State College the chance to clarify a point made in a short article written from that letter and published in January 1972 oob.*

Your paraphrase included a phrase about one class (Self Actualization of Women) that "women in the community are excluded [from it] for some reason." All of our classes are open to community women. In an attempt to reach out to women other than college women we have this semester started a Saturday class of Socialization of Women. We provide free child care for this class. There are presently fifty-five community women attending, and the numbers grow every week. Self Actualization is a special course. It is very personal and intimate. After the first class, where we give first priority to community women crashers, it is closed to anyone in order to foster a sense of closeness and trust among the women in the class. The community women in San Diego understand and agree with this policy.



memoirs of an ex-prom queen

*Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*, a novel, by Alix Kates Shulman is the rather ordinary story of a nice middle class girl growing up in the 1940's and 1950's to be a woman of the 1960's.

Sasha Davis, ex-prom queen, knows she is a sex object from the first time she wears a dress. She knows that the only success for her is to be beautiful, catch a man and produce two children. Her girlhood is a preparation for Mr. Right. "Seventeen" magazine is her guidebook. Her mother, wanting only happiness for her gives her braces and dancing lessons. Her girlfriends teach her

far" too soon and hides it from her girlfriends. She sets goals for herself to beat, like learning ten new words a day, trying always to win, yet always setting up a safety valve in case she loses.

Sasha grows up, gets married, gets divorced, has affairs, gets married again and has two children.

Sasha Davis is telling her story, like she would if she were in a consciousness raising group. There are many threads throughout the book that weave together to tell the story of her life: a life that is not terribly exciting or unusual. One theme is her menstrual cycle (which is something only women really know about). She talks about the first time she gets her period, the awkwardness of the situation and the feeling of horror that she had of her own body and the problems of disposing a soiled sanitary napkin at her boyfriend's parents' house (or what do you do when there is no trash can in the bathroom).

Even though Sasha was smart, beautiful and lived on the right side of town she still felt that something was wrong with her. She felt she was a freak, different from everyone else. It is a feeling most girls and women have about themselves. (How many books for pre-teen girls mention menstruation?). Sasha, who read a great deal knows from her socialization that sex/babies are all important, yet all the great philosophers she reads never waste their time on the subject. Perhaps that was because they never had to change a wet diaper.

Alix Kates Shulman, a veteran of the women's movement, has written for *Aphra*, a women's liberation magazine, has written some children's books, and edited a collection of Emma Goldman's writings as well as a novel about her life. Ms Shulman writes like she has spent many an hour in consciousness raising groups. This is a funny, light, enjoyable novel that should be released in paperback soon to hit the mass market.

*Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen* will probably be the start of a trend--novels by women from a woman's point of view. It's fine. I'm tired of reading about Alexander Portnoy.

by norma allen lesser

the last picture show:  
no models

Filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich's "The Last Picture Show" could easily be subtitled: Growing Up Female in the 1950's. Interestingly enough, *New Yorker Magazine* film reviewer Pauline Kael says the movie is about "Boys trying to reach manhood, without much in the way of models." While this is uncontroversially true, I believe Bogdanovich also meant to fully include the plight of the young girls, who must grow up without models as well.

We learn more during the movie about the women than we do about the male characters. The two somewhat taciturn young men, Sonny and Duane, never appear to have a home, parents, or any kind of previous history. Only once do we learn that Sonny has a father; at a Christmas party they meet as strangers, and pass on. The other males in the film seem excessively stereotyped--a sheriff, the high school ath-

letic coach, and Sam, the owner of the cafe, movie house, and pool hall, the cynical old guy with the heart of gold without whom pictures set in western locales would seem incomplete. Because the script gives far more detailed characterizations to the women, the actresses are better able to portray real human beings.

The picture depicts an extremely small Texas town in the early 1950's, a bleak, wind-blown, down-in-the-mouth town, where life seems to be unremitted loneliness. The young, in this case, members of the town's senior high school class, are given very little attention from their elders, and there is little for anyone in the town to do, short of attending the movies and high school sporting events. The diversion, for both the young and their elders, is, of course, sex.

The movie depicts well the tremendous emotional needs life in a grim Texas town leaves unfulfilled, and the search for happiness and excitement through alcohol and sexual exploit. For many of the older inhabitants, television is already beginning to fill the void.

The boys are shy and, more often than not, the girls are the initiators. For one of the more forward girls in the class, Jacey, the summer following her graduation is a time of sexual initiation. She rather cruelly uses Duane, her former beau, to de-virginize herself so that she will be attractive to another male who won't fool with virgins. Jacey then uses Sonny for adventure during the otherwise dull summer after the object of her interest marries another.

Sonny becomes involved with Ruth, the forty-year-old wife of the pot-bellied, tobacco-chewing high school sports coach. Ruth, who also begins the relationship, becomes alive under the spell of the boy's attentions. "Why did you ever marry Coach?" Sonny finally asks her one day. She replies, of course, that when she was younger she thought that being an athletic coach was the be-it and end-all of life. Sonny drops Ruth once Jacey begins to take interest in him.

The shallowness of Jacey's viewpoint is brilliantly etched in the movie's scenes between Jacey and her mother. Jacey's mother, played magnificently by Ellen Burstyn in a characterization which brings out the woman's honesty and humor as well as misery, tries to tell Jacey that there is more to life than marrying Duane. Jacey should go to college in near-by Wichita Falls. Her mother, whose own married life has become empty and meaningless, is having an affair with one of her husband's employees. "We've got to do something better for you than what I've going for me," she truthfully tells her daughter. Burstyn's excellent performance elevates the character she portrays out of the realm of the soap opera it would seem to suggest.

For the young girls these are no models to emulate, but only examples of wasted lives. While the men are also trapped into nothingness, they are less interesting because they are more passive; showing fewer signs of life, they react rather than act. The film more firmly and deeply catches the plight of women in America, the story of interesting, exciting women in a constant search for self-fulfillment through men, with its inevitable disappointments and harsh disillusionment. Jacey eloquently embodies all this in the screenplay's brilliant characterization of a young girl's vacuous life, in her careful ensnarement of Sonny into matrimony, only to find that she doesn't want him after all. Is this not a mataphor for a woman's life?

by jody raphael



the limits, from how tight the straps should be on her "Carousel" bra to "how far" she should go.

Sasha Davis somehow knows that being a piece of meat is not all she wants. Even though she participates in all the rituals, like a good girl, another side of her rebels. She reads through her father's Little Leather Library, a miniature collection of all the "great books." She cuts school to test her audacity by staring down strange men on buses and street corners until they look away because she wants to beat them at their own vile games. She masturbates. She goes "too

## the last picture show: male trip in black and white

*A shortened version of the following article was first printed in The Furies, a feminist-Lesbian newspaper. It was submitted to us by the author and is printed here in full.*

If *The Last Picture Show* were the last picture show to have as its theme the life and times of a young man on the "verge of maturity," I would view it with less jaundice. However, the coming-of-age movie seems entrenched; men are apparently fascinated with their first fuck and with the fading of boyhood into what is euphemistically termed "manhood." This particular movie, saturated with packaged cinematic sensitivity, is more dishonest than most in its handling of a hackneyed theme.

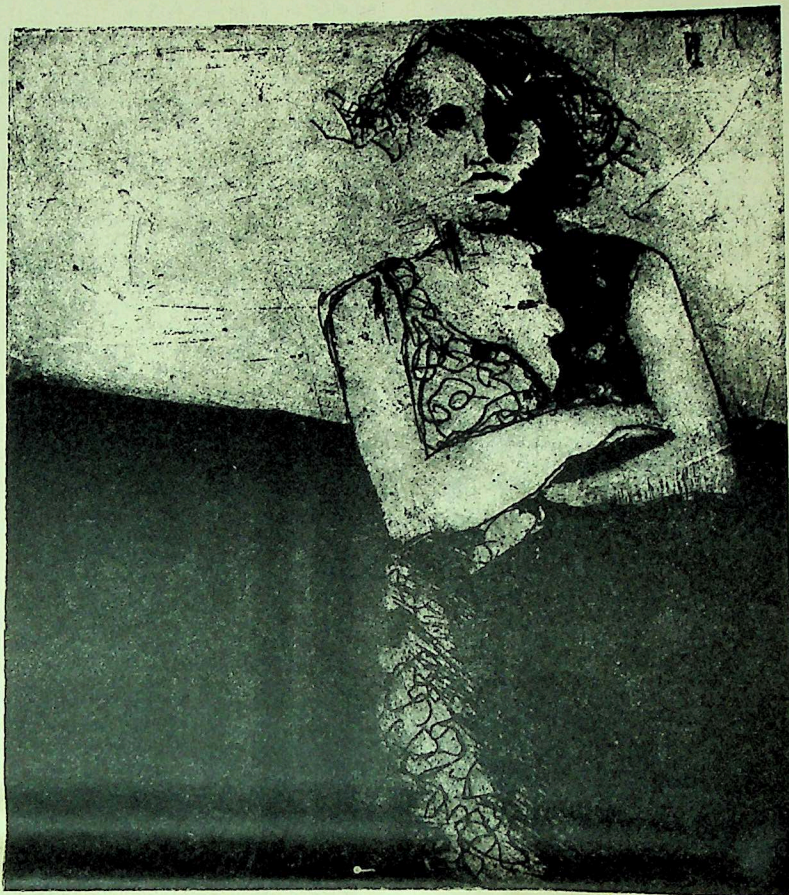
First, the technical dishonesty: movies shot in black and white in the 1970's are artsy fartsy. Human beings see in color, we don't need to be insulted by enduring a black and white movie which is to clue us in on the fact that it is "serious." There's a class aspect to black and white movies in our times. Supposedly, the bleak screen will serve to heighten the viewer's sense of the drab, the working class, the impoverished. Those of us growing up impoverished were oppressed in living color and any deviation from that is a perversion of our lives justified in terms of "style." When our ceilings peeled they peeled from pea green to red to black to gray and all together it was more hideous than anything shot in black and white. The only possible excuse any filmmaker can offer for shooting in black and white is money. Anything else is elevated crap.

If the color insult were not enough, we had to endure bad lighting, zilch camera work and shots of the Texas plain held over-long.

The shabby technical work collaborated with the shabby story line which is the archetypal American relationship: two male friends. This time it's Sonny and Duane. Let's follow Sonny and Duane in their adventures. So we do. They get drunk. They hurt a deaf-dumb. They screw girls. They fight each other. From these activities Sonny's "manhood" emerges, an understanding of life. No, I'm not making this up--if you've seen the movie you know it's true. Why do people make this shit? It's very simple and it's all connected with male supremacy, white supremacy and class supremacy.

The people who make movies are male, white, usually middle class and usually heterosexual. The people who review the movies for the most part bear those same distinctive scars. So the rest of us who don't fit into those categories have to watch movies that have nothing to do with our lives. Worse, we have no access to media to communicate the reality of our own life experiences. Therefore all of America since the beginning of film has had to watch the white, middle class, heterosexual, male version of life. I don't know about you but I'm sick of it.

If white men had concentrated only on themselves it wouldn't be so disastrous but they didn't. They gave us their version of what women are, what Blacks are, what people are who are not like themselves. It's grim. Women, sex objects, live through men. Blacks in the 30's and 40's were happy, dancing, simple people. Today, Blacks are superstud detectives treating women the way white men treat women. Those distortions, past and present, have influenced oppressed people, influenced us to a harmful degree. All too often, oppressed people identified with the oppressor's definition of themselves, an activity that creates intense self-hatred, hatred of your own kind and a desire to "make it" in the rich, white man's world. People



denied their own life experience and adopted the media image of life as fact.

*The Last Picture Show* successfully meets most of our oppression ratings. It ignores Texas' racial question completely, the movie is 100% white, non-white existence isn't even verbally recognized; it presents an artsy version of working class whites as well as the typical male supremacist view of women. And this film gets rave reviews from most critics plus "right on" from the radical community.

To draw a sharper focus on the distortion, the women characters in the movie are worth a look. All the women in the movie are vacant and what little there is of life for them revolves around the men. Not one of these women has work of her own or even a hobby. Now many Texas women in the 1950's may have been that vacuous but they did have some brains in their heads even if they didn't have careers or hobbies. In *The Last Picture Show* they do not have brains in their heads just dim ghosts of intelligence.

Jacy, the beautiful young girl, is a spiteful bitch who pits the boys against each other. No insight as to why she does that, of course. We only see poor Duane and Sonny suffering. Most women reading this article know why Jacy does what she does. Men however, are disturbed and mystified by this "bitch" behavior. That's all we know of Jacy, bitchiness, her character is not developed, we see only surface action. I didn't take this lack of charac-

ter development as sexist because the characters of the men didn't get off the ground either. Cybill Shepard deserves a great deal of credit for taking a tedious teenager and holding our attention with her.

Jacy's mother, played by Ellen Burstyn, is more interesting. She is good looking, late thirties-early forties, bored as hell with Texas, her husband, her tacky lover. She knows sex doesn't mean much when you do it with men and she makes this clear although I doubt that was the intention of the author or the director. Lois is the only person in the film who sees through heterosexual sham, unfortunately she doesn't see far enough, the usual film lobotomy on female minds. So Lois wanders through the movie trying to convey her experiences to her daughter in order to save her the same faded life. Too bad she didn't wander into her local, neighborhood Lesbian, it might have been a better movie and Lois would have been a much happier woman.

Bogdanovich's (McMurty's) portrayal of the women isn't even outrageous, it's dreary and familiar. What is outrageous is that people are still receptive to that conception of women.

Sexism explains why men view the women in the same old way but what explains how they view themselves? Do they actually think that Sonny and Ben the Lion are sensitive men? Why hasn't this sentimental slop about white, male, small town youth been rejected by critical male viewers? Worse, if it is a fairly honest portrayal of those youths then men are much worse off

than I thought. The men in this movie are not sensitive to anything except what is connected to their concept of self. They have zero ability to empathize with a woman's life and only the tiniest ability to empathize with each other. Even the two men closest to each other, Sonny and Duane, do not understand and love each other. Each man is locked into his sense of himself which according to The Last Picture Show is tied into screwing girls/women. If that's what men's lives are like we can look forward to World War III unless there is a women's revolution. Unfeeling, unthinking, uncaring about anything except their concept of self, "masculinity," these men are set-ups for any politician or military leader who can give them that "butch" self they crave. If anyone doubts the severity of this collective male identity crisis and its potential for political manipulation remember that Hitler built a party out of that same psychological dynamic.

The only time in the movie when a male character is not centered on himself, when he is drawn into another human life, is at death. When Billy is killed, Sonny recognizes a love for the deaf-dumb boy. Is that what it takes to get men to realize they love somebody, death? And running true to form, Billy's death was too much for Sonny to handle so he ran to a woman to help him get through it. And she ran true to form according to white, heterosexual, male movie-makers--she was glad to help him even though he had fucked her over. She threw a five-minute fit, cried and took him back. What incredible male propaganda. With this kind of propaganda on the screen do you ever wonder if the movie makers are part of the ruling elite's plot to keep us all down?

The Last Picture Show like all picture shows made in this country feeds us a distortion of life, feeds us an apolitical, hopeless view of the world. And that apolitical view is the only view available to the public in mass form. Movies may be critical of American life, The Last Picture Show is certainly that but the subject matter has been flogged to death. It's a catechism and audience reaction is automatic. There is nothing new, challenging or useful. It provides mechanized outlets for frustration with no solutions. There seems to be a shred of reality on the screen, after all, most white, middle class viewers came out of spiritual, emotional emptiness if we are to believe their testimonies in the arts and politics, so they are safe in the familiar dressed up to look different; i. e. working class Texans--but they haven't been pushed, questioned, taught.

These movies are more than apolitical or neutral, they are blocks to real political understanding. The Last Picture Show offers no analysis of why people's lives are empty. The screen in America is kept free from disquieting political thought, although kept entertaining. This absence of thought, analysis, solution gives us barrenness frequently disguised in technical riches. More movies serve the oppressors in ways other than diverting us from thought, movies offer mild protest without resolution, catharsis without cure. Movies keep images of oppressed people intact and relative to the image of the white, middle class male. The oppressed image only changes (if at all) if the white, male image changes--i. e. Dustin Hoffman in The Graduate and Midnight Cowboy.

These changes are so minute that we can safely say, racism, classism, and sexism reign supreme in the movies. The Last Picture Show is not Green Beret which is blatant enemy propaganda. The Last Picture Show is more destructive than Green Beret because it is so seductive to the minds of white, middle class males and the heterosexual women still tied to that system of thinking/acting/being--and that's millions of women.

The seduction is based on the ignorance

mentioned earlier in the article. Without an understanding of other people's lives, the white, middle class heterosexual viewer finds her/his experiences reinforced by those of the media and is never confronted by those of us coming from very different places. The movies may seem honest because the viewer can pick out parts of her/his experience which correspond to it. But to millions of us who are the "Other," those movies are white men's lies, lies we have to fight every day in our existence. Even the parts of a movie, this movie, which are honest cannot soften the overall effect of the movie: it keeps us in our place, our place in the movie, in the media, is no place.

Is there a way out of this art rot, this media sabotage of our lives? Yes, but it's a long haul and the critical element is not drive, talent, skills but money. We have to make our own movies. We have to convey the truth of our own life experiences to the mass public.

I would like to think we could get it together and do it. But who is going to give us the money to make a high quality, well distributed movie? Our vision of the world, our thoughts are threatening to the people who control the money, the government and obliquely, the film industry. We

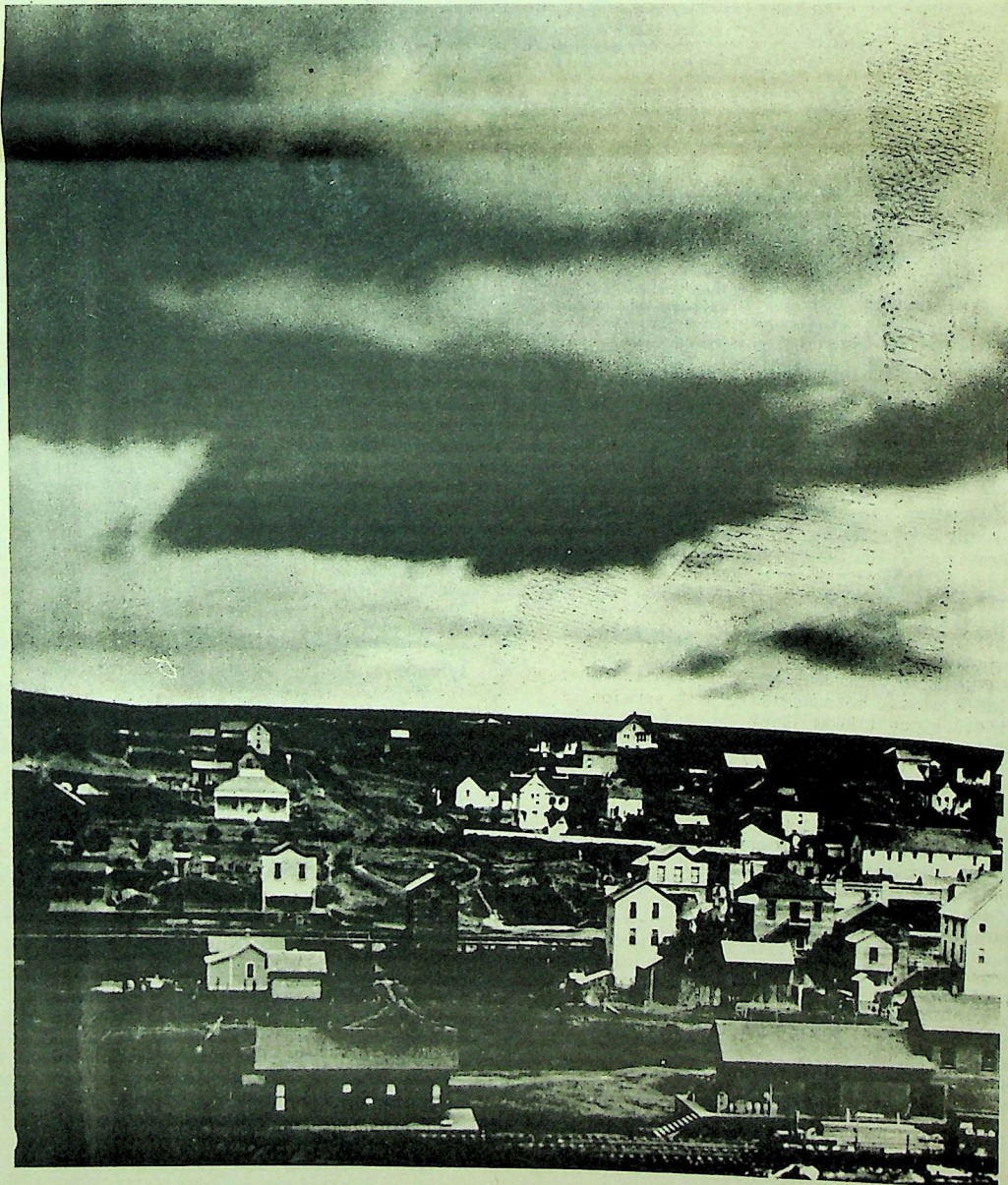
have a vibrant, newborn art, how can we get it to the public?

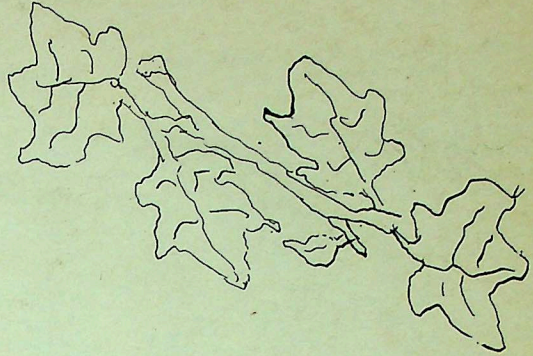
Maybe in the beginning, some of us will have to sell our work to the Man and watch him depoliticize it, watch the jobs go to people who keep us from those jobs. Infuriating as all that will be, in time, we will have money to make our own films and pay our own people for their skills.

However we do it, we must do it. Film is a powerful form of communication and we need it. We have to build a fighting media or we will find our ideas in twisted form selling vaginal deodorant before 1980 as well as selling us down the river. We have to build a media to get across a few scraps of the truth, of our lives, our art and of a hope beyond violent despair.

The Last Picture Show will not be the last oppressor's movie we will watch. But it can be the last picture show we watch passively. Get yourself together and help build an alternate media. Write, paint, dance, sing, act--it doesn't matter what you do as long as you do something! I know that's not the whole answer but in my own simple way, I can't help but think that if each of us does something it will be a beginning.

by rita mae brown





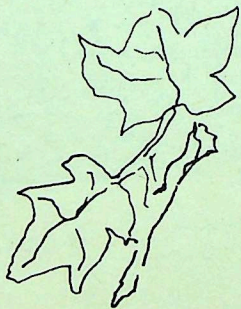
th end

& if by th end of it  
u find out  
that th men u lovd dint love u atall,  
th ones u thot about donating ur hart to  
were either scard of u, or jus disinterested,  
& maybe thats what u lovd abt them allalong,  
--not them really, but th cruelty of that  
situation  
(finding out now, simultaneously,  
that th strings stretch & snap,  
u can walk out of th spiderweb,  
& they dont have anything on u,  
& there ar bettr things to go  
hunting at nite)

so if they ask abt th painting,  
u can say:

"u jus kinda play with it  
with ur eyes  
bcause culture u know,  
or language or ideas  
hav to do with nature  
& should arise from it,  
just as th way u'd speak abt urself  
or go passing urself off t people  
or vegetable & animal folk  
must depend on an elemental  
conception or crystality  
native to th very hart  
& emanating from it"

yes & culture  
u see  
should come from a more animal world,  
either directly  
or by some roundybout artistic stunt,  
lestways by now it seems  
that th body is th source,  
(& nothing could  
surprise me less  
in th end  
than that some next man  
waits  
in th wings  
with a womans face)  
anne julia mclean



lies should be untitled

--for regina and me

I lie. I scream.  
I hate.  
I break plates.  
I crawl into jeans  
and find they won't close.  
Twenty pounds overweight. Again.  
I hate May and June  
and July and my exposed body. (you always did too?)

I lie.  
I cut my hair.  
I let it grow.  
I end up flirting  
in the grocery store.

I lie.  
And decide. Finally!  
Then I un-decide.  
I cry. I hate  
any ferriswheel, carnival,  
fate,  
and every springnight coaster-ride. (everyone, everyone,  
in my life!)

I hate every pretense  
of madness in public places,  
especially when the circus  
is not my own.

I find myself in rollers, meditating  
on my skinny hair,  
frail and timid,  
skating unaided into the corner bar.  
I order 6 more.

I abdicate all rights.  
Then claim them mine!  
I re-create interesting, controversial,  
psychological "insights"  
and perform at barbeques. (for alcohol)

For a few friends,  
I pretend to die  
in poetic flights...  
fantasy..... suicide.....

For a few enemies,  
I die, swallowed  
in calgon-tears (no streaks)  
washed over fondue,  
involving priceless steaks.

I die. I lie again.  
I hate.  
I end up throwing plates  
at the mirror,  
I could name the faces there  
but,

Instead  
I reflect  
upon our  
mutual self-destruction,  
our hate  
which regenerates  
on a regular,  
rotating basis.

Why?

I lie.  
(to be continued)

sjj

songs to a handsome woman

On Being an Orphan at Age 27

Please  
 Let me put my arms around your neck  
 And lean on you for awhile.  
 My sisters have betrayed me  
 And my brothers are blind  
 The wind is an icy knife  
 When stars have fled the night  
 And I've no gods to call on  
 Save a woman's heart  
 So let me put my arms around your neck  
 And hold me for awhile.

rita mae brown

disconnected

Did I appear disconnected?  
 I'm surprised it showed.  
 Did it insult you?

Should I be instantly opened  
 instantly intense?  
 Should I set aside  
 old hurts "inappropriate" patterns?

Not so long ago I tried  
 to love you fully  
 with my whole self.

You pushed me away saying--  
 Often people's needs are in conflict  
 (or something)  
 Now you wonder where  
 my full attention has gone.

Class, come to attention!

june slavin

women's\*lib meeting

Doesn't it strike you  
 That we are women  
 here  
 Without our men  
 Twittering with our hands  
 Some oppressed aspect  
 of our selves

Onto a crochet hook  
 That should have become a career.

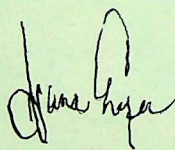
Don't you see--  
 We talk of liberated women  
 And think ourselves free  
 Because we live with men  
 Without marrying.  
 No longer devoted to dishes and children-  
 Having shitwork jobs  
 As a union organizer  
 Or eleven thousand a year.

But we have not become  
 our selves--

Are not constantly weaving  
 Our thoughts and perceptions  
 Onto some path

for the human beings,  
 But instead  
 Into some garment  
 To fodder the men  
 We live with  
 so "freely".

\*liberated, libidinal, librarian, libation.  
 See: freedom.




when you are old

in reply to yeats

When you are old and grey and full of sleep  
 Take down this verse and dream beside the fire  
 Of one beyond the reach of your desire  
 And how her eyes were reticent and deep.

For many loved her sympathy and grace  
 And loved her beauty falsely or loved true  
 Yet each believed as faithfully as you  
 He loved the sorrows of her changing face.

And think as you draw nearer to the fire  
 Of how they tried to limit and control  
 The resolution of that pilgrim soul  
 They only knew in terms of their desire.

terri b. joseph

the spring offensive  
 of the snail

Living someplace else is wrong,  
 in Jerusalem the golden  
 floating over New England smog,  
 above paper company forests,  
 deserted brick textile mills  
 square brooders on the rotted rivers,  
 developer chewed mountains.

Living out of time is wrong.  
 The future drained us thin as paper.  
 We were tools scraping.  
 After the revolution  
 we would be good, love one another  
 and bake fruit cakes.  
 In the meantime eat your ulcer.

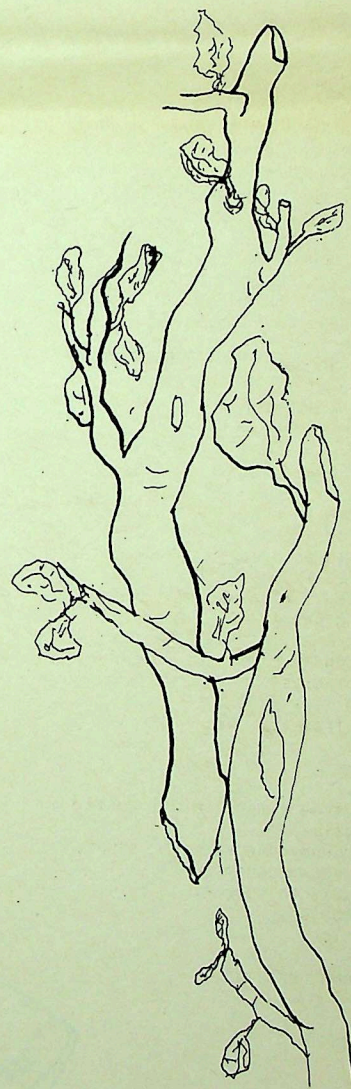
Living upsidedown is wrong,  
 roots in the air and  
 mouths filled with sand.  
 Only what might be sang.  
 I cannot live crackling  
 with electric rage always.  
 The journey is too long  
 to run, cursing those  
 who can't keep up.

Give me your hand.  
 Talk quietly to everyone you meet.  
 It is going on.  
 We are moving again  
 with our houses on our backs.  
 This time we have to remember  
 to sing and make soup.  
 Pack the Kapital and the vitamin E,  
 the basil plant for the sill,  
 Apache tears you  
 picked up in the dessert.

But remember to bury  
 all old quarrels  
 behind the garage for compost.  
 Forgive who insulted you.  
 Forgive yourself for being wrong.  
 You will do it again  
 for nothing living  
 resembles a straight line,  
 certainly not this journey  
 to and fro, zigzagging  
 you there and me here  
 making our own road onwards  
 as the snail does.

Yes, for some time we might contemplate  
 not the tiger, not the eagle or grizzly  
 but the snail who always remembers  
 that whatever you find yourself eating  
 is home, the center  
 where you must make your love,  
 and wherever you wake up  
 is here, the right place to be  
 where we start again.

marge piercy





Ameia lives!





## fight macho power: why women act against the war

The war in Indochina has again become outrageously visible to the U.S. Each person in our women's discussion group has again become active in anti-war protests. Many of the people we work with have said to us: "The war's not a women's issue," or "We're powerless to do anything; let's go on with our normal lives and work," -- and a part of each of us has wanted to do just that. So, to support each other in the central concern of our lives right now, we had a two hour consciousness raising discussion on our lives as women acting out against the war. Here's a small part of that discussion.

Members of our group are three people long active in Federal Employees for Peace: Susan Strauss, an ex-employee; Irene Waskow, a psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health; Madeleine Golde, an administrator at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and three others: Judy Davis, whose movement work is primarily among various groups of church women; Joanne Malone, currently involved in prison-related work as she waits to serve a four year sentence for the anti-war action against Dow Chemical Company; and Mariette Wickes, a teacher at Montgomery College working with other faculty members to protest the war.

**madeleine:** I see women much more ready than men to go into areas that are not as clear in terms of what's going to result for their careers. That's why I think there were a lot of women in the congressional gallery the other day shouting to stop the war. People were scared -- I was scared. If I got charged with a felony that was it -- I would be out on my ass, no kidding about it. I was frightened. Going back about a year and a half ago, there's been a big change in men. Previous to that, anti-war stuff or anything that I did was kind of weighed against my free time in other areas. I defined myself up to that point as a social worker. Now that has substantially changed -- and that happened to a lot of us, particularly after May Day where people were confronted for the first time. We couldn't ignore it. We were part of what's going on in this country and we were taking the shit along with everybody else.

**judy:** What you said about being a social worker relates to how I used to think about the war before the women's movement came along. That may help to answer the question about the relationship of the war and women. Things were so different in 1969. I remember the November '69 march and how I related to that compared to how I think about things now. There must have been about 45 people from Cambridge who passed through our house that weekend and I managed to play the hostess role right to the end. Part of what happened is that gradually the war began to become more of my own struggle -- my own liberation -- so I couldn't play the hostess part; I couldn't be a social worker anymore as the roles in my own life began to break down. I guess the connection is that the war is just not something over there to me anymore and I think that's related to things I began to trust more about women. Before I used to think that if someone got upset about death, that was just womanly wiles. I don't feel that way anymore. It's really important for people to get upset about those women weeping on the front page of the Washington Post today. Just figuring out that it was the same system killing those people over there that creates prostitutes in this country -- the same system that defoliates Vietnam poisons our food here -- and that really connects with me personally. That made the women in Vietnam much more real to me.

**joanne:** That feels like one of the biggest changes for me too. My politics for a long time was a politics of altruism. I was tied up with all the oppressed people that I needed to empathize with in order to fight their struggles. I was doing organizing and talking to people out there that weren't me -- giving speeches -- I was on one side and everyone to be organized was out there. It was ridiculous and alienating for me: I was being made a figure I couldn't really live with. It wasn't really me.

It was when I decided to have the baby [Blake, now 19 mons. old] that there was a big change in me because I learned a whole lot about my own oppression. On all kinds of levels I began realizing that if I was going to fight a long struggle for a long time and not just jump into the battle as a heroine to be offed, I was going to have to fight for myself and fight for things I needed: good education for my kid, good food, and a place to live like I never had for myself when I was acting so altruistically. The feeling came that it was going to take a long time to establish a kind of society where we could be sure of things like that and also overthrow a power that could sustain a war in Indochina this long and rattle arms all over the world as well.

**mariette:** I was thinking when Judy was talking how this year Vietnam has really taken hold of me in a way that it had not before. I've been in the anti-war movement for quite a few years, but now it's been personalized for me in a way that it never had. I think our women's group has a lot to do with it. Learning to be in touch with my feelings has a lot to do with it. The thing that was very very heavy was when we were arrested in Lafayette Park [on April 15]. The most emotional thing was seeing the man in the wheel chair with hardly any body left -- whether he was a Vietnam vet or not, he personified horrible suffering and despair on his face. That really got into my guts so deeply as a personification of the total human destruction that's going on in Vietnam. That was all working in me just before being arrested and then when they carried me to the bus, I screamed. Nobody in the world heard me except the three cops carrying me. I screamed, "Stop the War," as I've never screamed in public. I know I was screaming at Nixon; I was screaming at whatever power was carrying this war on. It was a kind of gut thing I never had had before.

**irene:** I was thinking as you were talking of the Issue of Ramparts early in 1967 with all the pictures of napalmed children. I had Shoshanna inside me and David was a young kid, and I saw those pictures of those kids who had been just about destroyed by napalm. I had been against the war for five years already, but I hadn't really done much about it. But those pictures just got to my gut like nothing else had done till that time, and I've never been the same since.

And the stuff in the Washington Post today made me wonder how anyone could read all that and not feel torn apart inside: those people who've moved fourteen times, lost kids, the old man who rebuilt his house fourteen times in the last twenty years, he doesn't know how he's going to get enough food to live....It's very important for me to go on educating my gut by reading all that. It's important for us to keep on knowing what the hell this government is doing in our name, so I can constantly question whether I can go up to work or not. David [Irene's eight year old son] said to me two weeks ago -- he didn't ask me -- he said to me, "Mommy, I think that if I were you, even if there were such a thing as Federal Employees for Peace, I still don't think I would work for a government that's making this war."

**susan:** When I saw today's paper, I glanced at the picture and read the first paragraph, and then decided not to read anymore, more for my own protection than anything else as I knew it would be a real tear jerker. I guess that I had decided that my survival that afternoon meant that I had to put the war aside and do things for myself. If I did that today, I know that lots of people must do that all the time and rationalize those blocks by saying that it's for their own survival and protection.

**madeleine:** That's at a cost. The very act of having to make a conscious decision not to do something builds up in your gut. I think it's one of the reasons we're very fucked up in terms of people's behavior and anxieties and tensions--squelching things like this.

**mariette:** The more you express the anger, the more you're able to live with the pain. That's what I've learned in the last weeks.

**susan:** Going to the Moratorium liturgy

and memorial service [on May 4, for all those killed and suffering through the war] was the first time I'd really let in my feelings about the war since last October at the Ellsberg dinner [given by Federal Employees for Peace in honor of Dan Ellsberg] and then the beginning of the bombing. I was very aware that all the time I was doing organizing for the Moratorium Rally, I didn't have time to read anything. To make myself functional during the week, for organizing and other things, I had to make the actual feeling of what was happening much more removed.

**mariette:** That really sounds like a male way of operating to me.

**madeleine:** What keeps Vietnam in my mind is having to deal so much with the god-damned bureaucrats: knowing everyday the kinds of minds that allow those things to happen. Since the bombing, I've kept my politics much more open in every way. It's much more honest and also much more tense. I'm constantly on the border of resigning because I can barely tolerate it. It's a constant drilling of how we've gotten into the situation we're in. I work with a lot of people who are former State Department and Pentagon and Security Council officials, many of whom left over Vietnam, people who were there up to 15 years, even working with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and left over Cambodia. But as far as they feel against the war, there's a whole intellectual rationale, a willingness not to let their politics show. They did it, but they did it quietly. And I find that very intolerable, because even if they left, they still have a military mind. I can see it so clearly in terms of how they organize the office where I work and how we're supposed to respond. It really is like being in the Pentagon. I've gotten an insight into how the military organizes itself to do a policy decision and it's absolutely frightening.

**mariette:** It's all part of the huge male macho trip.

**irene:** One of the strongest reactions I had was when Susan and I went to the Capitol last week, when they finally let us in the galleries, the day we thought Ron Dellums was going to introduce a motion to impeach Nixon. There were about 50 Congress people down below and 48 of them were men--all but Bella Abzug and one other woman. I looked around at all those old, very establishment type men, and I said, "What do you mean, the war isn't a women's issue?" These men, these old men are the people who are making all the decisions that are going to affect not only all the Vietnamese including Vietnamese women and children, but me and my kids, and there aren't even any women down there. Suddenly that whole picture on the house floor just got to me. One should go there every once in a while.

**mariette:** Those are the people who have power over us and the whole world--white male Americans, and they're the most pathetic people on earth. I was in a discussion about the war with a protestant churchman last week; he said he's never more than 51% sure of anything, including his opinion on the war, because he doesn't let his "random feelings" interfere with his rational judgements. He's the epitome of the WASP male who runs this country.

**joanne:** And the most pathetic of them all is Nixon himself. He really is so little. He does not have any special knowledge. I know so much more about the fucking war in Vietnam than he ever conceived of and I've known it for so many years. I've never believed in his damn secret plans. I've always felt so much contempt for him ever since his debates with Kennedy. He's a power-hungry, mighty, terrible man. But deep down, he's a little schmuck, and I want to step on him.

Earth Onion [a women's theater group Joanne is part of] should do a skit: we should make him this little schmuck, with a huge penis, and have it shrink. We'll do it in front of the White House, everyday.

**irene:** That's why the war is a women's issue. I know it, not in terms of rational analysis, but in my gut. The same male superpower structure that's keeping the Vietnamese from living is keeping women from being full human beings. What I want most for myself is to live fully, physically and psychologically, without stuff imposed on me by men. And if I want this for myself, I've got to want it for the Vietnamese and blacks in this country, and any people anywhere.

## washington area women's center

The Washington Area Women's Center is being set up for all women in the D. C. area. The Center is finally getting it together. It has received monthly sustainer pledges, but it needs more. The project groups are going, but each one needs people willing to work. It is beginning to form its own structure, but it needs help.

A Women's Center is just what it says: a center run by women and for women. Though it doesn't have a house (yet), it is already alive, and some project groups are already functioning. This article does not pretend to include all of the project groups that are a part of the Women's Center, but it does give an idea of what the Women's Center is and will be.

Anyone interested in becoming a part of the Women's Center should call the Women's Phone (232-5145). For specific project groups, names and numbers are given below

### housing

The housing committee is still looking for a house or building for the Center. A place is needed with a room large enough for meetings, a kitchen area, space for a newspaper(o.o.b.), health clinic, mental health counselling, office for the women's phone, etc. In all, about 15 rooms are needed. The major problem is the scarcity of large houses in the downtown area or in a neighborhood easily accessible to most women by public transportation. If anyone has an old mansion or just a large house to donate, or, knows of a suitable house that is for rent, contact Liz at 333-0761.

### legal & paralegal

A number of Washington area women lawyers have offered free assistance in setting up a legal counselling group to provide both information about the law in an educational capacity as well as to provide advice on particular problems and help train numbers of other women to staff such an office. Counselling particularly will be devoted to problems such as sex discrimination, child custody, adoption, welfare rights, divorce options, etc., and will be open to all women on a walk-in basis.

### lavender menace

The following were some of the suggestions for social and service projects for the Lesbian Office:

- Lesbian Library
- Literature Sales
- Calendar showing events in the area
- Staffed phones
- Rap Sessions
- Housing Referrals
- Job Referrals
- Open Office

For more information call Chris at 347-3776.

### liberation school

This project is to best serve the needs and interests of women who have not as yet identified themselves as a part of the women's movement. A "liberation school" could be in the beginning, evening workshops, seminars, or discussion groups on certain subjects. Informal discussion groups on any subject of interest can be applied to women. Through this interaction and information sharing, women's consciousness will inevitably be raised.

If interested, call Karen at 965-3573.



K. Kordisch

### feminist counselling

In order to provide an alternative to traditional psychological approaches to women, psychologists will work with paraprofessionals to meet marital and other personal problems using methods of self-help and group therapy meetings.

### crafts shop

This would be to provide a place where women can sell and buy crafts at a fair price. It will be a place where women can get literature about themselves. It can serve as an information center-bulletin board. The money made from the craftshop can go back into the center and the shop.

If you'd like to help, call Kathy at 387-6688

### rape

There is already a center. It's at 2134 Wisconsin Ave. N.W.. Services are starting in June. If you want to be a part of this working collective, contact Liz at 234-5354.

### crisis center

The main goal of this project is that it will function as a place within the Women's Center where any woman who is in a "crisis" situation can come for help and support. It would provide a place for women to stay for a few days. It would be open 24 hours a day and would provide beds for the women and any children they have. It would also provide counselling services such as job placement and mental health counselling.

If there is anyone willing to have women stay with them now until the Center has located a house, please contact Carol at 265-5688.

### \$\$\$ ....

Money is, as always, a problem. The Women's Dance was a huge success and raised approximately \$400.00 for the Center, as well as being a good evening of sisterhood. Anyone wanting to give financial (as well as moral) assistance should clip out the sustainer form, fill it out and send it in.

### health

Some of what the clinic will include will be (1) self-help clinics with paramedical women doing pap smears, (2) breast examinations, (3) pre-natal and child care counselling, (4) plus, teaching recipients of service to be able to do their own examinations. Also, V.D. and pregnancy tests will be available. Call the Georgetown Free Clinic Sat. mornings for more information. Ask for Dee or Helene.

### bail fund

This organization will be designed to get women out of jail by posting bail and by accepting third-party custody. The Fund also hopes to provide counselling and referral to appropriate programs for job training, adult education, etc.

### day care

This will be provided for women using the facilities of the Women's Center

The Washington Area WOMEN'S CENTER

Thank you for your sustainer in the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ Dollars

To Be Paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_ a month for the next 12 months

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ a month for the next 6 months

If you would prefer a different schedule of payments, please specify below:

---

Help us keep accurate records by filling in below the date you'll begin payments:      Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

To help minimize mailing costs, your canceled check will be your receipt.  
 Checks should be made payable to Washington Area Women's Center  
 P.O. Box 13098, T Street Station, Washington, D.C. 20009

# bringing it home

## one day in the life of the women's movement

Saturday, May 6, the day and night were planned for me. The D.C. Women's Abortion Commission was holding afternoon and evening sessions and the Women's Workshop section of Gay Pride Week was scheduled from 4 to 6. Abortion and lesbianism - if the struggles of women can be considered piecemeal - are two issues of the women's movement of relevance to me and to readers of off our backs. The irony is that I have to get a babysitter in order to be able to participate in or cover these activities.

### chronologue

Necessary arrangements made, it's almost 1 and I'm about ready to go.

Phone rings. It's Frances. "There's an all-day day care conference at the Mayflower. Norma can't make it. I can't handle it. Are you up for another split story?" (Allusion to our joint and schizophrenic coverage of February WONAAC conference - time heals all wounds.)

I tell her I'll meet her at the office at 1:30 and during the car ride down will have decided where the hell I'm going.

Speeding into D.C., I decide the afternoon goes to day care (added irony) and lesbianism. Of the three abortion panels slated for the day, I would only have caught one/half of the first anyway. Still, I feel a little guilty about not going because things have happened during Abortion Action Week that have not been covered: Abzug introduced her repeal bill, the Vatican embassy was picketed during morning rush hour, D.C. high school women managed to get 500 Birth Control Handbooks distributed at their school before the principal found out and turned blue. *But it comforts me somewhat that the Washington Post reported all of it.*

Meet Frances at the office. She's about as calm as I am. We load up with "Women in Prison" and "Women Loving" issues and fail to be uplifted by the sunny skies as we trudge down Connecticut Avenue to the Mayflower.

### how to alter our children and not feel guilty

We make appropriate comments about the chandeliers, crystal, mirrors, and plush deep-red carpets and pick up the wares at the registration table. The conference is presently in the State Room at a luncheon sponsored by the Catholic Daughters of America. We drop ourselves onto window seats in the rear of the dining hall and view the 300 or so people leaning back and wiping their mouths with their napkins. We have come just in time to hear all the workshop reports, the perceptions and conclusions of these 300 people's thinking on day care delivered in a nut shell by each workshop director. What more could a reporter ask for? Frances scans the scene and ferrets out a luncheon menu which she triumphantly snatches up and peruses with eyebrow lifted and lips askew.

The conference looks bourgeois professional. Although most of the people at the tables are women, 8 of the 11 on the dais are men, and only one woman presents a workshop report. A consistent theme is the contributions men can make to day care, getting men into public school positions, and involving fathers at all levels. Mothers, of course, are never let off the hook. The key word is responsibility. Children are always referred to as "he."

Workshop A - Learning and Living with Children: Ezra Pound is quoted about the need to "change our children by the fine old eyes of their teachers and parents." The error is in "not doing."

Workshop B - Trends in Early Childhood Research: "We don't have much information - no hard data."

Workshop C - Children and Drugs and Parents: Problems and Prospects: Speaker is a detective in the Narcotics Branch of the D.C. Police Department - we memorize his face.

Workshop D - After School Services for Children: The man is a holy roller, exhorting, screaming, gesticulating, vastly in love with

himself. "Let us keep in mind the child behind every man and woman." "You say you want the best for your child. Have you really made the commitment?" "You're sending out the product, and it's coming back to you. If it doesn't come back better, something is wrong." "Parental involvement equals self-fulfillment. We're giving people an opportunity to be somebody - and not to feel guilt." He gets the most applause.

Workshop E - Child Day Care in Washington, D.C., Present and Future: "Unless the program meets the needs of the people, it's not worth a damn."

Workshop F - Administering and Managing Day Care Programs: "We decided it's a good idea to get together with parents." End of reports.

According to the program, the conference was administered by the Center for Human Systems an outfit represented by three tables of people. According to the brochure distributed by the Center for Human Systems, "Now that the value of systems techniques has been demonstrated through such programs as space exploration and defense production, it is time to apply systems techniques to the solution of urgent human problems of our day."

Outside, we run into Gale, who had been to a hip day care workshop at the Community Bookstore a few weeks earlier. She tells us ours doesn't sound much worse than hers.

### a matter of definition

On to All Soul's Church and the one women's workshop in all of Gay Pride Week. oob has been told that when the workshop ends at 6, and the men return for their continued weighty discussions, the women will hold the stage and refuse to leave. So we're looking forward to the action. *But we soon discover there is no stage, but a number of discrete small group discussions going on in various rooms in the church basement.*

The women's workshop consists of 14 women and 3 men. One woman member of the GAA says that two hours were all women had because gay women had shown absolutely no interest in participating in Gay Pride Week and practically had to be begged to show up for one workshop. Two sides to every story.

The women speak of themselves as gay-identifies, women's movement-identified, lesbian feminist-identified, and unidentified (the five of us from oob are mostly oob-identified).

Around the identifications devolve discussions on what gay women's priorities are and should be, on interrelationships with gay men and straight women, on raising lesbian consciousness, and on unifying the variously identified subgroups of gay women.

One woman says she doesn't relate to the women's movement. "Abortion and day care are not my concern." That turns out to be the only comment uttered recognizing the fact that some women become pregnant and/or have children.

"But control of your body is," counters her neighbor on the left, "and so is gay oppression within the women's movement."

Another woman, who can't relate to either gay rights struggles or to straight women, voices her hope that her alienation will be overcome by participating in the women's center.

There is a discussion about too much talk and too little individual action in getting the women's center going.

Whether gay women should or could work with straight women is the issue, however. One woman from Northern Virginia NOW repeatedly urges lesbians to join their local NOW branches and organize into strong caucuses to influence the organization and thereby better the position of gay women throughout the country. Some think that might be a good mechanism to get gay women together in the first place, but with the purpose of raising consciousness and eventually splitting NOW.

Women from the Furies newspaper collective argue against any lesbian joining an organization whose stated goal is equality with men in all areas of life. They also contend that it is energy-draining and self-defeating to work in any predominantly straight women's group. "The women's movement is still heterosexual -

it doesn't question heterosexuality as a norm. When you start questioning it, when you start analyzing it, they don't like it, they don't want to give up their privileges. As soon as you start talking about lesbianism in a political way, you've had it. From then on, it takes all you've got just to survive in the group."

They cite, as their personal example, what they consider the difficult time some of the women who now work on the Furies had when they were oob staff members. None of us there had been on the staff at the time of "the split" and so cannot elaborate on the dynamics involved. We are asked by the other women how we find working on oob and one of us replies that it is on this newspaper she can most function as an individual: not having to adhere to any predetermined political line she can write as herself on issues of concern to her. Her opinions are respected, even if not shared, and her work uncensored.

This leads into a not too productive discussion of modern "political" lesbianism versus "old form" lesbianism. It does point out, however, the resentment some gay women have of women emerging from the women's movement as radical lesbians with the definitive line on what it means to be a lesbian.

A tangential topic is the strategy of alliances with gay men's groups. The Furies believe this to be politically advantageous in some circumstances. Soem of the other women have voiced their disgust over the male supremacist attitudes of gay men. "Straight men view me as a sex object. Gay men view me as an object," says one.

People are a little worn out by some of the "gayer than thou" dialogues that have taken place between "old" and "new" lesbians, and the session adjourns a few minutes after 6.

A few of us make it to a Mexican restaurant. It's 6:30 and none of us have eaten. We fill ourselves up an hour into the abortion hearings.

### abortion and the church

We arrive at St. Mark's Church. The scene is surrealistic. The church is all shadows with bright klieg lights beating down on the witnesses and judges in the center of the room. It's very quiet. We sit down; hymn books are at our feet. Frances spends the 45 minutes recalling her Southern Baptist childhood as she leafs through the pages. Women are recounting their experiences with abortion - some tell horror stories; some tell of how their husbands, the Catholic religion, and the abortion laws have turned their lives into daily oppression and fear. A high school woman relates the difficulties of minors. One woman tells the story of a remarkable doctor, her abortionist, who did a stretch at the D.C. Women's Detention Center, developed emphysema there, and is now dying. The hearings are being videotaped - a good way to perpetuate this kind of educational effort.

There is a pitch made for support of Abzug's repeal bill and for money. The women pick up candles and a casket and march to the capitol steps. We do not join the procession. (The next day the Post carries a picture of it.)

We all need a drink. We venture to Child Harold's, where the drafts arrive tasting like soapy dish water with a little urine. We force ourselves to drink most of it and make for the door, leaving \$2 on the table. Waitress rushes us - the beers are 85¢ a piece. We vow never to return to Child Harold's and, lemming-like, our legs take us to the old familiar place, the Dupont Villa.

End of day. I had spent \$9 on a babysitter to hear a lot of talk about a lot of problems and to envision data-processed, cost-effective day care administered by Robert Strange McNamara. The thing, though, that is really happening in D.C. - which was in back of my mind during all the talks about all the problems - is the Women's Center (see page 15). Not a panacea, but the best thing going to start solving the problems, a place where women can go for needed services without having first to get a babysitter.

by fran pollner

## sage advice

In the old-time tradition, people were "going around the room," in this instance, the seminar room of the Institute for Policy Studies, the chic rad-lib center of much Movement Activity. Women told what had brought them to the meeting, which was billed as a meeting of some of the women who had worked with the long-defunct women's center at Biltmore St. with the women who are planning a new Women's Center for D.C. I came as a woman who had worked with the old center as well as oob reporter. Of

## stood-up

The old women talked of the dark 2-bedroom apartment on Biltmore Street, too small to be a place to do much of anything but have meetings and maintain an office, too big to just let it go at being a Women's Phone information service. People just didn't come to it, said Sharon, a woman with whom I had written out a list of office procedures in those days so that any woman could come into our office and collectivize responsibility. "We were very moral," Charlotte reminded us. We refused to hire,

## magic quilt

Some of the discussion centered around the question of services: how many and what kind and who. Do we set up programs in exchange for political correctness? The minimal services, mostly abortion counseling, performed by the Biltmore center were described, as a political, disconnected and unrelated to the women's movement (you never saw the women again). Marlene talked about how services should relieve the oppression of women's roles so that a woman could go forward. Charlotte said we often talk about a large array of services we wish to perform for women as if we were the women's "counter-government" we wish to become. I challenged her on this, because I and a couple of other women don't want a counter-government, even a women's counter government.

Yes, we all want to succeed and be efficient, but we don't have the same goals, and it frightens me that we can never think of our goals on anything but massive whole-society terms and never just allow decentralization and voluntary disassociation. Too much in the women's movement smacks of the religious fanaticism which male-chauvinist propaganda would have us believe is woman's peculiar forte. Changing one's way of living because one came to a women's center is too much like being "born again," a feat I was never very successful at as a Baptist. I ain't being anybody's "little missionary" this or any other week.

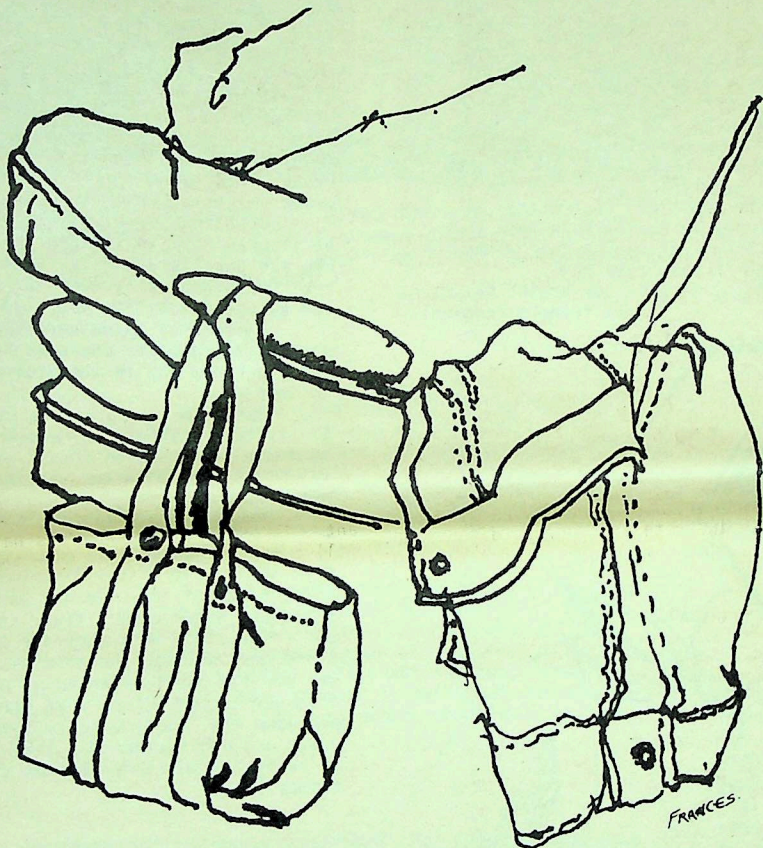
## services

It was suggested that there are frightening similarities between the new and the old women's centers: Is the co-ordinating council just "A Magical Quilt" (the whimsical name of our attempted city-wide forum cum policy making body) that has come out as what it really is, a steering committee? Is the list of services and project groups just as empty and inflated as Biltmore's? Is there a "hidden leadership"?

Yet there are differences: there are action groups, long-standing work groups relating to the new women's center and exhibiting the vitality of autonomy. The hidden leadership doesn't feel it has the whole truth and has a hell of a lot more understanding of what participatory democracy is all about. And finally, women involved in the new women's center are up front lesbians and maybe this time the ordeal of heterosexism and lesbian vanguardism will be less of an upheaval.

Two pitfalls that were delineated that really rang of the truth: unless we are careful about the process of our meetings, decisions will be made by whoever survives meetings the longest. Guard women's interests rather than succumbing to group pressure.

by frances chapman



all the "old women," I and another woman were the only ones who had not become lesbian separatists and she and I were in different places. The rest were now "Furies" or closely associated with them. The new women were Washington Feminists, a group of women who came from George Washington University WL when that organization was told by the University to purge the "townies." The Washington Feminists, many of whom are gay feminists, still see the women's movement as a unified movement despite the categories of gay and straight.

The meeting was called by the women organizing the new women's center so as to repeat "the mistakes of the past."

My own feeling was that it was a repeat of the favorite group game of the women's movement. Really believe you can do something - that because you're a woman you know what you need and want, then in a moment of panic for fear of being wrong, you freak out and seek the wisdom of the sage politicoes. Then predictable demoralization sets in, the fault of neither the old or the new women. It is simply the result of putting new wine in old bottles.

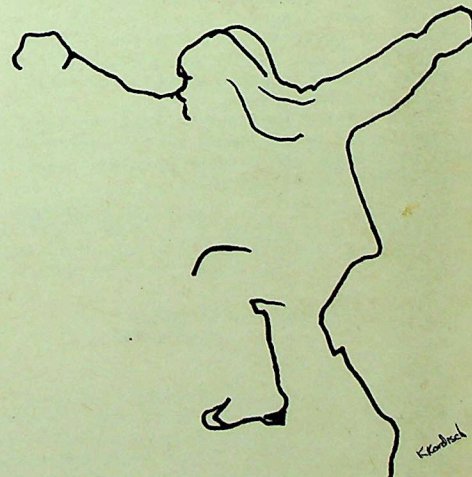
Our movement is not, as I have thought in moments of despondency, sick and cyclic. Each new feminist may start new, but the world is new too, and women have changed that world some in the last five years. It is our shame if we let the past haunt us.

ipso facto oppress a woman to work in our office full-time. We were going to be one large collective. When that failed, we became shackled by radical bureaucracy, which I must admit excited me at the time.

## decay

Yet so much of the process of degeneration at the Biltmore center was part of elitism and social clique still only half admitted to. True, as Sharon said, class was never dealt with. Everyone was expected to quit her job and work "full-time" for the women's movement in a fast-paced sequence of demonstrations, courses, and speaking engagements.

But it is more than class. It is not being sure of ourselves as women and as individuals. It is being embarrassed by women who are not as radical and liberated as we are, the whole she's from the suburbs syndrome. If we were more sure, we could sit down and talk to newly political women and tell them what we know about the women's movement, its seamy underside as well as the good side, and they could tell us about their lives, both the good and bad parts. It is not giving these women busy-work until you trust them, while you and your clique make decisions that are politically correct (but more usually are dead wrong) behind closed collective doors.



# bringing it home

## women and law

"Law is a reflection of an oppressive system," said Mary Helen Mautner, a lawyer with the Georgetown Legal Interns. She spoke April 21 on "Women and the Law" at a lecture sponsored by the Women's Studies group at George Mason, College, Northern Virginia.

Mary Helen outlined the areas in which women are directly affected by the law:

- In domestic relations, women have reciprocal rights under the law, not equal rights. She is expected to exchange homemaking, child care, and sexual services for the protection and support of her husband. Alimony and child support are extensions of the marriage relationship. The Equal Rights Amendment will cut off the alimony of older, unskilled women who are devalued by society both in the job and sexual markets.

- Protective labor laws regulate the circumstances under which women may legally work, e.g., rest periods, restrictions on amount of weight a woman can carry. Sometimes these laws completely prohibit women from doing work men may legally do, e.g., bartending. Protective labor legislation discriminates against women by making it easier not to hire women. Yet the trend has been for benefits conferred by these laws to be extended to men.

- Challenges on the issue of public accommodations are gaining women access to bars and restaurants from which they were excluded on the basis of sex.

- With regard to age of majority, a lower age is set for women. The rationale is they get married anyway, so why not make the legal age lower than it is for men?

- In some states, there are special criminal sections for women. Women are incarcerated more often than men for similar crimes, and often draw longer sentences. Girls are committed to juvenile institutions for running away or being out late. For girls, orderly behavior is linked to restriction on sexuality, as it is not with boys. Although juvenile delinquency is decreasing on the whole, juvenile delinquency is increasing among women because of women's liberation.

- Women are victimized by inequitable amount of money as their male co-workers, but get paid less at every age level when they retire.

- Women are discriminated against with regard to housing. The Federal Housing Administration does not consider the wife's income when a married couple applies for a house loan. Realtors demand that the husband sign a lease on a house or apartment.

In the middle of Mary Helen's discussion of laws on rape and their enforcement, students noisily assembled for a movie scheduled for the auditorium. So we reconvened on the grass outside.

Rape, says Mary Helen, is only an extreme of what happens every day. In fact, prisoners convicted of rape are the most "normal" and form an elite of the prison population. Rape is the most frequent crime.

Although penalties for rape are high, rape is difficult to prove because the law doesn't take the woman's word. Assault, penetration, and lack of consent must be proved. In no other area of the law is the assumption made that the victim is being vengeful or fantasizing, said Mary Helen.

The speaker reminded us that the legal system, based on the model of the battlefield, with prosecutor and defense attorneys as adversaries, itself is male.

by frances chapman

## lobotomy

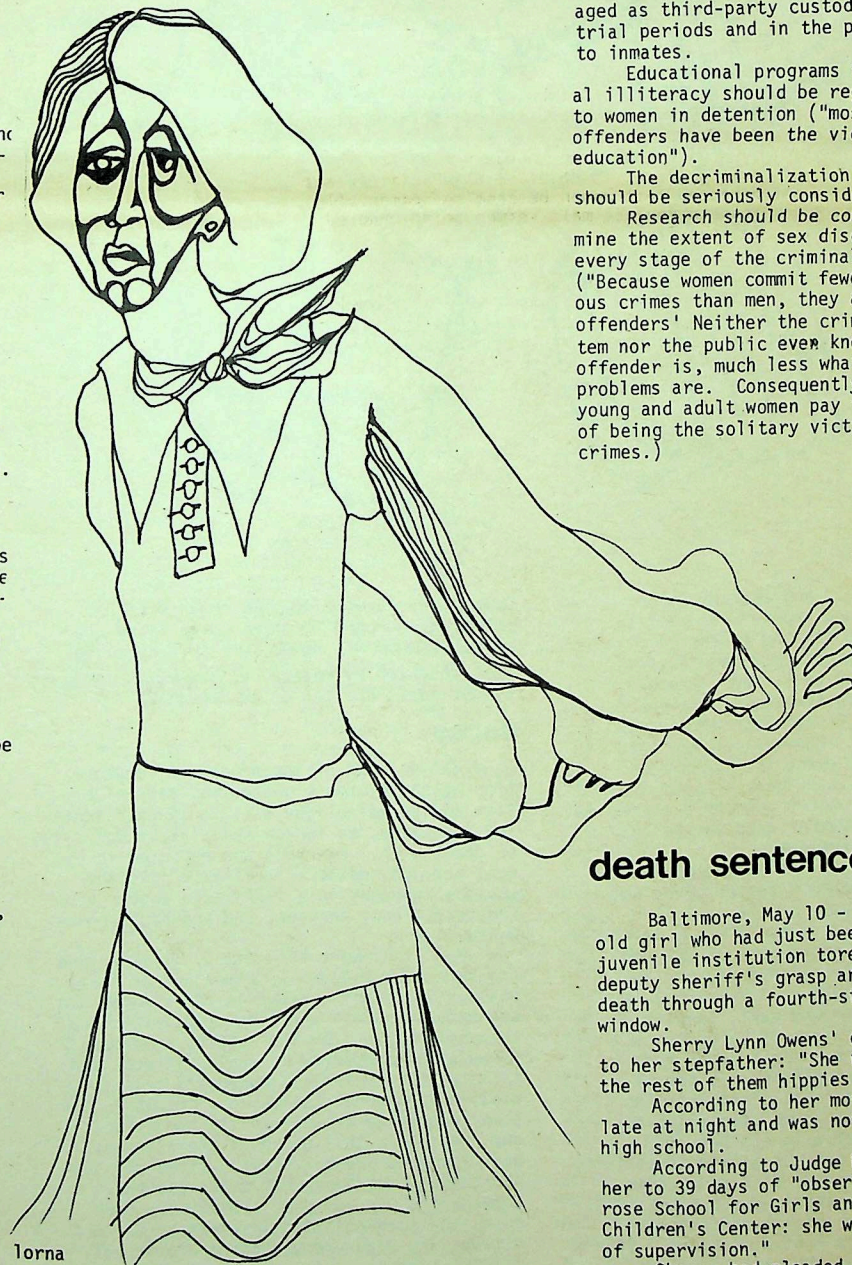
"The vision of a society of placid human robots, remotely controlled by computers is not far-fetched."

So warned Dr. Barbara Roberts, a physician working with the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition, speaking on psychosurgery March 31 at the Socialist Workers Party Militant Forum.

Psychosurgery is a weapon of the ruling class in the class struggle, said Barbara to the fifty or so people assembled, mostly SWP and YSA members. I wondered how many people movement prejudice against the Trotskyists kept away. Psychosurgery is an important issue for radicals, particularly radical women, to confront.

But psychosurgery is too important to be just another political issue around which to agitate. Says Barbara, "Unlike burning at the stake, psychosurgery can silence rebellion while preserving the useful work women do with their hands, their backs and their uteruses." Those that carry on this research believe that the source of human problems, violence and social chaos is the human brain, and so they try to destroy it. Marxists say it is the environment and the class conflict within it. Feminists might say it is the male trip that would do anything that can be done without asking whether it should be done.

To struggle, we need our brains intact.  
by frances chapman



## down with detention!

The D.C. Commission on the Status of Women has issued a report on "Female Offenders in the District of Columbia." Largely based on hearings held here in November (see oob, December 1971), the Commission deplored the overcrowded, inhuman conditions women are subjected to in detention here, the sex-stereotyped "rehabilitative" training they receive, the virtual absence of community half-way houses for women and girl offenders, the absence of a narcotic treatment facility for women, the denial to women of pretrial release on "personal recognizance" because they are not gainfully employed, and the incarceration of women for prostitution.

Among its 29 recommendations to the D.C. Government are included:

- Discontinuation of the use of D.C. Women's Detention Center for any but the most temporary of stays ("its basic design makes it unworkable as a detention center").

- Discontinuation of the use of Alderson Reformatory, West Virginia, as a detention facility for long-term offenders from D.C. (They cannot be enrolled in work-release programs in the District.)

- Incarceration of female offenders should be imposed only in limited instances. Women who are incarcerated should be granted liberal furloughs, playrooms for their children and extended visiting hours in private.

- Efforts of volunteers should be encouraged as third-party custodians during pre-trial periods and in the provision of services to inmates.

- Educational programs to attack functional illiteracy should be regularly available to women in detention ("most girl and women offenders have been the victims of ghetto education").

- The decriminalization of prostitution should be seriously considered.

- Research should be conducted to determine the extent of sex discrimination at every stage of the criminal justice system. ("Because women commit fewer and less serious crimes than men, they are the 'forgotten offenders' Neither the criminal justice system nor the public even knows who the female offender is, much less what her needs and problems are. Consequently, every day, more young and adult women pay that ironic price of being the solitary victims of their own crimes.")

## death sentence

Baltimore, May 10 - A weeping 14-year-old girl who had just been sentenced to a juvenile institution tore herself from a deputy sheriff's grasp and crashed to her death through a fourth-story courthouse window.

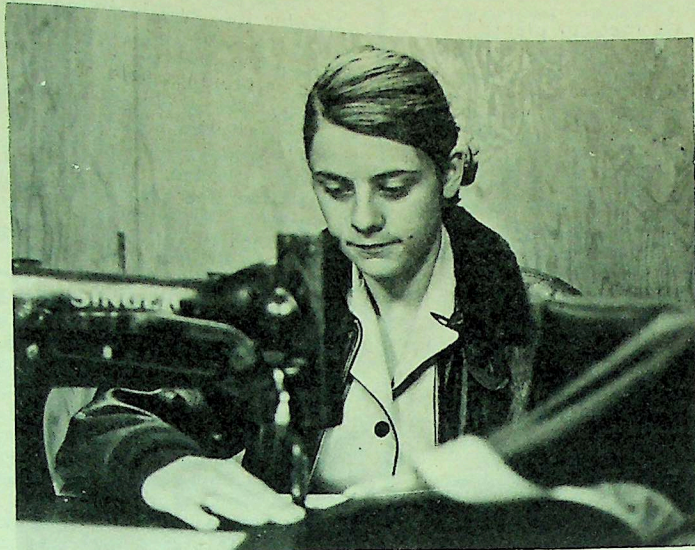
Sherry Lynn Owens' crime was: according to her stepfather: "She ran around a lot with the rest of them hippies with their dope."

According to her mother: she stayed out late at night and was not going to her junior high school.

According to Judge Walker, who sentenced her to 39 days of "observation" at the Montrose School for Girls and the Maryland Children's Center: she was a "child in need of supervision."

Sherry had pleaded not to be sent away. She was the third person in less than a year to jump from the windows of that courthouse.

## women's liberation and the war effort



U.S. Navy photo by PO 1.C. C.J. Markowski

"A knowledge of housekeeper chores stands Seaman Cathy Gaulin in good stead as she operates a heavy-duty sewing machine in the VRF-32 parachute loft...repairing flight suits, parachutes and other survival equipment."

"Women's Liberation is moving into the Navy," we are informed by the Pacific Fleet Naval Air Force, "and the girls think it's great."

"The move came in early February when the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet directed that women be sent to seamen billets to replace male seamen being ordered to sea duty.

"The distaff seamen perform mostly clerical work, such as typing, filing and sorting mail - jobs which were previously done by men now needed aboard ship....the Navy is better utilizing its women seamen and the Navy in turn is getting a job done."

The "job," no doubt, was mining harbors



U.S. Navy photo by PO 1.C. C.J. Markowski

"In VRF-32's material office, Petty Officer First Class Paul Roberts teaches Seaman Diane Gabriel how to fill out a supply requisition form."

## prison fashions

Stripes of a different hue are appearing in the uniforms of women prisoners these days. According to the New York Times, Dwight Reformatory in Dwight, Ill. is allowing women prisoners to make and wear slacks and matching blouses in such gay colors as purple, turquoise, aquamarine and persimmon.

These new fashions were shown last month during a three day seminar sponsored by the Correctional Programs Division of the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation of New York.

Candy Jones, a former model, consultant to the Foundation's program and an instructor at the Riker's Island Prison self-improvement course said that the fashionable uniforms provided by Dwight Reformatory for the show were modeled by both former inmates and by self-improvement course instructors.

According to Harry H. Woodward, Jr., program director for the Foundation, "Self-esteem through Femenity" courses are being held in 29 prisons at a cost of about \$50,000 a year. Many of the instructors are volunteers and some of the cosmetics are even being donated according to Woodward. The feminity courses include lessons on how to improve your appearance and speech and how to have a successful job interview.

## waitresses unite

Waitresses in the Harvard Square area of Cambridge, Mass., recently began to organize an independent, local union. The women are demanding an increase in the minimum wage from \$.96 to \$1.35 an hour; sick pay; overtime pay; breaks; maternity leave; cab fare for women working past midnight; an end to waitress responsibility for customers who walk out without paying their bills; and an end to harassment by customers and management.

At one restaurant, Cronin's, women picketed from Dec. 9 to Dec. 13. Because most customers didn't cross the picket line the women were able to force the management to recognize them as members of the Harvard Square Organizing Committee (the official AFL-CIO waiter-bartender union has done virtually nothing to help waitresses, and most women, including the waitresses in Cronin's, don't belong to it).

The waitresses have been negotiating with Cronin for over a month and although he has let the women have a place to sit in the restaurant, and given them the \$1 cab fare for women working past midnight, he refuses to budge on any of the essential contract demands. The women are trying to negotiate again but as this is not expected to work, they will probably be out on strike again.

After the initial success of the Cambridge women, waitresses at Jack and Marion's--a Boston restaurant--wore "I Support the Union" buttons to work. Immediately, eight women were fired. After picketing outside the restaurant, five waitresses were reinstated.

The Harvard Square Waitresses Organizing Committee is confident that eventually they will win their contract demands at Cronin's. Their next move will be to fight for recognition and a contract at Jack and Marion's, as well as to get the three waitresses who were fired, reinstated. This will take a court case, to prove that the women were fired for trying to organize a union. The Harvard Square Waitress Organizing Committee has received calls from waitresses all over who want to join the union or start their own.

liberation news service/  
womankind

*We just learned that the waitresses at Cronin's are still on strike and are becoming an independent union through the National Labor Relations Board. Contact: Pat Walsh, Harvard Square Waitresses' Union, 689 Green St., Cambridge, Mass. (617-547-6674)*



## droppings...

**BIGGEST HORROR OF THE MONTH--Tricky Dick** drops bombs on Haiphong and then goes and talks Capitalism with the Russians?

**LOCAL DROP-IN--**Woman with 11 year old child looking for apt. or house to share. Contact Ruth Mikulskis at 2820 Bosworth Lane, Bowie 262-1808--Washington Child Care Exchange, interested? call 232-0957 for more info.--D.C. Women's Center is still looking for a house. Any leads? Call 232-5145--Montgomery County NOW is sponsoring a symposium on women's health Sat. June 3 at 10:30 at the Wheaton Library, bring your lunch--Women who would like to have another Washington Feminist discussion series this summer, call the women's phone 232-5145.--Women entertainers who would like to be listed in WAFU Red Pages contact Isabel Holt at 234-5477.

## CARPE DIEM

**DROP-IN--**NYC Women's Center has moved into a two-story red-brick abandoned firehouse at 243 W. 20th St. Their rent is \$1 a month. Someone up there likes 'em or is afraid of 'em. Right on Sisters!--Women's Camp sponsored by WL of Michigan. June 16-25 at Circle Pines Center, Delton, Michigan. intrigued? Call (313) 963-6795--Women's Cooperative Crafts Store (just things made by women), Penelope and Sisters, 603 S. 4th St. Philadelphia--Also in Philly, the women's center at 4634 Chester Ave. At the house there's day care, literature (old oob's?), crash rooms, therapists and other services. Say hi for us.--Women's Abortion Group, 555 Central Ave., Scarsdale, N.Y. (914) 725-1292--Women's Center on Monterey Peninsula, 508 17th St., Pacific Grove, Ca!--Twin Cities Women's Health Conference, 1005 E. 31st St., Mpls, Minn. 55407, sometime in June--June 2-4, a weekend for women will be held in Voluntown, Conn. For more info call Denys at 203-376-9970 or write RFD #1, Box 430, Voluntown, Conn. 06384.--June 3-4 Older Women's Liberation Conference, NYC, Contact OWL, 505 LaGuardia Pl., Apt. 26B, NYC 10012 (212) 643-0788--Women's Conference, Communication Workers of America, L.A. Contact Valerie Howard, CWA, 1925 K St. NW, D.C. 20006. First International Festival of Women's Films June 5-21 at the Fifth Avenue Cinema, NYC (of course).

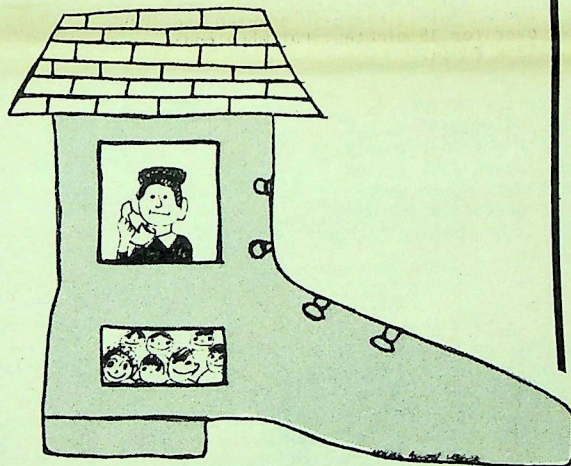
**STOP COCK--**A reversible vasectomy device called Bronx control is currently being tested. Made of gold stainless steel, it will be implanted in the vas deferens--in an on or off position--depending on whether sperm are desired or not. Ob-Gyn News

## WOMEN IN REVOLT STINKS

**SEND-IN--**Colleen Monahan and Elaine Jacobs have just finished a semi-documentary film about a lesbian couple. For more info write Colleen at 1941 W. Fletcher, Chicago, 60657--New poetry magazine on tapes. Hear Marge Piercy read Laying Down the Tower (tarot poems). Write Black Box 3735 Jocelyn St. NW Washington, D.C.--Sleeping Beauty, a lesbian fairy tale. 50¢ plus 20¢ postage and handling Write Sojourner Truth Press Collective, 432 Moreland Ave. NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30307--A new national lesbian service group has been formed by lesbian writers and professionals. The National Lesbian Information Service (NLIS) is publishing a monthly 8 page newsletters. Sample Copies are 50¢, subs are \$12.00 per year. NLIS may be reached at Box 15368, S.F.,

Ca. 94115.--Women in Cambridge, Mass setting up a resource center on "women's involvement throughout the world in the revolutionary struggle for new societies." If you can help write Lynn Rhodes, 105 Memorial Hall, Cambridge, Mass 02138--Want to turn someone on this summer? Send for back copies of oob, just send in the cost of postage (approx. 8¢/issue). Write Green Hairnet c/o oob--Please send in info about Sexism in Children's Literature to Children's Literature Project c/o oob.--The National Committee to Free Angela Davis has just published the complete text of Angela Davis' opening defense statement of March 29, 1972. The pamphlet, Frame-Up is 25¢ is available from the N.Y. Committee to Free A.D., 150 Fifth Ave, NYC 10011.--Purple Rags, a new radical lesbian monthly. Subs are \$2.50 a year. Write c/o W. 22nd St., NYC 10010.--New Record, "You'll Be Hearing More From Me." by Jody Aliesan available for \$4.25 by mail from It's About Time, 5502 University Way NE, Seattle, Wa. 98105--Women Studies Abstracts (even oob is listed). Individual subs \$7.50 a year. Write to W.S.A. P.O. Box 1, Rush, NY 14543.--U.S.-China Friendship Ass. has a newsletter for \$3.00 a year, P.O. Box 40486, S.F., Ca. 94140.

**DUM-DA-DUM-DUM--**J. Edgar is dead. Grey's in charge. He's gonna hire women. And let the men wear colored shirts.



*'Now they legalize abortions'*

**DEMOCRACY IN ACTION--**Mary Emily Stuart Austell will have to use her husband's surname if she want to vote, a Judge ruled in Maryland this week. If she wants to vote she would have to register to vote as Mrs Austell and that's that.

**BY SAFFRON--**flowers alone are not enough... how about a little marymagdlenecard.

Forever yours,



*Chicken lady*

## lesbian mothers

From the National Lesbian Information Service: The number of lesbian mothers in the United States is estimated by some to be half the total lesbian population of several million. However, lesbian mothers had largely been ignored by lesbian groups until last year's West Coast Lesbian Conference when a lesbian mother's group protested that no child care had been provided. This protest heralded the formation of the Lesbian Mothers Union as well as a growing awareness of the problems lesbian mothers face in retaining custody of their children in divorce proceedings, regardless of their "fitness" as mothers. There has been no known case in the country where lesbianism was an issue of divorce proceedings where the mother has been given custody of her children. Later last year the National Organization of Women (NOW) in a pro-lesbian resolution voted to support a test case involving a lesbian mother's right to child custody. But when funding was sought to support such a case in California, from NOW's Legal Defense and Education Fund, it was denied.

The lesbian mother's custody case in California, initiated late last year, was set back several months when the judge backed out of the case late in April.

Initially, the judge had recommended that the child custody issue be reviewed by a family counselor, whose recommendations would be accepted unless one of the parties challenged them. He indicated at that time, however, that the counselor's recommendations would be virtually insurmountable.

After interviewing all family members, the counselor recommended that custody of the children remain with the mother. The woman's husband challenged the finding and requested a hearing.

On the day the hearing was to be held, the judge said he did not have time to hear the case and that a new judge would have to be appointed.

And so it has rested since then.

## inside lines on attica

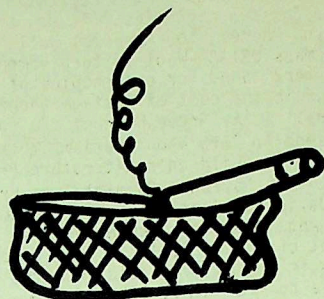
*The Correspondence Department of the Attica Prison apparently forgot to remove their 14-point plan for proper correspondence from a letter sent to off our backs.*

## THIS LETTER IS RETURNED TO YOU BECAUSE

1. You did not sign properly.
2. You did not fill out stub properly.
3. Name of addressee has not been approved.
4. Letters addressed to General Delivery not permitted.
5. It contains Criminal or Prison News.
6. Begging for packages or money not allowed.
7. You are not permitted to receive the articles requested.
8. The articles requested can only be received new from dealer.
9. Correspondence with newspapers or newspaper employees not permitted.
10. You cannot have a visit with the person named in your letter unless approved by the Superintendent.
11. Inmate who wrote letter for you did not sign his name.
12. Special Letters must be submitted Saturday, Sunday or Holidays.
13. You did not stick to your subject.
14. You have no stamps on deposit.

CORRESPONDENCE DEPT. PERSONNEL

## how to make a meeting



## if you're a quiet person

Everyone has their own theory on why some people are more afraid than others to speak up at meetings ranging from an explanation of just plain terror to a Freudian analysis which says quiet people are really superegotists who are totally into themselves. Although overcoming one's quietness is not entirely unrelated to the talkative people shutting up here are a few suggestions:

1. Say hello when you come in. Then you know you're there and so does everybody else, making it harder for you to cop out of the proceedings into day dreams or doodles.
2. Discuss the problems of quiet people in your group but remember the talkers aren't always responsible for your quietness.
3. Suggest a chairperson for larger meetings who calls on each individual for her response to the issue under discussion.
4. Some groups have tried starting meetings with a stack of chips for each person which you spend each time you talk. This will only benefit quiet people if the rule is that everyone must spend all their chips before the meeting is over.
5. If you don't understand something, grit your teeth and ask questions. Ask 50 times if you need to. Sometimes people obfuscate issues out of sheer orniness brought on by anything from indigestion to warped egos.
6. Sometimes being quiet is a good thing to do.

## if you're a noisy person

In meetings I have always talked too much. When the give-and-take of dialogue stalls, my response has always been an attempt to force the group to move by filling the silences with my ideas. What looks on the surface like some heavy's ego trip is essentially an hysterical response to a passive situation. Though there is some of that, for I am verbal and have learned with panic wrenching all my gears how to speak up in front of groups in spite of being a poor public speaker.

The positive motivation for this response is the time-worn revolutionary surrealist slogan: "Create situations." Of course it is not all conscious, some of us just do a lot of things for the drama, a healthy response in a world where a lot of the glory of life is leached out. But showy game playing is really for shit in meetings, even "I can't stand all the silence so I'm going to talk a lot and maybe some of what I say will spark ideas in someone else's mind."

Yet the way to deal with passivity is not knee-jerk aggressiveness but rigorous attention to the roots of where that passivity is coming from and the patient verification of the authenticity of these causes. Challenging passivity can only be successful with the voluntary co-operation of those who are being passive though, so people like me fall back on theatre; screaming fits, selfcriticism, (melodrama), flippancy (comedy), all catalysts for the transformation of group dynamics but that is hard on the actress--tension management but now for other females. Generally when you're feeling smug it's time to shut up.

## good brownies

Bring lots of beer and wine and drink it all. Feed each other--hunger leads to homicide.

- 1 cup sifted flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 squares chocolate (unsweetened)
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 lb. butter
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Melt chocolate with butter. Cool. Beat eggs with salt until light. Add sugar, beat. Add chocolate mixture and vanilla, beat. Add flour, beat. Add walnuts. Place in greased pan. 325° over for 35 minutes. Cut when cool. 12 x 8 pan.

## afgan

After I started going to various kinds of women's liberation meetings, I decided I just couldn't sit there and chew my nails. So I got myself a project...knitting an afgan. It's perfect for meetings because all you do is knit triangles. You cast on 41 stitches and then after the second row you decrease one every other row. You knit until you have 90 triangles and then sew the whole thing together.

I'm almost finished, but I just noticed there are alot of mistakes. I guess I've gone to alot of exciting meetings in the last 4 years.

## structured meetings, coalitions, and how to be an honest chairwoman

Occasionally, even in the freeform women's movement, we have structured meetings, run according to a fuzzy primitive Robert's Rules of Order, and occasionally we go to meetings of groups further right or participate in coalitions which include such groups. When you start hearing terms like "friendly amendment" and calling the question thrown around, your best move is to challenge the class and educational bias of the group and suggest a structure less elitist. Of course we shouldn't obe ignorant of parlamenta procedure, but this is a survival article. Even if we can survive in such a meeting, many of our newly political or less privileged sisters will not. Such bureaucratized democracy will work against them. Large meetings and coalition meetings need structure: someone to chair and a pre-planned

agenda. When it is clear a meeting needs to be structured suggest a rotating chair person or a committee so that one person does not end up with all the responsibility and power. If you are selected to be a chair person, (if you never are--volunteer. That's a part of our work and who are you to luck out?)ask the group to discuss how you should set priorities for the items that will be put on the agenda, to set a time limit on the meeting, and who will write down the decisions that are made. Since some of these decisions can be made on the spur of the moment at the actual meeting you will be chairing, be prepared to be considered super uptight. But remember, anything that is not decided in advance, you will have to decide unilaterally and be open to criticism if you guess wrong. Write down the items to be discussed at the meeting you are to chair, give your phone number to the group so that further items can be called in. Avoid putting yourself up to call groups who expect to be called if they want to add something. They should contact you. Ask people or decide yourself to allow for how long the discussion of the various proposals should go on. At the start of the meeting, say how long you estimate getting through the agneda will take, and suggest dropping some of the less important items. Of course, you should recognize people so that a few people don't dominate the discussion. At the end of the discussion, ask if there is anyone who wants to say anything further - even if noone has her hand raised to be recognized. Restate any deci-

## surviving a bad meeting

1. Stay home.
2. If you must go, arrive late so you can better choose where to place your body.
3. Have friends there.
4. Bring some diversion along with you - sketch book or pad are particularly useful. If you sit there drawing everyone or furiously taking notes, you will be treated somewhat delicately and may successfully be able to avoid contributing meaningfully to the discussion - you also may be thrown out.
5. If a tooth-and-nail fight is in the works, take out some bright cotton and a needle and start to embroider your jeans. This should divert the argument.
6. Never assume people cannot be reconciled with one another because they are expressing passionate differences.
7. In general, keep quiet.
8. If you must say something, start off barely audibly, which will draw considerable attention to you. Be direct and succinct.
9. Especially in abstract political discussion, use concrete examples, often from that real world outside the four walls of the meeting place. The rest of your life is a reference point to counter group tyranny.
10. Remember, if you do have something to say don't sit passively, especially if it's to say that you don't like whats going on.
11. Leave.

## pronouns

Dear oob,

We were surprised and puzzled at Frances Chapman's statement that APHRA wanted Rita Mae Brown "to change the pronouns in a love poem." We first heard Brown's poetry read at Anselma dell'Olio's New Feminist Repertory Theatre and admired it. She sent us the center section of a triptych with the title "The New Lost Feminist," telling us she planned to rewrite the other two parts, and we published it in the second issue of APHRA, which came out in December of 1969. She then sent us a group of poems, from which we selected "On the Rooftops Where All the Pigeons Go to Die" to publish in the third issue of APHRA. We never asked her to change a comma, let alone a pronoun, nor did we make any changes ourselves. We believe we were the first to publish Rita Mae Brown's poetry and never did understand why we were not credited as such in her book *The Hand that Cradles the Rock*. We were intrigued by the poem referred to in Frances Chapman's article, which must have been written as the result of an encounter with another magazine, and wonder if Rita Mae Brown would like to show it to APHRA.

## & pankhursts

We were interested in your article about women in prison, with the list of courageous women prisoners appended. We thought it would have been in point to have included the names of the English feminists Emmeline and Sylvia Pankhurst whose tactics--they chained themselves to buildings, used hunger strikes, and other effective means to dramatize their demands--were later to be used by many revolutionaries. In 1914 Sylvia wrote from prison: "I am fighting, fighting. I have four, five, and six wardresses every day as well as the two doctors. I am fed by stomach tube twice a day. I resist all the time." Not only did she and Emmeline, as well as the other English militant feminists, go on hunger strikes, they refused to sleep or drink water, and they often had to be carried out of prison.

For sisterhood,  
from all of us at APHRA

## incest, anyone?

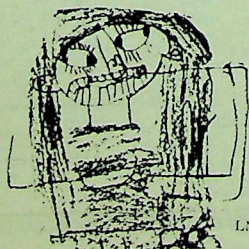
Sirs:

In our psychiatric practice we have treated a number of patients with a history of incest. In many of these cases emotional disturbance did not develop until after the illicit sexual activity became known outside the family. This fact has led us to consider the possibility that the psychic trauma was not the result of incest but of improper management.

In an attempt to establish more adequate guidelines we are exploring the pasts of mentally stable persons. Will you and your readers help us? We need anonymous autobiographies from women who are leading happy and rewarding lives in spite of having experienced incest. We will appreciate all information and want to encourage as much detail as possible.

Thank you,  
John Bishop, M.D.

*Why don't you treat yourselves for voyeurism?*  
oob



LNS

## oversights

Dear Sisters at oob:

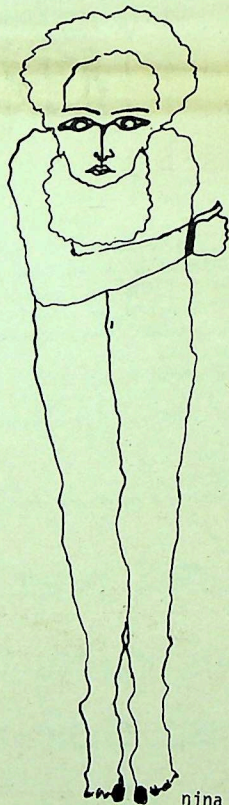
My purpose in writing is to express surprise that your March issue included a prison poem on page 2 with the note that this was written by "Anonymous."

The poem very definitely has an author, Carol Jean Kier, who is very active in Chicago Connections, a group that works with prisoners. The poem has a title too: "No Lady, Prison Didn't Improve Me None." The poem also has some passages that are not included in the version you reprinted from *The Chicago Seed*.

Now to the reason I am surprised. "No Lady, Prison Didn't Improve Me None" was the lead-in to a whole section on women in prison which Carol Jean wrote for the first issue of *Black Maria*, which we sent to you in exchange for a sub to oob back in December.

We are so proud of our journal and really sorry that the sister publications we exchange with may not be reading what we have to offer. The women's press, at least, should not perpetuate the "anonymity" of a sensitive, compassionate

Love & struggle  
Donna Ippolite  
Black Maria Collective



nina

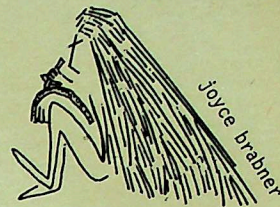
## happy mother's day

From a subscriber:

Please enclose a note with first issue - if you can - saying this sub is a mother's day present from Marcia. Thanks, sisters.

Marcia Holly

## letter writer



joyce brabner

Women,

I live in a small college town noted only for its lack of awareness. After a year of difficult birthing, the Gay community has finally established its tenuous existence (although virtually no gay sisters have come out, only the males). Meanwhile, the Association for the Awareness of Women Students, which had some vague feminist orientation, has folded this year, leaving nothing in its nothing place.

This is not the best place to begin smashing sexism. Like most consciousness-probing women I have met here, I find my number one priority is to get out of this stifling environment to where I'll find a little more support.

Not too many places in Amerika that offer that, I'm afraid. The battle, which has always been here, starts here. So I read, talk and try to do. Little project: maybe George and I will combine abilities of film/video and stage to make a video-tape about the role of women at this university. Bigger project: fighting the junior year orientation towards marriage or grad school escapism that haunts student women here (and just about everywhere else). Biggest project: defining an alternative living structure for a small group of friends who'd like to survive. Funny, I never used to be a Utopianist.

No feminist, non-sexist literature to be found here; I write a lot of letters. I met you through your March issue (picked up at WL in NYC) and a back issue from last summer (found for me, ironically, by a gay male friend). Your kind of support and mind-opening is sorely needed. As a journal, you are a real personality and, I suspect, a friend.

yours, en esperanza  
joyce brabner  
Delaware

## rock

a letter to you:

"Women are to be trained and fucked. The music of almost any rock group would suffice in such an analysis."

Arleen Pedigo's article on rock music was in depth and logical, but everyone already knows that the rolling stones are sexist assholes, among other things. What is needed is a lengthy report on rock groups whose sexism and oppressive attitudes towards women are not quite so blatant. One can almost forgive straights, but coming from your own kind, it really hurts.

As a lot of young people turn to rock lyrics for guidance and support, it would be nice to know who is real and who is just re-packaging stifling traditions.

a sister named  
kathy



nina

letters from prison

confusion

Dear Emily,  
 Hope this will be of some help to you. I can tell you my experience at two prisons, one juvenile and one adult.  
 The juvenile was worse than the other. Job opportunities were much the same. Hair-dressing, sewing and school, or kitchen and laundry.  
 The juvenile jail didn't have any drug rehabilitation. There were only a very few who used any dope, and that was heroin. Five women at the most. The adult prison had drug rehabilitation, drug counseling, and a lot of heroin users, myself being one. It was mandatory for all the women heroin users, myself being one. Group discussions once a week were mandatory for all the inmates (women). (This was never very good - made to discuss life with matrons you didn't like very much.) And discussions at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre every day -- there it was better. We were allowed extra privileges. They were giving some (very few) day paroles then -- no idea what they do now.  
 There were a lot of lesbians in both places. At the girls' school it was more like a fad. I know I wasn't sure of my feeling, very confusing.  
 Both places were always confusing, changing every day.  
 Political prisoners in the women's movement aren't usually held. They're fingerprinted and deported -- this is information from another woman.  
 Hope this isn't too late, and sorry it's not put together better. But better than not at all.

Peace,  
 Kelly

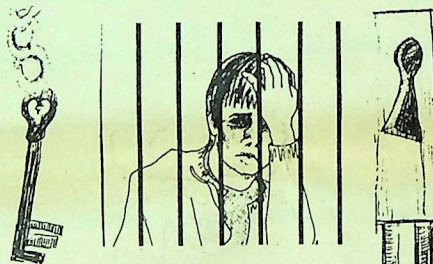
uncensored

Dear Comrades,  
 My name is Dominick Codispoti and I am a prisoner of Huntingdon Penitentiary.  
 I am also a co-founder of The Imprisoned Citizens Union, along with Richard J. Mayberry, who is also a prisoner.  
 I have heard a great deal about your paper, off our backs, and I am sure that we have much in common. Would you be kind enough to send me a few back issues to use as reference?  
 We also print a monthly "The Prisoner's Free Press." Would you like to see a few issues?  
 I cannot send them to you myself because our paper has been banned through the prisons of Pennsylvania, but I can have our office send them to you, my sister.  
 There is a possibility that off our backs will be disapproved by the Censorship Committee, but maybe it won't. So I hope I will be able to read it soon.  
 Keep up the great work Comrades; we are 1000% with you!

Yours in struggle,  
 Dominick

NOTE CENSORSHIP COMMITTEE:

I know damn well you are reading my mail, even though you're not supposed to! If this letter is obstructed in any manner, I'm having your ass dragged down to the federal court on charges of postal violations - plus!



love, the warden

*oob received the following letter along with a letter from an inmate at the U.S. Pen in Indiana. The inmate's letter is not reprinted here. The warden's is to show our readers the kind of cooptation and censorship of the press and abrogation of prisoners' rights attempted by the authorities under the guise of "protection."*

The attached letter was placed in our Prisoner's Mail Box for forwarding to you. The letter has been neither opened or inspected. If the writer raises a problem over which this institution or the Bureau of Prisons has jurisdiction, you may wish to write to me or to the Director, Bureau of Prisons, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20537.

You may write back to the inmate, and ask him questions. Your letter will be inspected for contraband and for any content which would incite illegal conduct.

The Bureau of Prisons encourages the press to visit our institutions and learn about correctional programs and activities. If you wish to do this, please contact me.

Inmates may not receive compensation for material submitted to the media. If the person writing you names another inmate or a staff member in his correspondence, we request that you advise us of that fact before its publication. We will provide background information and specific comments whenever possible.

If the writer encloses for forwarding correspondence addressed to another addressee, please return the enclosure to me, or to the Director.

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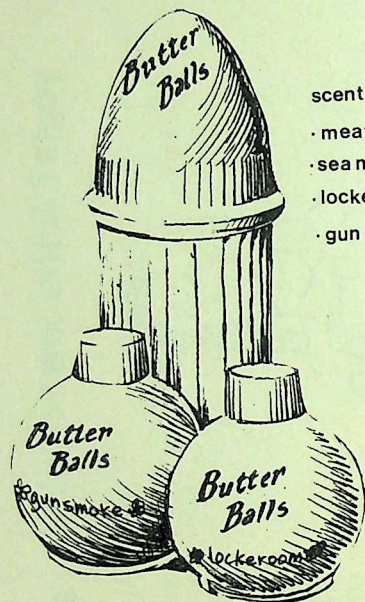
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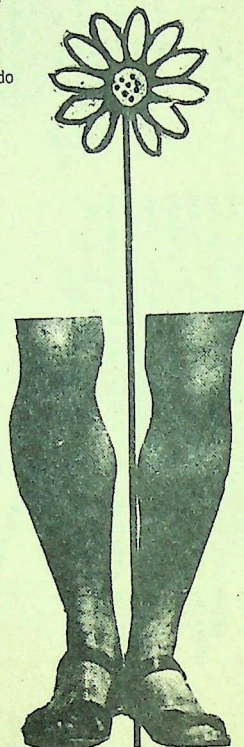
-----That is, more than we picture here on our cover. When oob first printed Butter Balls two years ago our printer pronounced it obscene. Now, due to popular demand--oob and Denver NOW have made Butter Balls available in a poster--17"x23" in two colors--black & white and creamy yellow.

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November, 1972  
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# off our backs

*off our backs*

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a women's news journal

inside:

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news

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d.c.  
p. 23-25



painting  
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## attention:

You who are pleasantly surprised to see off our backs in your mail box have been given a **lovely free gift** by a special friend—a six month free subscription. Also, others of you who have subscriptions to Everywoman will be receiving off our backs until your Everywoman sub runs out. We are sad that Everywoman has folded.



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number 3

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## friends

nancy ferro, norma lesser, delores neuman emily orzech, dana salisbury

bev fisher

*About the time women's liberation here became more than just a couple of discussion groups, it also became hot news for the establishment press. Meetings were spent agonizing over how to deal with reporters who wanted to interview us, talk to our "president," and come to meetings. To avoid the press picking out spokeswomen, we traveled in pairs, gave names of suffragists instead of our own, and eventually cut off all relations with the press. Despite these tactics, our worst fears were realized--feminism was distorted or watered down, feminist superstars arose "to speak for us."*

*After all, publicity has brought with it at least a veneer of respectability to feminist sentiment and some reforms, but women's media has a deeper responsibility. We must be a true alternative to the limited and distorted feminism in the straight press. We must present more varied and more revolutionary models of liberation than the female executives presented as models of liberation in the everyday dailies women read. One way is to point attention to the women consciously or subconsciously recognized as important persons by women with a women's consciousness, by activists working to create a new world for women and everybody else, rather than to publicize, as the male press does, photogenic faces, flashy figures, or flashy minds.*

*Not everybody who shows initiative or introduces some innovation is an elitist pig, a superstar, or a macho leader, inheriting leadership ability with her baby blue or brown eyes. Such ability is a widespread potential, brought out by circumstance and one's particular sense of self. The movement can only move when we are unencumbered by passive, intimidated, or worse, competitive responses to another woman's achievements.*

*This series of interviews, of which this is the first, will present women who are models, not macho leaders, or saints, just that, models. It is a chance to give women who do not put out a newspaper every month or who are not in media at all a chance to have their say.*

*Bev Fisher is active in the Washington D.C. women's center and was one of the major organizers of the Washington Feminists, a women's political group which emerged at a time of great demoralization and division within the women's movement here. In this interview she is speaking not for any of these groups, but only for herself.*

*This interview is by Frances Chapman.*



Q. How did the Washington Feminists come to be?

Bev It started somewhat as a result of a group of women who had been in George Washington University Women's Liberation

Q. Were you in school there?

Bev No, We were in the campus group over a year and felt that we didn't want to be a university group. Very few of the women were students at GW and a lot of them were employees going to school nights or something, so we really felt the need for it because at GW we were having seminars, a sort of an introduction to women's oppression. We were getting women from all over the area, Maryland, Virginia, all over. There was a fantastic response, because we did publicity on the thing. So out of GW women's liberation also came the Metropolitan Abortion Alliance which I think happened in January of 1971 and by June of 71 had undergone the whole split between Young Socialist Alliance and the people who were not Young Socialist Alliance.

Q: I never understood the dynamic of the Metropolitan Abortion Alliance. Could you describe it?

Bev Let me finish this story of the Washington Feminists, cause that's another whole thing. As a result of those two things, the abortion alliance splitting up and us wanting to get off campus, we decided that we felt there was a need for a citywide feminist organization. The problem also was that a lot of the women in GW Women's Liberation (who started GW women's liberation) were Young Socialist Alliance-Socialist Workers Party people.

Women had come in very politically naive, who were not former Left people, were not politicians, or anything else, just women who had never been involved in political activities before, and felt betrayed by everything that went on during the abortion coalition fiasco.

Also realizing that DC Women's Liberation wasn't around anymore, there was just a need for some general women's liberation organization that was not the National Organization for Women, because NOW already had specific kinds of purposes. We saw it as a very open group really open to new women as an outreach thing for new women who wanted to get into the movement and it was in September of 1971 that we called the first meeting and thereafter it became whatever people who came to the meeting defined what they wanted the group to be, but that was our original intention. We built for that meeting by sending out the old Women's Liberation mailing list and the Metropolitan Abortion Alliance mailing list.

Q: Were you in the city when the office on Biltmore Street existed [the DCWL office]?

Bev: Yeah, I was in Washington and I was in GW Women's Liberation at that time; I had been since August of 1970. I had gone to a couple of what were called the Magic Quilt [co-ordinating council meetings] meetings up on Biltmore Street. It was my first involvement with the movement and at that time, the anti-imperialist collective was really big. To me that seemed really heavy, heavy, heavy... I didn't get any good feelings about the Biltmore office. There was nothing about it that made me want to go back. If anything, I was very intimidated by these women who came on to me as heavy politicians, who had an analysis about the war, about imperialism, and about capitalism. Later, not even later, even from the beginning, I became aware of the YSA, about the end of 1970. YSA had sort of come out to me eventually and had approached me about joining YSA, and I knew that part of DC Women's Liberation already had been through the whole Trot thing and that they were very sensitive to that. I never knew but felt that the reason all those women were so cold to me on Biltmore was because they thought I was a Trot, and a whole lot of other women from GW Women's Liberation later felt that that must have been the reason they were all so cold to us, cause they thought we were all Trots. I realize now in retrospect, I didn't at the time, that it was a male left politics I was reacting to, I just couldn't feel comfortable with those kinds of politics. I went to a retreat [May, 1971].



Q: Is the Washington Feminists still an active group?

Bev: What happened was the Washington Feminists evolved into a group that decided to exist primarily for orienting new women into the movement. So they started an orientation series of discussions. They were 10 or 11 weeks long, covering all the topics from women in marriage and the family to women as an oppressed class. They ran two series, and I and a lot of the other women who had originally started it sort of phased out of it. I phased out, because I was working primarily, right from the beginning in the Washington Feminists, in fact right from the very first meeting, which was 70 or 80 women, we talked about what the needs for the Washington community were to determine what

it was the Washington Feminists should be, one of the needs that was expressed then, in September 1971 was for a women's center in Washington, so we formed a project group of the Washington Feminists. I worked with that project group. As that progressed it was clear that we eventually wanted to lead up to getting a women's center in Washington.

Meanwhile the Feminists had evolved into this orientation thing. In February 1972, we had the first large community meeting for the center.

The Feminists sort of started dying in the summer, no the spring, because I think they had finished their second series of orientation. I think it died because it was doing nothing else but orientation. It was the same problem that always comes up, you know, new women and old women, women who had already gone through the two orientation programs and they wanted to do something else now, they didn't want to just keep having orientation programs; they were already oriented.

Q: Were the women who were doing the orientation sessions also active in the women's center group?

Bev: No. Different women. I'm not really clear on this, because I wasn't involved, but some of the women I lived with were. They just decided not to do another orientation, so essentially, though they didn't really come out and say it, what they were deciding was dissolving the Washington Feminists

Q: So it just faded away?

Bev: Yeah, very quietly without much notice. When that original women's center project group got together, there was no Biltmore office, there was no meeting place, there was nothing.

So one of the most important simple kind of primary needs was just to have physical facilities, to have meetings, to have an office.

Then, as the project group developed, we started examining women's centers across the country, and we began thinking that what was needed was a real community center for women that would serve women's needs and be a totally woman-defined place, a place that could house a lot of different kind of projects and organizations. We wanted to meet not just organizational needs, but the daily needs of women. We saw it as a place for women to come who weren't necessarily into the movement and which would be able to deal with some of the problems in their lives, women who would eventually be able to relate to the movement, because in some sense the movement had related them.

Q: Is it fair to describe the center as an umbrella organization?

Bev: The structure of how it's governed is umbrella in terms of having representatives from all the groups that make it up. I don't really know what umbrella structure means.

The women's movement has so little structure up to now, umbrella structure doesn't have any more meaning to me than any other kind of description of the structure. What it is is an attempt in terms of governing the women's center, in making decisions about what the women's center is going to be. We realize (realistically) there is never going to be any one kind of politics.

Q: Do you see the women's center at all as a jumping-off place for mass organizing?

Bev: I do. In terms of myself and what I see, it's an obvious thing. That's another reason how it's very different from the Biltmore office and it's a shift in direction, because by the nature of saying you're going to serve women's needs, you're definitely talking about reaching out, as far as I'm concerned.

So therefore it is a place to broaden the movement to reach new women. It's one way of doing it; it's not the only way.

Q: How do you see the center relating to other parts of the movement, such as media?

Bev: I think I see it as doing a very different kind of thing. And media being essential. Another thing that's essential and doesn't exist in this city, and which the women's center can't do, is some political organizations of women. There aren't any. NOW and the reformist groups, but there isn't anything else. The DC Radical Feminists [a local political discussion group] is an attempt to have something besides reformist groups.

That's why the dying of the Washington Feminists is really an awful thing. We still don't have a kind of women's liberation organization which new women can come into--we

(continued on the next page)

bev ( cont )

get calls all the time at the women's center. Eventually the women's center may be able to serve that purpose. The Liberation School [see p. 24] is doing that somewhat, because it is running an introduction to the women's movement. That's the same thing the Washington Feminists did, but what's going to happen when those women go through the orientation program? There's still need for that middle kind of organization which is clearly a political organization that wants to do something about women's oppression. How they do it and what they ultimately want to achieve is going to put them in different places on the political spectrum.

Q: How would you like to see the women's center grow?

Bev: I hope the center grows by adding project groups and new ones being created out of this umbrella structure, which has already happened to some extent. Women have come forward because they see something that's not being done in the center, something that really relates to women's lives that needs to be done and so they decide to find out if there are others who would like to do something about it. If the center doesn't change, it's not going to be a very important development in the women's movement. It's got to constantly change and reevaluate what it's doing and whether what it's doing is serving women and making them more politically conscious of their identity as women as a political group, and if a project group is not doing that and if it's only making women content with where they're at and content with their situation, then I think we'd better evaluate where that project group is something that should go on.

Q: In other words, you see the nature of the project groups changing?

Bev: Yes, the existing project groups changing, and new project groups forming.

Q: Possibly others being asked to leave?

Bev: Yes.

Q: What particular project groups are you yourself interested in?

Bev: I'm not working with any specific project group. At one time I was working with the legal project, because that happens to be one of my interests. But in the last few months, I've had to sort of phase out of that. I work on the newsletter, but the newsletter's one of those overall kind of functions, and that's really how I see myself, as seeing the center from an overall perspective rather than from a specific project group.

Q: What effect did having been married have on working in the movement and on your relationships with other women?

Bev: It's a weird phenomenon, because a lot of people don't know I've been married and assume that I haven't been, and that's oppressive, and I see it being oppressive to other women. There's a single-ism chauvinism in the movement. If you've been married, you were kinda dumb or something. Too bad you went through all that shit, you weren't quite bright enough to have avoided it. And for women who are still married, it's even worse. I'm not still married. I see it happening over and over again. And in some senses being married was what really put me in touch with my oppression as a woman. There was no more real way that I was fucked over. That marriage was really an oppressive thing, and not only because that individual to whom I was married was so oppressive, but because marriage itself was.

I fell for all the traps in terms of where I put my identity in the marriage. I can really identify with women who are undergoing that first recognition of what their role in marriage and being a wife means. Women who haven't been through it, it is harder for them to realize. They feel a little bit "well I didn't fall into that so you know I'm untainted."

People change. Women change so much, we can always become something we've never been before. It's happened in my life a whole lot.

Q: Is the problem men or marriage?

Bev: Oh, it's definitely men, not just marriage. Marriage is one of the manifestations. The problem is within every institution of our society.

Q: What relation does Lesbianism have to women's politics?

Bev: I moved into a collective with eight other women. My identity has shifted over the last year and a half. This shift began at some level, and gradually it begins to reach



other levels. At first, it was a political kind of relationship, in terms of recognizing my oppression as a woman and then became getting to know women personally and living with women; emotionally and psychologically the relationships deepened. And you know, it just seems we relate sexually, as women.

Q: Is that true for all women though?

Bev: That would be true for me.

Q: Should it be true?

Bev: I think for a lot of women it's not possible. I don't believe Lesbianism is the answer for all women. Economically, they couldn't survive without men. Women derive their class and their economic status through their attachments with men and for women with five or six children, Lesbianism is not a real alternative at this time. I would say, yes, in some kind of utopian sense, yes. The best way of life would be to be relating totally to women. But that's a long way away.

These women who still hang on to it, and use it as a defense of why they're not oppressed or why they've got a unique situation do something that's really going to box the movement up. This kind of relating to men has to be dealt with. Ultimately women who cling to male privilege and male identity are blocks. That's not saying it's not possible for women to define themselves if they're still relating to men. There's a hell of a lot of women in this country who define themselves on whatever levels they have to.

Q: The issues within the women's movement have changed the last few years. Do you think there is an issue that won't be co-opted?

Bev: That was a lot in one question, but the issue that won't be co-opted is women gaining political power.

It's a goal really. As an issue, not a goal, it has come into the movement more than it has before. The reformists have in some ways been the ones to initiate it, e.g., the Women's Political Caucus. That has to be the real basis for being. The issues are going to change according to who the women are who are trying to get that political power. I see it happening over a broad spectrum, where

you're going to have a lot of women's groups coming from different places and they're going to be addressing themselves to different issues in terms of what their needs are and none of these are right or not right if in fact they are ultimately leading to women gaining political power.

Q: Do you see this power won through a political party?

Bev: One way might be a political party. What's got to happen first is women must decide what they're about and make a commitment to that. There's going to be a whole lot of different forms. For myself, that is the direction I would like to go, into a revolutionary political party.

Q: How do you feel about movement "leaders" like Steinem?

Bev: Leaders or stars?

Q: It's up to you.

Bev: The movement has been overcritical of the fact that there are stars. It was always putting down women who got any recognition. Because of Gloria Steinem, millions of women all over the country have some inclination to and sympathy with the women's movement. I don't want to put her or any woman down publicly.

What Steinem has done is important, though I don't agree with her politics. She's somebody whose going out and doing something about her politics. There's been a whole antileadership syndrome and antiorganizational syndrome that's really impeded us.

Q: How do you feel about being interviewed for off our backs?

Bev: I feel uncomfortable. I'm not sure of what the reaction is going to be, but I'm willing to take the risk. It's a good way to find out where women are at in terms of how they react to it. I want to be accountable. I don't want to make my politics a secret thing.

Q: What do you do when you're not doing women's stuff?

Bev: I really dig auto mechanics, besides women need a practical skill. I also like to drink beer and dance.



# putting hubby through

## the saga of the rose and the cabbage

For many women throughout the country, putting hubby through school continues to be a popular thing to do. Employed as secretaries, nurses, clerks, waitresses, teachers, etc., they are usually working not for personal satisfaction or independence, but for the purpose of helping a husband to get ahead.

My own experience in putting hubby through seems to have at least some similarities to those of other student wives. When my husband first started college, about ten years ago, I felt myself to be almost as necessary as he. My job gave me at least occasional satisfaction and self-confidence. Of course most of us, even if we liked our work, were not crazy enough to continue working indefinitely. We all knew the truly meaningful life began only after our husbands' college graduation, when we would make the uniquely individual choice of quitting work to devote ourselves to husbands, home, and children.

### the stuff of dreams

Dreams of my future life were modeled after the pages of *Redbook*. I pictured myself dressed in "good quality" coordinated clothes, strolling along in the invigorating air of autumn. Colorful leaves drifted about, complementing and blending with my tasteful fall outfit. And, in my cashmere coordinates, I saw myself serving casual but imaginative and relaxed little meals equally coordinated with the occasion and season.

Sometimes, though, I worried about my talents for playing the casual, discreetly elegant hostess, choosing the right table settings, foods, and clothing: my upbringing hadn't trained me for that. Eventually, my apprehensions extended to include more serious self-doubts. My husband, using me as his private audience, began to brag more and more often of his academic successes, his brilliant friends and professors, and of the great value his future career held for Mankind. Believing him, and being impressed, I began to consider myself lucky to be married to such an exceptional person. After all, the husbands of my former friends were only mechanics, construction workers, or plumbers who hung out in bowling alleys.

Soon, however, my vicarious sense of importance proved to be the illusion it really is. It became evident that his feelings of superiority depended on an assumption of inferiority not only of others but of me as well. Whenever, for instance, his scholarly friends -- men and women as well -- came to visit, I'd eventually find myself excluded. By directing their conversation only to each other, they implied I could no longer comprehend their elevated level of thinking.

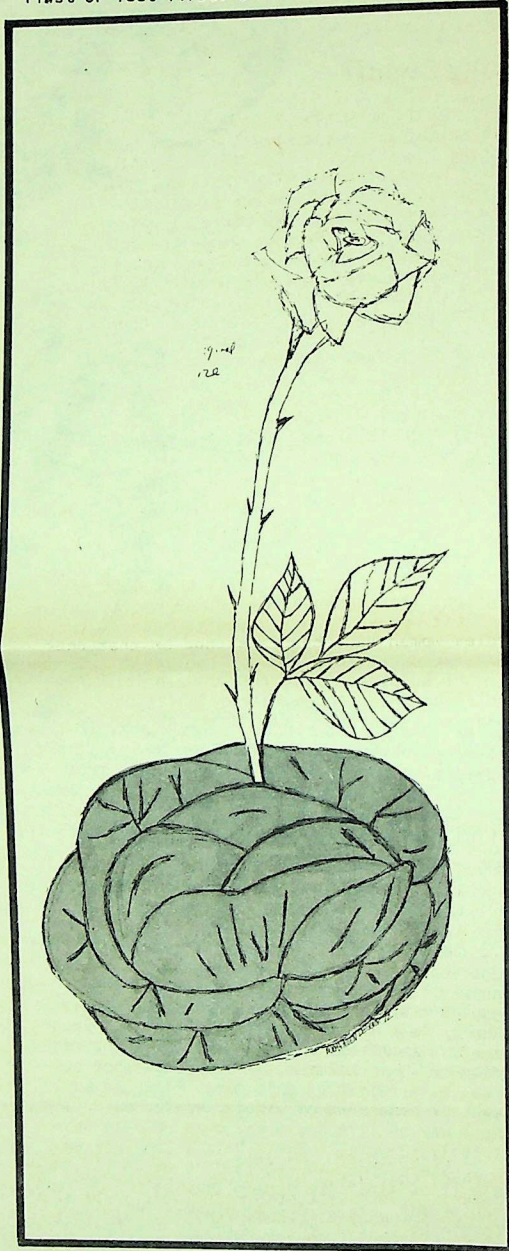
### the expert lag

According to many articles written by experts, in the advice columns of women's magazines, I had good reason to experience that growing sense of inadequacy. In their highly qualified judgment, which I believed, wives of students were actually often not "up to par" with their "thinking" husbands. They asserted that wives developed an "intellectual lag" a growing apart, after which they could no longer communicate meaningfully with their husbands' sophisticated intellect.

I used to take the idea of this "lag" very seriously, because these authoritative scientists claimed it explained the high divorce rate among students, who tended to discard the dim-witted wives they had outgrown.

Being worried about my "intellectual lag," I periodically enrolled in college courses as a part-time student. I soon found I was doing the right thing. Readings in sociology assured me that the wife with a college degree is an asset to her husband. She will be a better mother, conversationalist, volunteer worker, and companion. Sociology also brought to my awareness my good fortune in being married to a future professional. Unlike lower class men, who have more deviant, unrefined qualities, professional men are wiser, kinder, more humane and communicative beings who treat wives as equals.

Although some people may actually believe professionals to be better husbands, others are less naive, particularly about the supposed equality such men grant their wives. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir, in her book, *The Second Sex*, argues that women married to men with no particular occupational prestige probably feel less inequality and awe of their husbands than women married to professionals, especially if the professional husbands are well known. This was illustrated in a *Newsweek* article about Joan Kennedy which stated that "She is so in awe of Teddy, if he told her to jump, she would ask, 'Head first or feet first?'"



### greer, mead, and other men

Not long ago, I was reminded again of my affliction, the "lag," when I went to a lecture given by a visiting psychologist, who was attempting to persuade women to have careers as an alternative to having children.

As an incentive, she used the usual put-down method, the intellectual lag developed by the wife. In her example, she spoke of a biophysics major whose wife, working only as a file clerk, developed a dried-up, rigid mind in the face of her brilliant husband. As I identified with that mentally atrophied wife my stomach shurned, and my determination to disprove her implication of my ignorance increased. But lacking the "highly educated background" and the credentials to counter such a putdown, my only retaliation is to feel

an equal contempt for most so-called knowledgeable men, including with them the few women whose brains have been squeezed into the male mold.

Germaine Greer, author of the *Female Eunuch*, claims that she is one of these exceptional women. Although she says she's a feminist, her writing shows more sympathy for men. Being a professor, she identifies with her male colleagues, who are her intellectual equals. Her colleagues' wives not only have a lower mentality but also exhibit a bitchiness, thus making life difficult for their husbands.

Back in the sixties, I considered the word of most experts to be holy. At that time, Margaret Mead, another Authority on the side of Man, helped convince me of my dubious, secondary existence. In fact, she considered wives to be an obstacle to her male students' fulfillment. She sympathized with those poor guys, saddled with wife and babies who spilled formula on term papers, and who isolated them from stimulating conversation with their peers. At the same time, Dr. Spock appeared to be on my side. He and other child-care experts who ordinarily disapproved of working mothers, seemed to think that wives putting hubby through should be an exception. Unlike those selfish women who worked merely to get out of the house, I had an "important" reason for working. I was doing it for my husband.

### the rose and the cabbage

When my husband won a Prestigious Fellowship and went on to Graduate School, he became even more convinced that he was one of the few, selected, unique people. His intellect began to unfold and reveal itself more confidently, full of provocative promise like the opening of a high-quality rose. Although not yet at the height of full mature bloom, his flowering luminous mind precociously enabled him to detect the incipient, common scent of illiteracy and incompetence in others. And when I compared myself to the apparent miracle of his mind, I saw my own mind as a stunted, pale, immature cabbage. I knew I was included on his list of the inept. And why was I never as comforting, encouraging, and grateful as the experts advised a wife to be? Instead, I became increasingly maladjusted: bitchy, hysterical, jealous, neurotic, etc. This is what I was good at, said my husband. I exhibited misdirected pathological energy, a common but enigmatic behavior characteristic of many women.

Our fights, or at least my "free expression," continued at home, but my social life as a student wife remained serene. I managed to give the impression of being a nice, sweet little helpmate. At parties, we wives learned to question intelligently, and to listen with awe and agreement to the meaningful explanations and statements made by the male guests. I became particularly good at nodding, smiling and looking impressed.

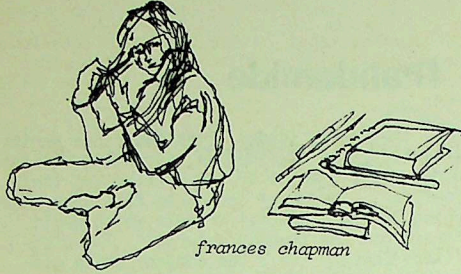
I was never seen as my husband's equal; I was always just his wife, my identity defined through him. When being introduced at social functions, my name was typically followed by "Her husband does such and such," or, I am asked, "What does your husband do?" Then, after being told how lucky I was to have a husband in such an interesting field, I was expected to discuss, appreciatively, the significance of his work.

When talking with other wives, the husband and his work was the subject most often discussed. Some wives, apparently identifying with their husbands to a much greater extent, would make such remarks as, "We're getting our degree this semester," or "We're writing our thesis," or "We're going to take our doctoral exams."

Many of these women belonged to the Dames Club, a student-wives organization similar to Law Wives or Dental Dames which encourages the student wife to assume the secondary, helping role to her husband while at the same time preparing her for activities suitable to the dependent wife of a professional. For the student wife, the highlight of the Dames Club is the celebration of her husband's graduation, when she is awarded her own degree, P.H.T. (Putting Hubby Through).

(continued on next page)

## toward a non-sexist literary criticism



This month off our backs focuses on women's study of literature. At Cambridge-Goddard, the literature seminar of the Feminist Studies program has compiled an annotated bibliography on women in literature. Its four sections list prose works by women, before and after 1900, 20th century women poets, and secondary works about literature and women. Its available for 75¢ (including mailing) from Cambridge-Goddard Feminist Studies, attn: Ann Kautzmann or Liz Fenton, 1878 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02140.

The article below is the story of one woman's reappraisal of her education and her view of the beginnings of a feminist literary criticism.

Not since I identified totally with Wonder Woman and Nancy Drew have I been truly in touch with my own feelings. Since then, and most severely for me -- as a woman whose profession is literature -- I have forced myself to see myself as though I were a man. For all these years of my study, I have identified with male literature and criticism. (I would even occasionally remark that I wanted to be an Edmund Wilson rather than an I. A. Richards or Austin Warren!)

When intelligent, perceptive and sensitive women read, they generally must identify with male characters since the women are depicted as those stereotypes so ably delineated by Mary Ellmann in *Thinking About Women*. And none of us can wholeheartedly embrace those negative characters, if we embrace them at all. Most literature thus reinforces women's suspicion and dislike of other women. "I'm not like that, but they all are," we think.

In order for us to assert ourselves, to assert "our identities," we have assumed masculine attitudes and approaches, masculine standards and values, in effect, masculine identities. That, of course, is the universal problem confronting professional women.

### indoctrination

In all my years as undergraduate and graduate student at four different universities doing work for three degrees, I had one woman teacher. Not only have men taught us in our professional classrooms, but men have written the criticisms which we use to interpret individual works, periods, writers; and men have written the principles of literary criticism

(putting hubby through, cont'd.)

### what price glory?

Aside from enduring frequent, and often unobtrusive, putdowns during the course of putting hubby through, the psychologically and economically unrewarding job, the rearing of small children, or a combination of both, are probably more nerve-wracking than the anxieties felt by the husband in his studies, exams, or thesis writing. Often, she also helps him with his work, typing his papers or even writing them herself. So when a student wife remarks, "We're writing our thesis," she may mean more than emotional support on her part. Yet in the end, when he graduates, everyone including his wife agrees that he is the one who has worked terrifically hard. He has earned his worth, while she has merely lived up to the responsibilities expected of any wife. In fact, it is likely that he has often said he was doing it all for her, and that she should be grateful to him.

which give us our standards of judging. It hardly needs to be added that men edit the anthologies which determine whose work will be read.

In order to choose an anthology for a sophomore level survey of early American literature I had the opportunity to skim about a dozen texts, all quite popular for that course. The only woman included generally was Anne Bradstreet, who was never represented by more than 8 to 10 poems; some texts included up to 20 pages from Sarah Kemble Knight's journals; one text included a few poems by Phyllis Wheatley. And, as just one example of discrimination, although Ben Franklin's letters were amply represented, there were no selections of Abigail Adams' writings.

### olive who?

It is no wonder that I find it necessary to re-think, re-interpret, and re-read everything I was taught. It is all taught from a male point of view. For instance, though my areas of concentration are nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, I was never encouraged to believe Virginia Woolf is as innovative as James Joyce; Doris Lessing was rarely on a reading list; Dorothy Parker and Edna St. Vincent Millay appeared only as "supplementary reading"; and Kate Chopin, Olive Shreiner, Mrs. Gaskell, Susanna Powson, Margaret Deland, Vernon Lee, Ella D'Arcy, Mrs. Eliza Linton, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Olive Custance, and all the others whom we still do not know but must begin to unearth from the bowels of libraries, never appeared on any lists at all.

I am finding most of what I have been taught, most of what I have studied, accepted as first rate, written about, been tested on, to be insipidly irrelevant to the realities of my life and my sisters' lives. I cannot relate very well to material that does not reflect the inadequacies of our social system or that does not consider with honesty the roles women have been assigned or that does not approach truly human -- not male -- concerns.

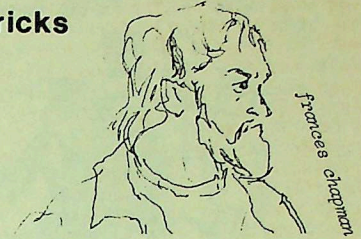
I keep realizing that I have forced myself, by accepting a male orientation to literature, to believe such works as *Ulysses* or *Women in Love* illuminated my life. (They do, of course, still illuminate me about men's lives.)

I have begun reading for the first time women writers whom I've been trained to overlook and neglect as derivative. And I've begun writing and compiling feminist interpretations of literature to help myself and my sisters re-interpret all the books, all the millions of words, which we have been trained to read by men.

It is time for us to read seriously the works of such known women writers as Anne Bradstreet, Colette, de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, Emily and Charlotte Bronte, and to rescue the works of unfairly obscured writers. For example, *Jane Eyre* is more con-

ventional and less feminist than *Villette*; it's a rare course that includes, a rare woman that reads, the superior *Villette*. We must reassess women writers and women's literature in order to discover life models who did not subjugate themselves, life models of energy, dynamism, strength.

### pen-pricks



In order to approach literature anew, we must revise our critical thinking and critical language which is formulated out of a male-oriented and male-dominated culture.

The value system which determines how we read as well as the very language of criticism is masculine. For instance, a style of writing is good if it is "hard," "firm," "decisive," "inventive" -- terms our society designates as masculine; and it is bad if it is "soft," "sensitive," "tender," "accepting" "supportive," "inconsistent" -- qualities attributed to women. A woman's sentences, a woman's tone, are unacceptable by our male critical standards.

In poetry, a "feminine" ending is a weak ending; it defines the "soft" rhyme of words, which are accented on the next-to-last syllable, such as *Helper* and *Whelper*, in contrast to the "masculine" or strong rhyme of *Sick* and *Prick*.

To speak with authority is masculine. But why is speaking with authority good in itself? (See Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women*. The section on "Difference in Tone" considers at length the failure of authority and certitude as positive values in twentieth-century terms.) Why is wonder, or questioning, or uncertainty necessarily bad except for the sexist reason that such qualities are attributed almost exclusively to women and that women accept themselves as non-authorities? Is it necessarily bad to empathize, as women are often depicted doing, rather than to judge and categorize? Or is such a negative value judgment part of our male-superior-critical standards? Are characters without sharp edges badly drawn, or are they considered badly drawn only because such indefiniteness is associated with women?

We no longer accept macho life characteristics as valuable; it is past time to repudiate the macho literary style and standard of criticism.

by marcia holly

The author teaches a women's literature course at Quinnipiac College in Hamden, Connecticut.

Although she may feel that the years of poverty and hassle have brought her dubious rewards, she must remember that his years of study have made him knowledgeable. And we all know, of course, that knowledge is power, and that brain-power is superior to muscle-power and other lesser skills.

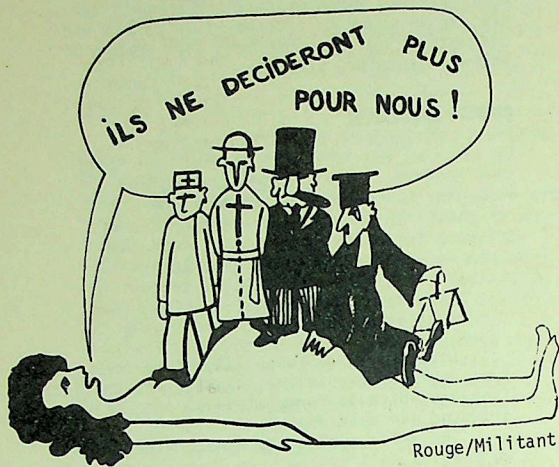
If hubby is an academic, he can use his gift of knowledge in examining and diagnosing the behavior of women and other unfortunates whose muscles have never been replaced by brains. Through his understanding of the working of society, he can create and shape ideas for the benefit of helping and uplifting this unenlightened, deprived majority. Undoubtedly, the scientific wisdom of such men has contributed enormously in guiding women to their proper place. If the professional husband is an M.D., he is even more remarkable, a kind of super-heroic being. As seen on TV, he is not only an agile thinker like the professor, but combines this reasoning power with astounding skill in all areas of medicine and surgery. He seems, also, to be particularly adept at helping women. Through his healing skills, they recover, beaming their gratitude and admiration at the physician.

Who can argue the value of such commendable, deserving men? His wife can only be proud of his success and accomplishments. She should be thankful just for the privilege of being his wife, for being near him, giving him encouragement, and providing him with serene surroundings. If she has been well trained, she has an innate talent for being admiring, deferential, and uncritical. If she remains slim, pretty, and young forever, she may be more certain of her continuing reward. He may consider keeping her. On the other hand, if she is irreverent, complaining and nagging, gets older and goes to pot just as he does, she stands good chance of being discarded. While the process of aging turns her into a hag, he becomes more distinguished. Not all older men improve with age, however, only the more important ones. Like the charm of a small, intimate, slightly decrepit but valued village like Chapel Hill, maturing men of quality emit a similarly distinguished essence. Obviously, being married to such a man is a blessing, well worth all those little putdowns she probably just imagined anyway.

by helpmate x

# as the world turns-- international news

## french abortion



The cartoon is by the French Movement for Freedom of Abortion. 'They're not going to decide for us any longer!'

PARIS, FRANCE--One woman's violation of France's age-old abortion law has been making headlines there for several weeks. Michelle Chevalier, who is the daughter of an unwed mother and deserted mother of three, is being charged with complicity in procuring an abortion for her 16-year-old daughter, Marie-Claire. Ms. Chevalier could not afford the \$900-fee for an illegal (the only kind in France) abortion by a doctor so that her daughter almost bled to death from the poor job she finally was able to get. She was reported to the police by her 19-year-old boyfriend who had been arrested for theft. She was originally charged with having had an abortion, but her trial was dropped after population control and women's groups demonstrated on her behalf in Paris on October 11. The demonstrators were met with police armed with billy clubs. Her mother's trial was held on November 8, but the judge has deferred judgment for two weeks because of the trial's possible effect on France's abortion law. Several people testified on Marie-Claire's behalf. Simone de Beauvoir said she would provide money and open her house to women who need abortions.

## thalidomide

The London Sunday Times has run a series of articles on thalidomide, including stories about the situation of the victims and their families. They have announced that they were going to run a special article which would trace how the tragedy occurred. The Distillers Company Ltd., the company which distributed thalidomide in Britain ten years ago got an injunction from Attorney General Sir Peter Rawlinson to stop publication of the article.

Distillers Co. is in court now facing a suit demanding payment of damages to thalidomide victims. Their case depends on proving that the company was not negligent when it sold the drugs.

## abortion setback

MICHIGAN-- After a year long struggle, a referendum which would have permitted abortion on demand was defeated on November 7. The referendum which would have allowed abortion for women up to twenty weeks pregnant in a hospital, by a licensed physician, by the woman's consent was defeated 1,843,803 to 1,175,830.

Over a year ago a statewide campaign began circulating a petition to get 212,000 names of registered voters to get the abortion issue on the ballot. They successfully collected 300,000 signatures.

At the same time that people fought for the legalization of abortion, anti-abortion groups opposed it. After the signatures were obtained anti-abortion groups tried to keep the abortion issue off the ballot by challenging the validity of the signatures, the wording of the petition, and the form on the ballot. During the summer the Michigan Supreme Court ruled these charges false and guaranteed the referendum would be on the ballot.

During the following months the Right to Life Committee carried on an extensive campaign against abortion using television, billboards, and newspaper advertising. It seems that their campaign was successful. Although various polls in August and September showed that the Michigan population was clearly in favor of the proposition, in November the anti-abortion groups had won.

Members of the Abortion Referendum Committee believe that the failure of the abortion issue in their state has set back the abortion movement ten years.

NORTH DAKOTA--also had an abortion referendum which would have allowed abortions for women up to five month pregnant, with consent of husband or parents required for women under 18. The issue failed here also, largely because of the efforts of the Right to Life Committee. A representative from Zero Population Growth (ZPG) which petitioned and campaigned for the referendum said that their opponents had outspent them in the campaign. ZPG had not decided whether they will try a state referendum again.

## hex on phiso hex

WASHINGTON, D.C.--Hexachlorophene, the super-ingredient that makes you glad you use Dial soap, is hazardous when used on your pimples and your pubes, and on your new born baby. Now it's official--from the Food, and Drug Administration.

On September 22 the FDA announced restrictions on over the counter sales of hexachlorophene. These restrictions were based on the much publicized French disaster in which babies died from exposure to talc containing hexachlorophene, but also on the finding that lesions on the brain stem definitely correlated with exposure to the substance in 23 infants autopsied at the University of Washington, and on certain unpublished data.

Hexachlorophene products, with the exception of those containing less than .1% will be available only by prescription. Although the evening the announcement was made Phiso hex and the Drug Fair labelled substitute were on sale at a suburban Maryland Drug Fair.

For 20 years it was known to be poisonous when taken internally; nevertheless, it has been widely used in lipstick and Chapstick. Over a year ago reports of suspicious animal studies implicating hexachlorophene reached the daily press, but were considered inconclusive.

It is one ingredient in vaginal sprays, which may cause vulvar irritation or allergic reactions in sensitive women. An article by Bernard Kaye, an obstetrician at the University of Illinois medical school, in the July 1971 issue of Medical Aspects of Sexuality points out that the television advertising that is promoting the spray has been prevented from saying just what it is supposed to do. In fact, there is the implication of vaginal use in the advertising, which according to Dr. Kaye, is absolutely something women should not do.

Even Gus S. Kass, vice-president for research at the Alberto Culver Company, a vaginal spray manufacturer, admits that

when the spray is held less than six inches from the skin the propellant may cause irritation. According to Dr. Kaye, the fluoroalkane gases used in aerosol propellants may cause cardiac toxicity when inhaled. He fears absorption through the vaginal mucosa, when the spray is used incorrectly.

Of course these underlying hazards are enhanced when we realize the dangers in hexachlorophene itself. The new federal regulations say "toxic amounts of hexachlorophene can be absorbed through the skin of humans. And according to Dr. Kaye, mucous membranes are more absorbent than skin.

Of the 15 deaths associated with the topical use of hexachlorophene in the United States, two involved the use of Phiso hex impregnated vaginal packs, and one, occurring in 1968, occurred in a 21-year-old woman during an attempted abortion in which Phiso hex was used for cleansing and possibly injected. In 1957, a four-year-old child with an abnormally large colon died five weeks after having been given enemas with Phiso hex. The child was suffering "piercing headaches."

A frequent advertisement by the drug industry interests to counteract its bad press takes the view that though some powerful drugs have side effects, dangerous ones, they cure disease. But this ignores the propaganda which sells compounds to us that we don't need, or that there are perfectly good substitutes for. We use talcum powder, possibly contaminated with asbestos, a known cancer-causing agent, instead of cornstarch. We eat processed food with preservatives that may later be proved to be unsafe.

Even the strict hexachlorophene regulations allow some hexachlorophene products to be sold until the stock is depleted. Obviously so nobody loses too much money.

by f.e.c.

## women who made it

Out of 435 Congresspeople there are now 3.2 percent or 14 women, five of whom have been elected for the first time. The incumbents are: Leonore Sullivan (D.Mo.), Patsy Mink (D.Ha.), Bella Abzug (D.N.Y.), Edith Green (D.Ore.), Shirley Chisholm (D.N.Y.), Margaret Heckler (R.Ma.), Ella Grasso (D.Ct.), Martha Griffiths (D.Mi.), and Julia Butler Hansen (D.Wa.).

The newcomers are: Pat Schroeder, (D.-Col.), a 32-year old liberal lawyer, Yvonne Braithwaite Burke (D.-Ca.), Barbara Jordan (D.-Tx.), the first black woman to be elected to Congress from the South, Elizabeth Holtzman (D.-N.Y.),

a 31-year old Brooklyn attorney, and Marjorie Holt, (R-Md.), a conservative.

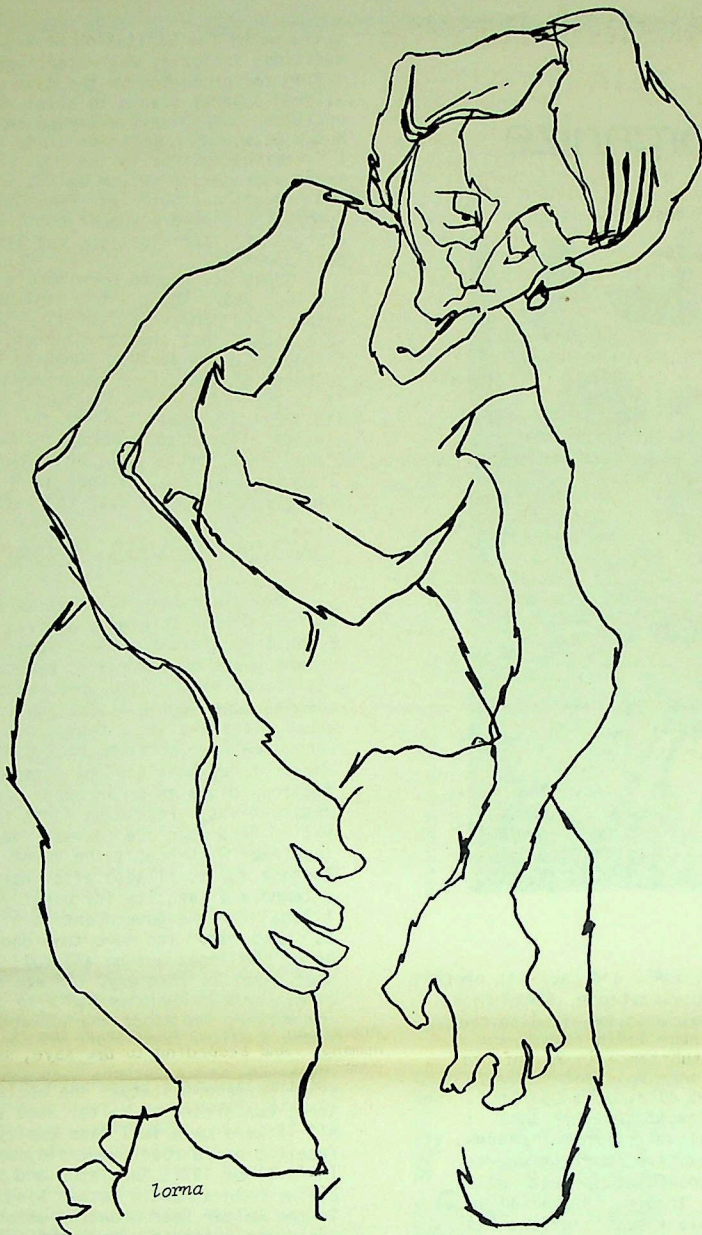
The campaign of Pat Schroeder provided plenty of examples of the type of harrassment used against women candidates. When she announced her candidacy in the primary, the papers, radio and T.V. referred to her as a mother of three. Barraged by furious callers, the media soon started calling her a 32-year-old attorney. Her opponent, in the primary, didn't get the message: he slipped flyers under doors condemning Schroeder for premeditated neglect of her three pre-schoolers.

At a debate in a conservative part of her district, the official representative of her Republican opponent was booed off the

stage after he referred to her as little Patsy and as a charming and wonderful wife and mother.

Other problems of women candidates included minimal funding by their respective parties, reluctant labor union support and being encouraged to run in districts considered impossible to win.

At the state legislature level, the number of women elected appears to have tripled. Many of the women are members of the National Women's Political Caucus. In New York all three women elected to the state legislature are Caucus members. In Oregon eight of nine women elected to the state House were Caucus members.



## midwifery

Sweden, where women go to midwives early in their pregnancies, has the lowest maternal and infant mortality in the world, but the United States ranks 13th.

Midwives from all over the world met in Washington at the 16th International Confederation of Midwives during the week of October 28th.

'Midwife' means 'with woman', to work with women during their pregnancy, delivery and after delivery to help make the experience both a physiologically and psychologically healthy one. The degree to which the midwife functions in different nations varies. Some give complete prenatal care including examinations and teaching with family involvement, stay with the woman throughout the entire labor, deliver the baby without a doctor, take care of the mother and baby up to six weeks after delivery, and sometimes continue to help the total family as an ongoing public health nurse. Others are more dependent on the doctor and do more assisting the doctor as counselor of the mother and family.

The midwives always emphasized that they work with or under supervision of a doctor though often this is impossible because no doctors are available. Even those who take complete charge of the prenatal, delivery and after delivery care refer all women with abnormal pregnancies to a doctor.

In the United States there is little or no prenatal care for many women due to a shortage of doctors, resistance to midwifery on the part of the medical profession, and the high cost of medical care (up to \$600 or \$1000 just for delivery plus prenatal care). Private hospitals and doctors in the United States have a reputation for turning

away women in their last month of pregnancy or in labor who haven't had prenatal care because the risk of problems is higher and the medical people are more concerned with mortality statistics reflecting badly on their practice than with the mother and child. Chicago Maternity Center and Cook County Hospital know this problem well, because these women who have been turned away come to them or deliver at home after being refused elsewhere.

In Britain over 70 percent of deliveries are done by certified midwives (CMW) with a doctor easily available if needed. But these CMWs have contempt for indigenous/granny midwives (knowledge from experience not official training) saying "we haven't tolerated that for ages".

Yet, in Bangladesh the CMWs are grateful for the help of indigenous midwives because "otherwise the women would be alone with no help at all". "Over 70% of the women in the Third World go through pregnancy and delivery without either a midwife or a doctor", said Dr. R.H.O. Bannerman of the World Health Organization.

In the United States there are currently 12 CMW programs and 1,500 CMWs who have training as registered nurses plus six months to two years of midwifery training. Yet some states such as California and Colorado prohibit the practice of midwifery and others strongly limit their function. Obstetricians are reluctant to accept midwifery, because it threatens their control over this field of medicine. However, since health care in the U.S. is oriented toward the abnormal and doctors prefer to see and treat medical pro-

## self help clinics

### first conference

The First National Conference of the Gynecological Self Help Clinics of America met in Iowa City, Iowa, October 12-15. Organization of the conference was a joint effort between women from Los Angeles and Iowa City. It has been called the first national conference "whereby women worked together to demand that our physical selves be returned to our control; that women take control of the decision making that affects us; that the field of gynecology must meet OUR needs." Women came away with a commitment to work for those ideas. In order to spread the idea of Self Help Clinics it is hoped that regional conferences will take place. (For information about the six geographical regions contact Donna Davis, Box 547, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240.) A slide show for conferences is recommended and available from the L.A. Feminist Health Center (address below). Other subjects for discussion in regional conferences include funding, communication and legal hassles.

### on the road

Carol Downer, who was arrested in a raid on the L.A. Self Help Clinic (see page 31) and Lorraine Rothman, also from the L.A. Self Help Clinic, were on tour last month. They visited Connecticut, New York, Missouri and Kansas bringing information on the arrest and trial and helping women set up new self Help Clinics.

### in court

Faced with charges of "practicing medicine without a license, Colleen Wilson, one of the women arrested in the L.A. Self Help Clinic, pleaded guilty and received a suspended sentence and a \$250 fine. Carol Downer, however, has pleaded not guilty and will go to trial on November 20, at 8:00 A.M. at Division 40 of the New Court House Building, Temple and Broadway, Los Angeles.

In order to provide the very best of court fights it is essential that Carol be supported by money, positive publicity and signed notarized affidavits describing cases where women observed specific vaginal situations and sought medical attention. For further information and to give support, please contact Feminist Women's Health Center 746 S. Crenshaw Blvd. Los Angeles, California 90005. Tel. (213) 936-7219

blems rather than practice preventative medicine, some obstetricians are accepting midwifery so that only 'interesting cases' will be referred to them. They are also becoming more interested at the thought of midwives working in their private offices because they can see more patients in a day and make more money. It took the American Nurses Association 12 years to accept the College of Nurse-Midwifery and no national medical or hospital association has yet officially supported nurse-midwifery.

In New York City in 1971 midwives delivered 1 of 70 infants born in hospitals. Dr. Lillian Runnestrom, director of the Nurse-Midwifery School of Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, did a study in 1969 of the nurse-midwife in the hospital. Healthy women were randomly divided between the midwives and the doctors. Those women seen by the midwives were more conscientious about attending prenatal clinic regularly. They also had shorter labors. (The midwife is required to stay with the woman throughout the entire labor. One doctor explained that fear causes release of adrenalin into the system and inhibits labor.) The most impressive finding was that 90% of the women seeing midwives had normal deliveries.

One 20-year-old woman being seen by a midwife at Johns Hopkins said, "I think the hospitals do it all wrong, making the ones with problems go to doctors. That's when you really need the midwives the most."

For more information: American College of Nurse-Midwives, 50 E. 92nd St., New York, N.Y. 10028

See oob page 27 for a step back into history and suppressed women's culture.

by pam kalishman

# struggle

## up from under: black government workers organize

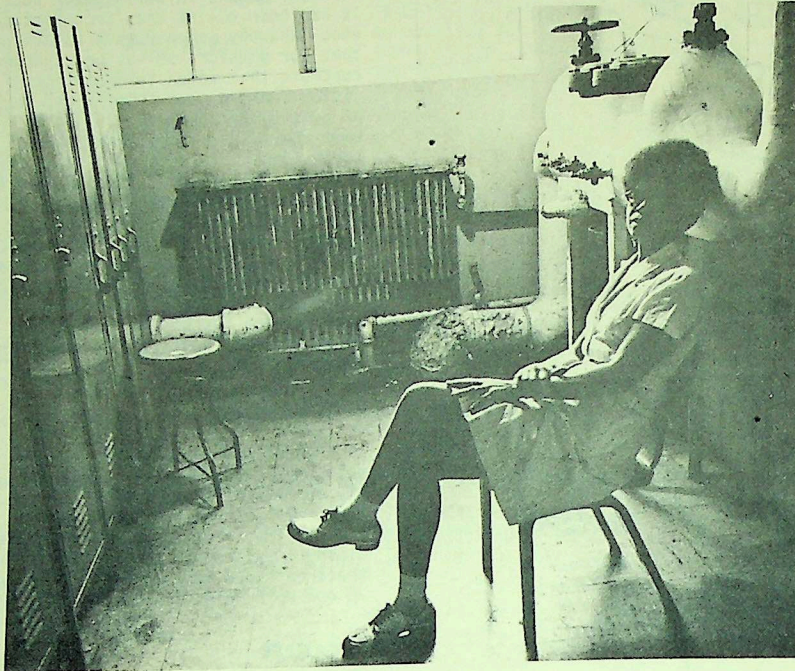


photo by Lorraine U. Gray, courtesy of Julius Hobson, Washington Institute for Quality Education.

Black cleaning women hauling 50 pound trash cans for \$3.12 an hour; black laundry women working in 90 degree heat while their white male supervisor watches them from an air conditioned office, timing them when they go to the bathroom... Throughout the federal government, blacks hold the lowest paying, most tedious and exhausting jobs. They are the laundry and janitorial workers, the elevator operators - what is known as wage grade workers, employees paid an hourly wage by the government to do menial work. Seventy two per cent of federal wage grade workers in Washington D.C. are black, yet only 33 per cent of all federal workers in the District are black. And black women have the lowest paying jobs of all, concentrated in federal laundries, cleaning divisions, and typing pools.

Until recently, there has been little organized protest activity among blacks within the government and little individual protest since this frequently precipitates firing or demotion. Although many blacks pay dues to the American Federation Of Government Employees, the largest union of federal government employees, this reactionary, southern based union does not even hold current contracts at many of the government agencies where it collects dues. It does little to represent the rights of any of its members, let alone its black members. And the government has done little to inform blacks of their legal rights in employee disputes.

But over the past two years, black federal employees have begun organizing to fight the racism they meet in their government jobs. They have created a coalition called Government Employees United Against Racial Discrimination (GUARD) which has task forces against racism within 17 government agencies. These task forces fight for equal employment for blacks by any number of tactics - sit ins, work slowdowns, large and frequent demonstrations. In addition, GUARD runs workshops on political and legal education. The Washington Lawyers' Committee For Civil Rights Under Law, which has recently published an advocates' handbook outlining the legal rights of federal employees, has volunteered to provide free legal assistance to federal employees who want to protest discrimination. There are 100 attorneys a-

available to advise GUARD and back its protest actions with legal assistance. GUARD is, in fact, one of the few government worker organizations to employ near strike tactics - strikes being illegal for government employees - to achieve its aims. This puts it continually in need of legal assistance. The reason it can employ whatever tactics it wishes is that, unlike government unions, it is an informal coalition, with no charter bylaws to adhere to. GUARD is most unlike government unions, though, in that it is a self consciously black organization. Its purpose is as much to heighten a sense of unity among black government workers as to do anything else. Its task forces push blacks in the government to understand that their constituency is the black population of the United States and that all blacks are fundamentally alienated from the productive system of this country.

### guard

GUARD was conceived by Anita Shelton, a black woman working at the National Urban League who felt an independent organization was needed to deal with the thousands of complaints concerning government discrimination that the League was receiving. Shelton organized GUARD in 1970 as a coalition of black civic organizations, two unions - the American Federation Of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees - and several task forces already established in government agencies. Its first project was to investigate conditions at the D.C. Sanitation Department, where 78.4 per cent of the wage grade employees were black. It staged a walking tour for the public of the Mount Olivet incinerator, where fire exits were blocked by trash and published a study analyzing the situation of black sanitation workers; black firemen were being forced to work in smog filled furnace rooms without proper ventilation and to take lunch periods in cardboard shacks located less than 10 feet from huge trash piles.

Soon after this, the sanitation workers went on strike and won a salary increase, an improvement in working conditions, and the right to be provided with protective

uniforms by the Sanitation Department. In addition, seniority was established as a criterion for promotion in the department, which allowed several blacks to attain supervisory positions. GUARD next demanded that the D.C. Human Relations Commission study discrimination against blacks in the D.C. Fire Department, where gross racism exists in hiring and promotional policies. The Human Relations Commission issued a report confirming GUARD's charges of discrimination, but little was done about it.

GUARD has become much more active over the last year. The civic organizations and unions have dropped out of it - the unions were piqued that the task forces did not wish to become union locals. GUARD is now mainly composed of individual government task forces; it is freer to define its focus and choose its tactics without concern for the priorities of other organizations. GUARD's individual task forces are confronted with discrete problems, so they have worked on a variety of projects over the last year.

### wage slaves rebel

The black task force at Walter Reed Army Medical Center is highly active. It was begun by Nell Pendleton, a black woman there who became aware of how blacks were discriminated against at Walter Reed when her work as a chemist took her to a section of the hospital where glassware was cleaned. Often the glassware came from sections of the hospital where it had been used by patients with infectious diseases or in experiments employing radioactivity. Pendleton first confronted Walter Reed when she learned that an animal caretaker was about to be fired for prolonged absence due to illness after having worked in a temporary capacity for eight years; it is illegal for the government to hire a worker as "temporary" for more than one year, since he or she loses out on all full time employment benefits that way. Fifteen of this caretaker's colleagues had also been temporary workers for eight years. Pendleton attended a Walter Reed staff meeting and announced that if the one caretaker was not reinstated and if he and his colleagues were not given permanent status, she would hold a press conference on Walter Reed's front steps. All 16 were made full time employees, but received no retroactive employment benefits. In April of 1971, Pendleton and several other blacks held a Martin Luther King Day program in the Walter Reed theatre, which about 1,000 employees attended. There she spoke on the discrimination against blacks that existed at Walter Reed and after the program several blacks expressed an interest in organizing against it. So, United Blacks Against Racism, (UBAD) was organized. Members of this black task force began entering heavily black sections of Walter Reed at lunchtime and talking to the employees to learn what the conditions there were. They would then go to the section's supervisor with a list of demands. As a result of this activity, laundry workers, largely black women - at Walter Reed, are now provided with masks and gloves to work in wards, and glassware, the hospital says, is sterilized by high heat before it goes to be cleaned. Laundry and janitorial workers now are receiving Hazardous Duty Pay, with retroactive benefits, in accordance with a provision of the 1970 National Labor Relations Act. Until recently, only higher level employees were receiving extra pay for doing possibly hazardous work.

Laundry workers held several slow down strikes and as a result now receive overtime pay when they are burdened with an unusual amount of work or when one of their colleagues is ill and they must do her work; they also now receive breaks every hour. Some time ago, an Assistant Secretary of the Army toured the Walter Reed laundry. Pendleton confronted him at that time, showing him the segregated bathrooms that existed in the laundry - one, locked, belonged to the white supervisor; the other, open and far less elegant, was to be used by the black staff. Both bathrooms are now open. Laundry workers at Walter Reed used to eat lunch in the bathroom. Now, they have a lunchroom with machines that warm the food they bring from home and Macke vending machines. The animal caretakers also have a

continued next page

## guard cont.

room to eat lunch in for the first time, although theirs is contaminated by smells from the nearby animal room. Time clocks have been removed from the laundry, the janitorial service and the commissary.

Many laundry workers have stopped paying dues to the AFGE local at Walter Reed since becoming involved with UBAD. The local does not even hold a contract with the hospital so it can do no bargaining for employees. Furthermore, as a UBAD newsletter pointed out, AFGE is racist in its own employment practices. Disillusioned with union activity, the laundry workers recently called an impromptu meeting on the laundry's Public Address system when representatives from another union came to recruit women; the men retreated under the challenges the women presented. The laundry workers frequently use the P.A. system now to discuss offensive treatment by supervisors.

Through contributions UBAD publishes a newsletter in which it prints equal employment regulations and exposes Walter Reed staff whom it considers racist. Blacks throughout the post are familiar with UBAD and call it when they need representation. Several months ago, UBAD's co-chairman, a black sergeant, was slated to be transferred to Vietnam. UBAD felt this was because of his organizing activities; black people all over the Walter Reed post staged a massive work slowdown. The sergeant was not transferred. Currently, UBAD is planning to bring a series of suits against Walter Reed, including at least one class action suit.

## nih

The National Institutes Of Health (NIH) is one of the government's bastions of racism. Of 1,059 medical doctors working at NIH, five are black. Out of about 1,500 PhD.s working at the agency, 23 are black. During 1971, NIH gave more money to the University of Alabama than it did to every black college in the United States combined. Last year, the D.C. Court Of Claims ruled that 15 black grounds workers at NIH were entitled to receive back pay because they had suffered a history of employment discrimination; a year later, back pay has still not been negotiated.

Black women are the worst off at NIH. Sixty three per cent of the black women who work at NIH are in the five lowest grades of the Government Service pay system. Twenty two per cent of black women are in the lowest ranks of the Wage Grade pay system - including the lowest paid service workers. Two per cent of NIH's white male employees are in that category. Sixty nine per cent of the white males who work at NIH are in the eight highest Government Service pay slots; six per cent of black women are in comparable positions.

All Concerned Employees (ACE) the black task force at NIH began to organize last year around the conditions prevailing in the laundry, where the employees sometimes endure 90 degree heat and where about 90 per cent of the workers are black women, ranging in wage grade from one to three; three is the highest wage grade a laundry worker can attain. The wage for this grade is \$3.41. Until last year they were supervised by a white male who sat in an air conditioned office, watching them by means of reflectors; instead of clocks, bells announced lunch hour and quitting time; there were no breaks. One of the laundry women told me they used to be timed when they entered the bathroom. Because of the 5,000 item a week production quota, laundry workers frequently suffered burns. They were never informed of jobs available elsewhere in NIH. After a series of meetings among the members of ACE, the laundry women and NIH supervisors, the quota system was abolished; there are now mats on the floors in the laundry; the reflectors and the bells are gone; the women now have breaks; the old white supervisor was replaced by a black man and there is now a bulletin board displaying announcements of jobs available throughout NIH. On the other hand, most other jobs are difficult to get after a woman has worked in the laundry for 15 years. And the promotion ladder still stops at wage grade three in the laundry. And, of course, the supervisor's position could have been taken over by a wo-

man who had worked in the laundry for several years, instead of going to a man from outside.

The housekeeping staff at NIH are now beginning to protest their own situation. They can't get above wage grade three either. When the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (to which NIH belongs) stated in 1970 that women could do all the same work as men, the female housekeepers were forced to start doing mopping, and the men in the housekeeping staff who had previously done that work left. The women receive no more money for the added work they do. Their duties had already included cleaning, moving 40 to 50 pound GI cans of trash, and moving linen and bottles. In some buildings, women are assigned to clean wards a block in length. In between rounds, "We just hang around, mostly on our feet... We are not allowed to sit in the lounges of the wards we clean." Many of these black women are routinely forced to train whites to supervise them. They are currently meeting with members of ACE and have already submitted a list of demands to their supervisory staff.

ACE blocked a sickle cell anemia screening program for black employees that NIH planned to introduce earlier this year. The information gained from this screening program would have been entered in the employees' personnel files; the program included plans to study the behavior of infected individuals after they learned they had the sickle cell trait. The few blacks picked by the program director to participate in planning the program had little experience in the area of sickle cell research. ACE advised NIH blacks not to cooperate with the program and denounced it on national television. Plans for the program were abandoned.



Photo by Lorraine V. Gray, courtesy of Julius Hobson, Washington Institute for Quality Education

These are the two most spirited task forces but others are active too. At the Library of Congress the black task force works with the union which it took control of last year; the membership of the two organizations largely overlaps. The task force publishes a newsletter and has held several demonstrations against job discrimination at the Library; 90 per cent of all wage grade jobs there are held by blacks. Last year, over 500 black employees sat in for a week in shifts in the Library's main reading room to support the demands of the primarily black stack workers for a pay increase. The Library padlocked the reading room and called in the Capital, Supreme Court and metropolitan police as well as its own. The strike ended when the Library fired 13 employees who had been demonstrating. Two were reinstated after a grievance board found their firings improper; the strike brought about few if any promotions among stack workers or any other black Library employees.

At the Department Of Health, Education and Welfare, the Department Of Housing and Urban Development and at the Census Bureau, the task forces have put pressure on the

administrations to introduce upward mobility programs - providing employees with college and other training opportunities. HEW formally adopted an upward mobility plan presented by a large group of black employees to HEW Secretary Eliot Richardson, but the plan has never been implemented. "The Invaders", the task force at the Census Bureau, recently won a promise of 408 promotions to be conferred there, and the establishment of an upward mobility college program. This agreement arose from a conference held between a number of blacks from GUARD and the then Assistant Secretary of the Commerce Department, Larry Jobe. According to one member of the Invaders, about 200 Census employees have already been promoted, and an upward mobility program has been started.

## revolt of the clerks

GUARD's future is unclear. Radical government employees in union locals which have broken away from the parent AFGE criticize it for drawing off potential union membership. They say GUARD has no collective bargaining power and no ability to enforce agreements it has established. In fact, GUARD is not adamant about eschewing union activity. At least two task forces have partially merged with union locals. Several are now discussing the possibility of affiliating with the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees. But it is true that they are uneasy about becoming part of the union structure. Many of GUARD's members have had experience with unions which effectively worked with management against blacks or which exploited blacks for their own purposes. (AFCSME, for instance, encouraged GUARD to publicize the situation of the sanitation workers, then locked GUARD out of the ensuing negotiations.) But GUARD is suspicious not so much of the individual unions as it is of the constraints that joining a union would place on its ability to focus on issues involving blacks and on its tactics. It is too soon to say whether the promises wrenched by the task forces from various administrations are less binding than contracts negotiated by the union locals. It is possible that a united, government wide black organization could be as powerful as individual union locals, which can be held at bay by means of the same machinery that institutionalizes them.

GUARD's primary importance, though, may not be as a labor-management negotiating tool but as an organizing mechanism for blacks within the government. Its leaders feel that the sense of unity and anger the organization has forged among blacks is far more important than the concessions the various task forces have gained. They say their battles in the federal arena represent only one front and one stage of a heightening worldwide black struggle against oppression. Last year, for instance, GUARD held a demonstration in front of the State Department to protest the United States' exportation of chrome to Rhodesia. Members say they will continue and increasingly to support black liberation movements throughout the world.

Yet, the most radical government unions must fight to avoid becoming trapped in right wing union structures. It is unclear whether the flamboyant tactics of the black task forces do represent the burgeoning efforts of blacks to strike the federal government from which they feel fundamentally alienated or whether these tactics disguise a desire to be integrated into that government's machinery. The chairman of GUARD says he has no belief in the political system of the United States and sees GUARD primarily as an organizing tool. But the women in the NIH laundry, despite the improvement in working conditions there, are still stuck in dead end jobs. And yet, because their working conditions are more pleasant, laundry workers who were among the most vociferous protesters last year now say that there is nothing more about laundry conditions that they would like to see changed. The only thing they now regret is that one black man who temporarily supervised them after the old, white supervisor left has not been officially congratulated for the fine work he did.

by frances lang

## indians occupy bia

Several hundred Indians from all over the United States came to Washington D.C. on the "Trail of Broken Treaties" on November 1. Plans for the demonstration included a caravan of cars, busses, and station wagons coming from various places in the West and picking up others on the way to Washington where negotiations would take place between Indian representatives and government officials. When the Indians arrived, the facilities which they were promised turned out to be a rat-infested building. Negotiations with government officials of high enough position to have any influence were not taking place. On Thursday the Indians decided to occupy the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to force to government into serious negotiations. (The BIA is the agency, under the Department of Interior, which administers all affairs concerning American Indians. Many of the people who work there are not Native Americans, and even those who are, are not responsive to the needs of the Indians. Local officials often can not help because of the bureaucratic structure of the BIA, and Indians not living on government reservations are not even represented.)

Occupation and demonstrations went on for a week before the Indians decided to agree on serious negotiations taking place over the next six months on the demands presented while in Washington.

### women move to ymca

After one day of occupation, the BIA found living facilities for the Indians at the YMCA. The men decided to remain, but it was decided under the direction of four male leaders that women, children, and the elderly would be evacuated to the YMCA. At this point, with no one forced to stay or leave, most of the women, children, and elderly moved to the YMCA.

The women at the "Y" when asked what was their main concern said that they cared the most about the education of their children. In the public schools discrimination against the Indians is widespread, especially against the boys who wear long hair to participate in the tribal rituals.

None of the women at the "Y" felt that they were being discriminated against by the male Indians who were occupying the BIA. Although the leaders had decided that the women should leave, those who wanted to stay were allowed. The women are not kept from taking part or speaking. "The women who are strong stay and speak up," said one of the women at the YMCA.

One of these strong women was 76 year old Martha Grass. Ms. Grass remained at the BIA and spoke to the press there. However, neither she nor any of the other women were present on the negotiating team.

by carol edelson

### sex bias suit

A market-wide complaint of employment discrimination against women was filed November 1 against the seven radio and three television stations in Columbia, South Carolina.

The complaint was filed with the Federal Communications Commission by attorney Carrington Selly representing Columbia NOW and Women's Equity Action League affiliates on the behalf of all women, and is another in a series of such petitions being coordinated around the country to deny license renewal to sexist broadcasters. Columbia station renewals come up December 1.

It is the first such petition-to-deny leveled market-wide and based solely on employment.

A prima facie case is being made on the statistics alone: 83% of the women employed in the broadcasting industry are office and clerical workers; only 6% of all responsible positions are held by women; the broadcasters use employment agencies which run exclusively sex-based advertisements.

The broadcasters presumably have either to come up with an affirmative action plan to correct the situation or to prove past unsuccessful good-faith efforts to recruit women in order to be granted license renewals by the FCC.



### droppings...

**BIGGEST NON-EVENT OF THE YEAR**--The election. Tricky Dick, better known in Washington D.C. circles as King Richard, the Hard Hearted, has won. Why? Who to blame? Many events and people. For instance, the Eagleton Affair, HHH, the Democratic Party, Gary Hart and his ilk, the news media, the T.V. media, the voters, and most of all the electoral system where there is no choice. And the war goes on.

**GIRLCOTT**--Farah Manufacturing Company of El Paso, Texas who manufactures mens' and boys' slacks has fired 75 women for trying to organize a union in the factory.

**SEND-IN**--The July 1972 issue of The Review of Radical Political Economics focuses on "The Political Economy of Women." Very good. Send your dollar to URPE, 2503 Student Activities, Bldg., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104--From the Women's History Research Center 2325 Oak St, Berkeley, Ca. 94708 a film directory, send \$3 if you are an individual woman and \$5 if you are a man or a group. It has 80 pages and pictures--"Job Discrimination Handbook" is available from Human Rights for Women for 50¢ until Dec. 1 and \$1 after. Write HRW, 1128 National Press Bldg, D.C. 20004--Give your favorite woman friend oob for Christmas/Chanukah--Spokeswoman, a friendly newsletter from Chicago, \$7 indiv. sub, \$12 institutional. Write The Spokeswoman, 5464 South Shore Dr. Chicago, 60615--Communities, a new magazine, about all kinds of (you guessed it) communities, \$1 single copy from 121 W. College Center St., Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387--films about women, available from New Day Films, 267 W. 25th St., NYC 10001--OMA button, 25¢ from the Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique and Guine (CCLAMG), New World Resource Center, 2546 N. Halsted, Chicago, Ill. 60614. OMA stands for Organizacao de Mulher de Angola. The button design in in MPLA colors, red, black and yellow with an armed black woman set against a red background circled in yellow.--Women's Studies Newsletter, published 4 times a year at SUNY College at Old Westbury by The Feminist Press (the same group that brought us the Dragon and the Doctor). Subs are \$5 to individuals, \$10 to institutions, Box 334, Old Westbury, NY 11568--Annotated bibliographies on Women in Literature and Women in Psychology, 50¢ plus 25¢ postage from Cambridge/Goddard Feminist Studies Program, 1878 Mass Ave., Cambridge, Mass 02140--Liberating Young Children from Sex Roles: Experiences in Day Care Centers, Play Groups and Free Schools by Phyllis MacEwan 25¢ from

New England Free Press, 791 Tremont St., Boston, Mass 02118--Liberation Enterprises, a unique mail order boutique, owned and run by women. Write for catalog, General Delivery, G.P.O., Brooklyn, NY 11202. Radio Free Women 90.9 FM WUHY, Philly, Wednesdays at 7:30 is trying to get together a tape library, anything written sung by women. They also need \$.

### NOW THEY ARE SCAPEGOATING MS WESTWOOD

**DROP-IN**--NEA Conference on Sex Role Stereotypes Nov. 24-26, 1972, Contact Shirley McCune, NEA 1201 16th St. NW D.C.--Northeast Regional Women's Law Conference, Feb. 16-18, 1973. They didn't give me an address--Hartford, Conn. Women's Liberation Center, 11 Amity St., Hartford, 523-8949--NAM Conference (New American Movement) Nov. 24-26 in Durham, N. Carolina for women sponsored by the Charlotte Perkins Gilman Chapter. write NAM c/o Sally Avery #03 Proctor St., Durham N.C. or call 967-7996.

**FROM AMY VANDERBILT IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL** (verbatim)--Question: "When you use Ms in place of Mrs., should you say Ms Jane Smith or Ms John Smith?"

Answer (by Vanderbilt herself): "I am unalterably opposed to the so-called title Ms, which is supposedly applicable to a married or an unmarried woman. The rule has always been that if you don't know a woman's title, you address her as Miss, so there is really no need for the unattractive Ms (pronounced miz). Among other things, the letters ms already stand for manuscript, master ship and multiple sclerosis."

**OUR FRIEND IN SILVER SPRING**--Bernice Carroll is collecting an anthology of theoretical and critical essays on women's history to be entitled Liberating Women's History. Anyone interested in submitting a paper contact Bernice at 9008 Alton Pkwy, S.S., Md. 20910.

**RUMOR HAS IT**--Our own Karen Kollias will be featured in Ms (or is it Mrs. or Miss or LHJ).

**NEW BOOKS FROM OUR FRIENDLY PUBLISHERS**--Monster poems by Robin Morgan, \$1.95 from Vintage Books, NYC--Images of Women in Fiction, Feminist Perspectives, edited by Susan Koppelman Cornillon, \$4 from Popular Press, Bowling Green State U, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403--The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America by Bonnie Mass, 75¢ from Editions Latin America, P.O. Box 218, Station "N", Montreal 129 Quebec, Canada.

**FROM ALTA**--to my children on a trip they dont need my fear riding along with them like an unwanted ghost.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY HARRIET?

Forever yours,



Chicken lady

### depraved

Robert Mitchell, chairman of Governor Ronald Reagan's social welfare board, complains that "It is amazing to find how many people do not regard illegitimacy as much of a problem and who do not think there is anything morally shocking about its growth."

According to the Oct. 30 New York Times Mitchell's committee has proposed legislation that "would allow a third illegitimate child born to any woman to be taken away and placed for adoption, on the legal assumption that the mother had shown herself to be 'morally depraved.'"

militant



photo by karen horowitz silk screen by marty kearns

## a counter vulture pullout

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### counter vulture gets a room of her own

Peer group controls fell apart leaving counter vulture free to grow into a self-contained monthly pullout section. The goal of this section is to both present and analyze the arts, aesthetics, rituals, values and belief systems of an emerging feminist culture. Hopefully, it will provide:

- . a poetry place
- . a gallery for graphics and visuals
- . a skills and information exchange

- . a place to experiment with aesthetic forms and standards
- . a forum for critical debate focussing on women's films, video ,poetry and theatre
- . a process for developing the graphic and writing skills of women
- . an on-going description and analyses of the styles, manners, tastes and content of our emergent sub-culture.

So, send in articles, graphics, photographs, reviews, analyses, skills information to counter vulture. First, maybe a new name ("counter vulture" came from the idea of a counter culture struggling against the vulture corporate culture). Especially needed right now are a poetry editor and a graphics- layout person, and always, of course, ideas, queries and comments.



counter vulture

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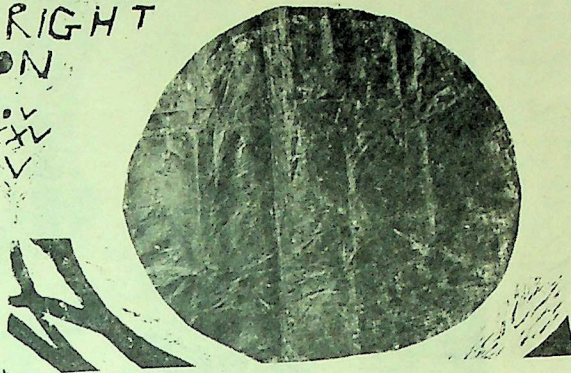


*Constanta, Romania*

photos by anne b. rosenfeld

LET  
THINE  
EYES LOOK  
RIGHT  
ON

Nov  
XXV  
V



Washington D.C.



Istanbul, Turkey



two women



I'm Running Away From Home But I'm Not Allowed to Cross the Street by Gabrielle Burton. (Know, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pa. 1972. 206 pp. illus. \$3.50.)

Gabrielle Burton has written a book which she has called a "primer on women's liberation." She writes it in the context of her experience in the role of wife and mother. While to a great measure she deals with the specific problems of working out the relationship between a husband and wife, it is certainly no "how to get your husband to do the dishes" book. Ms. Burton is very much aware of the conditions existing in society which mold the roles of a man and woman and deals with them as well: "A woman can rearrange individual things that hold her back-- she can have her husband share the housework and child-care-- but her arrangements do her little good if they only free her to experience job discrimination." Among other subjects she deals with the consciousness raising group, the myths about women working, the idea of pri-

vacy in our society which serves to isolate all the women in nuclear families, self-defense, abortion, childcare, and equal pay for equal work. She writes about each subject mostly in a very personal way, supporting her experience with facts and statistics (always footnoted), then theorizes about how society in general supports the ideas that make the liberation of women so difficult. The style has the effect of getting across the feminist politics without a sense of being "heavy." Also because she starts the discussion of each issue with something personal, the reader can easily identify with the situation. As she unfolds the facts which support her position, one can only nod one's head in agreement.

The book is also practical in the sense that she discusses how she could take this feminist theory and bring it home. She includes the important first step of gaining the awareness and self-confidence to be able to bring up the subject with her family.

Gabrielle Burton also writes on the subject of the liberation of men, in that she feels that the end of women's liberation is actually "People's Liberation." She cites examples of institutions such as alimony and the draft which oppress men. Her arguments would probably raise the consciousness of a few men.

I'm Running Away From Home... is an excellent introduction to Women's Liberation and is full enough of fresh points of view to interest all feminists. It is available by mail from Know, Inc. Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221. In Washington D.C. at the Com-

munity Bookshop and from Sue Sojourner, 23 7th St. S.E. 246-4951 (for mail order please include 35¢ mailing charges.)

by carol edelson

Sappho Was A Right-On Woman by Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love is subtitled A Liberated View Of Lesbianism. Unfortunately, although it is written by lesbians, it reads like another attempt to educate heterosexuals about the negative and positive attempts lesbians make to cope with being gay in an anti gay society.

The book is divided into two sections; the first deals with the techniques used by many lesbians to pass as straight and with the problems to lesbians posed by a society which disapproves of homosexuality. The second section discusses the attempts of lesbians to live openly and try to change the social system which oppresses them. Unfortunately, the dramatic way in which the book is divided turns it into a discussion of lesbianism as a peculiar problem. If it integrated its discussion of the difficulties and rewards of being a lesbian in this culture it would show more clearly how many of the difficulties lesbians encounter are culturally imposed. It would not just show lesbianism simply as a nightmare to be dealt with in either a negative or positive way.

The book is worth reading, though, by anyone interested in lesbianism or gay liberation. It contains a good bibliography and information about where a more complete gay liberation bibliography can be obtained.

by nancy tucker

another opening, another show... in Philly...

The opening night of the Philadelphia Women's Arts Center was on a cold October evening. Like most people who attended the event, I heard of the opening by word of mouth. The somewhat sketchy advance publicity promised exhibits of graphics, photography, painting and batiks, along with poetry readings and a multimedia show.

The opening night presents the opportunity to take a peak at "women's art", to see how we are progressing in the exploration of self and surroundings as terra incognita. So in pursuit of women's culture, I take the car from Perkiomenville, Pa., to downtown Philadelphia, then the bus to the Asbury Ministry on Chestnut Street.

The purpose of the Arts center, according to my latest Tell-A-Woman (put out by the women's center in Philadelphia at 4634 Chester Avenue) are:

To present to the public, particularly women, the creative works women have made and are making in the various art forms; to develop an understanding of women's aesthetic perspective; to provide an educational setting where women who are experts in a particular artistic field can share their knowledge with others; to encouraging women to make further contributions to the various art forms; to confront cultural institutions and publications with their omission of and categorical approach to women's works; to establish and maintain an historical and contemporary works in all fields of the arts; to develop a feminist setting which conveys an understanding of women's oppression and the movement to overcome it.

One imagines with dread the number of meeting hours, and compromises that lead to this statement. Later, I find out that there are three basic dichotomies within the Center planning committee, that can be grossly described as "gay-straight, political-non-political lesbians, and professional-amateur." The dichotomies result in anything but smooth sailing for the group. The Center, I'm told by all committee members is the child of one Joan Hubbard, and she is the person I really ought to speak to. When I do, sometime later, I find out that her original dream was for a women's culture center: Last June, she quit her job, and started talking to women's groups and artists and managed, despite original lack of enthusiasm, to get a planning group together.

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A small sign posted to the church door says women's Art Center, and I enter from out of the cold. A small room contains chairs and couches, a literature table, coffee and all kinds of brownies and cookies. Behind me at the food table (to which I have made a beeline) a woman shouts to another, "Oh God, for something organic." On the walls photographs are indifferently displayed. Of the five or so women exhibiting; only one, Sharon Grossman, displayed photographs of exclusively women subjects. Her "Six Women", done in portrait style, included a print of an older woman, an attractive movement woman and a female child. Chris Warden's photographs, were mainly, but not exclusively of women. I particularly liked "Two Women. My favorites, though not particular woman identified, were a series called "Purim" by Ann Spirn, showing children dressed up to reenact the story of Queen Esther's saving of the Jews (see oob, feb-March, 1972 for the story). For the most part, the photographs are passive,

The room is filling up with first nighters, attractive within the women's liberation style of pioneer faces, old cuorderoys and jeans, workshoes, worn leather jackets, peasant blouses, pretty beads, hand crochet shawls, and mostly long hair, mostly in their twenties and early thirties. There are a smattering of men, a few of whom you would have died to meet in the old days, but thanks to women's liberation, and the fact that I have to catch the 11:10, I no longer feel the need to pick one up. There are also a couple of kids, mostly male.

I pass into a long hallway being used as as gallery for works on the boundaries between arts and crafts. Except for a silk screen

by Marty Kearns, the work was in no way feminist nor was it possible to tell that the work had been done by women. There were better than average macrame wall hangings by Diane Phillipof and batiks by Nancy Friedman. But can there be a feminist style of macrame? With batiks, I suppose the designs could incorporate a feminist symbol, but I don't think our symbols are complex enough yet for that -- what do we have beside the raised fist within the woman's biological symbol?

Into the main auditorium where I am struck by an abstract painting in textures by Jody Pinto. It's striking but again in no way feminist. I am also struck by a cliché landscape painting, and some mediocre collages made from bits of paper. I wonder if availability was the major selection criterion. I buy a hand built earth and black matte pottery ash-tray from Carol Clamer, most of whose stuff has a uniform blue glaze. Pottery seems especially to be a craft that is for the most part asexual.

People begin to take seats for the poetry reading and multi-media show. Millie Lilly, a lady-like woman in jeans who volunteered for the job when Joan Hubbard demurred, is the mistress of ceremonies. She makes a brief welcoming speech and ends with a plea for money. The Women's Arts Center is totally dependent on the contributions of women using it

Brooke Williams read first. From my front row seat, I can see that she is shaking. Brooke starts by reading a poem dedicated to L. with whom, she tells the audience, she had a brief affair the previous summer. The poem ends:

I would sip your breasts  
Like coffee  
And feel the warmth  
The heat  
Spilling through me.

The lines get the first enthusiastic applause of the evening. Visibly strengthened by the applause, Brooke goes on to dedicate a poem to a "schmuck" radio announcer who spoke of the "supposed oppression" of lesbians. Two more poems, and then the last about St. Joan of Arc, ending with: God was created in woman's image  
And the world will explode in ovarian rage  
She exits to loud applause.

Linda Bakiel, the second poet, is clearly an experienced reader. Starting with a poem about the women of Viet Nam, she follows it with a light and funny poem about living on a farm after the revolution, and then another funny one about a conversation between "my mother, my mother's mother and Me." It is pleasant to hear feminist poetry that is funny.

The third poet, Eileen Abrams (with a face that reminded me of Gertrude Stein's) filled in for an ailing Pat Gainer, reading in a lovely voice, without much expression, Gainer's poetry. The audience begins to grow restless during a long poem to Melina Mercouri.

But a good change of pace is provided by Fran Winant folk-singing. My favorite is Gertrude and Alice were lovers to the tune of "Frankie and Johnnie."

Following Fran came the multi-media show, "The Dykes Bomb Back." The "multi-media" was for the most part poetry reading accompanied by color slides of Scotland shown over and over again, and occasionally by a flute. The first segment of the show was delightful, if a bit lengthy poem which starts by asking

If everyone is standing in  
a line  
Having a party  
Is that a party line?

The audience cheers throughout the poem. To my knowledge

this is the first time the YSA-feminist split has ever found its way into art.

If the multi-media show had ended with the party line poem, it would have ended with the audience wanting more. Unfortunately there were several more poems to the interminable Scotch countryside slides, and the presentation grew wearing.

The second set included three more poets and a Women's Puppet Theatre presentation. The audience had heard a great deal of poetry by this time, and numbers began to leave. Fran Baskin's monotone reading did not help.

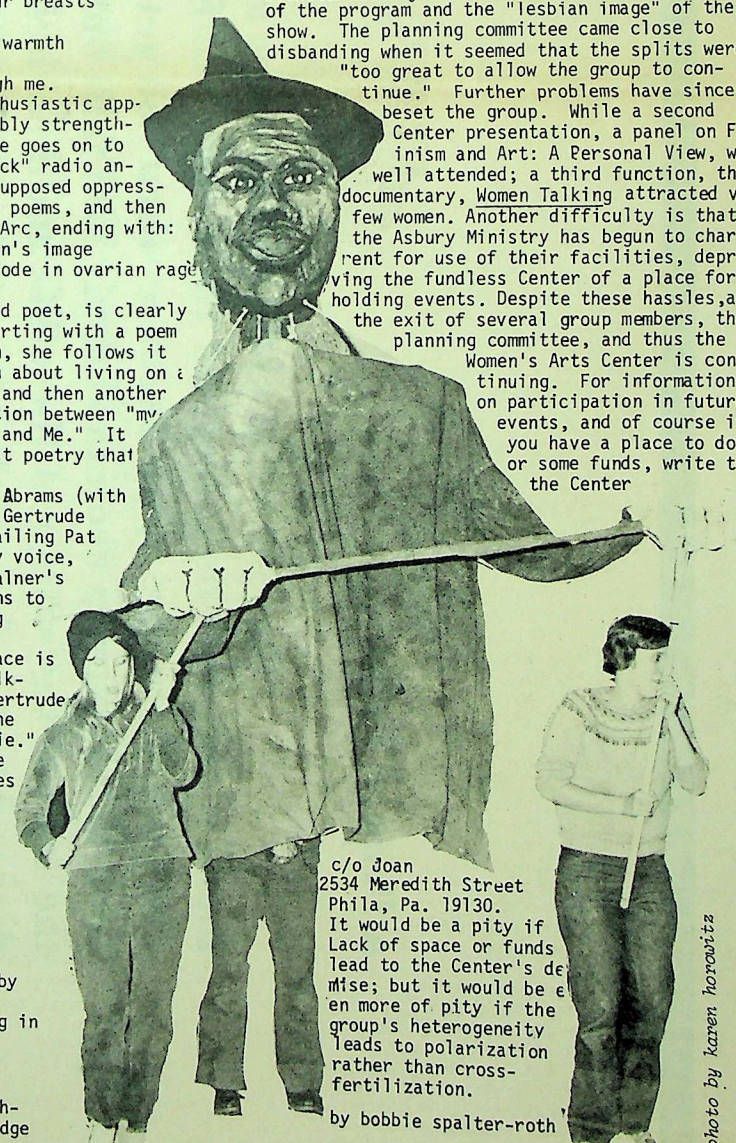
In clear contrast was Marty Kearns, whose voice and expression regained the audience's interest. Especially effective was a poem about Joan of Arc read in a panoply of voices, ending with the strong lines:

For the illegal act of wearing men's clothing  
We condemn you to death by fire.

The final poetry reading was by Alexandra Grilikhes, but by this time I am tired of sitting in a straight back chair, and no poetry maven, I am beginning to feel like a captive audience. But I forget about the uncomfortableness of the chair as the Women's Puppet Theatre chants and winds its way up the aisles with two giant paper mache puppets. The puppets, one of Philadelphia's police chief mayor Frank Rizzo and one of a witch, require three people to manipulate. Dancing and weaving with the puppets, the story is told of how the ladies won the day when Rizzo and his mounted police were confronted by a lesbian abstract artist witch conspiracy. While the piece suffered from the usual lack of editing and sagged in the middle, it ended on a note of elation with the victorious ladies dancing with members of the audience.

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The mood of elation, however, did not continue when the planning committee reacted to their opening night. According to Joan Hubbard, her own initial feelings of elation were dissipated when the group's three way dichotomies crystallized over the weaknesses of the program and the "lesbian image" of the show. The planning committee came close to disbanding when it seemed that the splits were "too great to allow the group to continue." Further problems have since beset the group. While a second Center presentation, a panel on Feminism and Art: A Personal View, was well attended; a third function, the documentary, Women Talking attracted very few women. Another difficulty is that the Asbury Ministry has begun to charge rent for use of their facilities, depriving the fundless Center of a place for holding events. Despite these hassles, and the exit of several group members, the planning committee, and thus the Women's Arts Center is continuing. For information on participation in future events, and of course if you have a place to donate or some funds, write to the Center



c/o Joan  
2534 Meredith Street  
Phila, Pa. 19130.

It would be a pity if  
Lack of space or funds  
lead to the Center's demise; but it would be even more of pity if the group's heterogeneity leads to polarization rather than cross-fertilization.

by bobbie spalter-roth

photo by karen horowitz

## A Printed Print

there are the cliffs and beaches and beyond those beaches are sometimes plains and then beyond those more cliffs and beaches and even when you can't see them any more because when you get up too high the earth's curvature is such that it curves around sharply and falls out of sight and then you are aware of the loss of the vision of the cliffs and beaches and the cliffs and beaches beyond those which is after all the meaning of infinity in the awareness or in knowledge of the continuum and then you also experience the suddenness of the curvature and you sense how one is dependent on the other and there are again two possibilities one being the sense of the dependency which is also infinite is, one, the earth does not exist without the cliffs and beaches or whatever else is on it and none of that could be there by itself and two, the second loss when you know you've gone too high and the turn or curve is too steep—and this leads you to those cliffs on the lower left which are not cliffs, which are elevated structures, but canyons, which are cut into the earth and keep going down forever. There is that word again—but we won't say it again—and here you are caught in the infinite descent into the canyons and the memory of the beaches and oceans dims gradually until it is gone and only the canyons exist. But perhaps in that part of the picture which is not shown there are endless ladders extending one from the other all made of stainless steel instead of aluminum or maybe even chrome because it will shine brighter in the canyons and it may be possible to get out again that way but you have to be lucky enough to stumble across them. But just as the bottom of the canyons can never be shown neither can the top when you are going the other way. *In the middle is a trypitch—the middle panel is St. Augustine on the left as he really looks, in the middle encased in the first layer of plastic that he has himself created, so it is really ectoplastic—in the third view all that remains is the essence of his mind, a red pulsating thing and the rest of his head has been dissolved in the ectoplastic*

never be shown neither can the top when you are going the other way. In the middle is a tryptich — the middle panel is St. Augustine on the left as he really looks, in the middle encased in the first layer of plastic that he has himself created, so it is really ectoplasmic — in the third view all that remains is the essence of his mind, a red pulsating thing, and the rest of his head has been dissolved in the ectoplasmic plasm which is hard on the outside and soft on the inside where it is always changing just a little after the initial dissolution took place. On the panel to the left is the setting sun behind one of the oceans and the panel on the right is a close-up of the mountains in the distance. It's not too important to show the canyons close because everyone has seen them. On the outside of the tryptich to the right is the rising sun which is part of the real world — these two suns are left over from the last picture, as well as the pail, and exist now in at least two places at once and provide another clue to all the extensions — the upper part of the picture shows the heavens above — a strange phrase because where else would heavens be — no one ever talks about the heavens below or slightly to the left — and one must also ask, "the heavens above what?" and the answer clearly is "above the heavens." The "heavens above" have a lot of clouds because even here there is obscurity and shadowy places where the souls hide. These are not shown because no one knows what they look like — or if they dance, but they are still there. One also sees a telephone pole and rope ladder which are useful for climbing

Eleanora Spalter-Roth  
1972



photo by carol uryosky

left to right: rosalyne drexler; louise nevelson; vivian gornick; shirley clarke

## in new york city

**personae:** *Shirley Clarke*, a film-maker, wearing a derby hat, high-heeled white vinyl boots and a heart around her neck which says "mother." She is an electric, irritable woman with a tough, almost street, wit, somewhat defensive, who will later bring the house down by saying that the way she made it was by being "a nasty rotten bitch." *Rosalyn Drexler*, an artist and writer, wearing a dowdy housewife-dress as a tunic and a cheap, fake-fur Russian officer's hat. Her unlined face belies her years. She has a wry wit, has managed to preserve a child's hilarious surrealism and directness; she will constantly surprise the audience and turn them into her affectionate mother. *Vivian Gornick*, a writer who in short black hair is opting for a gamine effect. The rain hat on the rack behind her is presumably hers. She affects no obvious personality, is rather, a kind of medium, eschewing wit for eloquence. *Louise Nevelson*, a sculptor, wearing a black jockey cap over a scarf and weighty, luxuriant lashes. She is a European grande dame and will speak somewhat allegorically, evangelically; will tell the audience that they are the architects of their own lives in a voice warm and hoary with age; and will be mostly impervious to their occasional impatience. (*Viva*, a superstar, was scheduled to perform but found a health cure in the Bahamas a more tempting offer.) The women sit on a dias and smoke.

**the setting:** A huge loft, part of the Women's Interart Center which is located in a desolate Edward Hopper periphery of Manhattan. One goes up to the loft in a vast freight elevator which has been furnished with low couches and a circular cocktail table. Wine is available. The audience gets modestly floozed in the ascent.

**the time:** October 20, 1972, 8:30 P.M., a clear fall night.

**the audience:** Mostly women, mostly artists, of all ages, sexual proclivities and degrees of make-up. Some are aggrieved, we will later discover; all are excited: the women they have come to see embody their deepest dreams of talent and success.

(NOTE: The following are excerpts, in some cases paraphrased. Certain central themes are present and are noted in capital letters; when context needs to be supplied it is indicated in parentheses. The evening begins with Gornick asking the panel how they define "making it.")

**making it:** *Nevelson:* I believe that human beings are born ready-made....The very fact that we're born means we're entitled to our full life and our full expression--that's "making it." I would like to believe that every human being would claim that heritage. *Clarke:* People here know who we are but I wouldn't go too far from here to find others who do. "Making it" is a matter of survival. For instance I would spend two years getting

money for a film, one year writing it, six months making it and two years selling it. But I *needed* to work; I was depressed and bored when I wasn't working. But I also needed to be *recognized*. ("How do you get the money for your work?"--an urgent question the audience will ask often. Clarke answers.) Inherit it or marry it. I was very lucky, I did both....It is also important to start at the top and then try to stay there. *Gornick:* "Making it" for me means the ability to work. Many women spend many years in a place of exhaustion, with frustrated energy. Work means spending long, lonely hours trying to produce what's inside us, and spending years of your life finding your way of expression....The importance of Feminism is that because of it we can avoid that connotation of "making it" as "being successful" (the audience stirs restively.) *Clarke:* (continuing to assume that "making it" means "becoming rich and famous" talks now about *how* to do it.) It's who you know. I spent many years going to parties to meet people I didn't like and feeling uptight if I didn't get invited.

**what makes art happen?** *Drexler:* Hate was a great impetus. I was poor; I had these rich relatives I hated and I wanted to show them. Now, I no longer know who the "them" is. I work from hate and deprivation. *Clarke:* I was going to show my father.

### encouragement, power:

(Question: "If you stay home and do your work how do people know if you have any?") *Panel:* Any what? (Audience laughs.) *Drexler:* You need friends and a sympathetic agent. *Gornick:* I began writing recently. (Audience wonders what the precise turning point was but she eludes the audience and offers instead a tame definition of Feminism: a movement eschewing power.) *Drexler:* I like power and I like exerting it over other people. (She then gives the most specific account of the evening about how she got started as a novelist.)

**romantic individual solutions:** (An aggrieved member of the audience accuses the panel of believing in the Old Romantic Notion of Individual Solutions.) *Drexler:* I thought if people could see me they would say that if she can make it then we could make it. *Clarke:* (attacking the non-solidarity of women) Women do this to each other too--don't recognize each other, help each other get jobs. (and on discrimination against women artists) Once I saw "Clarke" on a flyer. I didn't know who it was. I knew myself, and I was always referred to, as "Shirley Clarke." But Jean-Luc Godard is know as Godard

**a mother's guilt:** (There is the usual question about how to handle the guilt you feel when you're a mother and devoting yourself to your work.) *Drexler:* Maybe you should feel guilty having babies. Too much is made of birth being a mystical experience. I just remember being surprised that something was coming out of me--it was as weird as having some-

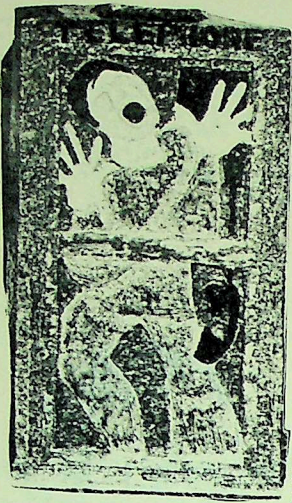
thing go into me, but I would try anything once. *Gornick:* The center is work. (A veteran of two marriages, Gornick says she can no longer see how one can be married and still have work as the center. Her remarks are so convincing that a hundred commitments are broken, a hundred divorces fantasized.) *Drexler:* You can be both a mother and an artist if you don't do both as well.

**creativity crises:** *Drexler:* I'm just not good all the time. I have a fear of drying-up....I sneak up on work; I put on music, dance, look out the window. *Clarke:* Doing it produces doing it....But work, for me, starts out with depression. *Gornick:* I spent years working out the anxiety of not working. When you can't go to any more movies, etc., that's when you can't escape work any longer. ..Working produces the death of the romantic myth of inspiration. (Gornick makes several more felicitous remarks, among which: "Life is a continuous process of loss." and "Art is a blood-letting which eases the frustrated self." The audience seems happy being rapt, but Clarke must be aware of other currents: "I keep thinking you expect us to say some magic word and then you free us," she says.)

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Every play has its critic and what most annoyed this one was the hedging about "making it." Everyone knows what the term means; it has been called attention to in giant capital letters in the program note, so why does the panel avoid it so assiduously? Why does Gornick, who describes the agonies of creation with painful credibility, write, if not to achieve fame? Why does she define Feminism as a movement which eschews fame and power? Neither she nor this sophisticated audience is so naive as to deny the connection between creativity and the will to power, or between public recognition and one's feeling of self-worth as an artist. Sometimes, it would seem, women who make it are jealous of their status. Fame is a small kingdom, especially for women. Many women came to worship, others were also curious about the mechanics of success: do you have to be beautiful? Do you have to go down on the Man? What were the precise turning points in these women's careers? How does power feel? Clarke and Drexler were open, Drexler the most, but even with them one sensed a withholding of trade secrets. The audience was frustrated in its desire for precision about a stated theme and the discussion, as a result, seemed disturbingly off-target.

But one was also left with an atmosphere. The remarks I've cited are pale nuggets out of context; they can't convey the wit, the warmth, the conflicts and the currents of the evening. These were brilliant women who, although they often avoided the core issue, shed illumination on other important aspects of artists' problems. In all, the evening was a marvellous entertainment, "glamorous" in the best, Lawrentian, sense that is, reflecting a stylishness so contemporary that it is sexually incandescent and in some way hints at a timeless energy. And, too, that steady emphasis on work had, at least for that evening, the force of Biblical injunction: Thou Shalt Put All Else Aside and Do Only The Most Important Thing....

by Maryse Holder



Talking Of Michelangelo has a fine collection of pottery sculpture.

years ago, the Washington Color School started it all. It brought to the forefront of art men like Sam Gilliam, and it brought their home base to notice with them. The Color School is no longer a power and no other striking trend has developed in Washington, but D.C. continues to grow as an art center. It is now a city replete with artistic opportunity yet not dominated by one school; so it is a city without a rigid hierarchical in-group to fight.

## talking to the out group

"Actually, it's our anniversary," Rosetta Dymond told me when I asked how long Talking Of Michelangelo had been in business. Talking Of Michelangelo is one of those galleries owned by women; it has been open for a year now - long enough to establish a network of good artists, anxious to show there.

The November show, through the 25th, features a woman painter and a woman potter; pottery has become a mainstay for the gallery. When I first arrived at the gallery I went to introduce myself to Rosetta. We said hello, and I looked around at the paintings. The paintings of Harriet Lesser are abstract but just barely. The titles linked the paintings to a realistic scene and the background revised again to a modern leaning representational art, a category that describes the style of her work but not its intimate flavor. Ms. Lesser is just back from Volga, where the rainy season, combined with the adobe style houses, prompted her to paint street scenes that bend and bulge and practically slide off the canvas. This is done, surprisingly, without resorting to a heavy sculptural use of her paint. Her lines are clean. She has a way with color that is not limited to either the light or dark shades; in some paintings she effectively

combines the two. Her people, too, seem to melt, but they do it without appearing either helpless or necessarily forlorn. The overall effect was a tug of identification.

The pottery, by Laurie Schmidt was of a quality that would prompt you to buy a whole set of something. Her work is superb - craftsmanship at its height.

The gallery itself is well suited to display both small standing items and paintings and prints. It is not crowded; you can walk between pottery groupings without holding your breath. But it doesn't have the startled empty look of so many galleries that show paintings.

## marriage pay off

I talked to Rosetta and her partner, Joan Liberman about being women in business, specifically the art business. They had both "worked" before, at the type of boring job to which women are so often relegated. They both have children. They each work half a day now, and so combine both aspects of their lives - themselves and their children - pretty well.

The art business gives no immediate financial returns, so in order to get started, one must have either backing or some other means of support. Women supported by another person can turn this fact to their advantage. It can give us the opportunity to be financially daring. It can also give women artists who have talent but are denied the usual inroads, a place to show their work and a chance to start a real revolution in art.

by georgia jones

## in washington d.c.

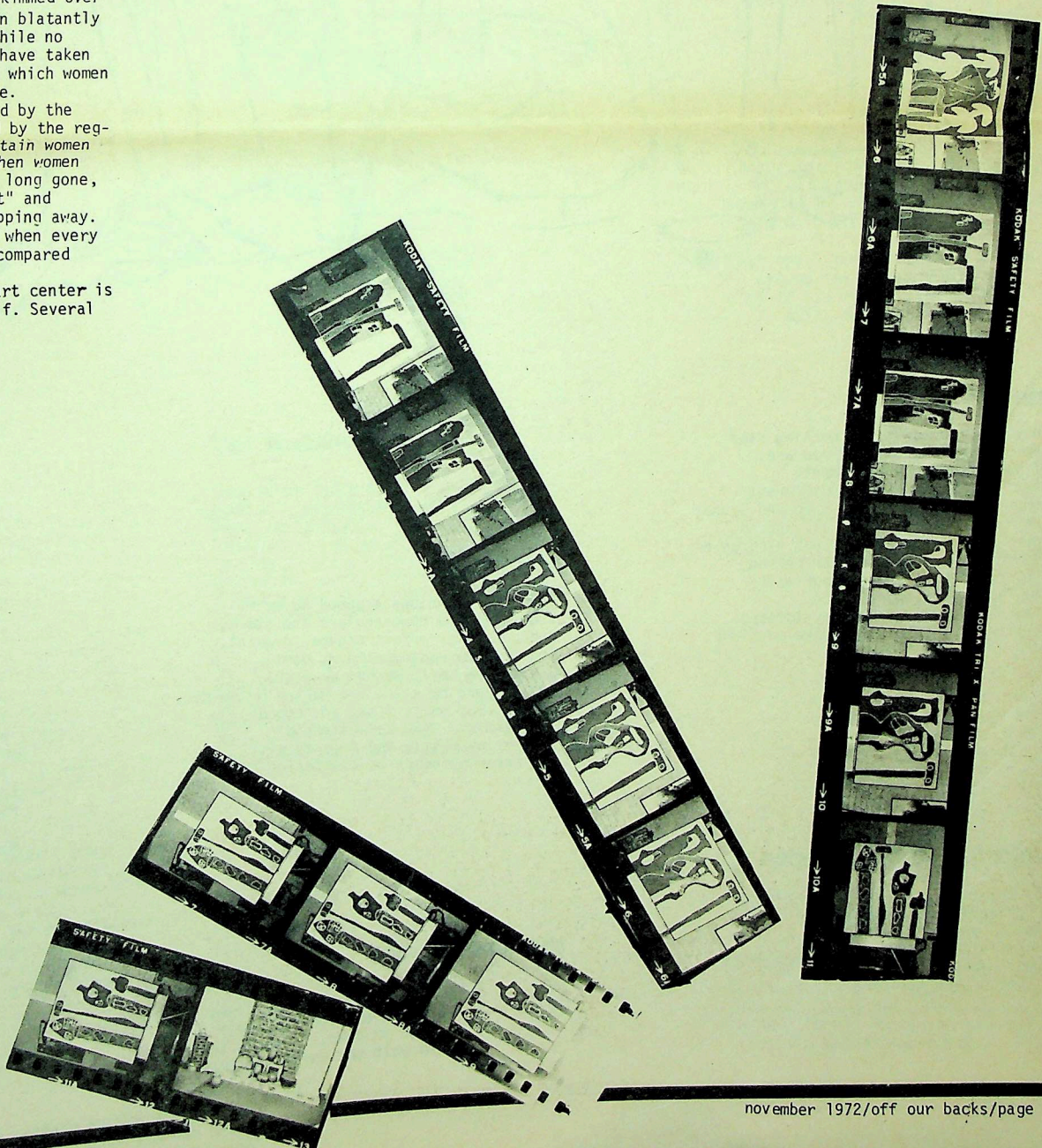
### a center for (women) artists

Washington, D.C. is in the middle of an art bloom. Paralleling this growth is another, the emergence of women as an influence in the art world.

Women artists, like women in every other field, have been omitted from or skimmed over in art histories, and they have been blatantly ignored by their contemporaries. While no dramatic change in that hierarchy have taken place, there is a trend developing which women artists are watching with some hope.

Here, in D.C., it is evidenced by the number of women gallery owners and by the regularity with which the work of certain women artists appear in them. The days when women painted because it was genteel are long gone, and the days of the "weekend artist" and "housewife painter" are slowly slipping away. Some of us even look toward a time when every middle aged woman artist won't be compared to Grandma Moses.

That Washington D.C. is an art center is something of a phenomenon in itself. Several





paying a back debt: dorothy parker 1893-1967

Dorothy Parker was the woman who, when told of the death of Calvin Coolidge asked, "How can they tell?"

The most quoted woman of the 1920's and 30's. Dorothy Parker was probably neurotic and often drunk. Although her poems are dated now, they were, at the time of publication, considered quite racy among the readers of Edna, Emily and Sara. Her short stories, however, survive better than most. They are funny, incisive and oddly observed tales of insomnia and roses. Her eye had a way of drawing a bead on things or people and lacerating them with a quick, terse, shot.

For awhile, from Prohibition through the Depression, anything funny said in America was attributed to Dorothy Parker. These witticisms were uttered in a demure murmur, forcing everyone within earshot to lean forward to catch the raw-cut gems. "A girl's best friend is her mutter," was one of the whispers.

Although Mrs. Parker ("There was a Mr. Parker.") was a bitch who regarded fellow women as competitors and men as prey, she took some pleasure in her power. Men and women both were afraid to leave a room when she was in it. She was a five-foot lady poet, very polite and well-mannered, who managed, in her own small way, to chomp the world's kneecaps.



from a book of drawings by gail geltner

men

They hail you as their morning star  
Because you are the way you are.  
If you return the sentiment,  
They'll try to make you different;  
And once they have you, safe and sound,  
They want to change you all around.  
Your moods and ways they put a curse on;  
They'd make of you another person.  
They cannot let you go your gait;  
They influence and educate.  
They'd alter all that they admired.  
They make me sick, they make me tired.

fulfillment

For this my mother wrapped me warm,  
And called me home against the storm,  
And coaxed my infant nights to quiet,  
And gave me roughage in my diet,  
And tucked me in my bed at eight,  
And clipped my hair, and marked my weight,  
And watched me as I sat and stood:  
That I might grow to womanhood  
To hear a whistle and drop my wits  
And break my heart to clattering bits.

prisoner

Long I fought the driving lists,  
Plume a-stream and armor clanging  
Link on link, between my wrists,  
Now my heavy freedom's hanging.

unfortunate coincidence

By the time you swear you're his,  
Shivering and sighing,  
And he vows his passion is  
Infinite, undying--  
Lady, make a note of this:  
One of you is lying.

the small hours

No more my little song comes back;  
And now of nights I lay  
My head on down, to watch the black  
And wait the unflinching gray.

Oh, sad are winter nights, and slow;  
And sad's a song that's dumb;  
And sad it is to lie and know  
Another dawn will come.

## symptom recital

I do not like my state of mind;  
 I'm bitter, querulous, unkind.  
 I hate my legs, I hate my hands,  
 I do not yearn for lovelier lands.  
 I dread the dawn's recurrent light;  
 I hate to go to bed at night.  
 I snoot at simple, earnest folk.  
 I cannot take the gentlest joke.  
 I find no peace in paint or type.  
 My world is but a lot of tripe.  
 I'm disillusioned, empty-breasted.  
 For what I think, I'd be arrested.  
 I am not sick, I am not well.  
 My quondam dreams are shot to hell.  
 I do not like me any more.  
 I cavil, quarrel, grumble, grouse.  
 I ponder on the narrow house.  
 I shudder at the thought of men...  
 I'm due to fall in love again.

## i know i have been happiest

I know I have been happiest at your side;  
 But what is done, is done, and all's to be.  
 And small the good, to linger dolefully--  
 Gayly it lived, and gallantly it died.  
 I will not make you songs of hearts denied,  
 And you, being man, would have no tears of me,  
 And should I offer fidelity,  
 You'd be, I think, a little terrified.

Yet this the need of woman, this her curse:  
 To range her little gifts, and give, and give,  
 Because the throb of giving's sweet to bear.  
 To you, who never begged me vows or verse  
 My gift shall be my absence, while I live;  
 But after that, my dear, I cannot swear.

## surprise

My heart went fluttering with fear  
 Lest you should go, and leave me here  
 To beat my breast and rock my head  
 And stretch me sleepless on my bed.  
 Ah, clear they see and true they say  
 That one shall weep, and one shall stray  
 For such is love's unvarying law...  
 I never thought, I never saw  
 That I should be the first to go;  
 How pleasant that it happened so!

At my door's another lad;  
 Here's his flower in my hair.  
 If he see me pale and sad,  
 Will he see me fair?

## the new love

If it shine or if it rain,  
 Little will I care or know.  
 Days, like drops upon a pane,  
 Slip, and join, and go.

I sit looking at the floor.  
 Little will I think or say  
 If he seek another door;  
 Even if he stay.

## indian summer

In youth, it was a way I had  
 To do my best to please,  
 And change, with every passing lad,  
 To suit his theories.

But now I know the things I know,  
 And do the things I do;  
 And if you do not like me so,  
 To hell, my love, with you!

## fair weather

This level reach of blue is not my sea;  
 Here are sweet waters, pretty in the sun,  
 Whose quiet ripples meet obediently  
 A marked and measured line, one after one.  
 This is no sea of mine, that humbly laves  
 Untroubled sands, spread glittering and warm.  
 I have a need of wilder, crueler waves;  
 They sicken of the calm, who knew the storm.

## somebody's song

This is what I vow:  
 He shall have my heart to keep;  
 Sweetly will we stir and sleep,  
 All the years, as now.  
 Swift the measured sands may run;  
 Love like this is never done:  
 This is what I vow.

This is what I pray:  
 Keep him by me tenderly;  
 Keep him sweet in pride of me,  
 Ever and a day;  
 Keep me from the old distress;  
 Let me, for our happiness,  
 Be the one to love the less:  
 This is what I pray.

This is what I know:  
 Lovers' oaths are thin as rain;  
 Love's a harbinger of pain--  
 Would it were not so!  
 Ever is my heart a-thirst,  
 Ever is my love accurst;  
 He is neither last nor first:  
 This is what I know.

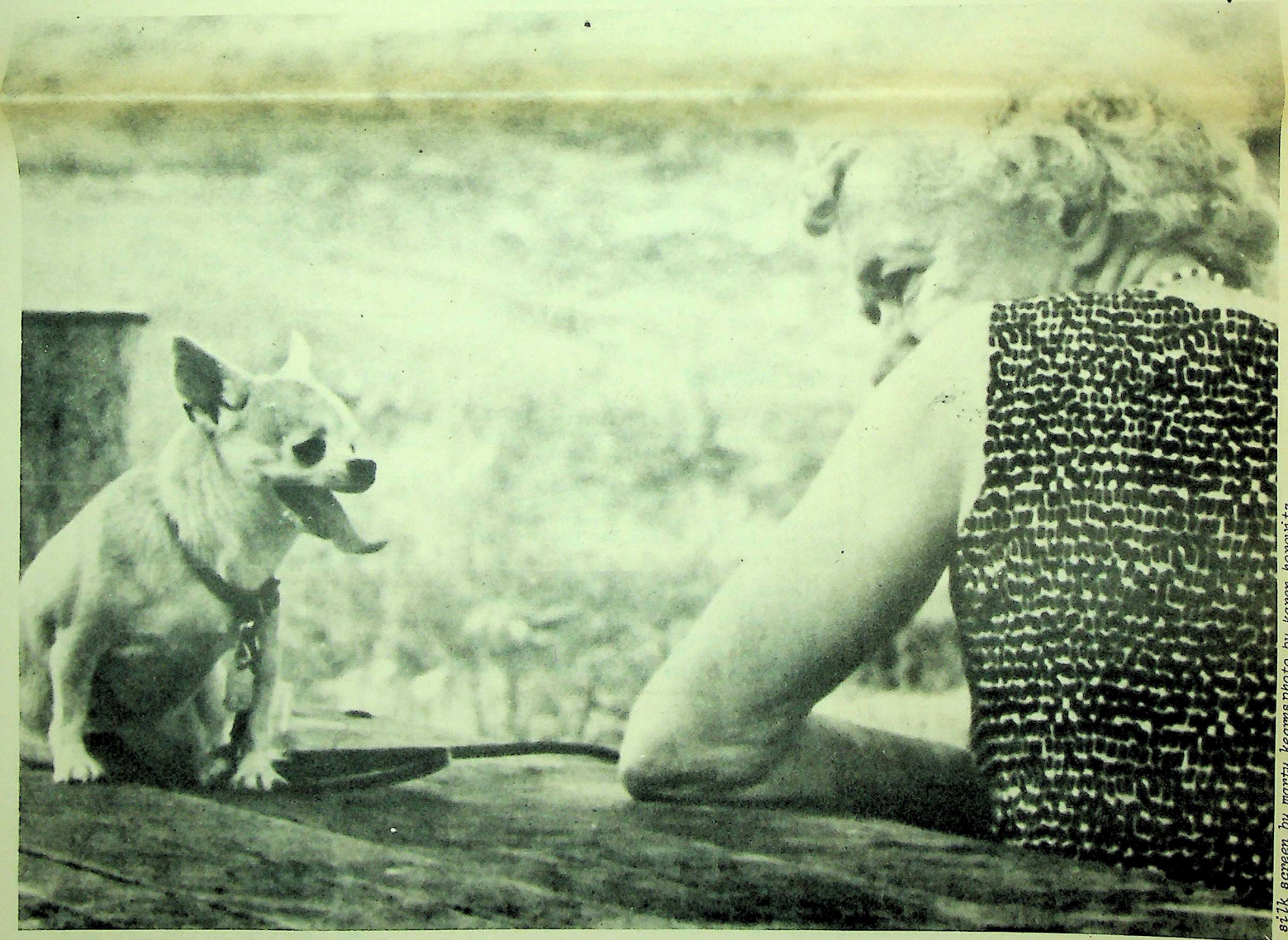
## sanctuary

My land is bare of chattering folk;  
 The clouds are low along the ridges,  
 And sweet's the air with curly smoke  
 From all my burning bridges.

---

by  
bobbie spalter-roth - editor  
frances lang - assistant editor

onka dekkers, betsey donahoe, heidi steffens,  
jo anne kovacs, shaye kris-spanier, and oob  
regulars



silk screen by marty kearns photo by karen horowitz

choices and challenges

A new series was aired for the first time in October on WETA, Channel 26, Washington's public broadcasting station. The name of the show is Women: Choices and Challenges. It's being put together by a group of D.C. area women representing a wide range of women's groups in the community. They are all donating their time and energy of course and are working under an unbelievably tight budget---so tight that they have to tape several shows at each studio session.

The weekly series is more of an outreach venture than a forum for confirmed feminists. But it is the only show I've seen that does not distort women's issues as the straight media always does. Let's take over more of that prime time.

The first shows have been on the portrayal of women by the media, alcoholism and drugs, physical health, women in politics, sexuality, and women's history. Most of the shows have been informative and done in the interviewer-leading-the-discussion kind of format. The studio audience is asked to participate in the discussions at the very end of each show. I would like to see a greater portion of the show time allocated to this since it adds liveliness and varying points of view to each topic.

Highlights of the series so far have been the performing of a breast examination on the physical health tape and the particularly well written script for the history show narrative. On the other hand, the program on sexuality should be redone. The focal point of the show was a discussion by a husband-wife team of Masters and Johnson orgasm technicians. Not once in this discussion was the institution of heterosexuality attacked. The many problems of female-male relationships were not delved into. A lengthier discussion by the studio audience at the end of the show might have saved it.

At the end of each program women are invited to mail in or phone in their reactions and suggestion. An information sheet on each

topic covered is available by contacting the station. The show can be seen on Channel 26 on Tuesday at 9 PM, Friday at 12:30 AM, and Sunday at 6 PM. Watch it and submit your suggestions.

by margaret devoe

abortion law on trial

A new D.C. abortion law which would require a 24 hour waiting period between counseling and the abortion was to have gone into effect on October 28, 1972. Two class action suits here in D.C. have been attempting to stop the new law with a temporary restraining order. (See October oob. Also please note correction: The two suits are Preterm opposing the 24 hour waiting period, and WONAAC, Prebirth, and Laurel Clinic opposing the entire law.)

Judge Pratt did not give a restraining order in either case, and gave the defendant (the city council) additional time to prepare their case (Nov. 17 in Preterm case, Nov. 24 in WONAAC case).

After being refused the temporary restraining order less than one week before the law was to go into effect, Roy Lucas and Judy Wolfe, council for WONAAC, made an emergency appeal to the Court of Appeals. This court stayed the law so it has not gone into effect to date. The stay was granted on probability of success, so it seems that the Court of Appeals believes that WONAAC, Prebirth, and Laurel can win their case. They will be back in court with Judge Pratt on November 24. The defense has until then to reply to Lucas' brief. If the Judge rules against them, WONAAC says that they will appeal.

by carol edelson

notices

feminist theatre

A Washington area Feminist Theater is forming workshops in acting, directing, playwriting, technical theater, filmmaking, creative dramatics for children, musical theater. For further information call: Nancee Campbell 547-5477 or Emma Trenchi 966-2534.

wonaac benefit



The D.C. chapter of Women's National Abortion Action Coalition is having a benefit with Gloria Steinem on December 1, 7-9 p.m. Cocktails and conversation. 1849 Lamont St., N.W. Washington, D.C. Donations: \$5 including hors d'oeuvres and drink. RSVP-- D.C. WONAAC 785-4769.

wafu catalog

The Washington Area Free University (WAFU) catalogs are free and may be found at the community bookshop, Earthworks, the Students Unions of Area Universities. WAFU meets on Tuesday, 8 p.m., 1724 20th St., N.W. For more info, call Andy Pettis 961-5271.

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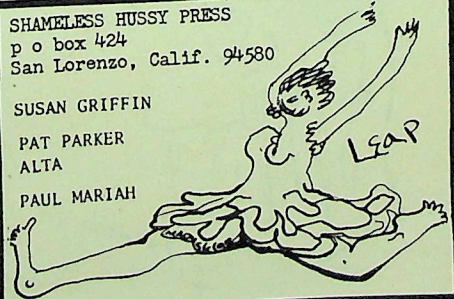
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NOTES is a yearly collection of radical feminist articles. This years 38 articles cover subjects like men and violence, black feminism, lesbianism and feminism and getting angry.



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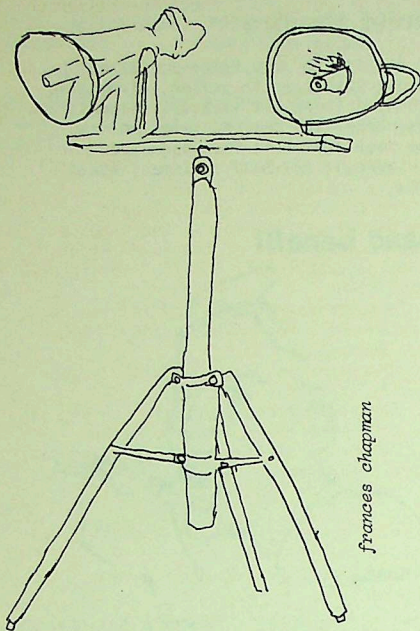
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real-life tv drama



frances chapman

wrc lets some women in

"That petition was serious -- heavy business. WRC knows it's in trouble and is trying to develop a new series of women's programs," said Mary Katherine Kilday, an executive producer at WRC (the NBC-owned local tv station), and chairperson of the WRC Women's Rights Committee.

She was referring to the recent petition to deny WRC license renewal on the basis of sexist employment practices, failure to ascertain and meet the needs of the women's community, and violation of the Fairness Doctrine in not presenting a balanced view of women and the women's movement. The petition was filed August 31 with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by local NOW affiliates and other women's groups (see off our backs, October 1972, page 4).

According to Kilday, WRC hired two female program managers (for the first time in its history) one week after the petition was filed. Jane Cohen, imported from Philadelphia to assume the position of manager of WRC community affairs programming, two weeks ago presented Kilday with the task of ascertaining

the needs of women in Washington, D.C., and coming up with a proposed format, content, and budget for a half-hour-a-week series of shows on women starting soon after January 1.

Kilday contacted local NOW president Cathy Irwin and Whitney Adams, NOW coordinator of the D.C. petition, and got a list of names of women active in women's organizations and feminist projects. She has been going down the list soliciting suggestions and proposals for the series.

A decision to be made is in what time slot the series will be shown. The management is thinking in terms of Saturday or Sunday afternoons, said Kilday, "but a week-day evening during primetime would reach a lot more women." According to the prime-time access rule, local stations must air one-half hour a night of non-network material. Kilday said she thought a place might be made for the projected series.

"The most essential thing about the show is that it be feminist and deal with what women in the community think is necessary. Any subject matter is appropriate. I'd also like to get away from the moderator-authority figure format," she said.

As for budget, she remarked that the station was under enough pressure to allocate sufficient money to meet the requirements of the series. "The idea for the series was a specific response to the NOW challenge and to our own charges." (The WRC Women's Rights Committee had presented documented charges of WRC employment discrimination to the EEOC a year and a half ago. That portion of the NOW petition dealing with employment is based in large part on those charges. According to Whitney Adams, the EEOC ruling, expected to be issued in about a week, will be the first time a determination of sex discrimination has ever been brought against a tv broadcaster.)

tokenism...

"Of course WRC will use the series and the new employees to try to disprove our charges against them," Whitney Adams stated. "But our argument is that one series isn't enough, that in no way does it compensate for the totally sexist programming at all other times of the day and night. And two women hired doesn't make up for the years of discrimination against women, which still exists from top to bottom.

"That doesn't mean we shouldn't put as much into this series as we can; we've got to a lot of demands to make on it, and maybe the impossible will happen and it will turn out good.

"The main thing is that we're not going to be bought off with their one token effort. They're under pressure now and we're going to keep increasing that pressure until all their sexist programming is overhauled."

She expressed no confidence in the good intentions of WRC management, who have refused to negotiate with the petitioners. "They won't talk to 'outrageous feminists.' Their attorney talks to our attorney, mainly about extensions of their time to file a response to our petition."

After the petition was filed August 31, WRC had the choice of negotiating with the challengers or filing a rebuttal with the FCC. They chose to rebut and requested an extension of time to October 12; on October 12 they requested an extension to November 9; on November 9 they requested an extension to November 29. The FCC granted all three requests.

"The FCC is incredibly ignorant about the problems of sex discrimination," Whitney observed. "On October 27 they renewed the license of a Philadelphia station that admitted a 'male only' hiring stipulation in their broadcasting magazine ads."

Less optimistic about the prospects for a favorable FCC ruling than she had been at the time of filing the petition, Whitney continued, "they may deny the petition outright, or they could sever the employment issue from the rest of it and hold hearings only on that. In either case we would immediately appeal it to the U.S. Court of Appeals, which has shown some understanding of the Fairness Doctrine in its argumentation in a recent case concerning license renewal. The whole legal process will probably take two to three years."

She and other NOW members are requesting a meeting with the FCC some time in December to review with them their standards and decisions. "I'm willing to try one more time to be cordial," Whitney said, "but they don't seem to be overly eager for a meeting with us."

and a chain reaction

"A lot of women think we're making good progress working within the system, and we are making some. But I see that with the Nixon administration in again, things will get even worse in the next four years. I think we have to prepare ourselves for confrontations. I've never been afraid of jail, but I do have a fear of being hit by a cop. We have to get over that fear -- be a little more like the suffragists who chained themselves to the White House gates."

by fran pollner

radio free women

Radio Free Women got started last winter when Juanita Weaver called WGTB-fm (90.1) for coverage of a debate between Barbetta Blackington of the International Institute of Women's Studies and Norman Mailer. The Georgetown Women's Caucus was offered the time, but before they could get the womanpower together, Juanita and a few other women got it started. It has been on twice weekly, Monday 2:30-3:00 and Tuesday 7:00-7:30 since February and has changed from music and discussion to a purely feminist discussion format. The seven women of the Radio Free Women collective believe in women seizing the media to tell and hear about their own lives; for if they don't get to tell their own story, it is warped. The women see their show as just a beginning towards the whole women's revolution. Now that the women have learned everything, they would like to share their skills in producing and executing radio programs (engineering included). So far, Radio Free Women has done interviews with "big names" in the women's movement: Jill Johnston, Myrna Lamb, Steinem and Sloane, and with local women artists and project groups: the Women's Center, Earth Onion, and the Women's Legal Defense Fund. Now that they have mastered the straight studio approach, Radio Free Women hopes to do more spot interviews and plans to do a live program on waitresses. Eventually they want to syndicate the show to sell to station and some of them, in the future, hope to have their own women's station.

The Radio Free Women collective desperately wants women's news from all over

the country, and they would like to exchange old tapes with other women's shows. They are very open to suggestions for future programs and to women's groups who want publicity to come do a show. Feedback from listeners for the women and the station would also be appreciated.



K Kordeck

Radio Free Women can be contacted by phone through WGTB (Georgetown University) or by mail at 3420 R St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007

sophie's parlor

Sophie's Parlor is a women's music show and although it is also on WGTB (Mondays, 12-3) it didn't get started as easily as Radio Free Women. Chris Laura and Shirl of Radio Free Women were going through the station's record files and "discovered" many women's albums they somehow never heard played on WGTB's music shows. They finally got the show time after five grueling sessions with the station's hierarchy who wasn't sure of the women's technical abilities and what kind of variety was possible for a woman's show. Although never actually said, it was implied that without men, the show could not prove a serious musical endeavor. The women monitored WGTB's other shows and found there to be hardly any women being played, so the station didn't have an argument.

The women take turns playing five song sets and, of course, all musical types are included. The show also includes announcements, so any women or women's groups needing publicity or announcements broadcasted should contact Sophie's Parlor c/o WGTB. The show needs listener response to get more air time and to get hours (p.m.) when more women will be able to listen.

by gale samuels

dance  
the  
life  
fantastic

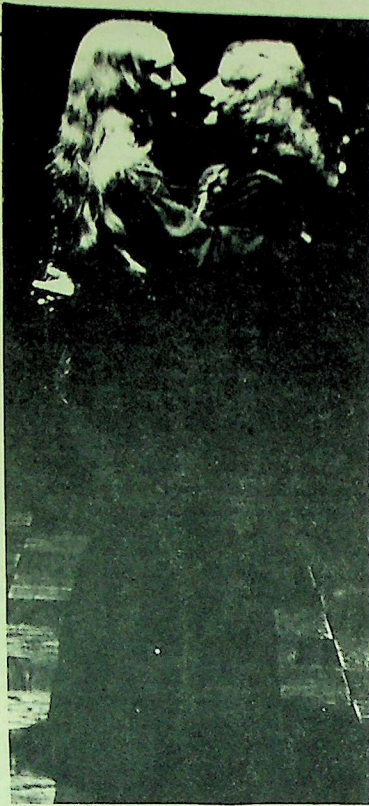


photo by delores neuman

On the night of November 3, a benefit dance for the D.C. Women's Center was held at George Washington University. Women and dance, music and drinks -- a flowing, flowering evening.

At about 1 a.m. two strong members of the campus security patrol were discovered riveted in the doorway, eyes wide with astonishment and -- was it fear? They were asked to remove themselves, their protective services obviously unrequired. After a brief altercation, during which some punch was accidentally spilled on an officer's face, the dance resumed in full spirits until the wee hours.

**tv rape**

The Rape Center and women participating in it formed a major portion of the first of a two-part television series on rape.

A community affairs program produced by WRC, "Rape: the Lonely Crime" was aired November 12 and was apparently motivated by the NOW petition to deny WRC license renewal partly on the basis of failure to accurately reflect the women's community (see story, p. 24).

Women were filmed discussing the experience of rape and the philosophy and functions of the rape center. Unfortunately, the rape center telephone number (333-RAPE) was not given.

Also unfortunate was the concentration on the fear and terror aspects of rape (augmented by frightening background music and shots of the back of a vulnerable young woman walking unprotected down dark streets) without mention of the fact that women are no longer accepting the role of victim and are strengthening their bodies and their minds to fight the all-American crime of rape.

The only course at the Sojourner Truth Liberation School that is filled to capacity and closed a week after it was announced is the course in self-defense-karate.

**sojourner truth**

Courses being given through the Sojourner Truth Women's Liberation School:

**Feminist Studies:**

1. Politics of Prejudice--Focusing on rape: the psychology of the raper, rapee, law enforcement officials, and lawmakers. How laws perpetuate the psychology of rape. "The most rewarding teaching experience I've ever had."--Bobby Deister, 785-1167 Normally meets Mon. 8-10 OPEN.
  2. How to Lobby for Women--Taught by Carol Burris, President of the Women's Lobby and organizer of the Equal Rights Amendment Lobby. Call 544-1537 for information OPEN
  3. Perspectives on Strategy and Tactics in the Women's Movement. Tuesday, 8-10 p.m., Women's Center. Nov. 28--Pat Webbink on Feminist Psychotherapy Dec. 5--Linda Carcione, et.al., on Dropping Out of the Women's Movement Dec. 12--Heidi Steffens and Barbara Meyers on 3rd World Women. Dec. 19--oob on oob
- Skills:**
1. Auto Mechanics--Mon 8-9:30 Call Terri Carta, 522-3497
  2. Home Repair Fri. 7:30 At Women's Center Liz Crain
  3. Karate--CLOSED (Karen Kollias)
  4. Speaking Tues. 6-8 p.m. Women's Center Call Karen Kollias 387-6068

**social center**

The D.C. Center now has a "social center" open everyday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. with a pool table, jukebox, reading material, and coffee and tea. 1736 R St.

**women's dance**

A Women's Dance will be held at the Baltimore Women's Center, 3028 Greenmount Ave., Baltimore, on December 2nd (Sat.) at 9 p.m. \$1 donation. B.Y.O.B.

**county women**

Montgomery County women interested in a women's center or activities, call Suzy at 270-5534 or Debra at 589-9021.

**weekends at the women's center**



painting



photos by delores neuman

scraping

wiring

**plumbing**

**sawing**

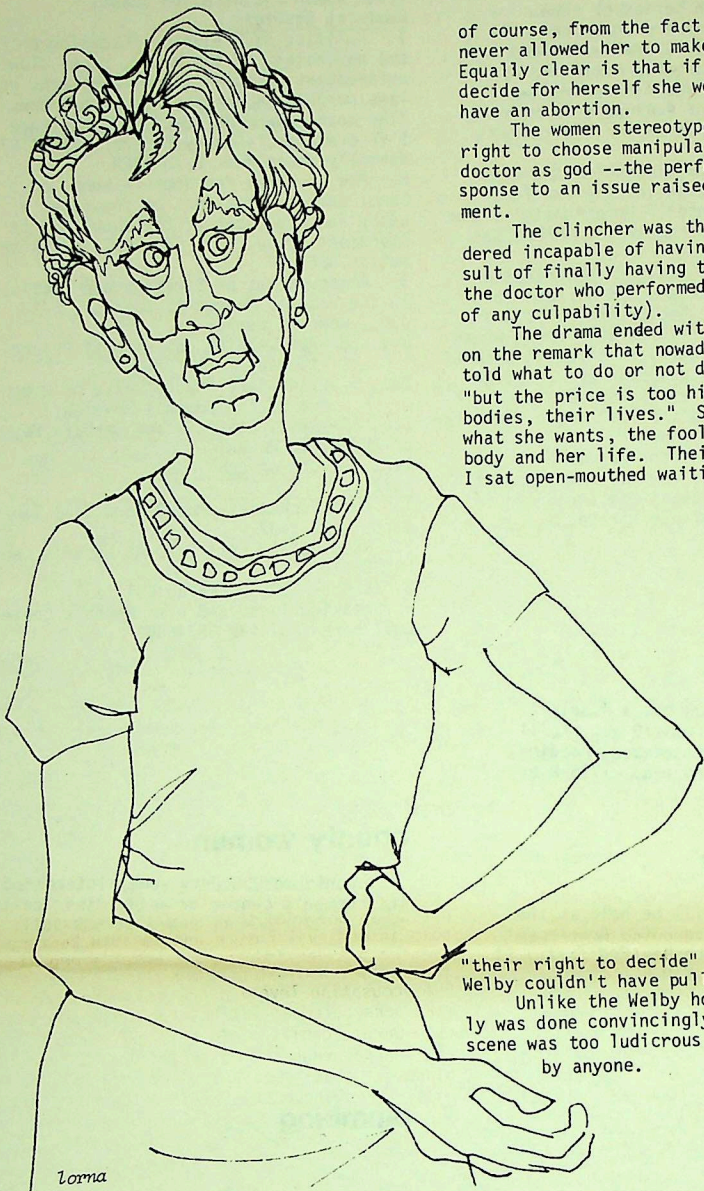
**planing**

**drilling**



Painting, scraping, wiring, plumbing, drilling, planing, sawing -- drop in on Saturdays and Sundays and join the construction crew: 1736 R Street NW (232-5145).

with an eye on the set and a lump in my throat



Most of us, with the exception of the stalwart women of NOW who are challenging the licenses of tv stations across the country, have given up watching television.

During the last month and a half my curiosity got the better of me three times: the venerable "Marcus Welby, M.D." (WABC) advertised it was plunging into the controversial topic of abortion; and "The Bold Ones" (WNBC), also super-hero physicians, announced they were braving the subjects of embryo transplants and lesbianism.

Not really expecting anything approaching honesty or understanding, I was nonetheless horrified by the malevolence with which women were depicted.

god and motherhood

The good doctor Welby was wise, so wise, dealing with the tender topic of abortion and the tender, dumb, beautiful, mistakenly pregnant young woman who was being forced to seek one by her domineering, selfish mother.

Marcus pointed out that "even in this day and age," abortion was a very serious matter and not to be granted unless death were imminent or severe mental repercussions could be ascertained by specialist consultants. The content of the mother's argument that a child at that time would ruin her daughter's life was quite sensible, but in the context of the story and the blind, authoritarian character heaped upon the woman, her words were rendered ridiculous.

Welby's dim view of abortion was supported by the daughter through her confusion concerning what was best for her -- stemming,

of course, from the fact that her mother had never allowed her to make her own decisions. Equally clear is that if she were allowed to decide for herself she would never choose to have an abortion.

The women stereotyped, the concept of the right to choose manipulated and distorted, the doctor as god -- the perfect mass media response to an issue raised by the women's movement.

The clincher was the daughter being rendered incapable of having children as a result of finally having the abortion (with the doctor who performed it cleverly absolved of any culpability).

The drama ended with Welby sermonizing on the remark that nowadays women cannot be told what to do or not do. "Yes," he intoned, "but the price is too high, too high -- their bodies, their lives." So if a woman does what she wants, the fool, she'll ruin her body and her life. Their bodies, their lives! I sat open-mouthed waiting for the next line,

"their right to decide" -- but even Marcus Welby couldn't have pulled that off.

Unlike the Welby hoax, which unfortunately was done convincingly, the embryo transplant scene was too ludicrous to be taken seriously by anyone.

virgin birth...almost

A woman who has undergone several therapeutic abortions due to a heart condition desperately wants a child ("I'd be willing to die if it meant my baby could be born," she is made to say. And, to her husband, "I'm so afraid you won't love me and will find a younger, more attractive woman who can give you a baby.")

The bold ones risk losing foundation support of their hospital in order to make a last-ditch effort for this miserable woman, who refuses to adopt a child because it won't be the genetic combination of herself and her husband. The husband, naturally, is reasonable and mature in this matter, quite willing to raise a child not his biological product.

So they get the woman's younger sister, a virgin of course, to agree to having the embryo implanted in her. The transplant is dramatically performed, the bold ones succeeding in a masterful, near impossible, procedure, and the drama unfolds with the two sisters eventually screaming hysterically at one another and the younger one falling in love with her brother-in-law because she is "bearing his child."

Around the fifth month, the sister aborts through some unexplained mishap which has to do with her rather than with medical competency or the lack of it. She is left crying in the hospital bed while the wife is enticed by the doctor and husband to hold one of the newborns in the nursery. It suddenly dawns on her that she would love an adopted infant, and the nuclear family lives happily ever after.

dr. strange love

The very next week the bold ones outdid themselves and went into the stuff of fear and fantasy of a good portion of television viewers. A nurse, her female lover and her suitor, a bold male intern, were the co-participants of "A Strange Triangle." (According to a Washington Post article, they went so far as to reschedule the program to beat out another network airing of a show on male homosexuality the next night.)

The nurse-lesbian is, as one of the bold ones comments, "a gorgeous girl." She is, also, as her hapless counterpart on the Welby show, confused and unhappy. We find out early in the show that the probable basis of her deviancy is -- you guessed it -- her mother, that wicked influence so ably utilized by male writers to explain the manifold evils of the world.

Valery's (the nurse) lover, predictably, is portrayed as a mother-substitute, an older woman embittered by an unsuccessful marriage, who has supported Valery through nursing school and provides her with the care and attention her mother denied her -- for the price of Valery's obedience.

The intern, who used to date Valery before it all happened and who hasn't seen her for four years, shows up at her hospital and decides to resume the romance. She's afraid of her lover's anger. He won't take no for an answer: his obnoxious shenanigans around her are supposed to be seen in favorable contrast to the stern visage of the other woman.

She seeks the advice of the head of the hospital (who had unsuccessfully tried to counsel her mother years back), and he suggests she see the psychiatrist, which she immediately agrees to.

Since she's "never had a man" and doesn't know whether she's a "confirmed lesbian," she and the shrink sensibly decide she should give the intern a try. When he takes her home after a date, the other woman (who has been waiting up) informs him that she and Valery are "not just roommates." Valery rushes into the apartment. The woman smiles and closes the door.

The next scene has the intern moaning to a senior colleague, a la Nicholas von Hoffman, about "lesbos" and how he doesn't care what anyone else does, but why does it have to be "my girl." The colleague, one of the bold regulars, tells him that as a doctor he should know better, that lesbianism doesn't threaten his masculinity, but rather her femininity. So much for medical science.

His masculinity, however, is saved by a pretty patient who he calls "blue eyes" whose life he brilliantly saves and who constantly makes passes at him. The patient's interest in him is continually juxtaposed with the difficulties he's having with Valery.

After treating Valery like dirt during their mutual work, he finally decides he loves her enough to fight for her. What his great love is based on is hard to say. He returns to her apartment, where he and the other woman have a screaming match over what's best for Valery.

Valery leaves her lover, spends a week-end with the man, and takes off for parts unknown. He didn't work for her and perhaps she is irredeemably lost.

But the show doesn't end with Valery's soul in limbo; what's more important is to salvage the masculinity of the intern. The last scene reveals his great love being transferred to another pretty face as "blue eyes" promises to show him what a real relationship with a real woman is all about.

mass murder

Those of us who missed these three dramas, and the hundreds of the similarly perverted views of women aired every week, have that much more of our sensibilities intact than the thousands of the others of us who are daily inundated with this mind-destroying trash.

Does art imitate life or is it the other way around? Or does "art" serve those in power for the purpose of brainwashing the rest of us?

by fran pollner

## witches, midwives, nurses



Witches were persecuted in Europe for four centuries because they indulged in sexual intercourse with the Devil. They were also persecuted because they were peasant women who practiced medicine without the consent of the Church.

In *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*, a pamphlet published recently by Glass Mountain Pamphlets, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English attempt to show through historical analysis that male control over the practice of medicine came about not because men possessed superior skills or technology, but because male doctors have traditionally served the ruling classes, while women have been the physicians of the poor; and it was a coalition among different ruling class elements that forced women out of medicine. For centuries, Ehrenreich and English write, unschooled women healers cared for the poor. Medical schools, when they were established in Europe, were primarily attended by upper class males. The graduates of these schools gradually drove their female competitors from the field, and medical practice slowly evolved into the elite, male controlled preserve it is today. "When women had a place in medicine, it was in a people's medicine." Male doctors destroyed at once popular medicine and women's role in it.

### witch hunts

Ehrenreich and English first discuss the history of women healers in Europe, where, until the 18th century, they were the only physicians available to poor people. Women served as midwives and used a number of herbs for medical treatment which are recognized by modern pharmacology. For instance, women healers of the middle ages used belladonna to inhibit uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened; it is used today as an anti-spasmodic. They gave ergot for labor pains, when the Church taught these were just punishment for Eve's original sin; ergot derivatives are today the principal drugs used to hasten labor and help in recovery from childbirth. During this same period, medical students (nearly all male, since few women were admitted to university connected medical schools) were studying such scientific practices as massive bleeding and application of leeches. Since the Roman Catholic Church controlled the development of medical schools in Europe, it approved their teachings while condemning the independent women healers. Gradually, licensing laws arose, prohibiting all but university trained physicians from practicing medicine. When the witch trials began in the 14th century, many of the women prosecuted - and by far the majority of those considered witches were women - were those who persisted in the practice of lay medicine. Women were tried and convicted of healing patients. A leading witch hunter of the time

adjudged that "[there are]...good Witches, which do no hurt but good...It were a thousand times better for the land if all Witches but especially the blessing Witch, might suffer death." The Church was heavily involved in the campaign against witches and it empowered university trained physicians to determine who was a witch. These doctors accused, and thereby eliminated, the female healers whom they perceived as their rivals, and the Church thus got rid of women who purveyed for free a healing magic as potent as any the Church possessed. Those female healers who were not executed were largely discredited. After the witch trials, Europeans considered university trained physicians to possess a science vastly superior to that of lay healers. The witch trials even resulted in male physicians in the 17th and 18th centuries beginning to practice midwifery; as they wrested it from the hands of women, they changed it from a neighborly service into a commercial business.

### popular medicine

The history of medicine in the United States is equally depressing. In the United States today only seven per cent of doctors are women. (In the Soviet Union, 75 per cent of doctors are women.) Yet, American women used to practice medicine freely. In the period following the American Revolutionary War, anyone who could heal was considered a medical practitioner - women and blacks were highly respected in the field. During the early 1800s, formal medical schools increased, attended, as in Europe by middle and upper class white men, whom the schools taught to bleed patients heavily and dose with laxatives as a cure. The graduates of these schools were scornful of the unscientific training received by lay practitioners, but there was considerable popular resistance in the United States to the takeover of medical practice by an elite. In the 1830s and 1840s arose the Popular Health Movement, which was fundamentally linked to the growing feminist movement in this country. The Health Movement was concerned with all women's rights; the women's movement at the time was particularly concerned with health and with women's access to medical training. The more radical groups in the Movement did not merely defend their own medical theories against the attacks of the medical school "regulars." They rejected the idea that medical practice should be in the hands of an elite. "Every Man His Own Doctor" was their slogan; this implied every woman too. They accused university trained regulars as being the parasites of the upper classes. Some did not even believe medicine should be a paid occupation. Other sections of the Movement pushed medical philosophies of their own to compete with those of the regulars. Much of the Movement adhered to medical practices that are widely accepted today. Women started numerous "know your body" courses, instructing audiences in anatomy and personal hygiene. The Movement stressed the importance of preventative medicine and encouraged frequent bathing, which regular doctors considered devilish; they praised whole grain cereals, temperance, and other sensible medical practices. Many sects associated with the Popular Health Movement opened their own medical schools; (regular medical schools were generally closed to women.) For a time the old regulars looked like just another sect, and during the 1840s, medical licensing laws were repealed in almost all states.

Finally, the Popular Health Movement degenerated into a group of competing sects. The old male regulars took advantage of this. In 1848, they formed the American Medical Association, presenting it as the only legitimate medical organization in the country. They attacked women doctors for sectarianism. Meanwhile, they refused to admit all but a few women to regular medical schools and harassed those few they did admit. Women who finally made it into medical practice were boycotted by male doctors - never referred patients or admitted to medical societies. Yet, slowly the women who did become regular physicians began to attack what was left of the Popular Health Movement just as viciously as their male colleagues. They too

demanded that all who practice medicine have graduated from a regular medical college; yet, according to *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses*, formal medical training in the middle 19th century was still no more "scientific" than that of the lay healers.

In 1893, Johns Hopkins medical school was started by German trained American doctors. Training there included laboratory and clinical work, which "regular" medical training never had previously, and it involved a four year training program. Soon after this school was established, foundations in this country began to give large sums of money to medical schools, but only to those which conformed to this model. In the early 20th century the Carnegie Foundation sent a staff man to examine all the medical schools in the country and decide which should receive funds. As a result of this tour, the Carnegie Foundation issued the Flexner Report in 1910 establishing the model to which medical schools which wished to survive must conform. "Irregular" schools and special schools for blacks and women received no money. Yet, the regular universities modelled after Hopkins still admitted very few women or blacks. Male doctors, allied with the foundations (as they had been allied with the Church in Europe) had successfully locked women out of medical practice. Then they pressured many states to outlaw midwifery, which robbed many poor women of medical care. Finally, male doctors encouraged women to become nurses. Women began taking over the tedious chores doctors did not wish to do. As in other spheres of life, women became the helpmates in medicine, without an independent role.

### and now

*Witches, Midwives, and Nurses* is a highly suggestive pamphlet. Particularly interesting is the idea that an alliance existed both in medieval Europe and in 19th century America between independent women's organizations and radical working class movements. One accusation levelled against the women who were persecuted as witches in Europe was that they were organized into a large secret society. Large groups of women did meet in public places at that time, and these "witches" meetings may have been related to the peasant rebellions then taking place in Europe. There is more evidence that the Popular Health Movement combined feminist and radical popular interests.

The pamphlet is only 41 pages and covers a tremendous area. Occasionally, the authors' identification of women's medicine with people's medicine seems facile and more evidence needed to prove that women were in the past the only doctors of the poor, as well as more information about the development of medical practices both in regular medical schools and among "irregulars." But the pamphlet is so carefully documented that I think the informational gaps are probably caused by stringencies imposed by space. The thesis of the pamphlet - that medical history is the history of conflict between male and female healers - is critically important for an understanding of how to fight sexism in the medical profession. It suggests that sexism is the root of worker oppression in medicine. About 95 per cent of nurses - always in a secondary position to doctors - are women, and *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* suggests this is the outcome of the male triumph in the battle of control over medicine. Low level medical workers are oppressed at once as workers and as women; elimination of elitism in medicine would necessarily mean elimination of sexism. This is a thesis it would be invaluable to investigate further.

by frances lang

*Witches, Midwives and Nurses* is available from Glass Mountain Pamphlets, P.O. Box 238 Oyster Bay, NY 11771. Copies are 75¢ or \$1.00 for first class delivery.

See page 7 lest you think midwifery is only a thing of the past.



## sisters and the plague

Women are special prisoners of drugs in our society where a woman is valued by how good she looks, sews or cooks, how silent she keeps her thoughts, how passively she accepts second-class place behind a man, how contentedly she spends her day at home with the children or goes to her mundane low-salaried job, or how well she sells or buys business products. It's no surprise then when women, in spite of the double condemnation of drugs when they involve women, start using alcohol, heroin or any other drug to escape the world they live under. And when the woman is also poor and/or of a non-white race, it should be even less of a surprise that the world is worth escaping.

But now throughout the country women are working together to gain control over their lives and help change the society that causes addiction, believing the cause and solutions are political.

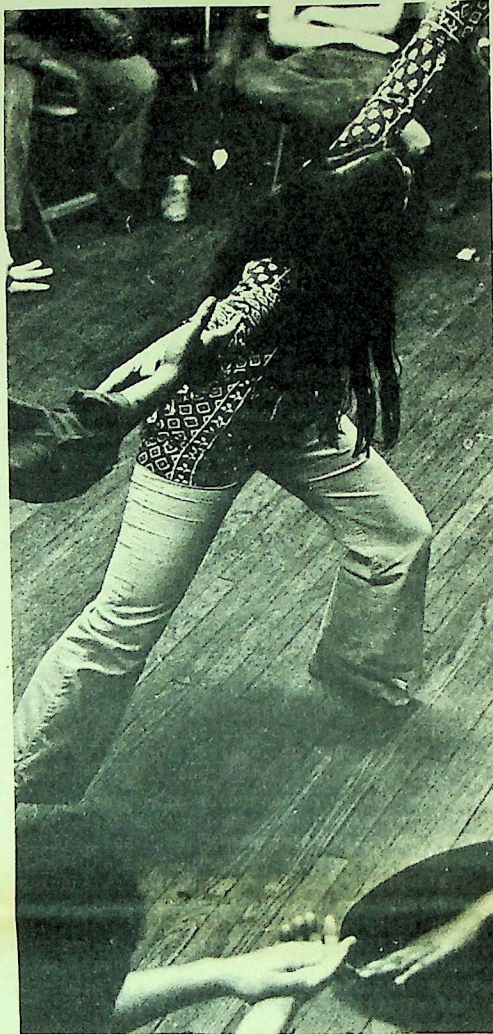
pam kalishman

### cass corridor

Cass Corridor in the City of Detroit is the center of addiction and prostitution in Detroit as addicted women support their habits with prostitution and women who are forced into prostitution find escape through drugs. Only one facility in Detroit now addresses itself to the needs of addicted women and it requires that the women be pregnant. All other programs serve only men.

Women of Cass Corridor are planning a center for women who are victims of alcohol, heroin and methadone addiction: Cass Corridor Women's Chemical Addiction Center.

The Center plans to help women maintain a drug free lifestyle by offering alternatives to their present situations. They will challenge the problems of unequal employment practices, lack of child care facilities and medical care. They will also attempt to reunite mothers with their children, many of whom have been sent to state institutions or foster homes by the government.



drama class, rap, inc.

### ain't got

Ain't got time to stand on the corner and gossip about bullshit, ain't got time to fuck around one bit.  
 Ain't got time to drink no wine, it's a waste of time.  
 Ain't got time to fuss and fight, ain't got time to waste cussing other people out, that's not what it's all about.  
 Ain't got time to party and hang out, I got other things to do, there is no doubt.  
 Ain't got time to waste smoking pot, laying in alleys watching my people rot.  
 Ain't got time to spend on fancy clothes trying to be fly or hanging in all night joints getting high.  
 I'm tired of wasting time, laying in bed scratching my nappy head, worrying about where I'm gonna get some bread.  
 Tired of going down shoplifting, beating, tricking, picking pockets, tired of shooting dope and watching sky rockets.  
 I ain't got time to be primping and trying to look cute in some looking glass, I ain't got time to be shaking and switching just to get a pass.  
 I ain't even got time to sell no ass.  
 My children are in a foster home and my man left me two years ago. I'm through, I ain't got time. I can't take it anymore.  
 Got to bring about a solution, a change, revolution.  
 My people dying like flies, big politicians sitting on their fat asses telling lies --- ignoring the people's cries --- poisoning my people (calling it help) in the name of Methadone, telling us that it's great, controls the patient and lowers the crime rate.  
 Cut back on welfare --- taxes increase --- no child care --- employment decrease.  
 I ain't got time to waste, got to move at a swifter pace.  
 Got to bring about change, that's the only solution, revolution.  
 Don't need to catch no train, car or bus cause sisters and brothers, the revolution is us.

barbara farr  
rap, inc.

### drug free at rap

RAP (Regional Addiction Prevention, Inc.) is a 2 1/2 year old drug free collective of 104 women and men in D.C. who found themselves victims of drug addiction (heroin, methadone, alcohol, pills) or just victims.

Many of the women come from the street and have spent most of their lives either working for a pimp or just hustling to stay alive and support their families. Most of the women are Black and have been victims of below-survival welfare or low-paying jobs. They felt hopeless in this society so insensitive to its people, trapped in a maze of drugs and nameless men, with a future offering only drugs, jail and the streets. The choices for many people are few. Either you go along with it, you find some means to escape (drugs), or you take a position to bring about change.

Because RAP believes the problem of drug addiction calls for political re-education they are strongly opposed to methadone which they see as just another narcotic that will continue to make their people non-functional.

The staff of the RAP House runs both a community RAP Shop and the RAP House. The process of becoming drug free begins at the RAP Shop where a person wanting to be drug free gets a taste of what RAP is and does. RAP requires the person to taper down the habit or get detoxified and also participate in the programs the RAP Shop offers to the community: medical and legal information, prison programs, films, classes on community issues such as welfare changes and tenant

laws, free clothing program, free lunch program and a liberation school for children.

Involvement in the RAP Shop may be enough to help some people get themselves together enough to stay drug free if the involvement in drugs was small, or those with an intense drug lifestyle may want to become residents in the RAP House.

The person is accepted into the RAP House as a full-time resident only after becoming drug free and demonstrating through participation at the RAP Shop a willingness to change their lifestyle.

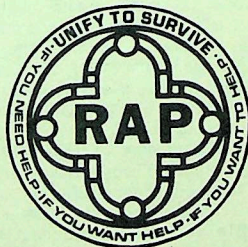
Initially RAP residents are encouraged to cut loose from the old environment of friends and family long enough to get involved in the RAP drug free lifestyle and not feel a strong pull to return to a drug lifestyle. Although flexible for each individual, this period is usually a couple of

months. The family and friends are encouraged to get involved in RAP community seminars and family rap sessions. Everyone is encouraged to return to live in the outside when they feel together and able to survive in a drug free lifestyle, approximately 1 1/2 years later, though continued involvement with RAP is welcomed.

In the RAP House rap sessions and seminars encourage open honest communication and trust instead of the lifestyle of the street that demanded staying separate and distrustful. Women and men begin to see the roles that have been put on them. Women begin to understand the pettiness of the competition and envy they've allowed to go on between them and how it's just another means of alienating sisters from each other. They learn to understand some of the reasons for feeling hopeless and powerless and start to develop strength to criticize and take criticism, make decisions and take responsibility. Women also play a major role in the decision making process of the organization.

The RAP House offers educational classes such as political education, math, history, creative writing, photography, printing, science, video taping and tutoring for G.E.D. (General Equivalency Diploma from high school). Scholarships are found for those interested in further education. RAP speaks at local schools and universities, churches, businesses and other drug programs, always having more requests than time.

At RAP they are helping each other create a new lifestyle for themselves where humanism is the primary lifestyle and unity, education and survival the ultimate goals.



## plague cont'd

### where from here



So you want to quit using drugs and don't know what kind of help you can get or what drug program you should get involved in. Drug programs have as many approaches to curing drug addiction as there are bed pans in a hospital. Rap to the women on their impressions. Find out if they have the kitchen, cleaning or typing jobs. Talk to the women in leadership, find out how groups are run and if punishments are meted out. Do you have to clean the stairs with a toothbrush? Read the literature. A lot of people I know became resigned to being addicts because they couldn't make it in some authoritarian drug program. Here's a brief rundown from my own experiences.

### therapeutic communities

Many of these live-in facilities are based on the premise that victims of the drug plague are worthless dope fiends who became junkies because of psychological problems. When you first enter the program you're constantly torn down and made to feel like a piece of shit. You will have to do the most menial jobs until you 'prove' yourself. The *encounter groups* delve into your past to uncover the traumatic events which turned you into the no good dope fiend that you are. When you're ready to confess and take your punishment, then you will be rebuilt into a 'productive' member of society. Just what you always wanted to be, right?

The rules of the facility are often quite restrictive, like not being able to talk to people on the 'outside', not just while you're kicking, but for the length of your stay. If you're late to meetings you might have to polish everyone's shoes or pull kp for a week or be degraded by wearing a sign saying you're stupid.

Synanon is a therapeutic community, with the residents working the shops and gas stations and businesses for no or little pay. And where does the profit go? Ask the Board of Directors. It's no coincidence that many of the people managing Synanon are not ex-dopers. Drug programs have become big business, especially now that the federal government is allocating funds.

### methadone

I wouldn't recommend this trip to anyone unless they've got a 40 year habit and have tried every other program around and even then I'd think twice. Methadone is an addicting narcotic being supported by the federal government primarily because of the recent outcry from the suburbs about white, middle-class kids getting into junk, returning vets, and the rise of property theft due to addiction.

Methadone maintenance quiets complaints because it supposedly stops the need of victims of the plague to steal to support their habit. This premise has led the N.T.A. (Narcotics Treatment Association) to addict 75,000 people to methadone with prospects of 200,000 by next year.

But methadone has also rapidly become the most popular selling street drug in San Francisco, Chicago, Baltimore and D.C. It's cheaper than heroin, keeps you stoned longer (lasts six times as long), is more available, can hold you over till you get some heroin, and can supplement your N.T.A. methadone supply to a level that gets you high. It's also more addicting (four times as potent as heroin) and takes longer to kick. More people have died this year from methadone overdose than

heroin, and there have been six times as many overdoses on methadone this year as last year. Dr. Larry Festoff, a neurologist and neurobiologist working with the Medical Committee for Human Rights in D.C., tells of autopsies of twenty-year-olds showing brain changes from methadone making their brains look like that of a seventy-year-old. And babies born to methadone addicted mothers suffer a much longer withdrawal period of tremors and pain.

Methadone maintenance programs are a method of control in several ways. One way is to keep you pacified and strung out on a downer while you check in every day. There is a threat of being thrown off the program for 'misbehaving'. Not just for dirty urine, but for participating in political activities. This has happened to vets on VA programs who organized against the war. Another control is putting people on methadone as a condition of parole. And it can be a violation of parole to try to get off the program or reduce your dosage. A third control is to continue your addiction rather than dealing with the causes that got you into dope in the first place. Your life still has no purpose and every day you still have to go to the people who control you to get the drug that controls you.

Because the government is pushing methadone it's obvious that being drug dependent is no longer a moral question in their minds. The problem is crimes against property (i.e. theft). Drug companies, one of the largest industries in the U.S., survive from people taking pills for their troubles. (Eli Lilly makes methadone, codeine, seconal and darvon.) It would be bad business to encourage people in this society to be drug free. But sisters, methadone will not deal with the sexism, racism, unemployment and alienation which got you into drugs. You'll just be switching from an illegal addiction to a legal one.

### political fight

In the 1930's and 1940's Harlem was becoming devastated by the heroin plague. The Black Muslims developed a street program to help their people fight this deadly enemy. The programs consisted of people who had been victims of the plague themselves, people who had grown up, shot dope, gone to jail and stolen with the people they were cleaning up. The emphasis was on being drug free and involved in the community, putting energy into organizing their people instead of ripping them off. The cure rate of their programs is among the highest in the country.

The idea of involving people with drug problems in the struggle to change their conditions has been shown to work. Unlike the approach of therapeutic programs where drug abuse is said to be the fault of the sociopathic individual, political programs examine our environment and our system within which we exist. Or try to exist.

The truth is, sisters, that there will be no simple cures for drug abuse. The fight against drug addiction will be a long fight. To end drug abuse we must end those factors that push people into drug escape: an end to the abuse and exploitation of women and poor and working people; an end to the vicious racism that divides our country and oppresses people of color; an end to the military mentality of our government that puts higher value on bombs and planes than the lives of Vietnamese people; and an end to the mindless, meaningless, money mad way of life in this country, pushed on us by the money-making corporations that run and ruin our lives.

It's a special day when you walk down your own street, clean, getting high off the people you rap to, on your way to do some righteous work to bring about change in this society with friends you trust, feeling there is some purpose to your life.

judy elliot  
redwood city people's drug program  
california

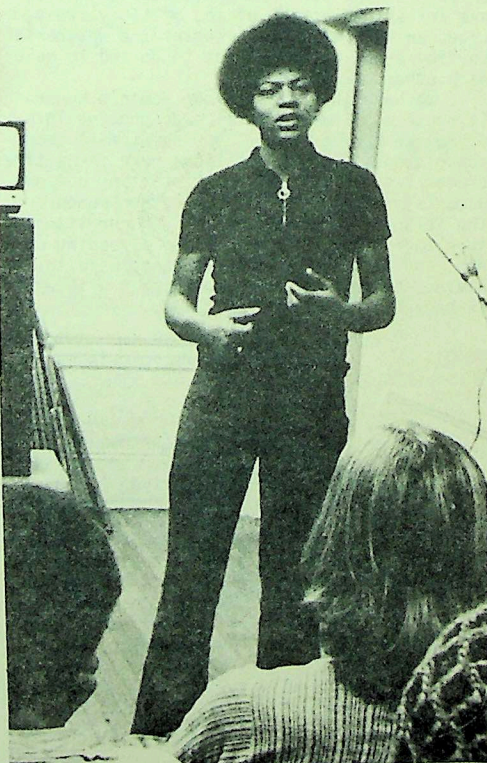
### the point is control

Of the two main addicting drugs, alcohol and heroin, alcohol is the most accepted and heroin the most condemned by our society. Alcohol is sold through glamour and sex appeal in our media and nets the government over \$8 billion a year in liquor taxes. There are also between 9 and 18 million alcoholics in the U.S. and only about 1/2 million heroin addicts, according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The physical effects of alcohol are worse than heroin. Alcohol causes cirrhosis of the liver, irreversible brain damage leads to senility and alcoholic psychosis, and it acts as a catalyst for 1/3 of the suicides and 1/2 of the homicides due to the feelings of worthlessness and hostility it stimulates. Heroin causes constipation, hepatitis if dirty equipment is used, and crimes against property (rather than people) for money to buy the heroin. Yet to our society an addiction by mouth seems better than an addiction by vein.

But the point is not to sell you on the least physically harmful drug because they are all equally harmful in the same one important way: they control you. Your life revolves around hustling your drug every day, whether from the pusher, the liquor store or, more recently, the methadone clinic.

amy tucker



video taping class by barbara farr, rap, inc.

rap graphics

## innovation on demand?

Dear Fran,

Thank you for the fine review of The Second Wave. Your attention to the feminist media is appreciated. I am hoping that your article will increase our circulation in this part of the country, despite the fact that I've had an incredible time trying to increase distribution. For example, none of the college bookstores will carry it, which shocked me.

However, I was afraid that your article might give people the impression that The Second Wave has been unwilling to give much coverage to lesbianism. Actually, the staff has been soliciting lesbians for articles about lesbianism in the movement for months with very little result-- in fact, none. Any well-written articles on the subject would be greatly appreciated.

I also wanted to respond to your request for more "innovative" fiction. The Second Wave is limited to those stories that are actually submitted to it, and nobody is sending in stories about relationships between women or stories written in experimental forms. Most of the stories received are about nasty, obsessive-compulsive, anal-fixated husbands or just plain dull husbands. The staff is giddy with joy when it sees stories about other subjects. I am not sure, though, that we should be dictating what sort of stories women should write. If women are mainly concerned with realistic stories that explain and interpret what has happened to them in the institution of marriage and in their relationships with men, perhaps we should not feel that it would be more progressive or literary of them to write in another way or about other subjects.

Thanks again for deciding to write an article on The Second Wave and for doing it so well.

In sisterhood,  
Carol Anne Douglas

## the common woman

Dear oob Persons, People, Women-People, Sisters,

oob really is an inspiration, even in a time of "Ms" which is an inspiration too. I am praying that oob can thrive among people even though feminism is now going slick.

Feminism will accomplish nothing new if the common woman is still denied opportunity to express and share her feelings and ideas. Until all of us are equally valued as conscious creatures worthy of meaningful, fulfilling existence there will be nothing new. Can we not, each of us, describe our own experiences?

oob, you still let us in. Please, continue.

Peace & Power to love  
and be loved,  
Pam Maccabee

P.S. I want fervently to contribute. Do you want anything?

Dear Pam,

Thank you for your support. And "yes" to your question. Would you like to be a Connecticut correspondent for off our backs? Let us know what's going on in your area.

oob

## pigs and sympathy

Fran,

It's such a delight to read oob after spending 2 hours in a first year law class arguing with oink oinks about whether a different standard of "reasonable care" should be applied to females. And then to find A Whole Page on the WRC challenge was just super. Your story was, by far, the most clearly written & sensitive of anything I've read in "sympathetic" or "non-sympathetic" publications. Just terrific. Thank you.

Whitney

## from the west coast...

Dear Sisters,

oob is the most sought after paper in our house. It feels good to know what other women are doing - thinking - struggling with on the east coast.

Enclosed is a check for a 1 year subscription so our Health Collective Storefront can share oob with other women in our community.

Sisters in Love,  
Barbara Tift & Pat Took  
Berkeley Women's Health Collective



## ...and beyond

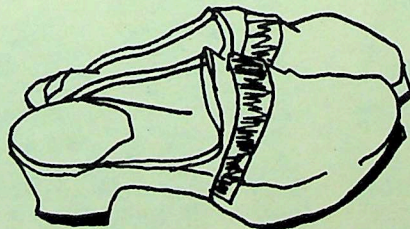
Dear oob sisters,

We love oob! We find that it speaks to us all at the many different places where we're at. The few copies we have gathered from here and there are wearing out from being read so many times over.

We'd like to explain a little about who we are. We are a women's group reaching out mainly to the women connected with the military here in Okinawa. We are military wives, WAFs, women doing legal counseling with the GI movement, women employed by the Department of Defense and other assorted civilians here on the island. The group has been going on for two years now, with ups and downs, until now we finally have a Women's House! We meet here, crash here, get our shit together here. We discover ourselves and each other, we learn to act to make our dreams realities, we resist the sexist oppression of the military, we come together with all our strengths and weaknesses to figure out where we want to go and to help each other get there.

We have just started our Women's House (a month old) but it is already growing into a real center for women...we have small group consciousness-raising sessions here three times a week; we are talking about starting our own women's press to reach out to other women on the island; we have pooled all of our literature and set up bookshelves and a reading corner, and so we will really look forward to having oob here to keep us in touch with what is happening back in the States.

much love and hope for our struggle,  
your sisters in Okinawa



K.Kardisch

## unpleasant shock

Dear Sisters,

I would like this letter placed in the upcoming issue of off our backs as an explanation of some parts of the article that was published in the October issue.

I had intended to cut the paragraph on race splits in the coalition completely. I did so, in fact, in every copy of the article I had. I apparently forgot to cut it out of the copy I sent to off our backs. I certainly had no intention of publishing the article with the paragraph, because when I thought about the paragraph after I had first written it, it struck me as being liberal and condescending. So it was a very unpleasant shock to discover that oob had reprinted that paragraph in full. I really wish that the race paragraph had not been published and regret more than anything that it was.

The second thing I would like to say is that the original article was 8 typewritten pages, equivalent to one full oob page plus an additional column. In fact, I was told earlier that the article would not be published at all because it was too long (and there were editorial differences with the style and content of the article). I had no idea that it had actually been published until I just happened to call Bobbi tonight. The article has been cut very drastically, to the size of one column (roughly equivalent to 2 1/2 typewritten pages). Therefore, a lot of things have been left out or mentioned in passing, such as stuff concerning political splits and the Socialist Worker's Party.

I really wish that I had known more about the format and editing of the printed article earlier. In fact, it surprises me, now that I think of it, why, with all the cutting done on the article, why an offensive section (the paragraph I mentioned earlier) wasn't cut out along with the rest. I am very upset about the way this has come out and I would like this printed to explain to my friends and acquaintances who read oob, as well as women in general, what is going down. Thank you.

In struggle & sisterhood  
& worry,  
Brooke



K.Kardisch

## nothing left to lose

off our backs,

Enclosed check, \$6.00, for one year subscription. Hope the rates haven't changed, if so let me know.

I wish to ask a favor. For some time I have been searching for the address of an organization called SCUM. Will you write it on my paper when you send it, please?

I stopped my subscriptions to off our backs because, in this town, it is too often "lost." Not so much when I had a P.O. Box, but now my mail is delivered. If the paper were wrapped so as not to show what it is, I believe it would reach me.

I wish you all success, but I have no hope of your attaining it. Women have become either a vegetable, or they are "chicken" and the men know it and "rub it in" every day. "Some tomato!" "Cute chick!" What are we afraid of losing? Haven't we lost all except self-deception and lies?

Jessie C. Trickey

viveca revisited

Dear oob,

Since my reaction to Viveca Lindfors' I Am a Woman tended toward unthinking enthusiasm, oob's and Rita Mae Brown's critical reviews were very helpful. I agree that the material should have been at least preponderantly by women authors and that the absence of attention to female-female relationships of any sort diminishes the show as a feminist statement.

Nevertheless, I can't go along with Rita Mae Brown's idea that since the show was aimed at a wide audience it was necessarily "commercial" and therefore (by implication) a dishonest effort.

Lindfors had the right--given the urgency of encouraging more women to come out of the closet sooner--to choose a wide rather than a small audience when she planned her show. The fact that she included the testimony of Ngo Thi at the Paris Peace Conference about the tortures inflicted on Vietnamese girls by American Servicemen proves to me that Lindfors is seriously committed to consciousness-raising. Strictly commercial vehicles aim to please; could any healthy person have "enjoyed" the graphic image of live snakes forced up into female entrails that Lindfors presented to us?

In fact, it was because she personally heard this testimony at Paris that Lindfors decided to do her show.

The heterosexual bent of I Am A Woman disproves for me oob's contention that Lindfors' purpose in including this material was "to save the world from male brutality." Rather I feel her purpose was to force audiences to face squarely the hatred for women that many men feel, to move out of the sentimentality wherein we deny that this hatred exists, out of the self-hatred to which we retreat often as a gut reaction and towards pride in ourselves. Pride that we survive with our humanity bruised but intact, and pride that mostly we don't fall into the trap of corrupting reciprocal hatred.

Beyond all talk of content, Lindfors probably raises the consciousness of her audiences most by the example of her living self--a proud, forceful, warm female, willing to go out on a limb alone, not passive but active.

All of you who put out oob are on Lindfors' level, but maybe sometimes you forget that lots of us have a way to go.

Katy Johnson

the postmistress and oob

Sisters--

Enclosed is our lovely free gift subscription blank, all filled out for our Postmistress, who must have been surreptitiously reading oob's all this time and saw the offer and put a little note in the latest paper saying "How about me?!" She is the mother of 6 daughters and is trying to cope with a recently retired husband; recently she and the mother of another, god, maybe 8 children, decided to start a women's group here in Canyon. That's pretty amazing because, besides VSC, Canyon is totally nuclear units with very much the macho man-little woman syndrome intact, including wife-beating.

oob seems to have gone through some changes-- haven't we all-- but I kind of miss the thematic issues. Do you know if anyone else has taken up that format? I see the need for a national women's paper too. I'll be interested in knowing if you feel a strain trying to be national, as we do, with no immediate community to relate to and work with? Or do you still plan to focus on D.C. a bit? Anyway-- keep it going

In Sisterhood--  
Andi  
Vocations for Social Change

Dear Sisters,

Although we've gotten away from the thematic format, we are interested in supplements by women with special concerns. And we're just crazy enough to try to cover both local and national news -- after all, national news is just local news X 50.

oob

yogurt & the law



I have been reading off our backs since its first issue. Living in the mountains of western North Carolina, your newspaper helps to break down the feeling of isolation I often have. We have a small women's group here; however, we aren't involved in ongoing programs. Therefore, I'm very interested in reading about any alternative institutions women are into -- successes and failures.

Your article on "health center busts" (p. 5, October 1972) ignored even telling why the Los Angeles Feminist Health Center was busted. You mention the bail fee but no explanation of the charges. I'd like some of the basic information.

In Sisterhood,  
Naomi Puro

Dear Naomi,

Sorry. We didn't have any other information when we went to press. Police raided the premises, confiscating all medical records and equipment, including a half-filled container of strawberry yogurt. Two staff members, Colleen Wilson and Carol Downer, were arrested on the following charges: for Carol Downer, allegedly helping women insert a speculum, noting a yeast infection, and helping apply yogurt to it; for Colleen Wilson, allegedly helping women fit a diaphragm, handing out birth control pills, giving pregnancy tests, passing out hypodermic needles, and drawing blood. Both women were charged with "practicing medicine without a license." (Taken from Majority Report, October 1972.)

oob

gift for a sister prisoner

Dear oob:

Thank you for sending me a subscription to your paper gratis. Know that I appreciate it and we here have had much discussion about some of the sexism which pervades the US. Here in a prison, this is an exceptionally defined problem and there are a lot of things to be done.

We try, however; continuing to read oob and other papers relating to the Women's Movement serves to strengthen us and we are doing what we can to find and break this conditioning; I can only express my gratitude to oob for giving us this perspective, for it must move forward with positive actions on the part of both women and men.

Thus, I ask that you grant in turn the enclosed Gift Subscription to a sister in Oakland whom I have told about oob and who in turn will be turning others on. Please forgive the temerity, but she doesn't have the bread.

In unity and in gratitude,

J.B. Bastian  
Correctional Training  
Facility  
Soledad, Cal.

alta on brown and media

hi off our backs people

there exist contradictions i cannot stomach. one is the ghetto attacks on one another in the women's movement (frances chapman quoted my poem "join the women's movement & gossip about betty friedan"); one happened yesterday when i was handed a leaflet reading on one side "restore the death penalty" & on the other side "welcome to aloha convalescent hospitals." the latest i found in the october off our backs.

rita mae brown wrote:

WE MUST CREATE OUR OWN MEDIA! good feminist theater, literature, anything is going to come from us. The establishment is not going to produce it for us. ...make yr decision now to stop trying to be the exception in the pig's media...

to which i reply

1. i bought rita mae's book this year and it cost me \$4.50. it was published by new york university.
2. that book received more reviews than any other women's poetry book this year. not because it was better than any other book, altho it was good, but because it came out in hardback by a notorious press. the reviews went like this: "lesbians rejoice! one of ours has a big book out by a big press!" these reviews appeared in underground magazines & newspapers. in fact, didnt i read a sentence very like that in off our backs?
- and the response i have made to date is
1. not to accuse rita mae of selling out because she may have had very good reasons for doing what she did.
2. personally to continue to support women's presses (there are now 11 in the bay area.) and to recommend them to poets & bookstores.
3. to consider sending my manuscripts to big publishers with demands like "this book shall not cost more than \$1." robin morgan says she said stuff like that and got away with it.
4. to withdraw from the whole problem. to write, & send my work out, & tell anybody who disapproves of what i do to kiss my ass.
5. to listen to cornelia & shoshana of Mama's Press when they insist "dont do it! dont send yr book to the establishment when we can do it without damage to any of us!"

i am confused. i dont know if it is better to create our own media & work only within that framework, or if it is better to have one foot in each door. but damned if i can take rita mae brown telling me to create my own media when she never consulted any of the women's presses i am in contact with to do her book.

thank you for the review of my book. i do appreciate all the recognition i can get.

alta  
Shameless Hussy Press



K.Kardisch

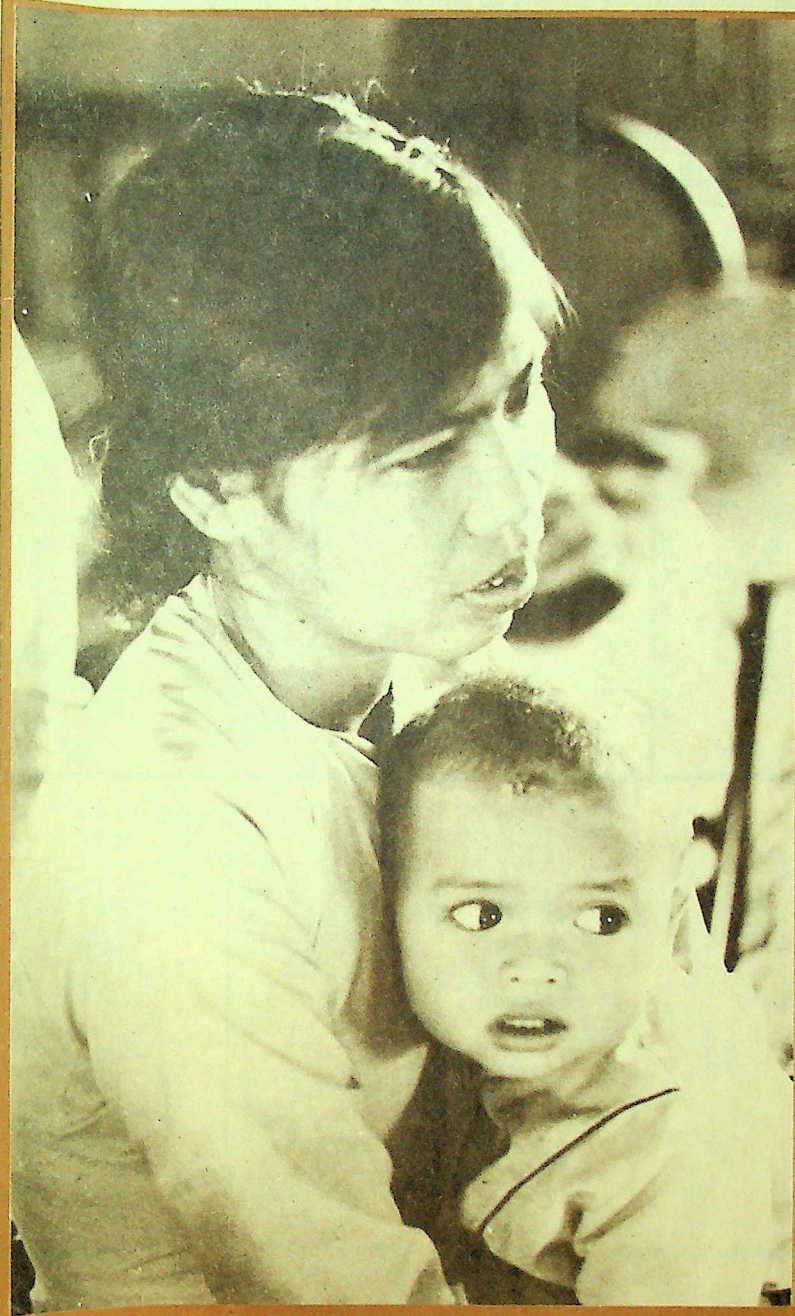
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Volume III Number 7  
April 1973  
Washington, D.C.

# off our backs

a women's news journal

35¢



inside:

vietnamese women

p.o.w.s in south vietnam

women's music  
meg christian

culture(s)  
pullout

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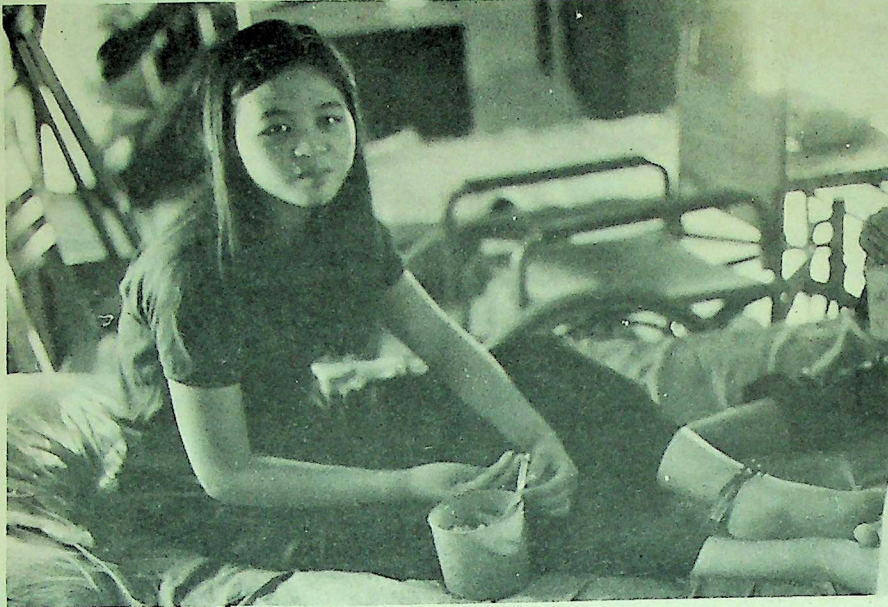
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# off our backs

## vietnamese women - - p.o.w.s in south vietnam



At this time released American P.O.W.s returning to the United States are beginning to relate tales of tortures suffered in North Vietnamese prison camps. However, Americans were not the only P.O.W.s of the Vietnam war, nor perhaps the ones to suffer the most virulent tortures. The following article relates accounts of Vietnamese women arrested and in many cases still held captive by the Thieu government on such charges as having relatives in North Vietnam or refusing to leave their homes. Many of these women have been given no trial, administered inadequate medical supplies, and have been brutally tortured. Unlike the U.S. pilots captured by the North Vietnamese, these women have been involuntary and for the most part inactive participants in the Vietnam war; yet, their prison treatment has been-- and continues to be-- as brutal as, if not more brutal than, that accorded the U.S. pilots. This treatment has been dealt at the hands of the South Vietnamese army: "It was the Americans who trained the Vietnamese in interrogation techniques... financed the police force, and provided money for the prisons and cells..."

For the past two years, I have worked at a Quaker Rehabilitation Center, run by the American Friends Service Committee, at the Quang Ngai Province Hospital in South Vietnam. During this time I've taken lots of visitors-- mostly reporters-- around the hospital, including a special ward for prisoners. Many of

the visitors are shocked by the legless and armless children or by the stares of burn patients, their eyes unblinking because scar tissue holds their eyelids taut. Personally, however, I feel the deepest sympathy for the young women on the prisoner ward, not only because they are of my age, but also because of the torture they have endured during "interrogation." It makes me very angry that our American advisers have done nothing to prevent this continued use of torture.

Altogether, there are 3,000 political prisoners in Quang Ngai. These are men and women suspected of being "Viet Cong," or at least not loyal to the South Vietnamese government. When one of these prisoners becomes seriously ill, either from natural causes or from torture, he or she is eligible to be placed in the prison ward at the hospital. The selection of these prisoners seems to be entirely arbitrary. Some are gravely ill, while others have minor complaints. "Important" or "dangerous" prisoners never go to the hospital no matter how serious their illness or injury.

The ward itself has little to recommend it. It is very small, only eleven beds, so that it can accommodate only twenty two patients at a time, even if two patients occupy each bed. It is neglected. No doctor is assigned to or visits the ward. A nurse does change the patients' bandages every few days but the only medicine the prisoners are given is aspirin. The windows are barred, and the patients are chained to the bed.

I first visited the prison ward last summer in the company of a Quaker service doctor. As I stepped inside the small room from the outdoor sunlight, I couldn't see anything in the dark ward at first. I could only smell.

My nostrils puckered, drawing in the odors from the cement sink and bathroom, both located on the ward. Suddenly, I could see and the prisoners seemed all around me-- staring at me, almost breathing on me. I felt terribly exposed, standing there as a gigantic American, slightly awkward in my Vietnamese clothes.

The men were in beds on the left, the women sitting on beds along the right wall. I focussed on the women. They were not only chained to their beds, they were also chained together, in pairs. Twice a day they were released so that they could go to the bathroom, I learned, but their ankle chains were not undone so that they had to hobble clumsily, dragging their chains between them.

The Quaker doctor began to examine the women. I helped to interpret, since I speak Vietnamese, and to distribute the medicine. Some of the youngest women seemed sweet and naive; they even giggled and laughed a bit. Others were quiet and strong, and a few looked at me with hostility and hate. She said that once the police in the Interro-who looked more like a Saigon-Vietnamese than the tougher, country women of the Quang Ngai area. I talked with her and learned that her name was Co Lang and that she was unable to move her right side; her leg and arm were limp and useless.

She told me that she had been picked up and put in prison because she had rejected an ARVN officer. This ex-boyfriend had friends in the Quang Ngai secret police force and, in revenge he told his police friends that Co Lang was a "VC." She was taken to the prison where the police beat her and repeatedly banged her head against the wall. Later, she was given electrical shocks under her fingernails and with wires attached to both ears.

I particularly noticed one young woman gation Center began torturing her at seven o'clock in the evening, but she couldn't remember much because she kept blanking out. When she woke nine hours later, blood was coming from her vagina. The next time the police interrogated her, they beat her head and face with a club. Afterwards, Co Lang couldn't move her right side. The doctor felt her skull and found a lesion and a depressed area.

We asked the policeman in charge of the prisoner ward if this woman could be unlocked and brought to the X-ray room for a film of her skull. The officer said he wasn't sure it could be arranged. "There are so many problems."

A woman in a nearby bed couldn't lift her head. She was beaten all over her back and neck. The entire area was exposed raw skin and muscles, and in some places the lacerations were so deep they had to be stitched. Because the woman couldn't lift her head, she sat in a seated position, with her head bent. The doctor asked the woman prisoner if he could take a better look at her back. "Could she lie down, please?" It wasn't until I saw her stretched out that I noticed she was very

(continued on page 6)

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oob subscribes to Liberations News Service We are in the files at the International Women's History Archives, 2525 Oak Street, Berkeley, California, and on microfilm at Bell & Howell in Wooster, Ohio. HELP! We pay 10¢ for every copy that the Post Office returns because of incorrect address. Please send us you change of address.

oob accepts and needs copy (news, fiction, features, poetry, reviews) and graphics (drawings, photographs, prints) by and about women. Sorry, we can not guarantee return of material sent to off our backs, although we will try.



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### friends

judy byron, nancy ferro, lee garlington, norma lesser, deLores neuman, emily orzech, kary schulman.

# women's music

## meg christian



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Photo by Sharon Deavey

Meg Christian plays autoharp and guitar and sings for women at Sophie's Parlor in the D.C. Women's Center, 1736 R Street N.W., on alternate Tuesdays at 8 p.m. She also sings for women to the mixed audience at Mr. Henry's (21st & I Streets N.W.) on Friday and Saturday nights from 10:30 to 2:30.

The following interview was conducted by Carol Edelson and Fran Pollner. We began by asking Meg how she got into music.

### curtsy, please

Meg: When I was about 5 I saw a ukelele with four different color strings in a drugstore window and decided I had to have it. I worked my way through twenty plastic ukeleles, breaking them in some way or other. I was an only child, and my mother worked. I had a lot of time alone, and that's how I spent most of it -- playing music.

I was 6 the first time I sang in public -- a Teresa Brewer song called "A Tear Fell" (remember that?) -- in a church talent show in Lynchburg [Virginia]. They told me I had to curtsy after I finished. And I couldn't do it, you know, I couldn't make myself do that because it was so repugnant to me, so against whatever nature I had built up by that point.

At around the age of 12 I was singing in a group with two other girls. We did local shows, like Dr. Pepper dance parties, singing stuff like "Lollipop" and "26 miles." But in the beginning of the 60s, the first time I heard Joan Baez, she wiped me right out. I knew where I was going from then on. I really learned to play the guitar by listening to Joan Baez. I'd sit in front of the record player and try to copy what she was doing. Actually, I learned guitar entirely from babysitters and records. Never had formal lessons until I was in college -- St. Mary's junior college in Raleigh and then the University at Chapel Hill, where I ended up being the first guitar major they ever had.

**oob:** Did you perform while you were in college?

Meg: A little. The interesting thing about St. Mary's -- and high school in general -- was the only thing that made me socially acceptable was my music. I wasn't boy chasing, you know, not following the traditional social patterns. I was also making good grades. So I was being boycotted. The only reason people were friendly to me was because I was singing and playing.

I was good to have at parties. It was sort of a combination of people being able to make fun of me because I was awkward in the social graces and people admiring the music that I made.

**oob:** Did you have any close friends?

Meg: I had some close friends -- all women, of course.

### words and music

**oob:** How did you come to D.C.?

Meg: Mainly to visit an old St. Mary's friend of mine. It was the summer of 69. I figured I'd stay for the summer, working a few night-clubs. It was a dreadful summer. I just roamed the streets trying to find someplace to work. I didn't have some man to carry around with me, to promote me, give the hard sell for me. It was a while before I finally got an audition and my first job.

**oob:** Did you ever try to get a clerical job, something to tide you over?

Meg: No. I've never worked a job like that. I've always either taught guitar lessons or sung. I'm lucky to have been able to do that because I know I've been able to avoid a lot of grossness. But when I first came here I was into making whatever concessions I had to make to keep a job. I let my hair grow very long -- the whole image -- and I acted kind of cutesy whenever I had to. I sang in lounges filled with convention drunks. And it was excruciating. I used to feel like a musical prostitute.

Along about then, around the winter of 69, the women's movement hit me. I started reevaluating my music in terms of what I was doing as a woman, and things changed a lot. Before that I was totally into playing music, into the guitar; words meant nothing to me; I never really listened to them. The movement made me realize I had to think a lot more about the lyrics, and that I should stop being fake.

**oob:** You sometimes change a few lyrics in songs you sing at Mr. Henry's and the Women's Center. The meaning changes at the Women's Center -- for instance, in "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman." Is it changing a couple of words that makes it women's music?

Meg: Women's music is mainly singing about women to women. I don't change a word in that song. First of all, a woman wrote that song, and I always point that out.

**oob:** But she probably meant the "you" in the title to be a man.

Meg: So what, so what. You have to ignore that. The most important thing is that I'm singing it, and the women in the audience who know me know -- and even those who don't know me sense that I'm not singing to the men in the audience, that I'm singing to the women.

I've seen very straight sorority-fraternity type couples come in. Usually, the guy checks you out to see if you're worth watching. She watches him to see how he's going to react to you. He quickly sees I'm not doing this number, this extra-musical number, and he either ignores me or settles down to listening. She relaxes when she sees I'm not a threat and she starts listening. I've seen these women react. Friends of mine who have been in the audience have seen very straight looking women, in couples, become involved in the music in a way you wouldn't ordinarily expect.

I think it's primarily that -- no matter what I sing, whether or not it was written by a man or what the focus was originally intended to be, I'm making it different. And the women sense that.

### politics

**oob:** Do you ever find you are reaching any men?

Meg: I know I reach many of them on the level of appreciation, but probably not on the level of understanding. Anyway, it really doesn't matter.

I try to find songs that speak specifically to women, like "Lady." I've seen more women get upset over that song, really upset. I guess something inside just goes "click." That's the most important thing I've discovered about music. I can -- any woman who sings can -- give people insight and strength. Even though all my songs aren't specifically political, they are sung by a woman to other women and, as such, they can mean different things. "I Never Loved a Man" -- that means something different. It gives women a chance to enjoy or identify with a lot of songs they wouldn't ordinarily relate to. That's a strengthening and happy experience, something we don't have very often. Also, I can preach in certain ways that would never get through if I were giving a political tirade. A song like "Lady" just slips in on you.

Some friends of mine who were very specifically into political work were very critical of me before they knew me. They thought what

meg, cont'd

I was doing had no political implications at all. But in terms of reaching women, focusing on women, and helping to make women strong, what I'm doing is political, and they understand that now.

I cannot comfortably sing blatantly political songs; it's not my function. I think we have to have what I do, and we have to have what the New Haven Women's Rock Band does -- in different times and different contexts.

**oob:** Is that one of the reasons you play straight places?

**Meg:** Recently, like a couple of weeks ago, I re-evaluated why I was still doing straight places. There is, of course, the chance to reach women you can't reach singing at the Women's Center because they wouldn't show up there -- at least not at first. But, actually, I think that's secondary. I really get upset playing straight places. Even though I've reached a point where I will not do anything that makes me feel unnatural or artificial, I still have to do some stuff sometimes I'd rather not do -- like cute chatting with the audience. So, the main reason is I have to make a living. I can't expect women to support me at this point. We don't have very much money, us women...



photo by sharon deevey

community and communication

But I'm really excited about singing at the Women's Center, excited about the possibilities it has for reaching a lot of women. The first time I sang there, there were about 50 or 60 women -- most of them the Center staff said they had never seen before. There's also a whole program starting at the Center, on Friday and Saturday nights -- amateur women singers, instrumentalists, song writers all getting together, and lots of these women will be singing with me on Tuesday nights.

I'd also like to make a record for women's groups, something that could be distributed to women's groups all over the country.

**oob:** Have you ever thought about writing your own songs?

**Meg:** I want very badly to do that, but it's very difficult for me. I just haven't had the gumption yet to do it, but I definitely want to. And I want to correspond with women all over the country who are writing.

Women are writing songs all over the place. There are so many that we don't know because it's so goddamn hard to get a job in this town, or any town.

Every once in a while I go on a letter writing campaign also to various well-known singers and talk to them about women's music and why they ought to be singing it. I had

written Chris Williamson and sent a tape to her. And when she was in town in few weeks ago, she did a set with me at the Women's Center. Now, she's a woman who for many years has been writing songs about women, without maybe consciously realizing how integral women are to her music and without ever viewing women in a political context. But since she's talked to women around here and sang for women at the Women's Center, she's become very interested in the women's movement and in more consciously relating her music to wards women--which is so exciting because she's such an incredible song writer and musician.

She talked for a long time with Ginny Berson, my roommate, about starting a women's record company. This, of course, is something that doesn't exist right now. An alternative institution like that would be a wonderful thing, particularly for someone like me who is not interested in going the route through commercial, male-dominated record companies.

We're just getting started with ideas for this now, and we're really interested in communicating with women who have any kinds of skills -- or want to develop them -- that might be useful in starting a recording company. And I guess I'll mention here that any women interested should contact Ginny through the Women's Center.

**oob:** We received a letter along with a packet from Rounder Records. It was a statement by a lesbian vocalist who said she had been hiding her lesbianism for years and had finally decided to come out and say she was singing about women loving women. Anyone hiring her would know they were hiring a lesbian-feminist, and maybe that would establish a precedent for other women.

**Meg:** That sounds like the letter I read that was sent to the Women's Center. The woman said she could no longer deal with being part of heterosexual male fantasies by singing for them, that now she was totally involved with making music for women and wanted to communicate with other women who wanted to do that.

There are a lot of women in all kinds of fields who want to deal just with women. I don't know exactly what it would take for us to do it. Do you have to make it first and have that strength and security to be yourself? Or can you start off from the bottom saying, this is what I am, accept me as you will? I change my mind about that every other day. You really get fed up with things, you know, and you don't want to fake it anymore -- even a little bit.



photo by sharon deevey

at sophie's



photo by sharon deevey

Chris Williamson singing at Sophie's Parlor last month

Sophie's Parlor is the social activities area for the Women's Center. We feel that there is a need in this city for a place for women musicians, poets, actors, to come together to help create a true women's culture. There is also a need for women to meet each other in a friendly social setting.

We feel these two needs can be met by an ongoing coffee house every Friday and Saturday where the creative energies of all women can come together. All talents are needed: those who play instruments, others that write; those who read and discover those perfect expressions that must be said aloud, those that dramatize the poem and the story.

Of course, most of all we need the audience that can give back the warm feelings to those performing. Fridays and Saturdays are our nights to rejoice.

from the Sophie's Parlor group

SOPHIE'S PARLOR APRIL CALENDAR

Every Friday and Saturday, 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.: women's music, poetry, drama -- \$1 donation.

8 p.m. April 9 Poetry reading with Rita Mae Brown and Lois Gomillion

8 p.m. April 10 Meg Christian -- \$1 donation

8 p.m. April 16 Jody Aliesan, feminist songwriter from Seattle -- \$1 donation.

8 p.m. April 24 Meg Christian -- \$1 donation

7 p.m. Every Friday evening Potluck supper

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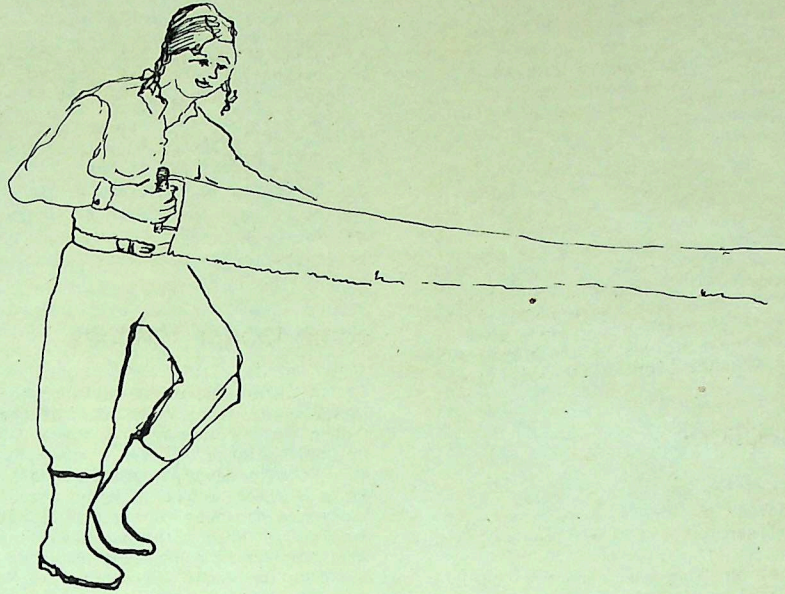
# struggle

## women lumber workers fight company; department of labor equivocates

Women workers at the Crown Redwood Lumber company (picnic tables, redwood tiles, etc.) in Fortuna, California, are being maimed by machinery and starvation wages. They are also fed up and fighting.

One of the workers described the situation there in an article that appeared in *People's Voice* in November and was reprinted in the *Rank & File Reporter*, an independent labor journal put out by the workers, in January. She used the pseudonym Rose Ridder. Having been laid off since the article came out, she can now be identified as Willa Ruckle.

Below is a condensation of her original article, followed by a letter she sent off our backs responding to our questions on further developments at Crown Redwood.



### the lord's will: unequal pay

Crown Redwood employs approximately 100 workers; 95% are women. They start at \$1.79/hour, men at \$2.40.

Women's jobs require just as much skill as men's. In fact, one woman said, "Our work is often more complicated and sometimes more physically strenuous than the men's."

"For example, my first week I stacked boards off a conveyor belt so fast I thought my back would break. A young man, a 'Jesus freak,' who swept sawdust off the floor for 61¢ an hour more, laughed and said it was 'the lord's will.'"

"In some operations," another woman added, "like stacking off the 'chain' a man would hold one end of a board, a woman the other; they would lift and stack it together, but her end was worth over 60¢ less an hour."

### busting ass — & fingers & heads

You are obliged to "bust your ass," one woman said, "to get your \$130 every two weeks."

"We stacked up to 10-foot long wet redwood boards on pallets, reaching over our heads; we wiped redwood stain (it smells so strong some of the girls get sick) from boards coming off a conveyor belt. The boards came so fast we sometimes let them fall off the table onto the floor."

"There were signs on the wall that said ventilators should be used near the paint machines. But we never saw any ventilators except the man-size hole in the roof--so nice in the rain and hail."

"In winter I've worked with snow coming directly in on me. The mill is open in back, where they load the boxcars," another added.

Several women described working on drills and saws with inadequate or nonexistent guards. Many workers have lost fingers and one man recently lost an arm.

A woman on swing shift suffered a brain concussion when a roof beam fell on her head during a minor earthquake.

### old or unfriendly need not apply

Younger women are preferred to humor the foremen. Flirting is required, or you face being fired or assigned the worst jobs. There is no senigrity. The foreman personally picks who gets what job.

One 57-year-old woman, being fired, was told that the mill "just wasn't her cup of tea." When she tried to collect unemployment, the office told her Crown's reason for firing her was that "she didn't need the money." She replied "I sure wasn't working there for my health."

### mass firing & attempts to organize

There is no union at Crown Redwood. Two years ago a unionization attempt was made. An entire shift walked out--and stayed out. They were fired, and new people were hired at a few cents more an hour.

Recently, however, a group of workers who were either fired unjustly or who quit (and are therefore outside the mill and not fearful of losing their jobs) have gotten together and signed affidavits with the Labor Department, charging Crown Redwood with discrimination against women.

A suit will be filed. If it succeeds, all women who have worked for Crown Redwood in the last two years will receive back wages. Those presently employed will receive raises to equal the men's pay.

Many women believe the suit, even if it "pays off," won't be the final solution. They think a union is necessary to ensure "decent treatment and human conditions in that hole."

But, apparently, the unions in the area can't organize Crown or don't have the gumption to try.

by willa ruckle

We are thinking of some other tactics now; but mostly we are depressed and disgusted with the law and the Labor Department. There has been some enthusiasm for taking the situation to local unions and having them put pressure on the Department of Labor and the Health and Safety Standards people. (The director for health and safety up here is very good friends with the company's owner, so we haven't gotten much from him.)

Also, there has been talk of trying to organize, but people are still afraid to try for fear everyone will be fired.

There is also talk of making this a class-action suit--using the ACLU or whatever method is used in cases like this.

We need encouragement from other people. Perhaps if you ran the article other women could write us if they have won similar fights or if they have any suggestions.

In any case, we haven't given up--despite seven months' wait. And we've learned alot about the sincerity of the government's efforts to help women workers...

### 'our system of government'

From Willa, February 12, 1973:

Thank you for the letter requesting the use of our article on the problems at Crown Redwood.

Developments since November when the article came out have not been too many, unfortunately. The Labor Department has been so slow that many of the women have pretty much given that method up--including myself. That's one reason I have been so long in replying to you.

The Labor Department representative says things like, "Well, we have to proceed this way, through the legal procedures...this is our system of government...we might like to do it other ways but what would happen if we did?"

Supposedly, the company is deciding with their attorneys whether or not they should let the case be pressed in court. For months they have been deciding this. The Labor Department hopes (?) that the case will not go to court as the representative says we probably would not win since our mill had few instances, according to him, of women and men doing exactly the same work for any extended time. But, the law says, "same or similar work." This doesn't matter, he says, as most judges have to have proof that the work was exactly the same to rule in favor of the workers. "They're still pretty prejudiced you know," he says about the judges. What about the whole Department of Labor?

Willa Ruckle  
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## bankamericard courts the ladies and...

Approximately 400 "influential" women from Maryland, Washington, and Virginia were invited to attend an all-day conference Wednesday, March 21, on "Women as Economic Equals."

The conference was sponsored by the Ladies' Home Journal, National BankAmericard, Inc., and six local BankAmericard member banks.

This was the second such conference held by BankAmericard and the Journal; the first was in San Francisco several months ago. Presumably, other key areas will be visited in BankAmericard's campaign to publicize its new policy on extending credit to women on an equal footing with men, except where state law conflicts.

The chosen "delegates" were women in state, local and federal governments, female bank officers and other executives -- and a sprinkling of what press contact Liesl Wittenberg termed "activists."

## main attractions

The agenda for the day consisted of:

- . an address by Anne Armstrong, co-chairman of the Republican National Committee and Counselor to Nixon;
- . a panel on "Women as Economic Equals -- The Reality of Today" with Liz Carpenter, Hilda Boswell, Maryland state delegate, Martha Griffiths, Michigan congresswoman, Juanita Kreps, member of the Board of Directors of the New York Stock Exchange, Dr. Bernice Sandler, and Jayne Baker Spain, Vice Chairman, U.S. Civil Service Commission;
- . a luncheon address on "Women as a Human Resource" by Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare;
- . "Concurrent workshop exchanges" on "How Can Women Achieve Their Legal Rights to Property and Credit," "How to Fight Sex Discrimination on the Job," "How to Equate Anatomy, Ability and Economy," and "How to Move Up the Corporate Ladder." Each workshop had well-known leaders, and the 400 invited delegates were assigned the workshop each was to attend;
- . "The Men's Inning -- a Panel" on "How Men View Women in the Economy," featuring John Mack Carter, Ladies' Home Journal editor, John Bullis, Hecht Company vice president, Herbert Stein, Chairman, President's Council of Economic Advisors, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations;
- . Reception for delegates, speakers and invited guests.

## money talks

Statistics on working women in the United States were offered throughout the conference, in varying contexts. Sometimes the poor pay, poor working conditions, and poor education that are the lot of many women were noted with dismay and anger; sometimes the increasing numbers of women in high level banking and governmental positions were applauded. Always the message was: the earning power of women is important to the economics of the nation; and the message from BankAmericard and its member banks was patent: come to us with your money.

Said one lady guest panelist: "Only 1% of working women in this country earn over \$15,000/year. That's obscene. But there's good news -- a young woman, under 35, in this room is a corporation lawyer making \$100,000/year (applause and cheers)...Banks have found out that 65% of their depositors are women, and that the all-male, all-white look of their corporate boards is no longer profitable.... We are grateful to BankAmericard for giving us respect, dignity, and the chance to air our restlessness."

Said Casper Weinberger in an unintentional slip (he was visibly embarrassed): "Women compromise, rather, comprise, 43% of the workforce."

Said Casper in all sincerity: "3/4 of a million women are serving our country by working with the government....Women are needed economically."

Overheard in transit from the Blue Room to the Diplomat Room, one lady bank executive to another: "You know, one of our girls, uh,

the black girl..."

Also overheard, one lady guest speaker, who during the panel had bemoaned, "Sometimes I despair of women, do we ever stand together on anything?", to another: "I'm going to skip these workshops, but I'll be back at 3:30 for the men's panel. Now that's the place to be."

And said BankAmericard in its brochure, reflecting its recognition of the breakdown of the institution of marriage: "All sources of income, such as child support and alimony, should be considered in determining a woman's credit-worthiness."

## some loser tongues

A few of the guest workshop leaders were outspoken in their criticisms of the conference, though their comments were for a relatively limited audience.

Estelle Ramey, Georgetown physiologist, was a bit fed up with all the plaudits BankAmericard had been receiving: "I hate BankAmericard. What's the big deal, anyway? They'll take this whole conference as a tax write-off. Don't get me wrong. I don't like Master Charge, Central Charge -- or the entire credit system."

Bella Abzug, who was invited to lead the workshop on credit and property, was walking with several other women to the assigned room when an officious BankAmericard individual ran up half a flight of stairs to greet her. Bella cut him short as she glanced his name tag. "You're one of those guys who's been screwing women all these years." She nearly knocked him over as she continued down the steps.

Following the workshop she led, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, writer for the Journal and Ms., said she had had problems with associating herself with a conference sponsored by BankAmericard. So, she said, had Bella Abzug and Bernice Sandler. "they told each of us the other two were coming. That's how they got us here." She thought the conference was of some value, however. "After all, Weinberger had to look at his facts before he could speak to 400 women....I used to think I'd wake up one morning to find the revolution had arrived. Now I see it's really a series of minor revolutions along the way, and I'm committed to reaching women where they're at at the moment."

## where to?

But where they're at and where they're going are not lightly dismissed.

During the workshop on credit and property, Massachusetts congresswoman Margaret Heckler described her bill that would require credit companies to extend credit to women on the same basis as men. She and the other women in attendance saw this as one goal in the gaining of equal rights for women. She specifically stated it would still be essential for the credit companies to enforce their policing practices to determine the creditworthiness of women -- just as they do for men. She did not question the invasion of privacy and data collection and dispersal inherent in credit checking nor the credit economy's role in increasing corporate profit and consumer debts.

Undoubtedly it is necessary for both married and single women to be able to survive from day to day without being either the property of or dependent upon a man. We need to be able to live where we please with whom we please and we need to be able to support ourselves.

But this conference was talking about incorporating more women into the system in ways advantageous to the system. It was talking about BankAmericard and other credit companies cashing in on the growing numbers of women who work and of grooming more women to be bank executives and government servants -- so that what's good for General Motors will be even better for General Motors.

by fran pollner

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## manners make the news

The manners at the Women as Economic Equals meeting were politeness and deference. The women speakers congratulated each other and themselves. The most deference, the most homage, however, was paid to the male guests of honor, even when these guests were grossly insulting. John Bullis of the Hecht Company, for example, told the assemblage that, "women should use the techniques they're good with, they should use feminine reinforcement." Yet the women assembled did not reciprocate this insult with a return insult. Instead they sat listening with polite and attentive deportment, laughed when the speaker paused for laughter, and applauded politely at the end of the speech. Those with grievances or angry questions saved them for the allotted time period at the end of the speeches. While the anger was evident in some of the post-speech questions and remarks, a furious Ann Scott of NOW snapped at Bullis, "It's you and your attitudes that are the barriers to women;" nonetheless she, like the other questioners, gave up the floor without hesitation when John Mack Carter, protecting the sacredness of his male panelists, quickly moved on to the next questioner.

The three of us from oob, however, had determined to try not to be deferential to the male guests of honor, despite the psychic costs of being labelled hostilewomen. (We also tacitly agreed to exempt women influentials from insult behavior). Emboldened by pre-luncheon drinks in the press room, and Liesl Wittenberg's smiling refusal to let us put a donations box on top of a stack of off our backs, saying, "We don't want this conference tainted by commercialism," we were ready to do a little lunch-time profaning of the sacred personage, his Honor the Secretary of H.E.W.

We seated ourselves at one of the many tables reserved for the press. While Betsey Wells of bankamericard introduced some extra honored guests (including Barry Goldwater Jr.) who stood to receive homage in the form of polite applause from the audience, we began a few trial boos and hisses. We hit our stride by the time Weinberger was introduced in laudatory fashion by Wells. When we turned around to face our tablemates (five women, mostly assistants to Senators, and one man), they had disappeared. When he paused for applause after declaiming, "The winds of freedom are blowing," or laughs after referring to the mastermind of the Watergate Scandal as H. Robert Haldeperson, we booed or hissed or laughed raucously. Numbers of people at the surrounding tables responded to our lack of deference by throwing us signals to stop such as glares and snapping of fingers. One hip looking male journalist, with long hair, shook his fist at us furiously. For the most part, however, the women at the surrounding tables looked away from us, thereby avoiding being implicated in our rudeness. They were clearly embarrassed by our behavior, and didn't wish us to continue. Many were undoubtedly afraid that by our lack of polite demeanor, we would give the notion of economic equality for women a bad name.

By booing and hissing right after the speaker was introduced, before he began his remarks, we were making clear that we were profaning the man and not just his ideas. We were violating a common prescription of polite society; to listen before disagreeing, and to debate the speaker's ideas, but not to cast aspersions on his character. Our profaning behavior was evidence that we were beyond the pale of the polite forms that middle class women are taught to think of as synonymous with moral character.

In a lead article by Judy Flander in the next day's Washington Star titled, "Big Guns at Lunch," she noted, "The press ranged from UPI to off our backs, Washington's aggressively feminist weekly (sic). The reporter from the latter, sat at the table with other similarly minded feminists, who briefly hissed and booed Secretary Weinberger, while an elderly security guard sent one baleful look in their direction." It's difficult to know what to conclude from our profanation experiment. We probably made no converts among the women, but in these days of Nixonian respectability, a hiss is as loud as a fart.

by bobbie spalter-roth

# pows in south vietnam

pregnant; six and a half months, she said. I wonder if the baby is still alive.

An older woman on the ward called me over to look at herself and a sixteen year old girl. The young girl was totally vacant. She didn't hear or say anything. She was a delicate girl in her white blouse and necklace and her hair tied back with a length of hospital gauze. The older woman prisoner related to me the torture the young girl had received. The police had force her to drink water mixed with lime (sometimes soap or nuoc mam, a fermented fish sauce) until her stomach was bloated. Then the police jumped on her stomach until she vomited, gagged, and defecated. The doctor suspected that the lime which the prisoner had been forced to drink acted as a toxin, causing brain or nerve damage and memory lapses. Incongruously, she wore a necklace of round white stones. It's rare to see Vietnamese women in Quang Ngai with jewelry and it seemed ironic that the police would beat this girl into a coma-like state without taking her necklace.

The thirty-five year old woman who was chained to this younger girl and also had been beaten and tortured was an old timer. She even knew Bac Si Mai, Marge Nelson, an American doctor who had worked in Quang Ngai four years ago. I thought, My God, Marge goes home and testifies before Congress about the prisoners being tortured, but the same woman who was tortured four years ago is still in prison and still being tortured and no one has done a damned thing about it. I thought, too, about the years this woman has been in jail. Marge has returned to the States, married, added a degree in public health to her M.D. status, practiced medicine, had a baby, and talked and travelled in many countries. The prisoner hasn't gone anywhere or done anything. She says she has been a political prisoner for six years.

While we continued to move from prisoner to prisoner, asking questions, giving out medicine, I noticed other prisoners reaching out toward Co Lang, the first prisoner we examined. I wondered what was the matter. Her eyes were closed and she was trembling. A few prisoners were pulling her by the feet, trying to get her from a sitting position to a lying one with her head away from the metal headrest of the bed. Then she began to thrash and convulse; foam appeared on her lips. Her head moved from side to side with her hair getting matted in the foam and sweat. And she yelled and talked-- probably saying things she must have told the police while she was tortured: "I'm innocent. I'm innocent. Ask anyone, my villagers. I swear, I'm not a 'VC.'" The other prisoner had already tied her legs and arms to the bed with soft bandages. The other woman chained to Co Lang tried to untangle the chains and move away. Someone else tried to put something in Co Lang's mouth to keep her from swallowing her tongue. No one said anything. Nor was there a change in anyone's expression in the room.

After my initial visit, I continued to go to the prisoner ward daily. I treated all the prisoners as best I could but I felt I was able to relate to the women prisoners in a very special way. Although a million American men/soldiers have come to fight in Vietnam, most Vietnamese have never seen or met an American woman, especially one who could speak their language. Thus the Vietnamese women were more curious about and perhaps more trusting of me than of my male counterparts. They asked me all sorts of personal questions about myself and the women in the States. I, of course, was just as interested in them, their histories, and their problems.

There were always new prisoners. Sometimes the old prisoners were able to stay on the ward until they were better, but often they disappeared and were taken back to the Interrogation Center or prison while they were still seriously sick. One woman whom we were treating had been shot through the chest with the bullet passing through her left lung. As a result, she had an abscess on her lung and the doctor had given her penicillin. When I checked to see if she was taking the medicine regularly, I asked her how many pills she was taking each day. She didn't reply at first; then, she quietly said, "two." "But the doctor told you to take eight each day. Why are-

n't you doing that?" I asked. She replied in a pleading voice, "I've been in prison for a year and a half. I have so much pain, but no doctor has ever seen me. I've never had any medicine. I want to save it. Next time they beat me, I'll have some medicine." I sat down on her bed, showed her the X-ray of her lung and gently tried to explain to her that she would feel less pain if she took all the medicine now as the doctor prescribed. I told her that we'd return and give her fifty-six capsules, enough for a week. Maybe if she sees that many pills, I thought, she won't be afraid to take eight a day. I promised we'd be back the following day. Only, the next morning she wasn't there. I then understood her fears, her reasons for wanting to hoard the medicine.

## women prisoners

There were many prisoners whose fate I wondered about, like "Ba Gia," the old woman, for example. "Ba Gia" was a sixty seven year old hemiplegic. She lay on the last bed in the corner of the ward. The bed had no mattress-- only a straw mat on the metal springs. The old woman lay on top of this mat, curled up like an animal-- skinny, nude, her recently shaved head beginning to show a stubble of white hair. Through the springs of her bed a green plastic pail was visible. The old woman was paralyzed; thus she couldn't control her bowel movements and defecated through a hole in the mat into the green pail. The area around her bed smelled and the old woman's face and body were covered with flies. The other prisoners took care of the old woman and fed her, but in a country where old people are honored and respected, it was obviously a humiliating situation for this old woman-- smelly, delirious, unclothed. The other prisoners told me she'd been badly beaten and tortured, but she spoke so incoherently I couldn't make out what her "crime" had been. Her paralysis seems permanent and she is still so weakened from the poor diet and torturing at the prison that she may not survive long. (see photograph below)

Another prisoner in whom I became especially interested was Co Tho, an eighteen year old woman. She had been shot in the thigh and the bullet broke her left femur. Her leg had been set incorrectly and the bullet left to fester. The doctor and I asked that she be released to have an operation, but the police also had some excuse why this could not be done. Meanwhile, our doctor discovered that she had a serious heart condition and wrote to both the Vietnamese and American authorities asking for special consideration. Again, there was no reply. Finally the doctor decided to operate on Co Tho's leg using local anesthesia.

The morning we gathered the equipment together and went to the ward to perform the

surgery, Co Tho was gone. The policeman said she'd been taken back to the Interrogation Center for further questioning. I paled. "But her heart. She'll die," I told him. The policeman had no sympathy. He said to me as if I should understand, "But she's a prisoner of war-- very dangerous. Class A Viet Cong." I thought of her smile. "Yes, really dangerous." Co Tho has never returned to the hospital, and I don't know if she is still alive. Neither the South Vietnamese police authorities nor the American advisors ever responded to the doctor's letter.

On successive visits to the prisoner ward, I began to see a pattern that deeply disturbed me. Co Lang's seizure was not a unique occurrence. I have witnessed as many as twenty five female prisoners having seizures and once saw seven prisoners having seizures simultaneously. The seizures vary in intensity. Sometimes a woman might sit still looking as if she is in a semiconscious state, having muscle spasms or trembling. Other prisoners would have more extreme signs, foaming, thrashing, convulsions.

It's very difficult to diagnose the exact medical or psychiatric cause of these seizures. Even the five American doctors I've known who have seen the prisoners' seizures were not sure what caused them since they had never seen similar ones in the States. Also, none of the doctors had the freedom, time, or facilities to examine or observe the patients at length. All these doctors felt, however, that the seizures were directly linked to the amount of torturing a prisoner had received, and many believed that they were a psychosomatic reaction to that torturing. For reasons about which we could only speculate, the women seemed far more prone to seizures than the men.

## chi minh

As I visited the ward more and more often, I began to make friends. During one of my very first visits, a woman about forty pulled my arm and nodded for me to come close to her so that she could speak to me quietly. The guard was sitting outside the ward smoking, so she didn't seem afraid to talk. "We know who you are and that you want independence and peace for the Vietnamese people," she said to me. "We've heard about your work at the rehabilitation center and how you make all the artificial arms and legs for the wounded Vietnamese civilians. We aren't afraid of you. Please trust us. Help us." This woman held my hands as she talked to me and twisted the ring on my finger. She put her arm around me.

I soon became used to the generous affection and physical contact of these women prisoners. They talked with me, calling me by my Vietnamese name. The ones I knew best would sometimes hug me or try to fix my hair a little, very tenderly tucking back stray strands. Some women wouldn't speak as openly



photo by jane barton

# pows in south vietnam

and unabashedly as others, but none of them were ever rude or aloof with me.

I was always amazed at the political sophistication of the Vietnamese and how quickly and clearly these women distinguished me as a "nhan dan tien bo my," "progressive American and not like the 'linh my,'" the American soldiers. They knew as well as I did what had happened at My Lai, a village only four miles from Quang Ngai, and yet these women were loving with me.

One time, after not having visited the ward for a few days, I walked towards it in an angry mood. I was feeling particularly depressed and frustrated about the war. I had begun to think that I'd been saturated, that I just couldn't experience any more hurt and horror. Chi Minh, a nineteen year old woman who had befriended me when she was on the prisoner ward a few months earlier, saw me coming, reached through the bars of the locked door, and grabbed my arms. She grinned at me and pulled my ear, maybe the only affectionate gesture she could think of since she couldn't embrace me as she usually did. "I'm back. Did you miss me?" "Of course I did," I answered, and my frustrations left me.

Chi Minh had been in prison for two years and had been tortured four times. She had hated the isolation of the interrogation center but found the prison not too bad. "We're together, we talk and have a feeling of togetherness, of solidarity," she told me. "My cousin was picked up recently, and it was fantastic to see someone from home."

I showed some pictures I had taken of the prisoners to an American friend of mine who wasn't at all impressed: "Gee, these prisoners don't look bad. They're smiling." I tried explaining, "Yes, but you can't frown forever. Maybe the first year, but after two or four or six years in prison you get tired of frowning and smile a little, even if you're in chains. The Vietnamese are really strong." I wanted to thank Chi Minh for smiling, for giving me love and strength, but I didn't. I didn't know how to express it, and there was too much to express anyway.

## politics, tortures

Gradually, as my acquaintance with the women prisoners increased, I began to learn more about why they were in prison. There was as great a variety of reasons as there were individual prisoners and I can only make three generalizations. First, they were all political prisoners. I never met a woman prisoner convicted of a crime. The women were basically "dong bao" type, country women of the Quang Ngai area. There were, of course, no rich, well known or university educated women as there are in some of the Saigon prisons. And none of the women I spoke to had been given a trial or knew exactly how long they would be in prison.

In all other respects, the women were very different. They ranged in age from twelve to sixty seven years. There were teenagers, women with nursing babies and grandmothers. The politics of the women varied as much as their ages. There were women who were strongly supportive of the South Vietnamese government. A pregnant woman, whose X-rays showed that she had three cracked ribs and who had bruises on her body, claimed she had a husband and two brothers who were serving in the ARVN army. I didn't really believe her at the time, but a few months later I saw her husband, with his M16 grenade belt, revolver, uniform and jeep. He had just returned from fighting in Quang Tri and had immediately gone to ask to have his wife released, but he said the police only laughed and asked him for a bribe.

Some women were totally apolitical and had no idea why they had been made prisoners. Occasionally these women had relatives in North Vietnam, for instance fathers who went North in 1954, twenty years ago, when they were children. Nevertheless, the South Vietnamese government feared their relatives might try to contact or influence them and thus these women were "suspect." A number of the more country looking women had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Usually they were older women who stubbornly

remained in their ancestral homesites to work the rice fields rather than moving into concentration like refugee camps the government set up. Such women, having experienced thirty years of war and seen their land change hands and government many times, were tired of moving at the whim of warring groups. Nevertheless, by refusing to move, they were classified as Communist supporters.

Another large segment of the women were those who support "the other side", the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government.) Of these women, some simply sympathized with the PRG, others had minor roles or jobs with the PRG, while still others were actual cadre. Usually, the women with the liberation forces in South Vietnam have jobs as leaders, political organizers, teachers, nurses/doctors, or as supply-carriers, but some are also guerilla soldiers who fight and carry guns.

The women who fell into the category of supporting the PRG remained silent about their true identity. After all, many of them had openly resisted talking when they were tortured and they couldn't risk speaking openly with anyone-- their fellow prisoners or an outsider like myself. Two female prisoners, however, did tell me their motivation for joining the PRG. One of them was a prisoner I knew

quite well before she was picked up. She came from a very poor refugee family who couldn't afford the government school fees, so she decided to join the PRG because she knew they would give her a free education in the mountains, equal to that a male would receive. Another young woman, only nineteen years old, told me her brother had gone off with the liberation forces and when she heard the police were planning to capture and torture her to find out where her brother was, she went to join him. "At least if I was going to get tortured, I might as well have done something so that the pain was worth it. I've worked for the PRG for two years and I'm proud of it, but that's all I'll tell the police," she explained to me.

When I've spoken with some Americans about there being over a thousand women and about seventy five children under the age of four in the prison centers, they have reacted, "Women and children. How awful," as if all women should automatically be innocent creatures. It is true, of course, that all the children and a majority of the women are innocent, but there are also some women who have struggled and fought equally with male cadre. What should arouse the outrage of people is not that women are getting imprisoned, but rather the conditions of the imprisonment -- the lack of trials or determination of guilt, the inadequate food supply, unsanitary conditions, the total lack of medical care, and most importantly, the inhumane torturing of the prisoners.

I learned more about the torture with every passing day. There was the evidence from the physical examination by the doctor--the unusually high percentage of cracked ribs, bruises, paralysis of limbs and so forth. Many of these symptoms were verified by X-rays. And there was the testimony of the patients who, as they came to trust us, told us more about the procedures to which they had been subjected. They told us of being forced to drink lime mixed with water, of beatings, of electric shocks. Often, they said, they were forced to lie on a table and if they didn't respond to questioning properly, the interrogator would reach underneath their rib cage and crack or break a rib.

One singular torture was the hardest to diagnose, since the police had devised it so that the prisoners would have no external signs of having been tortured. The special police would put the prisoners in a full-length upright tub of water and then beat the sides of the tub. The pressure and concussion caused internal injuries.

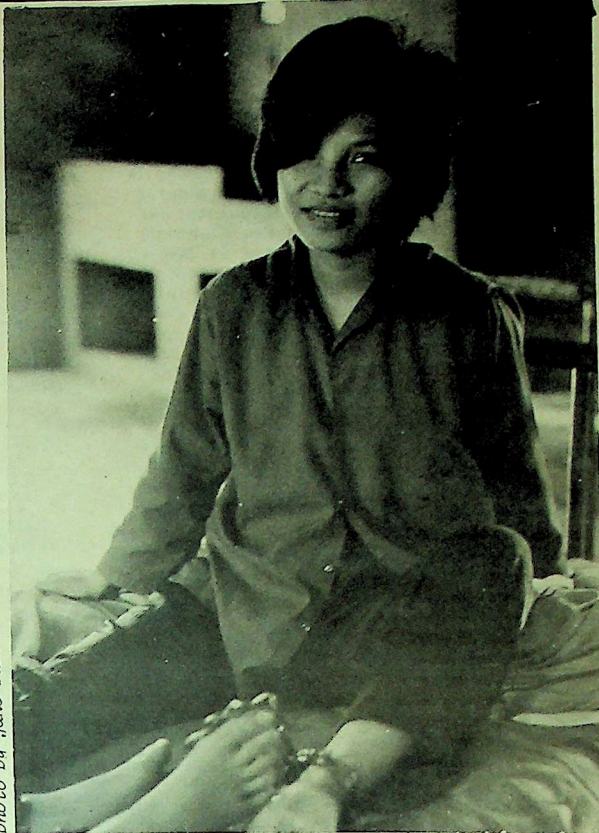


photo by jane barton

Pham Thi Tho, a prisoner at the Quang Ngai Province Hospital: "Her leg had been set incorrectly and the bullet left to fester...she had a serious heart condition."

Appalled by this continuous evidence of torture, my Quaker Center teammates and I made many efforts to bring these conditions to the attention of the American advisers. It was the Americans who trained the Vietnamese in interrogation techniques, we knew, who had set up an identity card system for all civilians, who financed the police force, and provided money for the prisons and cells. It was the CIA who advised the special police. Yet one deputy senior adviser dismissed all our stories by blaming the Vietnamese. "Asians like to torture one another. I've worked in Korea too, I know. Asians aren't my kind of people."

As we heard about the progress of cease-fire negotiations, we hoped very much that the PRG representatives would be successful in their efforts to guarantee that the 20,000 prisoners being held in South Vietnam would be freed simultaneously with the North Vietnamese and American P.O.W.s. But what we feared happened instead; their fate was left in an ambiguous state, to be worked out in negotiations with no firm deadline. While American newspapers focus on the return of the P.O.W.s, my friends on the prisoner ward in Quang Ngai will continue to wait day after day, week after week for their release.

I wonder how many American P.O.W.s, their wives and sisters realize that there are 200,000 prisoners in South Vietnam who haven't received their freedom yet? I wonder how many who fought with the purpose of containing Communism and supporting a democratic government, really know about the repressive administration of President Thieu, with his martial law and his decree banning local elections and his inhuman prisons? I wonder if they wonder how they might have fared as prisoners in the hands of the South Vietnamese government.

I wish I could introduce American women to those Vietnamese sisters for whom I have such a feeling of empathy and love when I visit them on the prison ward at Quang Ngai. As a second best, I have decided to write about them, in the hope that my readers will join me in working for their release. For them, too, it should soon be a time of homecoming.

by jane barton

jane barton will be returning to the united states this spring. Those interested in getting in touch with her should write to her care of the American Friends Service Committee, 160 North 15th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

## women's fest

In Kalamazoo, Mich., women celebrated International Women's Day (March 8) by passing out flowers as a gesture of sisterhood. The Marin Women's Newsletter sponsored a women's dance in San Anselme, Calif. Here in Washington, we had a two-week festival for women, Women's Fest, sponsored by the Community Bookshop.

Activities ranged from an art show to a talk by Vietnamese women. There were local name personalities, Meg Christian, a feminist singer (see pages 2-3), and Rita Mae Brown, a poet and a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. There was also an open poetry reading, in addition to a reading given by Rita and Lee Lally, and presentations by collectives and project groups.

Women's Fest was planned by two coordinators of the Community Bookshop, Barbara and Natalie, with help from the bookshop's women's caucus. The Women's Center also helped with logistics. Activities were for women only, except for the Film Festival at George Washington University.

## film

The following were the impressions of an off our backs reporter who attended the film festival:

"Six films comprised the Women's Film Festival portion of Women's Fest. They ranged from the professional feature-length 'A Very Curious Girl,' which the audience enjoyed, to a 20-minute 'sensuous, erotic dream' (producer's description), with which the audience seemed generally disgusted.

Each film, except for a made-for-TV documentary on Aretha Franklin, was produced by a woman. Aretha's film, despite her fine sounds, was dominated by speeches by male managers, her husband, and the male narrator. It was fairly depressing.

Only two of the other films, women filmmakers notwithstanding, were feminist in perspective. 'Janie's Jane,' by Geri Ashur, an interview with a welfare mother of five as she went through her day, portrayed a strong woman who had taken control of her life out of her ex-husband's hands and was getting other women involved in fighting the welfare department. It had some good music, too -- a song written about the woman.

The other, 'The Smiling Madame Beudet,' was a silent film made in 1922 by Frenchwoman Germaine Dulac. About the intimidation of a woman by her husband and her hostility toward him, it was interesting as film history and amusing beside, but tended to drag a bit.

'L'Opera-Mouffe' by Agnes Varda, about the "anguish one comes out of the womb to find," was a camera eye's view of tedious scenes in a Paris slum, presumably reflecting the thoughts of a pregnant woman. It was neither moving or sensible, and the connection with pregnancy would have been non-existent had not shots of unborn birds inside eggs been interposed between scenes every so often.

But the one that was most everybody's worst was 'The Now.' It was a technicolor medley of a black man and white woman and a white man and black woman in various idyllic settings, nude, rolling around, touching, in numerous positions, shot at numerous angles. It was accompanied by moans and groans and exclamations like: "What do you know, for four years I thought I was a feminist. Obviously, I must have missed the point somewhere along the way."

It's not easy to secure films by women -- there aren't that many and those that exist aren't readily accessible. The coordinators of the film festival obtained all the films as a package deal at a set price. It would have been better to have shown only three of the six -- three hours is long enough to sit in one seat, anyway."

Most feminists I polled went to only one or at most two of the activities offered. "I go to enough meetings," said a woman active in the Women's Center.

Donations for Women's Fest events went to the rebuilding of a women's hospital in Vietnam, damaged during the bombing, as did 10% of all feminist book sales during the two weeks of Women's Fest. Customers also got a 10% discount.

Unfortunately, the sports day which was planned was rained out, and there was poor attendance at some events. But people were glad Women's Fest happened. Some men were pissed, because they were excluded from all events except the film festival.

This was the second annual Women's Fest to be held in Washington, which makes it a tradition of sorts. When I asked Barbara, the coordinator I spoke with, how it was decided that Rita Mae should present a political talk, she answered that she and the other coordinator were interested in the question of separatism vs. coalitions in the women's movement. Rita and Charlotte Bunch, also of the Institute for Policy Studies (see page 17), had written about the subject in the lesbian-feminist newspaper the Furies. Charlotte was in Africa, and Rita was available. "It wasn't that heavy a decision," Barbara said. With a little searching, the planners could have found other questions of feminist analysis to be addressed and people to talk about them. Rita should speak, but others should speak too. Selection and program planning are "heavy" decisions. Decisions that the women's community as a whole should put some energy into.

## veni, vedi...?

Anyway, the event I attended was Rita Mae's "Beware the Ides of March: Are You Killing Yourself?." The title was chosen as a provocative lead-in to women's concept of self. Rita believes that Rome in 32B.C. is much like America today. Then Rome was very close to being an empire. America is already one. Today rich corporations vie with each other for power, just as rich families did in Rome. These rich families, according to Rita, killed Gaius Julius Caesar because he was ahead of his time and had a concept of self. We in the women's movement have indignant leaders who want to be in the service of the women's movement and who have a sense of self, but are not allowed to be leaders, Rita said, because of what women have been trained to be.

Drawing this parallel, Rita described female socialization as including a very heavy indoctrination into a mind-body dichotomy, a passive and stupid self-image, and deviousness, this last trait being for those who do not resist socialization right then and there and become lesbians, who do not grow out of their tomboy phase. Although working class kids get this beat out of them, middle class kids get sent to shrinks. This leads to unsureness of one's motives and thus to inability to act, which is oppression.

The women's movement is fragmented and there is hostility among the fragments. Lesbians in the movement tend to have more skills. Some women who came out in the women's movement are young and not out of school yet. However, none are total women yet, Rita said.

Marxism was great 100 years ago, but women must change the inside of our heads. Our goal must be to seize political power, anything else is social work. It is certainly not feeling better, for heightened consciousness makes every day of our lives more miserable, she said.

Our job is to institutionalize what motivated us to become feminists. We are different from our mothers, otherwise they would be here, she continued.

A woman from the audience added that mothers have skills too. Rita answered that the crucial skills now are political ones; other skills have to be fed into what we are building. There is no vertical scale of skills and we need different skills at different times.

Another woman in the audience said, "some women are home with kids, and can't go to meetings." Rita admitted that child care was important in that it freed women up to do other things. The question of radical child care as non-sexist socialization for children was not raised.

Rita emphasized the accumulation of capital for the movement and intellectual labor directed toward forming an ideology as central needs. Working class women have many of the important organizing skills. Rita said that her mother, a working class woman, would ask the right questions, if put to an organizing task, such as how much money do we need? and how do we get it? She wouldn't talk about communicating with people on their level. Rita is deterministic about class. One's emotional base is one's class origin, no matter how rich one becomes.

The central parts of a women's ideology are woman-identification and the human body as the basis of all labor. Woman-identification is not based on genital sexuality, but on commitment to women. However, she said, she could not understand what holds heterosexual women back from physically loving another woman. Although some men are genuinely lovable "half-women," they are inferior to women, who are multiorgasmic. She called limited male sexuality "a dirty trick," she wouldn't have played on them.

Rita criticized the first women's liberation action in Atlantic City against the Miss America pageant on a class basis. Miss America, she said, is a model for working class girls. They have nothing else. Also, the action publicized woman as an oppressed person rather than woman as strong and beautiful. When we take a psychological approach, such as woman as sex object, rather than a political approach, the press latches on to it. We look self-indulgent. The psychological approach is rooted in middle class minds. The middle class asks "What is wrong with you?," not the political questions, "What do you get paid?" and "What's coming down on you?" We are so far from a society where such things as a living wage are taken for granted that to ask the further psychological question is just silly.

## pure subjectivity

At this point, folks, I stepped out of my reportorial role and became a participant in the discussion. Rita dismissed elitism, as nothing more than an empty charge made by those who resist leadership. I protested that elitism was a real thing, for again and again in the women's movement here, women's movement heavies had withdrawn from movement activities and outreach into exclusive clubs, the defense being that they had to get their politics together, free of the harassment of new women, who always ask the "same questions." My criticism was that groups such as Lilith, a now-defunct women's collective, impede political communication and free discussion within the movement. When internal strife does not kill the group off first, the politics coming from such groups tends to result in partial answers that are taken for final solutions. Such an "answer" was lesbian-feminist separatism.

I suggested the alternative was to form a politics, not a single monolithic one, out of the experience of political, highly conscious feminists in interaction with the so-called new women, who are new to the movement but not so new at being women. I was answered with angry shouts from the audience. To her credit, Rita answered that such an approach might be possible but that she doubted whether it would work.

Moreover, I question the necessity for leadership, for a hard core elite that will seize power for the mass of women and create a society that elite thinks is good for women. The question is not that I do not trust women to be leaders (I do not) but that I trust women enough not to need leaders, or governments, or politicians, even those with radical credentials and a double-X chromosome. I do not want women to seize power, I want to see women destroy all power relations in society entirely.

by frances chapman, with thanks to fran pollner for her impressions of the films

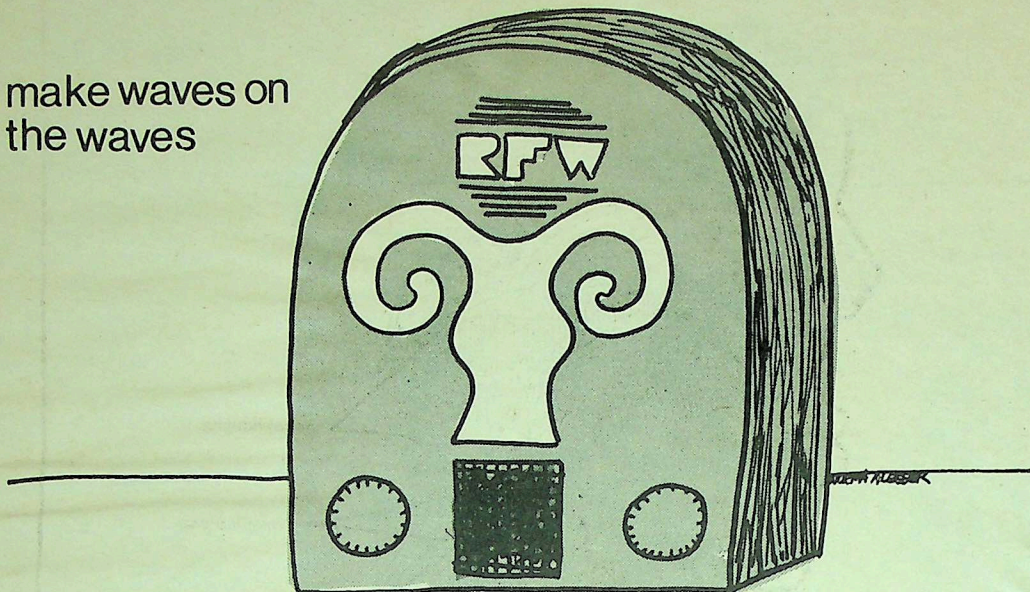


*Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein*

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make waves on the waves



On April 8th, International Women's Day, I was stranded in Perkiomenville, Pa, with only my chickens for companions. Luckily, I turned on WUHY-FM (Philadelphia) and got to celebrate the day, until sign off time, courtesy of Radio Free Women. The next day, I sent them a note and asked if they would write about how they came to broadcast the 12 hour marathon, that made my International Women's Day.

b. sp-ro

I don't remember just when the idea came to us to put together an entire day of radio programming in celebration of International Women's Day, March 8. That we even considered such an undertaking showed how much we had grown from our experience of the previous months.

Our group, called Radio Free Women, had been producing a weekly radio show called "Learning To Fly" on WUHY-FM, a listener-supported radio station in Philadelphia, since March 1972. In the beginning there were 20 of us, an offshoot of a group which had worked on a people's radio show for UHY. Polly Fischer, a UHY executive producer, was impressed by the women's contributions to this program and offered us air time for feminist programming.

To launch "Learning To Fly" we split up into smaller groups and produced a package of six shows. These first shows were made up almost entirely of music-- in an attempt to show how it is part of the conspiracy of conditioning which females endure from the cradle on. We relied heavily on music too because we were feeling our way in the new medium; none of us had ever worked in radio before. We approached the mikes with shaky voices. A half hour a week seemed a formidable time span to fill.

In a short time, Radio Free Women had shrunk to four core members: Sharon, Chris, Judy and myself, with other women occasionally contributing to the programs. We each did shows on subjects which interested us, and because we are four very different women, the programs reflected this diversity: subjects such as women and drinking, day care, abortion, women in sports, herbal medicine, women welfare workers, women drug addicts, and women's music and poetry, for example. We tried for varied formats, using collage techniques with music and narrative.

By the time we came up with our fantasy for International Women's Day, we had learned a lot and felt some measure of confidence as producers. In January we approached Polly with our plan, and she was immediately enthusiastic. She got an okay from the higher-ups at the station and we started planning the programming and working on publicity right away. We used three half-hour tapes from other women's radio collectives (Radio Free Women in D.C. and the San Francisco Women's Media Group); the rest of the programs we did ourselves.

On the morning of the big day Judy talked to a friend on the phone who asked how to find UHY on her dial. Judy said, "Well, it's 90.9 FM which is around 92 on my radio, but it's easy to confuse it with WRTI, Temple Universi-

ty's station, because it's on the next band. Listen, if you hear a man's voice, you've got the wrong station."

And that was how it was on WUHY on International Women's Day: from noon to midnight, an entire day of programs by and for women.

There were several shows on women's music: one titled, "Music Of the Women's Movement," with folk singers Holly Near, Ruthie Gordon, Diana Markovitz and selections by the Chicago and the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Bands; another, called "Songs Of Our Lives," a presentation of women's traditional music featuring a local non professional singing group called "Wine, Women, and Song"; and, usurping the regular air time of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, a presentation of works by women composers of classical music: Clara Schumann, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Lili Boulanger and Claire Polin.

There was a show on sexism in children's literature which offered listeners a list of non-sexist picture books; a program produced by Radio Free Women in Washington on the blunt and funny revelations of some very hard working women, waitresses, with some delightful songs about the trials of tray carriers; a conversation among five lesbians: relaxed, frank, informative; a three part program entitled "Triple Jeopardy," a strong, emotional offering by black, Asian and Latin women on their oppression in a sexist, classist, and racist society.

With an international focus: a show on the history of International Women's Day, a program titled "Song from the Ruined Field," a San Francisco Women's Media Group production on the lives of Vietnamese women; a program on women in Socialist countries, specifically interviews with women about their lives in East Germany and Cuba.

A program on songs and stories of American working women, including "Bread and Roses" and "Factory Girl"; and a reading from Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*; "We're Coming Into Focus," another presentation of the San Francisco Women's Media Group, on women's consciousness raising group experiences; a show on Children's Liberation in which three children talked about their lives and oppressions.

And on the local scene: an introduction to various Philadelphia area women's groups with information on contacts; and a show featuring two Philadelphia women poets, Marty Kearns and Linda Bakiel, reading selections from their work.

publicity

I listened to the day's programming, like many women I know, as the demands of my daily

routine permitted. I missed part of the children's book show to dash over to the day care center to pick up our little girl (wondering if she wasn't ready to begin staying there all day.) With each new program my sense of excitement grew until by mid afternoon and the program on women's traditional music I was laughing and crying and feeling proud, strong and joyful. I wanted desperately to see and talk with other women to share my feelings, so I was delighted when Sharon and Judy came in wearing red carnations and bringing one for me.

That night, we got together at Sharon's house with some women who had contributed to the programs and some who hadn't. The radio was tuned to our programs, but everyone was too excited to listen. We talked about the publicity we'd received (which made the station very happy.)

NBC's television coverage of our venture made up for CBS's perfunctory treatment. The reviewer was enthusiastic. He said that the programs were "anything but slick" but praised their "let it all hang out approach," and termed them "refreshing, relaxed, and radio with an open mind." Several other papers covered us as well. We laughed at the "Inquirer's insistence that "when they are not dabbling in program production, the four Radio Free Women lead rather typical lives. Sharon is a graphic artist, Chris a secretary, Judy a social worker, and Mary is a housewife..."

Chris is not a secretary but a mail girl, a job she took very recently, having grown somewhat timorous about living from photograph to photograph (her "Two Women" appeared in the last issue of "Off Our Backs.") Judy recently did a show on the welfare mess, portraying the frustrations of trying to work under that system so well that everyone applauded when she quit her job as welfare case-worker a week later. Sharon has not done much graphic artwork lately, spending more and more time at the radio station and making herself indispensable to us all. All three are active in various feminist groups in Philadelphia.

Perhaps more exciting to us than the good media coverage which our all day programming received were the phone calls and letters which have come steadily into the station. While some listeners took the time to make suggestions and offer criticism, the response was unanimously favorable-- women were thrilled to turn on the radio on International Women's Day and hear women's programs.

problems

This response convinced us of the need for more feminist programming and we determined to share our conviction with the station. We submitted an "immodest proposal" to UHY executives that they hire us to produce more women's programming. We offered to continue to produce "Learning To Fly", along with 1) a one hour weekly show of women's music, 2) a half hour weekly presentation on "Living Herstory" (interviews with Philadelphia women who have been pioneers in labor and suffrage movements, birth control, etc., and 3) a half hour weekly show for specific segments of the women population, black and third world women, older women, etc.

WUHY personnel said that they are open to our doing more feminist programming but aren't sure if they can find any money in the station's tight budget to pay us. They did promise to try.

This helped to bring us down from our March 8 high. Women are so often forced into "voluntarism;" we don't feel good about continuing to work at the station and not get paid for it. In addition, because of the publicity which we received recently, many women have contacted us about joining Radio Free Women. We are now faced with the task of assimilating these women into our group and/or helping them to start their own. This presents us with some practical difficulties. While we want to be open to more women, we see the addition of new "volunteers" in women's broadcasting as a threat to our chances of being hired by UHY.

(This typical housewife, hooked on radio, is going back to school in the fall to study Communications.)

by mary quinn

## films

Although I had never seen a stag film, I had always assumed pornography was a particularly malignant form of sexism. Lately, the amused, glib reactions of men I knew to their periodic "camp" forays into art theatres had provoked in me an increasingly bitter hard-line feminist response. My last argument had been with a friend who liberally espoused porn as a beneficent escape valve for social deviants: a kind of enormous artificial orifice which safely channeled the perverted semen which otherwise would dribble into soiled handkerchiefs and the coerced vaginas of street victims or frigid wives. A successful man who prided himself on integrating love and sex, he was quite disdainful of those sad little men with their handkerchiefs and lonely rooms. Pornography, he said, had nothing to do with him.

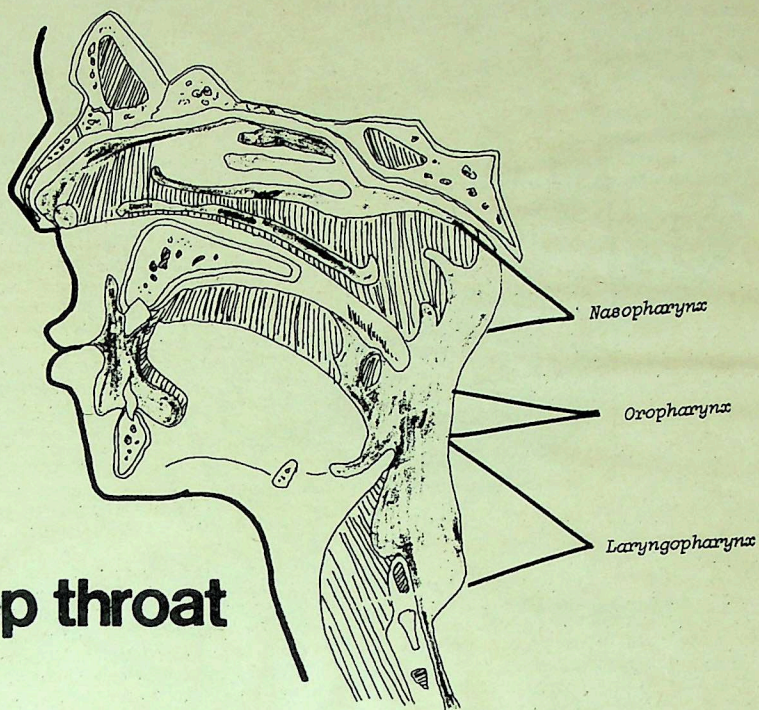
My convictions, unsubstantiated by first-hand evidence, deadlocked with his logic. So to shift the argument out of the realm of abstract theory, we picked our show, the hit that is packing them in, not just the standard 42nd street crowd but businessmen, intellectuals and the hip-- at \$ a shot and a seven month run in Manhattan and at city and suburban art theatres across Middle America. "Deep Throat," for those few who don't yet know the memorable but sparse plot, is about the quest for orgasm of an ingenuous, freckled nymph of a woman-child. She loves to screw, but, as she sadly confesses to her female friend, she can't get off. Her greasy gynecologist subsequently discovers that the reason is she has fallen victim to the Myth Of the Vaginal Orgasm; her clitoris is in her throat. Plot development pretty much stops right there. The next hour consists of an unrelenting elaboration of every bit of potential inherent in the situation of a woman with a clitoris instead of tonsils. America for all its fat is a hungry country and "Deep Throat" provides an orgy of eating.

Women get eaten, too, mind you. In the opening sequence Miss Deep Throat (and she does, by the way, have a deep throat. Any woman who has ever gagged on a penis should be properly awed and admonished at seeing her effortlessly swallow at least seven inches) returns home from a morning at the grocery to find her roommate casually straddling the kitchen table chatting to a male head between her legs. "Mind if I smoke while you eat?" she solicitously inquires. Her orgasm is an impressive one, a convulsive, moaning, legs a-twitter drama which is just what men imagine an orgasm would be like if they were women. My favorite, though, was when this same champion of the climax came while being fucked on all fours from behind; where was her clitoris. I'd like to know? All in all, if I'd bothered to keep statistics on cunnilingus v. fellatio, I think I would have found the producers gave equal time to both parties.

So my purposeful, rational plan to determinedly collect images of Degraded Women was thwarted from the start. There were a few, but there were also plenty of degraded men, and there was none of the male sadism and negation of female sexuality which I had predicted. Women got satisfaction as often as they gave it, and the real titillation of the film was the spectacle of women, not men, at frantic pitches of sexual excitement.

But this intellectual understanding of the equality of degradation fails to account for the most significant aspect of the film for me: the fact that I freaked out. Barely into the first ten minutes I began building up a physical pressure of rage in my stomach--

## deep throat



at the men in the film and the men who made the film and the men in the audience and the man sitting beside me. Scene after scene of screen-size penises pumping in tireless piston action into various orifices made the strain of bearing down to keep it in bounds unbearable. Like most women, I dread awkward social situations and I usually endure rather than make a fuss, but my body rebelled at continued exposure. So, trying to minimize the feminist martyr aspect of it all, I muttered something about feeling ill from dinner to my surprised and disgruntled companion and headed for the ladies' room. There I stayed for all but the last scene, abiding the hour against the surreal background of inflated moans of cosmic blow jobs. I think it could be diagnosed as a severe attack of man-hating. Followed by an equally violent bout of hysterics when I finally got home.

Why so upset? asked my bewildered friend. How to explain my explosive tears-- for the women who have faked a cinematic orgasm to please a man, the women who in the wake of the film have been choking on penises, but mostly for all the women in all the thousands of beds who are starving for physical love which is not automated, sex which is tender, erotic and understanding and respectful of the small uglinesses and beauties of their bodies. Few beds in America are unaffected by the emotionless calisthenics, competitiveness and achievement ethic of "Deep Throat."

Those men in the audience with their hats on their laps are pitiful, all right. Like women, they are victimized by an impossible standard of mechanized passion which pornography sets up to be emulated. But then why are they buying tickets at \$5 a show. And why do they pant along with women like Miss D.T. who are paid off to advertise the recreational pleasures of a grim male extravaganza in which none of us have any stake? Victim or not, any man by virtue of his sex shares in the power and privilege which is dehumanizing our lives. The sad little men, losers and winners, have big power-- power enough, in fact, to create a culture which sucks emotion out of sex and sensuality out of our bodies and turns the whole business into a hot-dog stuffed in a Wonder Bread bun.

Men seem to be surviving on these sandwiches. They may be malnourished, but there are a few, even the ones with severe protein deficiencies, who have renounced the tasty synthetic treats which fatten the flesh and momentarily fill hunger but give no nourish-

ment. It's women who are dying on this plastic food, women who are inescapably shut in that flesh which "Deep Throat's" camera mercilessly exposes ad nauseum to the glare of MacDonalld's Golden Arches America. In pornography, the body is, pure and simple, meat: a lewd, grovelling, mechanical instrument of lust, an entity you would only want to admit belonging to in the privacy of your bathroom. It's been a long and tiring effort for me to make friends with my body but we were just beginning to keep each other company when I saw "Deep Throat." Afterwards, when I took off my clothes for bed, I looked at it in the bathroom mirror and hated it. Flesh, only a force which fucks or is fucked, unanimated by life, sensuousness, or loving desire, becomes sodden and shameful. Pornography does have everything to do with me and my friend, for it is the most honest expression of our culture's hatred of the body which infects us all.

Men's bodies are a direct and normal connection with the world. A man's body is his unobtrusive companion; he can take it to work, out to eat, even for a walk and it will never embarrass him by making a scene. A body is a man's best friend. It can help him out in a lot of tough spots. For a woman, it's questionable who's leading who by the leash. Our bodies are our Siamese twins, objects of the love/hate reserved for that which is us and yet not us, our jailer. Bouncing breasts, monthly blood, protruding hips and too much or too little fat in awkward places never let us forget the companion we drag along. And lest we do, there is usually an obliging male to remind us of our twin sister. Precisely because our flesh in the eyes of our culture is omnipresent, we are most victimized by that culture's denigration of the body.

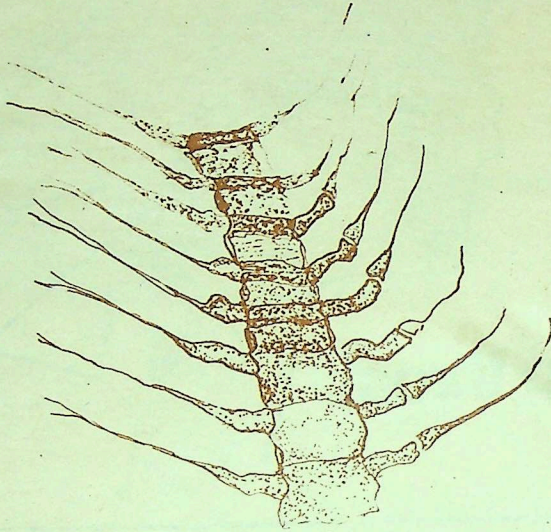
Possibly the most disgusting moment of the film was the last scene I returned from the bathroom to see: the spectacle of Miss Deep Throat shaving her pubic hair, transforming her vulva into a smooth white sandwich bread. Women are their bodies. Sex for us is not an outward relation to the world but something that happens in our vitals and we are desperate to fill our hunger with more than a frankfurter. Stag films may someday vie for the Feminist Film Board's Recommendation for Adults Only; they have the potential to embrace the correct genital party line. But pornography will always be a woman hater, and "Deep Throat", the film industry's answer to the "new" sexuality of the "new" woman, proves it. Starving women? Force-feed them penises.

by christine stansell



you are what you eat

I could live on  
milk and oysters,  
mothers and lovers  
greens and oranges,  
strength and sunshine  
once I ate  
a lavender herring  
it never went away  
and everyone who knew me  
is still choking on the bones.



for a sister

There you are again  
woman whom  
I've never seen before  
a thousand times  
baby strapped to your aching back  
sadness in your face  
I wonder what it is  
you go so slowly home to  
each night  
what burden do you carry  
in those heavy sacks  
beneath your tired eyes  
I wonder why  
you keep going back  
when it hurts you so  
how many tears  
have you wasted  
on a plastic heart  
in the past week  
enough to drown on, yet  
you don't swim away  
the weight on your back  
keeps you down  
you say  
caught in the rapids  
mind smashing against rock  
taking in just enough water  
to keep the fire  
under control  
you think you might go mad  
one day  
on the way home  
or just before  
not falling asleep  
baby strapped to my aching back  
I start slowly for home  
wondering why  
as our eyes catch  
we avoid each other's  
burning.

a kind of perfection

Wounded waiting in dreams  
wet with the taste of you  
and the oysters, always the oysters  
you've come back you say  
you want to see me again  
as I know you never did  
though you tried  
and I longed so to show you  
to lay it all bare for your knowing  
if only you could see  
I'd take hold of your hand  
lead you down all the twisted corridors  
around all the hairpin turns of my love  
unplumbed, stopping me  
let you watch as someone  
pours on the acid, loosening everything  
I'd take you to the deepest parts  
lock you in till you feel it  
throbbing, in the damp caverns  
dripping limestone monuments  
for each dead molecule of hope  
I'd show you the graveyard  
where I bury my desire  
I'd take you through my every room  
show you the corners  
I rounded for her  
my unfinished work  
the eggshells I keep on a shelf  
in her room  
Yes I believe I'd tell it all to you  
sitting in a quiet corner  
near the fountain  
billowing my better dreams  
I'd tell you about the oysters  
and what they mean to me  
and to Rita, who found the way  
to tell it  
eventually I'd leave you  
quietly  
standing on top of it all somewhere  
whispering that we have  
the perfect relationship  
For that I hide myself  
I run from you  
back to you for want  
of that familiar phrase  
we have a perfect relationship  
In bed, with our eyes closed  
we were perfect lovers.



## a kind of perfection

Wounded waiting in dreams  
wet with the taste of you  
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back to you for want  
of that familiar phrase  
we have a perfect relationship  
In bed, with our eyes closed  
we were perfect lovers.

Address the following  
to Leonard Cohen  
who has called my sisters  
how many times  
too many  
cunts  
not that we're not proud  
but you have no right to blaspheme  
the vehicle that brought you into this world,  
and coming from you it is  
unmistakably blasphemous  
would I had been the one  
destined to bear you  
but had aborted first  
there would be the hero  
you have failed to find.

## the liberals

I have not forsaken the revolution  
though I seem to have stopped  
fighting it  
(to be taken either way)  
it has forsaken me  
lending itself to the students  
loving sons and daughters  
of the rich oppressor  
who find it necessary  
to burrow in  
to better learn what it's  
"really like"  
down here  
in order to be effective  
organizers  
they crowd the way in  
blocking our way out  
don't they know  
the first to be encountered  
shall be the first to fall?

## women: cry out for justice

Tears  
lightly reflected  
in the glass wall dividing us  
tears for you  
who cry on the other side

I cannot reach you  
my darling  
there are miles in these few  
feet between us  
glass miles  
cold and hard  
sterile window  
keeps the love out  
or so it tries

lets the cold in  
through the cracks  
to the core of me  
your tears are lost on them  
as are mine  
lost on the cold sterility  
sterility people

hospital leaves me shuddering  
shuddering  
I never left it  
I stand at that window  
every day every night  
they never see me  
wouldn't recognize me  
or you or the agonizing  
truth  
reflected there

an eternity of suffering  
lives in that  
barren hallway  
branching off  
to rooms where mothers  
hold their newborn  
children close

golden rings on  
on left hand fingers  
link the past self  
to present glory  
diamonds can cut through glass  
walls  
with honor

and their respectability  
give the right  
to mother  
keep the cold out  
are licenses  
to love  
I stand accused  
my fingers empty  
and so my arms

I pay my debt  
imprisoned by glass  
and legal papers  
that authorize  
the kidnapping  
in which there is  
no ransom  
the price already paid.



illustrations by frances cnapman

women: cry out for justice

Address the following  
to Leonard Cohen  
who has called my sisters  
how many times  
too many  
cunts  
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but you have no right to blaspheme  
the vehicle that brought you into this world  
and coming from you it is  
unmistakably blasphemous  
would I had been the one  
destined to bear you  
but had aborted first  
there would be the hero  
you have failed to find.

Tears  
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who cry on the other side

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there are miles in these few  
feet between us  
glass miles  
cold and hard  
sterile window  
keeps the love out  
or so it tries

lets the cold in  
through the cracks  
to the core of me  
your tears are lost on them  
as are mine  
lost on the cold sterility  
sterility people

hospital leaves me shuddering  
shuddering  
I never left it  
I stand at that window  
every day every night  
they never see me  
wouldn't recognize me  
or you or the agonizing  
truth  
reflected there

an eternity of suffering  
lives in that  
barren hallway  
branching off  
to rooms where mothers  
hold their newborn  
children close

golden rings on  
on left hand fingers  
link the past self  
to present glory  
diamonds can cut through glass  
walls  
with honor

and their respectability  
give the right  
to mother  
keep the cold out  
are licenses  
to love  
I stand accused  
my fingers empty  
and so my arms

I pay my debt  
imprisoned by glass  
and legal papers  
that authorize  
the kidnapping  
in which there is  
no ransom  
the price already paid.



margaret

A dozen men  
before her  
she was my first  
lover  
nearly a year  
I loved her  
before she knew  
I could  
and when she knew  
she wanted me  
and when she knew  
she had all of me  
she left a dozen men and  
and me  
ask her now  
about her  
lovers  
she'll tell you  
there were  
twelve  
and all of them  
wonderful  
men.

liberals

have not forsaken the revolution  
ough I seem to have stopped  
ighting it  
o be taken either way)  
has forsaken me  
nding itself to the students  
ving sons and daughters  
the rich oppressor  
o find it necessary  
burrow in  
better learn what it's  
really like"  
own here  
order to be effective  
rganizers  
ey crowd the way in  
locking our way out  
on't they know  
he first to be encountered  
hall be the first to fall?



Poetry is a great pretend game  
played by yesterday's children  
who suddenly find themselves big  
with the burden of time's realities  
and must revert  
to survive  
to the fantasy world of childhood  
romanticizing life  
the evil truths  
and the pain  
we'd like to believe  
is just pretend.

illustrations by frances cnap...

morning dialogue

Mrs. Ord was listening to some outrageous slander against the establishment by her fifteen-year-old son and scraping the black off James Ord's toast when Grampop Potter hawked a huge blob of yellow phlegm into the sink and chuckled at the newspaper which he had spread on the counter.

"I wish you wouldn't do that, Father," Mrs. Ord said and spread butter on Mr. Ord's toast.

"Hee hee hee."

"What's the matter with Grampop?"

Young Jim asked.

"Hee hee hee."

Elizabeth Ord, who was seventeen and very idealistic, wandered into the kitchen and glared at Grampop Potter. "You really ought to put him in a home, you know," she said.

"Hee hee hee."

Mrs. Ord poured Elizabeth's eggs into an iron skillet and began swirling them around in yellow coagulating curds with a fork. "What's so funny, Father?"

"Hee hee hee."

Elizabeth munched toast and picked at a pimple on her chin. "He won't tell you. He's senile. The arteries in his brain have hardened and he doesn't get enough oxygen."

"How would you know, Alice Acne?" her brother said.

"Go to hell," Elizabeth told him.

James Senior looked up from the funnies and frowned. "Young ladies do not talk like that," he said.

"Hee hee hee."

"What are you laughing at, Father?"

Mrs. Ord said and stared down the rest of the family as she scraped eggs into Elizabeth's plate and tried not to burn her palm through the thin quilted potholder with the orange and brown roosters on it.

Grampop Potter pushed his rimless glasses up and snarked loudly into his handkerchief. "Listen here, James," he said.

James said, "Yes Father," and continued to read the funnies.

"Says here a couple of women went down to city hall and raised Ned with Mayor Pressman."

"Yeah, yeah, Grampop," Young Jim said. "I heard all about it at school from Harvey Pressman. He said his Dad had them thrown out of his office and charged with disturbing the peace and trespassing." Young Jim chuckled nastily and punched his sister on the arm.

Elizabeth smiled. "Mother, how does it feel to give birth to an encephalic child?"

Mrs. Ord sat down at the table and sipped her cold coffee from a Blue Willow cup. "Both of you be quiet," she said.

"Says here they was wearing dog collars and chains to 'signify the position of women in a sexist society.' Hee hee hee. I'll tell you the position for women in a sexist society, yes siree! Hee hee hee."

"Get me another cup of coffee, will you Bertha Mae?" James Ord said. "That's ridiculous, Father. Bunch of neurotic, foul-mouthed women, I'd say."

Young Jim laughed and Mrs. Ord sat down again after getting the coffee pot off the stove and pouring the last of it for her husband. She pushed her own cup away.

Elizabeth took a small mirror out of the suede purse she always carried about two inches from her left foot and examined a blackhead carefully. "What else does it say, Grampop? I'm all for that women's lib stuff. No shit work for me."

"Just says they was 'demonstratin' for women's rights.'"

James folded up the funnies and passed them to his son. "Vague thing to be demonstrating about, I'd say," he said. He got up, kissed his wife on the forehead, rubbed the cat's ears, gathered up his London Fog and briefcase and went out to conquer the world--or at least be one of the occupation forces in those parts of it which were the vested interests of the Bedford County Savings and Loan.

"Harvey Pressman says they wanted his Dad to lift the Sweat and Leather's liquor license."

"It doesn't say that here!" Grampop Potter believed only what he read in the papers.

"No, Father," Mrs. Ord said. "Jim says Mayor Pressman's boy Harvey told him--please zip yourself up, Father."

He ignored her. "That's the silliest damn--excuse me, Elizabeth--silliest damn thing I ever heard. That little Pressman snot doesn't know what he's talking about.

His mother was a Swanscombe and all the Swanscombes are liars. Old Arch Swanscombe tried to sell me a lot on Harrison Street one time, before the second war it was. Told me it would be a good investment because the area was goin' to go commercial. Damn--excuse me, Elizabeth--damn chicken processing plant was built right next door and the smell of wet feathers and rotten chicken parts was enough to gag a maggot. Made that lot worthless. 'Course that was before they started to make feed out of it.

They didn't know in them days what they do now about chickens. Now a chicken will eat anything 'longs it's fixed right--even his cousins' inedible extras. You didn't know that, did you, that they make chicken feed out of the leftover entrails and feet and feathers and stuff? You might say chickens is cannibals." Grampop Potter hawked into the sink again. "Think about that next Sunday when you sit down to a big plate of roast chicken and mashed potatoes. Hee hee hee."

Elizabeth stuffed the mirror back in her purse and got up. "God, Grampop! You're a disgusting old man. You go on and on. It's enough to cause atrophy of the brain." She went out.

"Why did they want Mayor Pressman to revoke the Sweat and Leather's license?" Mrs. Ord asked.

Jim leaned back and shoved his hands in his pockets. It made him feel important to be the repository of knowledge the rest of his family didn't have. "The Sweat and Leather has a side door with a sign over it that says 'Ladies' Entrance.' There's another inside that says, 'No Ladies Allowed At The Bar' and another--'Tables For Ladies: No Waiting.' These two women are from some kind of women's lib group and they asked Mr. Kelly to take the signs down. But he wouldn't, so they went to Harvey's dad and told him he had to revoke their license because they'd violated the civil rights act or something. But Mr. Pressman had them arrested. Serves them right. A bunch of foul-mouthed, neurotic women, I'd say. Imagine gettin' all in a flap over a dumb thing like that!"



Mrs. Ord looked at her son who was rocking back and forth in his chair and laughing. "Well--maybe. But maybe it isn't so silly."

Grampop snickered and winked at Jim. "Certainly it's silly, Bertha," he said. "Silly as a five per-cent sales tax on sex."

Young Jim rewarded him by stomping his feet on the floor and laughing even louder.

"No, it isn't, Father," Mrs. Ord said carefully. "And you know better, Jim. It is discrimination."

"You talk like the man had white signs in his bar, Mom. He took those down in 1956. He said he did."

Mrs. Ord sighed and got up to get the lunch she had packed for Jim out of the refrigerator. "O.K.," she said and handed him the brown paper bag.

He took it, shouted "See ya!" and ran out the back door.

Grampop Potter eased himself into a chair at the table and fiddled with the newspaper while Mrs. Ord fixed his breakfast and a second pot of coffee. The old man preferred to wait until after the rest of the family had gone because his daughter, at least, would sit quietly opposite him drinking coffee and listening to him without interrupting while he talked and ate.

Now he said, "If you ask me--it's a bunch of them women's liberation people from Wilmington or Philadelphia coming here to cause trouble."

"Oh, Father," Mrs. Ord replied. "You said that when the N.A.A.C.P. picketed the Rest-For-The-Wear Motel, and you knew half the people in the picket line by their first names."

"Yes, that's exactly what it is--a bunch of outside agitators."

Mrs. Ord fed her father and saw that he put on his hat and coat and was decently zippered before she sent him off to a long communal table at Molly's Lunch where Grampop Potter and a few select patriarchs sat every day and talked about the terrible state of the world now that they were no longer personally running it.

After the old man left, Mrs. Ord sat down and read the article that had amused him so much even though she knew she didn't have time if she was going to get down to the grocery before all the really good lettuce was gone. James was so particular about his salads.

The article, headlined 'Women Disrupt City Hall,' stated that two women carrying women's rights placards had, upon being refused an appointment with the mayor, staged a "bitch-in" in his outer office. Further, they had referred to Mrs. Shephard, the mayor's secretary, as an "Aunt Harriet," which "gravely upset" Mrs. Shephard who had loved her poor Aunt Harriet "Deeply" until June 1, 1968 when the saintly old woman had "passed away." Mrs. Ord smiled to herself. Glenna Shephard's Aunt Harriet had had a stroke while screaming epithets over the hedge at her neighbor whom she had caught gossiping over the other hedge about the fact that Aunt Harriet kept a bottle of Jack Daniels in her upstairs linen closet.

Mrs. Ord gathered up the scattered newspaper, washed the dishes, cleaned up the kitchen, made all the beds, picked up the empty Coca-cola bottles in the living room, cleaned up after Madison--their elderly calico who had vomitted up furballs--changed from her green terrycloth bathrobe into a dress, combed her greying hair, dragged Madison outside, suffered a run in her stocking, got in the car and drove to the grocery store.

by louise melton



"chickens is cannibals"

media notices

Original video tapes are being sought by WGBX-TV, Channel 44, Boston, WGBY-TV, Channel 2, Boston or WGBY-TV, Springfield, which are all Public Television stations in Massachusetts. They are looking for tapes (1/2", 1", 2") which reflect an innovative and creative utilization of existing video technology, "whether to explore new treatments of subject matter or to expand the aesthetic potential of the medium itself."

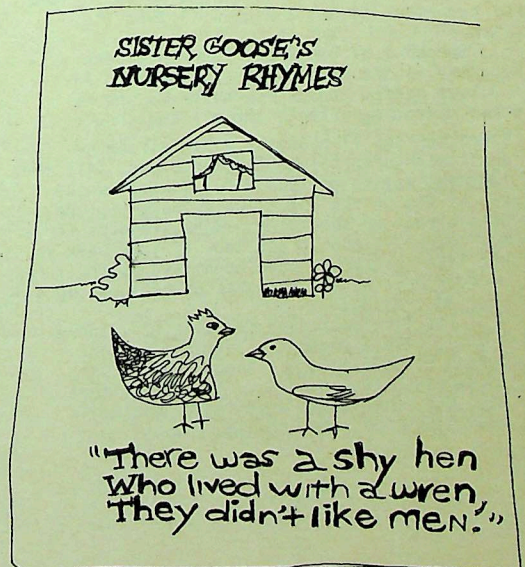
All tapes should be originals if possible, or high quality dubs, and must be 30 minutes or less. No fees are offered for the possible local broadcast. However, all tapes submitted will be considered for exposure in a one-hour national television program on arts, access, media, with Brian O'Doherty, editor of "Art in America" and TV art critic for the "Today" show.

If your tape is accepted for the national program, you will be contacted for your permission to excerpt the section and you will be paid \$75.00 per minute for the material used.

If you are interested in participating, write immediately to Dorothy Chiesa, WGBH-TV, 125 Western Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts.

A PUBLICATIONS WORKSHOP will be held in Chicago, Sat. June 30 during Gay Pride Week. It will be sponsored by Lavender Woman, the lesbian newspaper of Chicago. They are planning to discuss the following:  
collective consciousness and decision making  
orientation - political, literary, news  
production - format, layout, printing  
advertising

financing  
public relations & feedback from readers  
national news service.  
If you are interested in attending or have suggestions, please write:  
Lavender Woman  
P.O. Box 60206  
1723 W. Devon  
Chicago, Ill. 60660.





## experiments in hostility

*This month's sojourn across the boundaries into hostility is by Bane, a friend of Pussy New York (a.k.a B. Razen Cunt), our usual sojourner.*

One time my friend Pussy was saying how if you kick a male where you ought to, he'll be out of commission for maybe three minutes. Day after that this boy was telling how at a strike at his school he was blocking the steps so no one could get to class and a woman who wanted to grab his hair (on his head) and pulled him- who is big and weighs over 200 lbs-- to his feet and he punched her as hard as he could in the stomach.

She shoulda kicked you, I sympathized. She couldn't.

How come?

Cause I would have grabbed her foot and thrown her over.

Bull shit. Don't try to lay that shit on me.

Yeah. Wanna see?

Yeah.

We square off. He looks at me, giggles and says, Hell you'll really do it. Good judge of character.

Couple of days later I'm having a hassle with this boy and he starts to push me around saying it's his turf-- this all happened at work naturally I don't spend my free time with non-women, which is how come its free- and I better get out. I say and mean, You'd better get your hands off me. He stops, thinks for a few seconds and walks to the other end of the room. We keep arguing but he doesn't come near me again.

Now being a woman I can intuit what it was the prick was thinking in those few seconds it took him to decide to walk away. You all are women, so I guess you can intuit it too. Any non-woman reading this send me a fiver and I'll let you have the answer.

The moral of this tale is a threat or two may help you, if not a kick will turn the trick.

Speaking of kicks bet you ain't been getting any at the rape flicks. I know you haven't been seeing any. They never do show a woman defending herself the way she should.

Sometimes she'll pound at a big strong he-chest with open palmed feather blows, it's the tasteful way to go, you know. Sometimes she knocks him on the head (always the wrong one) with a rock or something and he staggers for a few seconds-- though you know if it'd been you hit like that you'd have been laid up for three or four days -- and then the he-ro shows up and does the rescue.

Its like anatomy (male) aint vulnerability. Like a woman just naturally can't defend herself from male brutishness. But thats probably paranoid to look at it that way. Who would gain anything by making it seem like women are defenseless?

I bet that what it is is a fine kick in the nuts is too indelicate or undignified to show. Course women being terrified, screaming and crying and moaning, making pitiful little animal noises, trembling, standing rigid eyes and mouth open wide (how do you like that for symbolism, Mr. Freud?), crouching in corners, spittle running down their chins,-- none of that is too undignified to show. Also women being burned, slapped, stomped, smashed into walls, gang-banged, blinded, stabbed (including thru the cunt), slashed, shot, guillotined, strangled and so on and on is not too indelicate an ENTERTAINMENT to show.

Ever stop to think that in our civilization folks go to movies about the rape and mutilation of women in order to relax and be entertained. Ever stop to think that it aint ours and that their so-called civilization got to be smashed and stomped and burned and bombed the fuck off our earth.

But let's not get emotional. Or into a frenzy. We know about the function of rape and rape entertainments. Thats why we picket those entertainments. That's why we do guerrilla theater outside them, kicking and castrating effigies of Alfred the Cock, the Average Joe and other vermin and explain to people that we're just trying to entertain them and that what's a rapist with his equipment stuffed down his gullet but our version of Deep Throat. That's why we go inside and make constructive comments and blow shrill whistles during the "good" parts and throw franks at the screen and explode stink bombs. Thats why we leave clocks disguised as bombs in the gents' room (just getting our ticks, boys) and phone in bomb threats (fake ones of course right). Thats why we...

Why the hell don't we. Why don't we kick cock every which way we can? Dangerous? Its dangerous to be a woman. While we chat and theorize and read ever so titillating articles the boys back of the boob tube make entertainments that have more and more women as helpless victims of prick violence (there's a statistic out on it) and the newscasters report that "serious" crime is down and that rape is increased.

Well, a he-ro won't save you. But a hero will, specially if she's yourself. They been pushing for a long, long time. Its time push came to shove. Nothing to lose but their balls and our chains.

by bane

## reactions

*The following two letters, are the first two strong reactions we've gotten to "Experiments in Hostility."*

### pro

Hurrah for "B. Razen Cunt" and her article on "Experiments In Hostility." It will take an angry hostile approach, as in the case of the Blacks before the male society will appreciate the seriousness of our cause. We must of course first see the male (all males) as the enemy.

They must be treated as such, confronted as such, and made to feel the power of our anger. "So many of our sisters like Betty "Fried" are conditioned to seek male support in every undertaking, much like Whitey was called in to "help" the black in the early days. No, as Victoria Woodhull in 1871 put it: "We mean treason; we mean secession and on a thousand times grander scale than was that of the South. We are plotting revolution; and we will overthrow this bogus system." I might add, you can't consort with the enemy and fight him and his system at the same time. Rise up angry sisters, righteous wrath can be beautiful!

clue dennis

### con

Sorry to hear the aggression articles will continue. There is no doubt in my mind that the attitude they express does the women's cause more harm than any possible good. If the woman doing these feels that to realize her self she has to do what she describes, that is her problem. Some shrinks, I am told, encourage their patients to express their aggressions and animosities as a means of cure. I doubt the validity of this, but for those who wish to follow the advice, it may be the only way to learn it doesn't work. The mask becomes the face. What I do believe is that for the writer to project her hang-ups into a method is a dangerous approach, or at any rate, putting the stuff into print is-- young and inexperienced women may be persuaded to imitate and suffer for something that would not spontaneously come out of their own natures. People do tend to be impressed by what appears in print-- alas! Especially the inexperienced.

elsa gidlow



"I was a Demonstration Hostess", an article on the obligations and expectations of hostesses, invaded by demonstration visitors, during New Left or Women's Movement political rites is postponed to next issue, so more data can be gathered (but never fed into a data bank). Of particular interest are the experience of commune dwellers and hostesses who had only women guests. So write in your experiences during demonstrations past (like Mayday) or demonstrations present. What did you have to eat? Who cooked? Where did people sleep, get dressed, or make love? No detail too trivial. Also, write in about any ceremonies you've been to or created lately; ceremonies to mark important or not so important life events.

## women's crafts

We're interested in how-to articles from craftswomen. It can be on just one simple process, like how to dye beads, especially with dyes you can make your self, or extracting potions from herbs, or making booze. In the next issue, we'll have the third article in our quilts series.

*The photograph of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas is a still from Perry Miller Adato's film, "Gertrude Stein: When This You See, Remember Me."*

### by

bobbie spalter-roth.....editor  
frances lang.....asst.  
betsy donahoe.....poetry editor  
kary shulman.....layout  
+ bea camp, lee garlington, judy byron  
& shaye kris-spanier.

## lesbian feminist politics

*The fourth in a series of talks given at the Sojourner Truth school for the course in "Tactics and Strategies for the Women's Movement," the following is a condensed transcription of Lesbian Feminist Politics, delivered by Charlotte Bunche.*

Lesbian Feminist Politics is an awkward phrase, but the most important thing we've tried to define is a politics that combines the sexual aspect of lesbianism with a feminist perspective. It defines a certain option for women at the present time in our movement and a certain direction for the future, for the kind of society we want to build.

Inherent in Lesbian Feminism are three concepts. The first is what we call woman-identified woman, which is a concept that states that lesbianism in this day and age is not simply a personal choice: it is also a political issue in this society. Our second point, around the same idea, is that lesbianism is one of the major threats to male supremacy in this country. Our third assertion is that a lesbian feminist consciousness is absolutely crucial to the success of the women's liberation movement and that without that kind of consciousness we will reach the same dead-end we think the women's movement reached a hundred years ago -- despite all its many accomplishments. These are my three basic theses and I'll talk about each one.

### woman-identification

The first, woman-identified woman, is probably the most important one for each individual woman. Although we use the term synonymously with lesbian, it's not quite the same. It's more than the old sexual definition of lesbian that male society has used.

We mean a woman whose identity, whose energy, emotions and life, is essentially centered around herself as a woman and other women.

I think one of the essential questions the women's movement has raised is Who am I? What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be a woman in twentieth century Amerika? Advanced technology has made it possible for us to ask questions that got pushed aside for survival before. In fact, what seemed like luxury questions in the past are today the questions for survival. Only as we deal with self-identity will we build a strong movement that has a political identity and a political direction.

For most women, the concept of ourselves has been built around men, around roles of wife, daughter, or mother. Even the exceptions to these roles which some of us have reached are still in a male-defined context.

At a very early age I decided I was a token. I was more like a man than a woman and I could do anything I wanted to in a man's world. After a few years of doing that I discovered that by being a token I had accepted all the male definitions of who I was. I was doing what they said an exceptional woman was allowed to do. Most of my intellectual and emotional support came from them. I thought they were the most interesting ones to talk to. With my husband I had worked out a fairly liberated relationship, and that protected me from having to deal with what marriage was all about; after all, I had my exceptional man. I wasn't using my energy to support women.

What happens when one begins to deal with woman identification is that you discover that you are on your own; it's up to you and whatever woman you're with or trust to figure out a whole sense of self (and that doesn't mean that nothing from the male world is useful). Rebuilding your sense of yourself as a woman is both a political choice and a whole new way of being that is very painful and very exciting. It creates a new strength in a woman.

There are women I know today whom I think could face anything they could never have faced a few years ago. That is why the sense of self is so important in political struggle. Without it you simply give up. You give up because politically it's going to be very hard to get anything you want.

### sexuality & male supremacy

When I talk about woman-identified woman, the most crucial point is how your life is oriented. Who are the people you spend your time and energy with? What kind of strength does this give you and what kind of new self instead of self-denial?

The clearest thing I can say about sexuality is that once you become a lesbian you discover that lesbian sexuality gives you an enormous additional strength. You discover that women are just as fulfilling and that you are not, in fact, dependent on men at that basic irrational level you once thought you were.

I would not say that a woman could never be woman-identified without being a lesbian, but I think she misses a lot of strength she could have. It's like denying yourself one whole part of what is important to your life.

It's a tricky part, though, because it brings as much pain and struggle as it does strength.

Counting on women is basic to the maintenance of male supremacy. Sex domination of men over women is based on women's having to come to men for fulfillment. To challenge this domination is to bring men to understand themselves and the institutions they have created.

When I talk about woman-identified woman or lesbian feminism, I don't mean to say that lesbianism itself is the answer to the women's liberation movement. I don't think that going off to become a lesbian, to live your life in the same old institutions that heterosexual society has set up, is the answer. I think the lesbians who did this without any political consciousness had a strong instinctive sense of what their oppression was. They tried to get away from it the only way that was available to them. I respect those women who were able to do that, but we're talking about lesbian feminist politics. We have to have a feminist political direction, not simply individual solutions. Lesbianism is one of the strengths with which we can fight male supremacy. It is a notion of a consciousness and community which is political, not just personal.

Almost every man I have ever met -- even the good men who are struggling -- was still operating out of the same old assumption that women will come through for them in some way or other. Wife, mother, girlfriend, even daughter, there is a tradition of women coming through and being the strength behind the man.

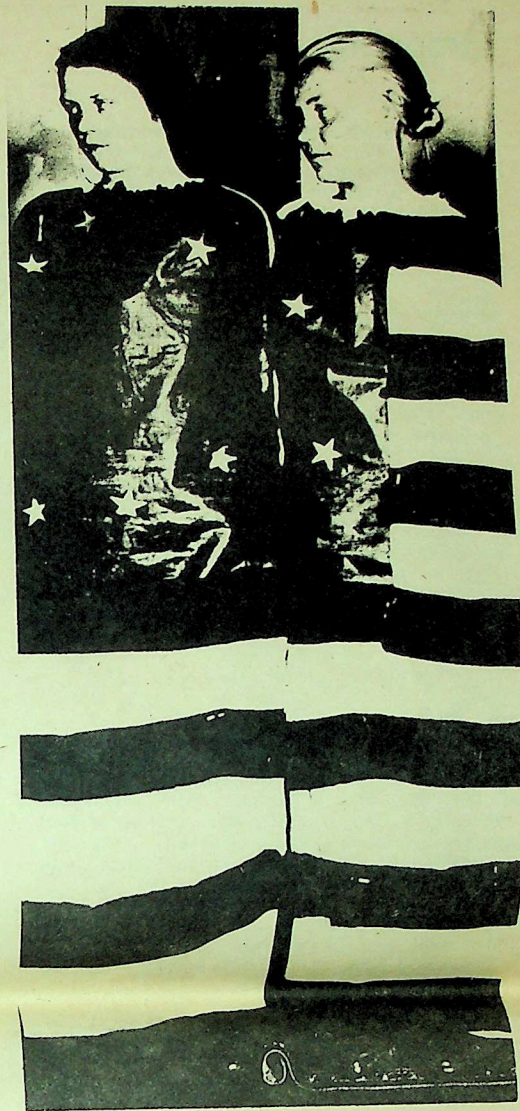
What we are saying now is threaten men, don't always be there to service them. We are saying we will no longer be available, personally and totally. Men are going to have to change themselves and society if they want women to deal with them. The political organizations in this country didn't start taking women seriously until women started leaving them en masse. The student movement was very sexist; SDS didn't deal with that until five or six of their strongest women left. It's the only way things get dealt with. People change because women demand it.

### reproduction

I don't have any answer to the family and reproduction question. At this time, my statement is that women should seize more control over the family and reproduction. We are in a critical position that we have not yet begun to use as a position of power. Men know that if women were to say we are not going to reproduce without some changes happening, that would be a power they'd be unable to cope with.

When women talk about lesbianism together it threatens men because of the potential power involved. If you are going to be a lesbian then you are not going to be involved with reproduction unless you consciously decide you are going to have kids in addition. You are not automatically going to be part of that reproductive and family system. The power to control reproduction is not dependent upon becoming a lesbian, but once you are a lesbian you see what that power really is. When you get out of the system you have been defined into you can see so much more clearly.

Women who have become lesbians and have developed that consciousness can act as catalysts for other women to see the power they have -- even if they do not make that choice to become lesbian.



### economics

Our experience so far says that the same kind of woman-identified consciousness that makes women more powerful in personal relationships has the same potential in terms of the political and economic structure. Once you are fully away from thinking of yourself as defined by family you have a much greater stake in the job market. Your survival is tied up with what happens to women on the job and in the political structure. The biggest threat to the political structures in this country is that kind of politicization of women.

Each thing that builds toward a consciousness and toward an active concern for your life in this society makes us a political force that cannot be ignored. The job market is not prepared for all the women who want to be in the workforce today. One part of the economic crisis of the past few years is, I'm sure, related to women's liberation.

I'm not saying that jobs are the answer. Jobs for women are for shit -- just like they are for most men -- but the fact that women are wanting and needing jobs is one of the elements that has already shown its effect on the economy and ultimately has a lot of potential.

What is important is not solely lesbian sexuality but the questions lesbianism raises about women's passivity and role in society. It hits all the institutions in a harder way.

Sexism is fundamental to all forms of domination in our society. Some people call it the original imperialism. I think this form of domination has conditioned people to accept domination in other areas. The notions of racial domination, of one class over another, of one nation over another, are dependent upon the original acceptance of male over female.

droppings...

BIGGEST OUTRAGE OF THE MONTH--The Nixon administration and food prices and the Watergate Scandal and the IT&T/Chile Affair and the continued bombing of Laos/Cambodia and the impoundment of O.E.O. funds and inflation.

SEND-IN--Mother Earth Bookstore mail order service from Anarchism to Worker's Control. Write to M.E.B., 3429 Fremont N., Seattle, Washn, 98103 for free catalog.--The Politics of Health Care, a 28 page bibliography with annotations on over 400 articles and books by Boston MCHR (Medical Committee for Human Rights) 35¢ from the New England Free Press 791 Tremont St., Boston 02118--Distaff, a new newspaper \$2/year from 1001 Ursuline St., New Orleans, La. 70116--A review of educational films, records, tapes etc, "A Feminist Looks at Educational Software Materials" by Lois Hart R.D. 1, Box 637, Belchertown, Mass 01007.

RIP OFF RED MEAT--It's all a hoax

A NOTE TO MS BETTY FRIEDAN FROM MS CHICKEN LADY--It is true that ten years ago you wrote an important book (The Feminine Mystique) that influenced alot of women and it is true that you helped start N.O.W. However, Betty, be a little humble. There were thousands of women who worked every bit as hard as you building the women's movement. And the women's movement has grown and matured, like Emily, Danny and Jonny--it is no longer your baby. Women have gone beyond equal right (whatever that means in an inherently unequal system) and have begun to analyse and dissect all definitions of being woman. The women's movement is a mass movement whose leaders were made by male media. The women's movement is every woman and every where.

BEST QUOTE OF THE MONTH--from the Cost of Living Council on how to keep down high food costs--"Eat Less." Haven't heard anything like that since Marie Antoinette said, "Let them eat cake."

DROP-IN--Childbirth Conference, Sat. June 2 at the First Presbyterian Church, Bedford St, Stamford, Conn.--Third Annual Women's Festival of the Arts at Calif. State U. San Diego, April 27 to May 18--Conference of Women's Studies and Feminism Survival in the 1970's, May 25-28 at Calif. State U, Sacramento, 916-454-6817--Art show at ..Talking of Michelangelo, 655 C St. SE, D.C.

SAFFRON--In the heat of Spring and in the Frosty of Summer--Remember, that all is not well even if it seems so.

Forever yours,



Chicken lady

international



abortion in canada

TORONTO---On March 16, A cross-Canada conference here rallied to a fine confident beginning refreshed and strengthened by our American sisters' victory in the fight for the right to safe abortion. WONAAC's Dr. Barbara Roberts instilled the fights spirit of your success into the crowd Now, we won't give up till we've won. Highlighting the Rally was Dr. Henry Morgentaler (a Montreal physician who has run an out-patient abortion clinic for about 3 years, against the Criminal Code of Canada) who, against the advice of his lawyer, declared to us that he has performed 2,000 abortions in his clinic with but 27 complications, all of which were satisfactorily resolved. The personal ease, safety and economic efficiency of his clinic were obvious impressive factors adding to this physician's integrity. But, here he is a criminal, convicted of three offences: performing illegal abortions twice and conspiring to commit offence (that is, discussing abortion with a woman and consenting to perform). The excitement grew when a man stepped from the crowd, announced his name and medical specialty and affirmed that he, too, is a criminal, guilty of conspiring. Another physician rose from the crowd to announce his actions as a criminal and conspirer. A feverish peak was reached with the statements by many women daring the federal government to prosecute them as well--they had all had illegal abortions. It was Dr. Sylvia Schasknewicz who made the most significant remark for the conference and the Women's Health Movement: I am a Feminist and a physician. No woman needs a doctor, not even a woman doctor, to tell her to have or not to have an abortion. There should be no more begging to doctors by women. It should be her right to ask and be given." Perhaps, these peoples' admissions will ultimately lead to court action. More sacrifices. It is clear now: we have had too many sacrifices---we cannot afford any more. Hopefully, the conference will convert the confidence and strength into action. We seem to be at a new stage now--the evening's direct challenge to the courts confirmed that. No government can withstand the force of the time when an idea has come.

by elsa king

athletics in alaska

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA---For many years, the standard practice in schools has been to direct little attention or money towards girls' athletics. To equalize the expenditures for Girls' Activities and those for Boys' Activities, the administration and School Board of the Greater Anchorage Borough Schools proposed earlier this year to increase the funds available to Girls' Activities by \$28,000. The budget committee reports, however, that large cuts in the overall proposed funds for Girls' Activities stand in imminent mortal danger. Amy Bollenbach appeared before the School Board on February 20 to support equalization of expenditures.

Amy said that equalization is necessitated by both simple justice and by the fundamental principle that priority should be given to items that will benefit all students.

She argued that girls have even more need than boys for a program of physical development. "Our society has done a great disservice to girls by telling them that physical activities and sports are somehow unfeminine." In fact, she explained, girls have a special need to develop skills and habits of fitness. Regular exercise would alleviate obesity and depression, suffered by twice as many women as men. Developing muscle tone would ease the difficulties of childbirth, which women alone face. Physical development would decrease girls' susceptibility to violent attack and rape. Since girls have less strength than boys, more attention needs to be given to physical development. "If a child can't read, we give him more help, not less," she said. The same principle should apply to physical activities.

Amy went on to say that the budget could be cut by reducing spending for football, since football does not benefit all students or those with special needs. Moreover, football has harmful effect in a high rate of injuries and in the encouragement of an undesirable brutal competitiveness. And finally, she said, football is an activity with less transfer value to adult life than such sports as cross-country skiing, tennis, swimming, skating and golf.

The school board made no reply to Amy's presentation. The matter is still pending.

Just this week a memo, with idea from interested parents was sent to the Superintendent of Schools suggesting three simple means of helping girls' varsity sports:

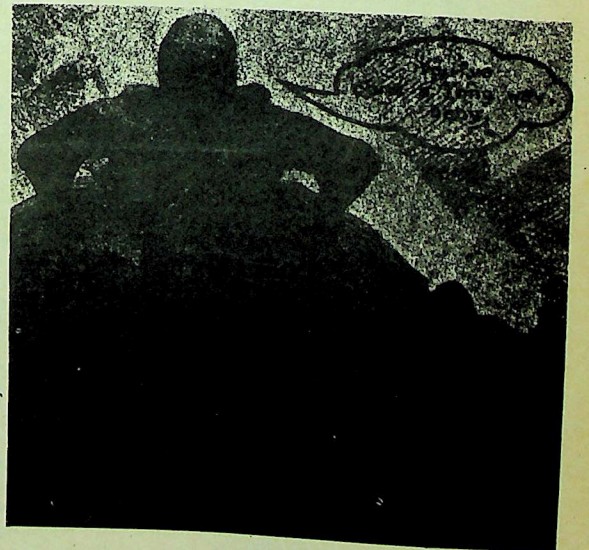
- 1) schedule games at a time when parents can attend (not early afternoon, as now.) 2) charge admission to games, and 3) encourage news coverage.

black mirror

LOS ANGELES--Womanspace, a comprehensive West Coast exhibition space for women, is presenting a three-week program of events "interpreting the black woman's reflections on herself."

Works by five women artists will be on exhibit. Other events include talks ranging from "Art and Black Lifestyle" to "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima," African dances, and a film entitled "Child of Resistance" by Haille Gerima, followed by a panel discussion of the black woman in film.

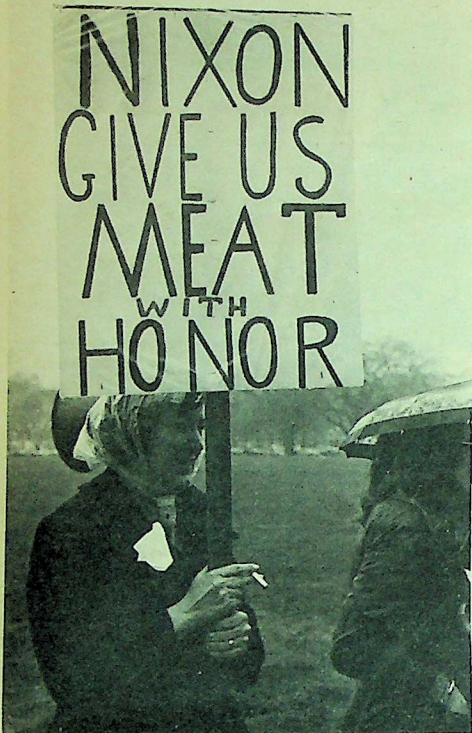
The series "Black Mirror" will continue through April 22. Womanspace opened in late January of this year, as a gathering place for women in the arts, where women come together to exhibit their work, share their ideas with each other, and relate to the wider community. For further information, contact the gallery at 11007 Venice Boulevard, LA 90034, (213) 838-9668.





boycotts past and present

beating meat



photos by deJONES neuman



D.C. women demonstrated at the White House in support of the meat boycott during the week of April 1 through 8 in protest of high meat prices. Along with the boycott, petitions, leafleting and picketing food stores will take place. Women United for Action has joined with many other groups in a nationwide community based boycott.

Here in Washington two major food store chains announced a huge beef sale. But even with the reduction of 10 to 20 cents a pound, chuck roast at \$1.29 and round steak at \$1.69 is no bargain.

women beat farah

EL PASO, Tex.--The National Labor Relations Board decided March 29 that the Farah Manufacturing Co. violated federal law by discharging employees and changing work rules at its El Paso plant in a union busting attempt.

The Gateway plant, the company's largest, employs mostly women. Ninety-four percent of its workers are Mexican-American.

The NLRB ordered Farah, a leading producer of men's and boy's slacks, to reinstate the 19 workers discharged and pay back wages from the time of discharge plus 6% interest.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, AFL-CIO, called a consumer boycott of Farah products in support of its organizing activities. The boycott enjoyed the support of feminist and radical groups and newspapers. Although sales slumped, the company insisted the boycott was not working, according to an Associated Press report.

The starting wage at Farah factories is \$1.70 per hour, 10 cents above U.S. minimum wage standards, but union officials still consider it substandard.

The company is also required by the order not to maintain a practice of "very closely watching and following employees while at work" and not to restrict all personal conversations during work time. Secretaries take note. Organize.

children's benefit

You are invited to enter the spirit and friendship of a spring evening -- for the benefit of the Children's Free Community. Saturday night, April 14, at All Soul's Church (16th & Harvard N.W.) there will be free wine and beer with dinner, served from 7 to 8, a nonviolent puppet show, square dancing, and a latin soul rock band till 1 a.m. Donation \$3.



pee-in

"Instead of turning our hostility out on the motherfuckers, we turn it in on ourselves or on our so-called sisters", Florence Kennedy, a woman lawyer, said at the recent National Conference on Women and the Law. Kennedy felt that we should tolerate the differences of women but speak out against the "motherfuckers." She mentioned the response to Ms. Magazine. "ABC-CBS-NBC, McCall's, Esquire--whatever--can put on any kind of racist, sexist shit and nobody makes a peep. But let Ms. show a little skin, and they're instant traitors." She also questioned what good Friedan's article on the women's movement did. (See Chicken Lady)

Kennedy offered specific advice to women trying to get into law school. "You've got to blow the mind of the interviewer. Don't take anything from him. Tell him, I am going to destroy your reputation, get your job, etc." And more advice for those who are rejected: "Don't delude yourself into thinking you can do better next time by studying, sucking, or whatever. Hold a press conference. KICK ASS, TAKE NAMES, TALK LOUD, DRAW A CROWD".

If a woman ever gets her law degree, Kennedy advised her to go into private practice so she won't be dependent on foundations or the government. She felt that the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) lawyers "never could do much anyway. If they started doing something right, before they could finish it the mayor or the feds would come down on them".

Kennedy also recommended what kind of law women should practice. "There's been too much emphasis on legal defense--I've been through that whole scene getting people's asses out of the wringer--but it's highly romanticized and very inefficient. We've got to get on the offensive". Some of her suggestions included getting reparations for victims of lead paint poisoning, reparations for consumers of products which have excessive advertising budgets, and a Pee-in in Harvard Yard".

## the new women's clinic

*The New Women's Clinic was brought to the attention of this newspaper as a result of the Kennedy hearings on human experimentation. Dr. Brooks who is medical director of the clinic testified in defense of the use of Depo-Prevara as a contraceptive. Depo-Prevara has not been approved for contraceptive use by the FDA. Dr. Brooks does not use Depo-Prevara at the New Women's Clinic. off our backs believes that as a women's newspaper we have the responsibility to evaluate abortion facilities available to women.*

The New Women's Clinic was established by two men in the medical supply business who were sympathetic with the movement to liberalize abortion laws. They believed that by placing the primary emphasis on efficiency, the best care in the area of abortion could be provided at a minimum cost. With this principle in mind they opened the New Women's Clinic at 1990 M Street, Washington D.C.

### a clinic is a clinic

This clinic is not unique in this principle. It is the basis for any health clinic. Monetary costs can be reduced by providing less personal service than a private doctor and in the case of abortion clinics, providing a very specialized service for which a systemized procedure is devised.

There is much that must be sacrificed in a clinic situation. For example, you will not see the doctor at all until you are ready for the abortion to be performed. Extra waiting time is involved. You will be seeing a doctor who you have not seen before, and if you return for follow-up care you may see a different doctor. But the medical care is as good as you could expect to get from an appropriate physician. The disadvantage can be overcome. At the New Women's Clinic the counselors provide the personal treatment which the doctors can not.

The procedure at the New Woman's Clinic takes about four hours. Upon arrival, patients fill out a medical history form and consent to abortion. The fee of \$125 is collected at this time. A counselor is then introduced. The same counselor usually remains with the patient throughout the entire procedure, including the abortion itself. She counsels on the abortion, birth control and anything related to the abortion. Lab test are done for RH type, VD and anemia. Just before the abortion a physical examination is given. A cervical block anesthetic is given unless specified otherwise, and a tranquilizer is available on request. The abortion itself is performed by the doctor by vacuum aspiration. This is the only procedure used here and will only be performed up to 95 days to last menstrual period. After the abortion, patients remain in the recovery room for a short while, depending on whether or not a tranquilizer was used.

All the necessary services related to the abortion are available. In addition, menstrual extraction is performed until 14 days after a missed period. Pregnancy test are done for free. The clinic is open at 7:30 AM so that a woman could leave a sample for testing on the way to work. The phone is staffed from 9 AM to 5 PM, seven days a week to answer questions or make appointments (You may call collect.). Limosine service to and from National Airport is available. Birth control counseling is done and methods are provided. Blood tests are part of the regular procedure and a RHgam injection is given when indicated. Follow-up care is also available.



Glass Mountain Pamphlet-LNS

### abortion clinics phase II

However, these services are not enough because many women cannot or do not take advantage of them. As abortion laws became more liberalized, clinics such as the New Women's Clinic appeared in most places where the laws would allow them. While they do provide the service of making abortions available to large numbers of women, there are basic flaws. First is that they are limited in location, so that most of the women who come to a clinic come from out of town. They are not in a position to be able to use many of the services available. The pregnancy tests and the follow-up care are meaningless to them. Now that abortion laws will be liberalized across the country, this problem will probably be solved.

Also, in the attempt to make abortions available, it is unfortunate that general gynecological care has been overlooked. These abortion clinics could, by expanding the facilities that they already have, make that kind of care as available as they have made abortion.

The New Women's Clinic hopes to be able to do this sometime in the near future. Plans at present include expanding into the areas of women's health care and sex therapy counseling.

The plans for health care are nebulous at this time. The sex therapy plans are not definite either, but Julia Jackson, the woman who is coordinating the project has some idea of what she would like. Julia is not part of the New Women's Clinic staff, although she is the consultant psychologist and was largely responsible for the counseling services which are now provided. In the future she would like to explore attitudes toward sex. Counselors in the clinic have observed that women who come for abortions do not talk about sex often, and when they do, intercourse is often thought of as very remote from the idea of getting pregnant. Julia would also like to do Masters and Johnson type therapy. The relationship between her work and the clinic is not clear but the therapy would be associated with the clinic and would share the facilities. Presumably, both the sex therapy and the women's health care will draw women other than only those who use the abortion clinic.

The addition of these services could greatly improve the clinic. Clinics like this one have been responsible to a great extent for making safe abortions available to women. It is time to make general health care available as well. The New Women's Clinic may be taking a step toward that end.

by carol edelson

willie's kid sister



The diarist Alice James had two older brothers who achieved pragmatic success, i.e., viewed as a process where truth and usefulness fused. William, a philosopher-psychologist, founded the first experimental laboratory in America in 1875 at Harvard and wrote a textbook, *Principles of Psychology* (1890) which has achieved the distinction of being read still by persons who have no obligation to do so. In addition, William developed the philosophical view known as pragmatism, which is a method of discovering individual truth. "The true," he writes, "is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons."

Henry James, who was born in 1843, fourteen months after William, became a citizen of Britain. Although his personality was in many ways the complete opposite of William's, the loyalty and depth of feeling between the two brothers is evident in their trans-Atlantic correspondence.

Alice, the youngest of five children, achieved no fame. Like the other two James siblings, it is possible that she was merely overshadowed by the presence of genius. However, her diary, published in 1964 and edited by biographer Leon Edel, appears to be gaining attention among those of us who wonder what women were doing while men were writing novels, establishing psychology as a science and, generally, painting frescos upon the ceilings of the chapels of the world.

Alice's secret diary reveals an active, intelligent mind which cultivated an objective skepticism toward the world she observed, while seeking knowledge by serious introspection of the world within herself. But her personal struggle was played out upon the stage of ill health. Her major method was withdrawal from the world, a tactic which her brother Henry concluded was the "only solution for her of the practical problem of life." In the same letter in which he writes this, he also suggests that "in our family group girls seem scarcely to have had a chance." Gay Wilson Allen, author of the biography *William James* writes that, "It seemed to her that her mind and her will were always engaged in a war over which she had no control."

teasing needlework

Alice's father, Henry James, Sr., was a vacillating man who seems to have become bored with places and situations easily. As a result of his frequent moves, seven months in France was the longest stretch of uninterrupted education any of his children had. Independently wealthy and lacking one leg, Henry Sr. spent much of his time writing obscure philosophical essays on his personal interpretation of transcendentalism inspired by Emerson and Swedenborg. Although he sought for a lost paradise in Europe, he never bothered to learn the languages. His ambition was that his children would be fluent in foreign tongues, and they did not disappoint him. However, his wife never learned more than a few phrases and the life of the James family in Europe in the mid 19th century seems to have been one of social isolation.

According to Allen, Mrs. James was the "chief source of the family's stability." Yet, Henry Sr.'s personality did seem to dominate in the home, although in an untypically Victorian manner. He "restrained his children by indulgence; he appeared to give them complete freedom of choice." Yet, he may thus have made

it more difficult for his children to rebel against him.

Both in Europe and in America where they returned in 1860 (when Alice was 12) it appears that the boys were more often sent to boarding school while Alice remained at home to study with a private tutor. Allen writes, "Alice probably felt boredom most, without any playmates of her own age; her brothers ignored her except for their habitual teasing, and needlework was almost the only diversion available to her."

When she was fourteen, Alice apparently became a victim of "unpredictable attacks of hysteria." Her acquaintances were limited by the family to cousins and the children of close family friends. By her eighteenth birthday she was diagnosed by local physicians as having "neurasthenic symptoms," a phrase which exists in historical texts. Alice's symptoms included weakness, heart palpitations and headaches, as well as a sudden terror just before dropping off to sleep at night. In addition, "whenever she became especially interested and animated in conversation, she was likely to fall over suddenly in a dead faint."

senseless talk

Henry Sr. arranged for William and two of his brothers to live and study in Bonn, Germany. Eighteen year old William became quite homesick there and concludes one affectionate letter home: "If I ever get back, I will be a perfect sherry [sic] cobbler to both of them [his parents] and to the little Alice too, for the harsh way in which I have treated her." In the winter of 1865 William, who had begun studying at Harvard, embarked upon an expedition to Brazil with zoology professor Louis Agassiz. In one of his letters home, he writes, "Kiss Alice to death." Another letter to the family describes an encounter with wild Indians and refers to Alice as "my beloved white child."

William's letters to Alice never refer to his own troubles and always allude to hers in a "light bantering manner." William and Alice both suffered nervous breakdowns at approximately the same time; yet in his letters to her at this time, he address her as "Cherie de Jeune Balle." His correspondence with her offers an example of that strange masculine-feminine exchange which borders upon the compliment but which might also be taken as disparagement. For example, William wrote to Alice from Harvard that he was lonely for the company of his sister and "wishing for nothing so much as an hour or two of voluble and senseless, though soothing and pleasing talk."

Allen notes that William James vacillates between addressing Alice as a child and writing to her in the "extravagant language of love making." It is up in the air whether William intended to tease, embarrass or to convey affection. Perhaps we can assume the impulse of all three feelings, but if his attitude toward Alice was shared by others in the family, the result must have been a confusion of cues to her.

While William spent a year in Dresden, Germany, he wrote Alice, boasting about the ladies who "unconditionally surrendered" when he showed up. His letters on this subject seem to reveal an openness between brother and sister. On the other hand, I wonder at their possible offensiveness to someone who was leading an extremely restricted life.

Soon William began writing to Alice of "being smothered in American petticoats." "How much more pleasing to this heart is a good, insolent American girl (like yourself) who by her unconcealed repugnance for everything unhealthy about you...goads you [himself] and spurs you to desperate exertions of manliness."

A few years after returning from Europe, William became engaged to schoolteacher Alice Gibbens. His sister Alice became "gravely ill and was nearly insane for several months."

Following William's marriage, her parents' death and Henry's moving to England, Alice found a needed friend in Katherine Pea-

body Loring, "a strong, energetic, somewhat masculine woman of thirty one (a year younger than Alice.)" Alice's health seemed to improve somewhat for years and she made short trips with Miss Loring.

In 1884, when Alice was thirty six, she decided to accompany Miss Loring to Europe, expecting to stay a few months with Henry. She never returned to America. Onboard ship she fell into "mysterious spells" and was so weak upon arrival that Henry had to carry her ashore.

She lived out her life in London near Henry as an invalid with an "invisible malady" who "howled with derision whenever anyone tried to sympathize with her." Two servants and Miss Loring lived with her most of this time. Allen writes that Alice "recognized in William's essay on 'The Hidden Self' a great deal of her own experience; the psychologist had indeed gained much knowledge through sympathetic observation of his neurotic sister."

been dead so long

Considering William's lifelong interest in religious and mystical experiences and in psychic phenomena, as well as their father's spiritual philosophy, it is interesting that Alice exhibited extreme skepticism upon these matters. At one point, during her last years in England, William wrote requesting a lock of her hair for an experiment involving a medium who reputedly received information from the spirit world about people residing far away. She later wrote to William inquiring on the results of the experiment and confessing that she had sent a lock of hair belonging not to herself but to a friend who had died several years previously.

During these final years in London, ambiguous diagnoses by various physicians included "nervous hyperaesthesia," "spinal neuritis," and "rheumatic gout." Alice was again subjected to various treatments, some of which strike us as being bizarre, if not unbelievably cruel. One time she suffered a temporary paralysis from an ineptly administered Galvanic treatment."

In a letter to William's wife, Alice about this time confessed that "I am working as hard as I can to get dead as soon as possible... The trouble seems to be there isn't anything to die of, but there are a good many jokes left still, and that's the main thing after all." The discovery of breast cancer was made soon after.

Upon hearing the news that death was a certainty, William wrote Alice a thoughtful, sincere and affectionate letter expressing hope that she "would be reconciled to the prospect with all its pluses and minuses! I know you've never cared for life..." He advised her to seek hypnosis to alleviate the pain and not to hesitate using opiates if necessary. Referring to suppressed parts of the mind being released upon death, he wrote, "When that which is you passes out of the body I am sure that there will be an explosion of liberated force and life till then eclipsed and kept down."

Alice replied that he had exaggerated "the tragic element in my commonplace little journey.. You must also remember that a woman, by nature needs much less to feed upon than a man, a few emotions and she is satisfied so when I am gone, pray don't think of me simply as a creature who might have been born something else, had neurotic science [psychotherapy] been born."

She made her own funeral arrangements, involving cremation and final burial in America. She wrote in her diary: "This long slow dying is no doubt instructive, but it is disappointingly free from excitements... One revolves with equal content within the narrowing circle until the vanishing point is reached, I suppose."

"If I could concern myself about the fate of my soul, it would give doubtless a savor of uncertainty to the fleeting moments, but I have never felt so absolutely uninterested in the poor, shabby old thing. The fact is, I have been dead so long and it has been simply such a grim shoving of the hours behind me..."

by sandie johnson-jones

# herpes - deadly vd

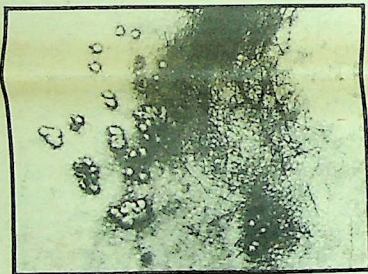
No, it's never happened before. Burns like hot iron when I pee --- and last night I practically climbed the bed post it itched so bad. The doctor? Didn't know...said maybe warts...maybe syphilis...maybe herpes. Said don't worry... only a little sore so far. Only!

Both non-genital and genital herpes sores are acquired through close physical contact where the herpes virus of one person passes directly to susceptible tissue of another person and so it was named the "virus of love". In adults, type 1 (non-genital) affects exclusively above the waist and type 2 (genital) below the waist, and they are rarely cross-contagious.

The sores usually limit themselves to mucous membranes --- type 1: mouth, nose, eyes; type 2: cervix, vagina, labia (lips), penis, anus --- though some type 1 herpes have been found on fingertips in hospital personnel and on the chest and arms in wrestlers (herpes gladiatorum!), while type 2 in a woman giving birth can dangerously infect any area of the infant's body.

Recognized as early as 1736 by Jean Astruc as a venereally spread disease, herpes type 2 (genital) was largely ignored until André Nahmias in 1967 proved it to be a separate virus from its well-known cousin, herpes type 1, which causes "cold sores" or "fever blisters" of the mouth, recognized 100 A.D.

About 80% of the U.S. population show antibodies in their blood (factors resulting from having a specific disease that help you fight recurrences of that disease) to one or both herpes viruses, according to Davis' textbook, *Microbiology*, 1970. Anywhere from 10 to 50% have antibodies to genital herpes, depending on which study you accept. From here on the term *herpes* will only be used to mean type 2, genital herpes.



herpes blisters

## sores galore

The incidence of the first or primary infection with herpes is highest in March, April and May. The sore of the herpes appears 2 to 12 days after sexual contact with a person having the virus though that person may be unaware of having it if the virus is limited to only the woman's cervix or the man's urethra (tube carrying sperm and urine out through the penis). These areas are often infected without noticeable symptoms. (Josey, et.al., *Obstetrical and Gynecological Survey*, 4/72) Initially the sore looks much like a 1/8 inch red, slightly raised blister, located alone or more often with many other blisters on the cervix, labia (lips), vagina, anus, the shaft or glans (tip) of the penis, or in the man's urethra. The blisters itch and in a woman are often accompanied by a sudden onset of discharge from the vagina, often found to be trichomoniasis, a venereally transmitted disease but without symptoms in the male. Within a couple days the blisters break leaving a very tender raw area of skin which burns intensely when touched, when urine passes over it or during intercourse.

There is a general feeling of pain and soreness in the genital area. With the primary or initial contact with herpes, the lymph nodes in the groin often become swollen and the person may have a fever. The herpes in women resolves itself without treatment in 7 to 21 days; more rapidly for the male. Though herpes is the most common genital lesion in women and the second most common in men (after syphilis), the various stages of herpes are often misdiagnosed as 1) venereal warts which are velvet and wart-like in appearance and which occur 1 to 3 months after contact, the

2) syphilis chancre which appears 3 weeks after contact, is larger (pea-size), not tender and gets a scab after it heals, or the 3) chancre which looks like an infected pimple until it bursts and then bleeds easily when touched.

## perennial visitor

Once infected with herpes, the virus remains in a latent stage in the person's body forever. It's not certain what factors bring the virus out of its latency into an active recurrent infection, sometimes as often as every 3 weeks for over a year, sometimes never at all. Contributing factors seem to be infection anywhere in the body, physical trauma or irritation to the herpes site as with intercourse, changes in hormone balance as with ovulation and menstruation (Drumeau in 1880 called it "bouton de règle", button of menstruation), emotional tensions, and environmental temperature changes. Recurrent infections are usually shorter and milder except that psychologically they become harder to handle as they continue endlessly on.

During pregnancy they recur more often and last longer. The 1964-70 study by Nahmias et.al. at Grady Memorial Hospital, Atlanta, showed 1 of every 100 pregnant women had herpes during the pregnancy in contrast to 1 of 300 nonpregnant women those same 9 months. The herpes lasted from 3 weeks to 3 months during pregnancy instead of 7 to 21 days.

## cancer's cousin

Both herpes and cancer of the cervix are now thought to be viruses with latency characteristics that are transmitted through sexual contact though some scientists believe cancer is genetically inherited and sits latent until the right conditions allow it to be active (Todaro, Heubner). There is quite a strong correlation between the incidence of the 2 viruses in the same women. Melnick and Rawls in 1970 claimed that 38% of women with early cancer and 82% with advanced cancer of the cervix had antibodies to herpes in their blood, showing previous infection with herpes. Naib shows a 10 to 15 year lapse between the greatest incidence of herpes (20 years old) and early cancer of the cervix (30 years).

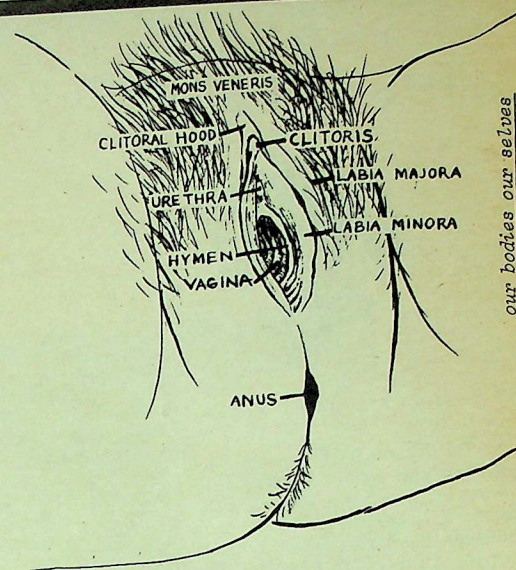
The unanswered question is why the correlation. Is it a coincidence since both are viruses probably venereally passed along? Does herpes change the cervical tissue so that it accepts the cancer virus if it's acquired or stimulate the cancer into action that some believe has been in the tissue all along? Or is a tissue that's receptive to herpes (75% of those in contact with herpes will get the virus) also susceptible to cancer? Until the answer is known a pap smear every 6 months is recommended for women with herpes in their past.

## fatal to infants

About 10% of pregnancies normally end in miscarriage but when the woman has had a herpes infection anytime before or during the pregnancy, the rate increases to 34%. Naib claims in *Obst. Gyn.* 35:260,1970, that women whose herpes attacked them within 18 months of the pregnancy had a 55% miscarriage rate and those with herpes diagnosed during the pregnancy had a 62.5% rate of miscarriage.

About 1 of every 3500 deliveries in this country occurs during active herpes in the mother and if the infant is delivered vaginally instead of by cesarean it has a 40-80% chance of acquiring the virus through its eyes, mouth or skin as it passes through the cervix, vagina and labia. This follows the presently accepted theory that herpes of the newborn infant is not acquired across the placenta from the mother but in the birth canal. Support for this theory is given by the fact that these affected infants appear healthy until they're 4 to 21 days old when their appetite, activity and weight gain decreases, and they begin having loose stools and being irritable.

Of those infants who do acquire the virus approximately 2/3 will die, and 1/3 will survive, the majority with disabling brain or eye damage, reports Nahmias et.al., *Adv. Ped.* 17:185, 1970. Various treatments have been so far unable to save these infants. If the herpes is detected before or during labor and before the membrane (bag of water) has been ruptured for 4 hours, a cesarean delivery will avoid the infant's contact with the virus and offer an almost 100% chance of healthy survival.



our bodies our selves

## lab talk

Since 43% of herpes in women is confined to only the cervix and therefore without external lesions, the only sure way to detect active herpes is to have a cytology test to confirm the presence of the virus. For a fee of \$5.00 the simple test is performed by swabbing the cervix, vagina and any suspected lesions with a sterile Q-tip, spreading the smear on a slide, and fixing it by the Pap technique used to check for cancer, Giemsa or Wright's stain. It can be read in less than 30 minutes by your doctor, whoever reads your pap smears, a laboratory or anyone familiar with the purple-stained multinuclear giant cells containing intracellular eosinophilic inclusion bodies (... info to tell your doctor when you're told he/she is not familiar with the test, it can't be done, is impractical or expensive). The other test for active herpes detection is a tissue culture that costs \$100, takes several weeks and requires expensive equipment. To check your blood for antibodies against herpes, a serology test with neutralization and complement-fixation titrations can give you the results that same day for \$10.

Once you are sure the problem is herpes, most of the treatment is symptomatic to relieve the discomfort: soothing baths and topical viscous novocaine to numb the painful lesions if they're on the labia or penis. Some women wear a tampon to keep the vaginal discharge from irritating the raw lesions on the labia. And some have to urinate in the bath water so it doesn't burn their lesions. Doctors may want to prescribe antibiotics like sulfa to protect against the herpes getting infected but this rarely happens with average cleanliness.

## new drugs - old attitudes

There's a new drug that can be applied directly onto the lesions but whose total effects are not yet known. IDU, iododeoxyuridine, helps minimize the severity and length of an attack by interfering with viral DNA synthesis, but doesn't prevent further recurrences. It's not recommended during pregnancy because it's readily absorbed into the body's cells along with the herpes virus and thus possibly is toxic to the fetus. Reports say that large quantities given systemically (to the entire body) rather than locally cause bloody diarrhea and depression of the bone marrow (where blood cells are produced). It may be safe in the long run when applied to lesions but that's not known.

Other health measures include pap smears every 6 months for cancer detection and strong consideration of cesarean delivery if herpes are detected through weekly cytology tests the last month of pregnancy.

You should be aware that the attitude of gynecologists has not changed much since R. Debré said in 1958, *Strasbourg Med.*, "Such is herpes simplex, a common infection, barely a disease --- so why talk about it?" Holland and Brews' *Manual of Obstetrics*, 1969, has nothing about herpes in its 866 pages, Shaw's *Textbook of Gynecology*, 1971, has 7 lines and recommends unnecessary antiseptic powders, and Novak's *Textbook of Gynecology*, 1970, gives one column and recommends sulfa creams. Hayne's *Medical Complications During Pregnancy*, 1969, should be complimented for good coverage in which he refers to Nahmias' recent research.

pam kalishman

no neuroses

Dear Sisters,

Please start a subscription for me. My address is on the enclosed check. I sent for the article on menstrual extraction and had prompt service. Thank you.

As you can see from the other name on the check, my husband is a doctor, so I read every article in his journals on women, whether as medical students or patients. There is a highly important article in the Feb. 8 issue of the The New England Journal of Medicine entitled "Alleged Psychogenic Disorders in Women--Possible Sexual Prejudice" by K. Jean and R. John Zennane. In this article, the authors suggest that labor pains, dysmenorrhea, nausea during pregnancy and infantile colic are real disease entities with organic cause, not products of a neurotic female's refusing to accept her female role! The latter view is still highly regarded in medicine today, if you can believe it. Also, TNEJ of M is the most prestigious of journals for internists, so this article will have a wide reading in the profession. I urge you to obtain a copy. All medical libraries receive this journal so medical schools there or the N.I.H. out in Maryland will have it.

Keep up the good work,

Sue From

mother earth

Dear Sisters,

I am tired of hearing about the homesteading adventures of men in such magazines as Mother Earth and Lifestyle. There must be some of our sisters out there who like us are working at developing a place. We as women have more to gain by leaving the system and going back to the land than men. Our freedom and lifestyle can be expressed and enjoyed to the full. We are two who are passed forty but we feel we are just beginning to live and can't pack enough into a 24 hour day.

Would welcome correspondence with anyone out there who is organic garden minded and who wants to make it back to the land. Swapping ideas and experiences can help in such a venture.

in sisterhood  
Clue Dennis  
Grindlestone  
RD 3, Naples  
New York 14512

We can recommend one women's magazine that deals with that subject: Country Women, Box 51, Albion, California 94510.

oob

is this for real?

Dear Sirs:

I saw an ad in her-self magazine for "Butterballs," masculine hygiene deodorant. Is this for real?

Thanks for any info you can send

Sincerely,  
R.E. Whinery

*Butterballs masculine hygiene deodorant is not on the market as far as we know. But the Butterballs ad is for real. It is available as a poster from oob and Denver NOW for \$2.50. Order from B&B Posters, P.O. Box 15652, Lakewood, Colorado, 80215.*

oob

abortion counselors

Dear Sisters,

I just bought a copy of the beautiful Our Bodies, Ourselves, and the section on abortion counselors inspired me to write this letter. I am one of three counselors in the only abortion clinic in Florida, Women's Medical Center. We (the doctor) perform(s) approximately 150

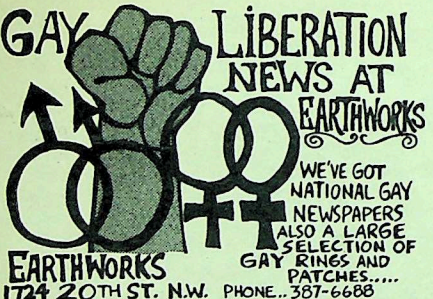



terminations a week, sometimes having to counsel as many as 40 women in a day. Needless to say, it is very difficult to maintain spontaneity and personability with each woman, and to keep the whole procedure from being an assembly line.

The women who work in the clinic are all very fine--some slightly more politically aware than others, but all are slowly but surely becoming aware of the frustrating situation we are in. The clinic is owned privately--by a greedy, repressive, obsessive man who purportedly owns clinics & daycare centers around the country. Whether this is true or not, I don't know, because there are discrepancies in many things he says. Each woman is paid according to how much he likes her--I am paid \$35 more a week than a woman who has been there longer than I have. We are not allowed to hold meetings unless one of the "bosses" is there (the other boss being a woman who is also very repressive). None of us is sure of where we stand--i.e.--our rights as workers, how other counselors around the country work and are treated, and what and how much we should demand.

We would like to communicate with other counselors in New York, Washington, etc. to rap about working conditions, counseling sessions, unionizing perhaps? How about some kind of newsletter? Please help us get in touch with them by printing our letter, sending us ideas or addresses, etc. We see counseling and clinics as a new field, full of so much potential for teaching ourselves and other women. Thank you very much.

In sisterhood,  
Rusty Sevigny  
6255 SW 69th ST.  
South Miami, Fla  
33143

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<p>advertise in </p> <p>We are expanding our ad space and the size of our ads. For information about our new rates please write us. We have not changed our policy about preferential treatment of women and women's enterprises. We will not accept ads which are sexist or offensive to women. There is a free classified section available to women who can not afford our regular rates</p>	<p><b>the furies</b> <b>goddesses of vengeance</b></p> <p><i>A new lesbian feminist newspaper coming out monthly</i></p> <p>\$5. one year 219 11th St. S.E. Wash. D.C. 20003</p>	<p>"MISS SIDEBOTTOM &amp; MISS TOAD" a book of poetry &amp; drawings by gay women. \$1.00 plus 10¢ for postage. Write: <u>Radicalesbians</u>, Gay Center, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, OH, 45387</p> <p>Feminist clinic needs MD for part-time salaried position involving working with and teaching paramedics; patient contact; routine gyn. care. Currently operating under a federal grant. Applicant must be committed to goals of women's health movement. <u>Woman MD preferred</u>. <u>Aradia Clinic</u> 4224 Univ. Way, Seattle, WA 98105</p>

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Volume III, Number 8  
May, 1973  
Washington, D.C.

# off our backs

35¢

a women's news journal

**inside:** underground sister writes-- see p.6  
supercoil: the inside story  
culture(s) pullout with more on quilts  
and a women's hagadah

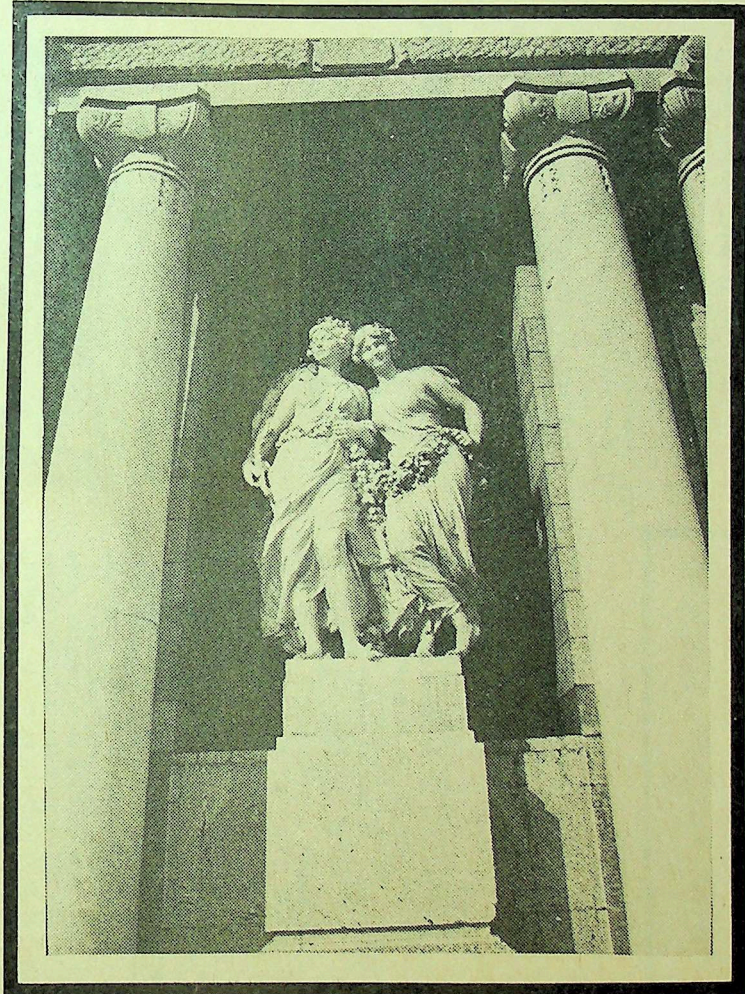


photo by mecca ry lancee

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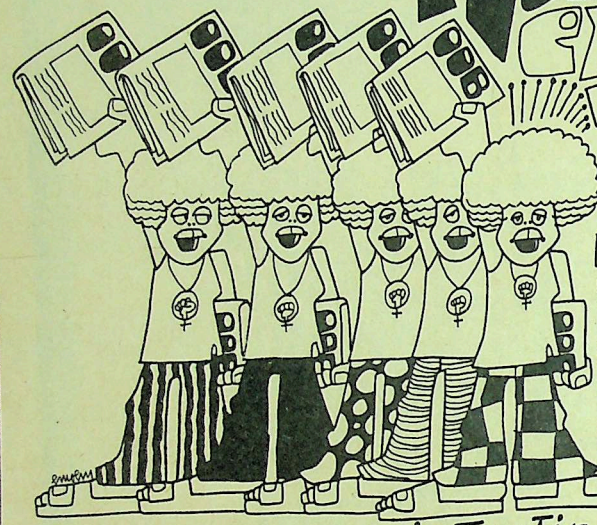
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# off our backs



photo by mecca rylance

This is an unposed picture of a staffer accurately reflecting the financial condition of off our backs. Presently we are alive and broke; shortly we will disappear completely without your help.

The cost of printing has gone up in recent months, so that while we are operating by the same budget we are losing money and stand to lose the whole project unless you help.

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### US

frances chapman, tacie dejanikus, carol edelson, chris hobbs, pam kalishman, frances lang, betty page, fran pollner, mecca rylance, gale samuels, bobbie spalter-roth

### friends

judy byron, nancy ferro, peg griffin, norma lesser, emily orzech, kary schulman

## super-coil controversy

it started a year ago...

A year ago, on May 13, 1972, twenty poor, young women from Illinois and Indiana, most of whom were black, were forced through poverty and restrictive state abortion laws to seek second trimester abortions in a Philadelphia clinic after the women-run clinic where they were scheduled to have their abortions was closed down by police.

Although saline is usually used in abortions during the second trimester, 12 to 24 weeks after the last menstrual period, the method used in Philadelphia was the "super-coils", a seldom-used technique.

The incident has had enormous repercussions in the women's health movement, especially in the controversy surrounding Harvey Karman, a psychologist known for his invention of the Karman cannula and his involvement with menstrual extraction (see oob, december). The event was the subject of an investigation by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The incident was also cited in testimony in March, 1973 before the Kennedy Subcommittee on Human Experimentation.

The abortions were arranged by Merle Goldberg, of the National Women's Health Coalition, and performed by a Philadelphia doctor, Baron Gosnell, a Los Angeles doctor, Benjamin Graber, and Karman. Goldberg called the Philadelphia Women's Center to get help in arranging housing for the women from the Midwest.

This much of the sequence of events seems clear; almost every event following has at least two versions. According to Goldberg, she made every effort to arrange for free saline abortions but was unsuccessful. Because the situation was an emergency, she turned to a method which had been used in another emergency, she said. (Many Bangla Desh girls and women, who had been raped by Pakistani soldiers, would have been forbidden by religious custom to return to their homes if they had had the children. Karman spent several weeks in Bangla Desh with a team of doctors performing super-coil abortions and training paramedics how to do them.)

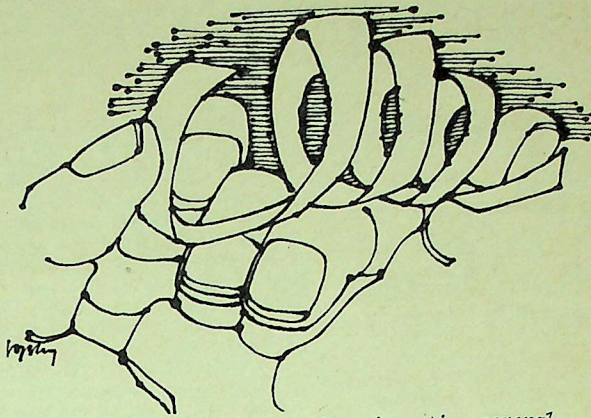
When the Philadelphia Women's Health Collective learned what was going to happen that weekend at the Gosnell clinic, they went there to meet with Goldberg. The outcome of the Health Collective's observations was a five-page paper called "The Philadelphia Story: Another Experiment on Women" which condemns Karman, Goldberg, and the super-coil method.

Phyllis Ryan, who was then associated with Choice, a non-profit abortion referral service, has filed suit against Karman for practicing medicine without a license. Goldberg refers to Ryan and her colleagues as "Ryan's Vigilantes."

## karman's and goldberg's story

According to Goldberg and Karman, when they arrived at Gosnell's abortion clinic Saturday night, they were immediately confronted by a phone call from the Philadelphia District Attorney threatening a bust. The District Attorney's office denied making any calls to Gosnell's clinic. In spite of the threat, they proceeded to treat the women as soon as they arrived by bus from Chicago late that night.

Only 15 of the women needed the super-coils: two were determined to have spontaneously aborted prior to leaving Chicago and three to be in the first trimester. The super-coil method involves inserting into the uterus, in a manner similar to IUD insertion, several plastic strips which coil up and slowly unwind inside the uterus. In Philadelphia the women



The super-coil method involves inserting several coils into the uterus. Each coil is 13 inches long when unwound.

required from four to twelve coils each. After ten to twenty-four hours, the coils are removed. If spontaneous abortion doesn't occur, the fetal material is removed and then the uterus is checked for additional material with a Karman cannula.

While the abortions were being performed, women from the Health Collective came to the clinic. Goldberg says she met with them on the clinic steps for a combination of three hours discussing the technique and other questions. Their most frequent statement, she said, was "we don't know anything about it." Exasperated, she finally told them to call Malcolm Potts. (Potts, associated with Planned Parenthood in London, arranged for Karman to go to Bangla Desh.) "If you get me a place, I'll stop [the abortions]," Goldberg said she told the Philadelphia women.

Karman's explanation of the Philadelphia women's reaction is that they thought he "was invading their turf without giving adequate notice". He said he received a phone call from one of the Philadelphia women before he left California inquiring about the super-coil method. He gave the woman several sources, but when he checked later to see if she had contacted any of them, he found that no one had received any calls, he said.

## ryan's story

Phyllis Ryan, formerly with Choice, found out about the planned abortions a half-hour before the women arrived. She was disturbed to learn that second trimester abortions were to be performed in an out-patient clinic and even more upset that Gosnell was involved. She claims that both Gosnell and Goldberg lied when they told her that Gosnell had hospital affiliations and had used the super-coils before. Neither of the doctors had had previous experience with the coils. Another woman from Choice, Sue Wise, stated further that Choice refused to even refer women to Gosnell's clinic for first trimester abortions. She did not give any details.

Ryan was worried about the experimental nature of the super-coil method and wondered how well the women had been informed as to the risks. She asked Goldberg to stop the procedures for a few days because she wanted to find a hospital that would do free salines, although she told this reporter that that would not have been too easy. She also arranged for the women to be examined by a doctor at one of Philadelphia's major hospitals after the abortions, but Gosnell turned down her offer, she said.

Ryan says that Gosnell jeopardized the lives of the women and she has brought suit against Karman for practicing medicine without a license because she thinks he's a "shyster" who needs to be stopped. A decision has not yet been reached in a hearing held in California in April, 1973 to consider extradition of Karman to Pennsylvania. If he is not extradited, charges will be dropped, said Walter Cohen, the assistant District Attorney in the Philadelphia Fraud office. If convicted, he could receive a maximum sentence of five and a half years in jail.

## feminist health collective's story

Ryan from Choice and the women from the Health Collective did not work together before the Philadelphia incident and were often unaware of what the other group was doing during that weekend. As soon as the collective found out about Goldberg's request for housing (Goldbergs says she called three days before and the collective says the afternoon before), they started making calls to find out more about the super-coil method.

Ann Shalluck, a member of the Health Collective, who assembled the final version of the "Philadelphia Story", explained that the group had found out that perforation was one of the more common complications and that they felt there were serious questions about the use of super-coils. She added that no one from the Health Collective phoned Karman. They met with Goldberg but felt their questions were dealt with evasively. When they asked about complications, Shalluck said, Goldberg told them the procedure was painless and had no complication, although she said Goldberg has since denied saying there were no complications. In retrospect, Shalluck said, the Health Collective thinks they should have made more of an effort to get the women saline abortions. However, at the time, the Health Collective decided they could be most effective in trying to make sure the abortions were as safe as possible. They asked several medical students to help at the clinic taking blood pressures and looking out for trouble situations. They also got an intern to spend the night with the women at the house arranged by the collective.

The Health Collective, like Choice, had some reservations about Gosnell's clinic, although after checking it out, they did refer women there for first trimester abortions for awhile. Gosnell's lack of hospital affiliation was a clear drawback. Although this did not deter one of the women who had major complications (profuse vaginal bleeding and shock) from being admitted through the emergency room, it did mean that Gosnell was not the attending doctor. Karman, Shalluck said, was opposed to taking the woman to the hospital, but Gosnell had insisted.

## t.v. interview

Shalluck also charged that in a film of the super-coil abortions made by the educational T.V. station of New York City, Channel 13, Karman led viewers to believe there were no complications.

A well-informed woman source, who had a close connection with the Philadelphia incident, said that the woman who had been admitted to the hospital had "almost died."



# controversy cont'd

## serious complications

After discussion with some of the women from the Midwest several days after the Philadelphia incident, the source said that their attitude toward the doctors and women who had helped them was protective because they didn't want them to get in trouble and they were glad they'd had their abortions and were still alive.

Seventeen of the women from the Midwest returned to Chicago early Monday morning; two more flew home and the woman who was admitted to the hospital remained there for a week and a half. The director of the hospital notified an official in the Philadelphia Department of Public Health who called the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC investigated and reported on the situation. Their report analyzes the method, the "operators", and the environment. It states that nine or 60% of the fifteen women had complications; three of the women had major complications, as defined by the Joint Program for the Study of Abortion report. In the Joint Program Study the complication rate for saline-amniotic abortions was 27.9% for 5,973 women. Although data based on only 15 cases is statistically unsound, the CDC report is basically favorable, Goldberg says.

On the other hand, Sidney Wolfe, M.D., of the Health Research Group, a Nader organization, cited the same report when he described the Philadelphia incident as "human experimentation at its worst" in his testimony before the Kennedy Hearing on Human Experimentation in March, 1973. Wolfe focused his attention on the three women who had major complications. The woman with the most serious complications, profuse vaginal bleeding and shock, was transferred to a hospital where a hysterectomy (surgical removal of the uterus) was performed and the administration of seven units of blood failed to stop the bleeding. A tissue examination revealed several large lacerations of the uterus.

Ryan was disturbed by the fact that the hospital to which the woman was taken didn't usually perform second trimester abortions and tried to get her transferred to another hospital. Goldberg says the woman was annoyed at Ryan's interference and to this day is still angry at her.

The second woman with major complications was hospitalized the day after returning to Chicago because of severe abdominal pains. She was treated for suspected acute pelvic inflammatory disease and was discharged 10 days later but was readmitted the following week with fever and abdominal pain. A surgical probe for suspected acute appendicitis revealed endometritis (inflammation of the lining of the uterine cavity).

The third case involved a woman who after complaints of fainting and fatigue was found to be severely anemic several days after the abortion and in need of iron injections and oral iron.

## medical pros and cons

There are several difficulties in trying to find out about the safety and efficacy of the super-coils, whether super-coil abortions should be performed on an out-patient or in-patient basis, and whether they can be performed by paramedics as well as physicians. Prior to the CDC report, only one unpublished study by Lee Newman, M.D., existed. The study is based on the super-coil abortions he performed on 32 women in a small Los Angeles hospital and reports no major complications. However, Newman is no longer performing super-coil abortions because, he said, based on his own observations and those of other Los Angeles doctors, he decided that the problems of infection, perforation, hemorrhage, "messiness", and frequent visits associated with the technique didn't support their continued use. He said he "would recommend that other doctors didn't use them," although he did feel the super-coils "might warrant research."

## "fantastic" alternative

At San Vincente hospital, a 17-bed women's hospital, where Newman performed his super-coil abortions, Lilly Spitz, head of counseling at San Vincente, said that in the past the hospital has done 60 to 80 super-coil abortions on an in-patient basis. She felt the advantages of super-coils were "fantastic from a patient point of view." She cited less pain, less time, no labor and a low risk of infection as some of the advantages. She felt that doctors who had tried and rejected super-coils did so because they took more work on their part than saline. (The coils have to be inserted, removed and then if the fetus is not spontaneously aborted, it has to be removed with forceps. After delivery of the fetus, the uterus is evacuated by vacuum aspiration. With a saline abortion the doctor gives a saline injection and then comes back for delivery of the fetus. However, some doctors, even at major hospitals, never return after the injection.) Spitz wouldn't recommend super-coil abortions on an out-patient basis, but would like to see a college or university study of the procedure. She said that San Vincente hospital is not doing any super-coil abortions now.

Karman, who pioneered the technique, said that he has used the super-coils for 20 years with "nothing more than minor infection" as a complication and thinks that doctors don't like them because they find them inconvenient. He believes that there is "virtually no chance of perforation" and said he was not convinced that the uterine lacerations of the woman who had the hysterectomy did not happen in the hospital rather than at Gosnell's clinic. In reference to the Philadelphia incident, he said that there was "nothing

experimental about it at all." The complication rate of the Midwest women was "totally unusual" and the "environmental" factors which the CDC report felt might have influenced the high complication rate was the probable explanation, he said. Under environmental factors, the CDC report included the late hour the abortions were begun and the threat of a bust. However, the CDC report also states that "the relative lack of experience by these operators may have been a factor contributing to the high morbidity." Karman would like to try to get research fund for a study of the super-coils.

## "too dangerous"

Goldberg would also like to see a "carefully controlled study" done but thinks that the recent adverse publicity before the Kennedy hearing will militate against funding. She thinks there is "no contest" between saline and super-coil abortions and said that if she ever needed a second trimester abortion, she would prefer a super-coil one "hands down." She defended the lack of experience of the doctors because using the super-coils, she said, isn't very different from inserting IUD's. In his study, Newman wrote that the super-coils are "ideal for use by paramedic personnel."

Carl Tyler, M.D., chief of the section of the CDC which did the report, thinks that the super-coils "offer relatively little new in abortion technology", although he feels that we need new methods badly. Tyler said that one of the problems with the super-coils is the high infection rate. He asserted that there was no reason to think that super-coils took less time or were less painful than saline abortions. He added that if Karman had observed that super-coils was ideal for paramedics, he had "overstated the case."

Wolfe, of the Health Research Group, is much more adamant in his disapproval of super-coils. He thinks any research should be killed as "too dangerous," especially when saline has a "good track record." He sees some of the major problems with super-coils as the risk of infection and the chance of perforation because of the weakened condition of the uterus in pregnancy. In his testimony before the Kennedy Committee, he quotes a gynecologist who said that the use of the super-coils is "not based on sound physiologic principles."

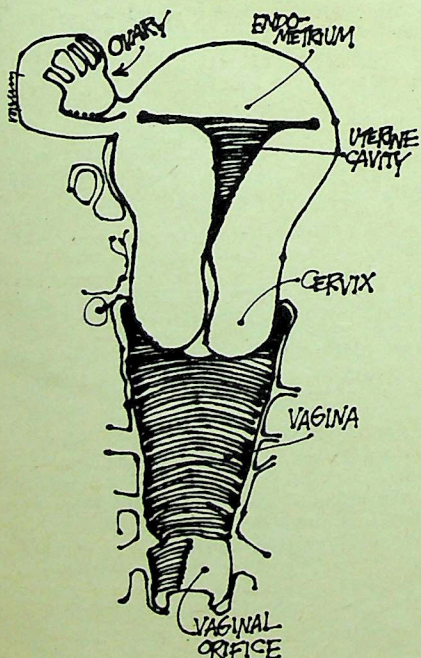
Shalluck, of the Philadelphia Health Collective, said that although there are some problems with saline abortions, she doesn't think the super-coils is a "very promising technique" because of the high infection rate and perforation problems associated with it.

## future experimentation

Most of the people who criticized the super-coil method are anxious to see the development of new methods of second trimester abortions because of their awareness of the serious problems with the saline method. The development of new methods raises several questions:

- \*Who should decide if a method is theoretically sound?
- \*Who should decide if the practical benefits outweigh the disadvantages?
- \*Who should the new method be tested on and what kind of informed consent is valid?
- \*Who should follow the course of the new method in the following years to make sure it was as good an idea as originally believed?

cont'd p 11



## brooke(cont)

changed my mind a little bit, at least on non-fiction. Fiction and poetry we carry should definitely be written by women.

The other question was if we carry non-fiction by men, should we get stuff by Norman Mailer. I thought we shouldn't at the time. But we've been thinking of a "Know Your Enemy" section, and that is where Norman Mailer should go. As Sue Sojourner said to me: "Some women are taking women's studies, and I could see some unhappy woman like you who might have to study Lionel Tiger's *Men In Groups* for a course." I had to do that in my sexual identity course. I started coming down to Washington on Thursdays and spent Monday through Wednesday at Antioch.

Q: What relation does the bookstore bear to KNOW [a feminist publishing house in Pittsburgh]?

Brooke: Sue, who started the bookstore, is a member of KNOW in Pittsburgh. At first the bookstore started out as a D.C. distribution center for KNOW articles. For the past year or so, she wanted a bookstore and mail order house and now it's beginning to happen. People write in and we order books for them. It's done out of the house she lives in.

Q: You were in Radicalesbians in Philadelphia. What is the relation between a woman's sexuality and a woman's politics?

Brooke: I see lesbianism politically. I define lesbianism as putting all of our energy into women and not giving out any to men or men's causes. If you love women, you're not going to stop at one pint, you're going to go all the way through. I also see self-identification as a lesbian as important. This is a different definition from the typical definition of lesbianism. And I've been using the phrase "gay woman" to mean just a woman who sleeps with other women. It gets kind of confusing.

Q: Do you think there is an old-gay/new-gay dichotomy?

Brooke: I think to some extent there is a dichotomy. And at the women's dances I've attended here, it's funny because like around 11:00 or so at night, I can look around at the women on the floor and see the split between the freak women who may or may not be gay and the women who are obviously gay, who are from the bars or something. There's a difference in dress and dance style and what they drink and a whole lot of things.

I tend to judge people by their politics. That's another thing I had to learn the hard way, that not all gay women are necessarily radical feminists.

Q: Do you see lesbian separatism as something worthwhile and viable in the movement?

Brooke: To an extent. For a while in Philadelphia. I never thought we should have a separate lesbian movement. I see lesbianism as an important part of the women's movement.

### major contradiction

Q: You've written about the danger to the women's movement of the Socialist Workers Party. Why it specifically?

Brooke: It is the difference in ideology and not just in tactics. It is a liberal mistake to think just the SWP is bad, and just to get after them on their tactics, though their tactics are pretty rotten. But most of these left groups use about the same tactics except that their tactics are a little less rotten. They're all coming from the perspective of Marxism, where class struggle comes first and women come up as no. 2, no. 3, or no. 17. They are just using the women's movement to recruit to their group. This has been happening since the women's movement started and the reason why a lot of the time we're so vulnerable to that sort of thing is that a lot of women haven't cut the umbilical cord with the left. So when groups like the Attica Brigade come around and start guilt baiting, which they do about class and race and stuff, there are a lot of women who are going to fall for it. One thing these groups have in common is that they are extremely buggy about lesbianism.

Q: Do you know anything about the anarchist-feminists in Chicago?

Brooke: Yes, I get the Siren newsletter.

Q: Would you include them?

Brooke: Not really, because at this time, I don't see the anarcho-type people as a real threat. As far as I know, the Siren women aren't working for any particular organization.

I'll say one thing about the anarchists. They're the happiest damn women in the movement. At least the utopian ones are.

The left groups are getting more subtle, they're getting better at the game of co-optation. Like the New America Movement, they've been pushing this socialist-feminism. Now they're calling themselves feminists. Nobody has really bothered to get together a really good definition of feminism; we've just relied on the dictionary definition, somebody who wants equal rights for women. Even Nixon can say that. These groups have been defining feminism for their own ends. My main objection is on ideological grounds.



Q: Does it really matter what the primary contradiction is?

Brooke: It's where your top priorities are. Feminists see sexism as their top priority. I'd just like to add in the case of the so-called socialist-feminism that it's really fence-straddling between feminism and the male left, that it's really a very conservative feminism and liberal socialism, all bound up in a mish mash with socialism being predominant. That's the impression I got out of the paper that came out of Chicago. There were no clear definitions of anything.

Q: With regard to class, as a woman from a middle-class background, how have you dealt with class privilege?

Brooke: At first I got all these guilty feelings about it, especially when I was first beginning to digest what the Furies were saying, and then I began to figure that middle class was simply where I was born and guilt usually comes about when I'm not working hard doing political work or fighting for something.

Then, I began to realize that, yes, by God, I am middle class. Because the next stage after the guilt I went into was making excuses like "my father came from a working-class background, so I'm only halfway middle class. But that's not the issue, it's where my background is, and my background is middle class. And I really shouldn't hedge around it and I think we should work on honesty, just realizing that we are middle class and that we have these privileges and that we have these options and realizing that we can't make class go away, and being much more aware of all the middle class ways we oppress working class women. In the *Pedestal* [a Canadian woman's newspaper], I saw an article written by a Marxist woman talking about the sin of being middle class. I don't think the class oppression in this country or any place should be reduced to a theological dispute.

Q: What other problems do you see, Brooke?

Brooke: Racism. I have a lot of problems dealing with that because I come from Virginia. Unless racism gets dealt with in a serious manner, not through guilt or anything, it's just going to produce a tremendous explosion because women who are really active in the women's movement are often from the South or have been South in the Civil Rights days. Those who have the best understanding of feminism also have a good understanding of racism.

Also, I think a very serious problem we have is that we have no current ideology. When you ask people what they want for a future society, they'll say, oh, we want a non-hierarchical society, which is nice idealism, but doesn't really say anything very concrete. And I think that one reason the left has found it so easy to hamstring the women's movement, is that we haven't been really clear about an ideology.

Q: How would you define "feminist"?

Brooke: I'll define "radical feminism" because I've thought more about that. Radical feminism is the political theory that sees male supremacy as the basis of oppression, is working to end it as it's top priority, and is working to build a strong female nation.

Q: Could you describe what this female nation would be like?

Brooke: At this point, I think that it's going to take a revolution to get it, and it won't be a non-violent one. In the interim stage, once male supremacy is overcome, we're going to have a dictatorship of women. In other words, I'm transplanting Marx; instead of the major contradiction being between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, it's between men and women, substituting women for the proletariat. I really do not believe what some other women, especially straight women, tend to believe: that men are basically nice people who happen to go down the wrong path. You're not dealing with just attitudes, you're dealing with power and privilege, with a whole social structure.

Q: Would you include in "male supremacy" the supremacy of women who came on real macho?

Brooke: Male world women? Women with male politics?

Q: Yes.

Brooke: I wouldn't call it male supremacy; we'd have to think of a new term for that.

Q: Not necessarily male left women, though. Just women with very male ways of operating.

Brooke: Well, I don't know. I think we're going to have to get away from considering some traits male and some some traits female.

I can see the possibility of a fairly ruthless dictatorship as long as it's a feminist one, as long as its working for women, as not necessarily a bad thing. I do see a problem if it's a very elitist equal rights type thing, with a few women on top with every other woman still on the bottom. What we have to be about has to be all women. We're not working to put a few women on the board of General Motors.

Q: How do you feel about being interviewed?

Brooke: I felt really funny when you asked me to be interviewed. I do think the idea of interviewing people is good, because even in the women's movement press there's this whole star system. I mean everytime Gloria Steinem breathes, almost, you hear about it. One reason for the star system is that not enough credit or coverage or anything is given to us local feminists. And we'd have fewer rip-offs and less opportunism: if people would be recognized, who may not be big names and may never get to be big names, but who are doing things. I was just surprised when you came up to me, I was just surprised, because I'm not really a leader or anything.

### leaders

Q: Do you believe we need leaders?

Brooke: I think we get leaders. Yeah, I think we need leaders, I mean some women do have better consciousness than other women. Some women are more capable of doing things than other women.

Q: What then do you see your role in the women's movement as?

Brooke: Well, my role in the Philadelphia movement was to be an ass-kicker, politically, which is getting on people's asses if I think something is going down that's not right, and worrying all the time. Also I see myself as a literature provider.

Q: What do you do for fun when you're not worrying?

Brooke: Well, I'm very lazy. I like to sit around and read and listen to records and eat. Sometimes I go to women's dances and very occasionally I go to a movie.

## brooke

This is the second interview in the series of interviews oob began last November, the purpose being to give our readers the chance to know the women who are felt to be important by the women in the women's movement, not the male-dominated newsmedia.

We will try to include women who have made contributions to the movement of women's liberation, who have spent time and energy in deepening--and changing--their own personal perspective, who other women perceive as innovative and strong.

Brooke became active in women's liberation while still in high school. She has been active in the women's movement in Philadelphia and in Washington, D.C. She should be recognized for the degree of commitment she brings to her work.

The interviewer is Frances Chapman.

### growing up activist

Q: Brooke, oob first learned about you when you were in high school. Will you tell us about your experiences in high school and in women's liberation?

Brooke: I first started hearing about women's liberation when I was 16--in 1969--when they started having all those articles in the media about it. What finally converted me was an article in the December issue of Life. It was meant to be an attack on the women's movement. However, when I read it, it suddenly hit me that these women that Life was trying to disparage were right.

In April 1970, Reston Women's Liberation had its first meeting, and I got my mother to take me. They started having these seminars, each week on a different topic. I couldn't go to any of them until school was out, because I had a 10 o'clock curfew.

Q: Did you do anything in high school politically with your fellow students?

Brooke: When I was a senior in high school, I sold off our backs! Most of the women at Herndon High School said, oh yeah, I'm all for women's liberation, but... And there was always that "but" in there. One thing I did notice though was that the so-called straight women, in terms of the counter culture, were somewhat more for women's liberation than the freak women. But a lot of the freak women were into "I'm liberated because I sleep with 10 guys instead of one. They always brought up the draft.

I was very depressed during my senior year because I was so isolated, because hardly anybody at Herndon felt as I did about anything. I didn't have transportation and I couldn't go to meetings. I'd begun to see that it wasn't those oppressed women out there, it was the oppressed woman right here.

Q: Yourself?

Brooke: Yeah. There were a lot of tensions in my home. With politics in general. After awhile, my mother would not allow me to mail any letters out, because I'd been writing all over the country to all these women's and left publications. I think what really did it was when she saw a letter I'd addressed to Socialist Revolution. My father works in this think tank for the government and has to have security clearance, so my mother was all upset about that. My parents were of the opinion that I was sick, and every so often little hints were made: "Wouldn't it be nice to see somebody who could help you?" Of course that is upper-middle-classese for going to the shrink.

I started writing during my senior year. I wrote poetry and essays on women's stuff. I had learned during my junior year never to show anything I'd written to my parents, but my mother would keep prying into my things. I'd know she'd be doing it because when I came home, she'd act extra nice to me, and ask me if I liked the dinner she'd made.

Also during my senior year, I started skipping school and going to Washington. The commuter busses would leave at 8:00 in the morning. I went to Washington, and I never told my mother about that. My mother was absolutely freaked out at the whole idea of me even going to D.C. by myself.

Q: When you would come into Washington, where would you go?

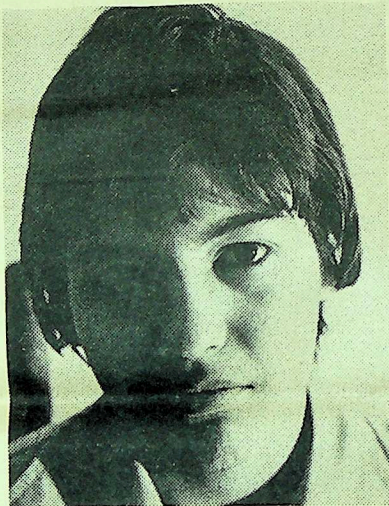
Brooke: Sometimes I visited the women's liberation office on Biltmore St. Sometimes I visited women's communes. Some of the people in the women's communes eventually put the Furies [a lesbian feminist newspaper] together.

Q: How did your life change when you went away to college?

Brooke: Oh, the obvious things. There were no parents on my back. Bryn Mawr is only 11 miles outside Philadelphia, so I was no longer isolated as I had been. I used to take the train into Philadelphia, and I was able to get much more involved in the women's movement.

Q: Were there any conflicts while you were at Bryn Mawr?

Brooke: The main conflict at Bryn Mawr was the academe-activist split. At Bryn Mawr, they work you very hard. There is a lot of required reading and papers. A lot of it is busy work, but all the same it takes time. I was in the Women's Studies Committee at Bryn Mawr, staffed the women's center in Philadelphia and was in Philadelphia Radicalesbians. A conflict was building, because my main interest was the women's movement. I felt that



photos by gayle peabody

with the Bryn Mawr academic scene the way it was, if I wanted to continue, I'd have to devote a whole lot of time to it. I was being pulled in two directions. It was accelerated when I visited the Furies people, in December, because I had sort of been thinking to myself before then that maybe I should leave Bryn Mawr, because I did want at that time to put most of my energies into the women's movement. In the Furies Collective, they gave me this whole thing about class and stuff and about how I shouldn't let my parents control my life, which was true, and I should leave college. This upset me a lot but I did act on it. I came more and more to the conclusion that, if I was too chicken to drop out completely, I could at least take a year's leave of absence. I did take a year's leave of absence.

Q: How do you see your work? Do you see yourself as a political organizer or as a poet?

Brooke: I have conflicts. At this point, I guess I see myself primarily as a radical feminist.

Q: You have worked in Washington as well as in Philadelphia; can you compare the two cities with regard to the women's movement?

Brooke: D.C. is a very political town. No matter what your politics are, Philadelphia is just not that together politically. There's a left influence in both cities, but it's different. In Philadelphia, the main left influence up to now has been the Quaker groups and the peace groups. In Washington the left is far more radical. In Philadelphia there is the problem of the women's center not really being a center for anything. Various groups hold meetings there. The center sold literature and people would call up. It ended up being a kind of social service. What would happen was we'd end up referring people to other phone numbers. It's very decentralized. There were a couple of together collectives, but they were pretty much into their own projects.

Q: How long were you in Radicalesbians?

Brooke: From September of 1971 to August of 1972. Radicalesbians was not radical at all. At times even its lesbianism was in doubt. It had no overt structure for a long time and all these power struggles were going on continuously. People came to meetings every Monday night. There were no political principles or anything else.

Q: What other activities were you involved in?

Brooke: I was involved with the August 26th women's coalition, which was groups of women and male-left groups, to plan a women's march. It was a definite learning experience. That was when I truly became a feminist to the extent that I will never have any truck with the left at all. Also I helped with the women's art center in the initial stages. I helped with Penelope and Sisters, which was a women's craft store. I brought in lists of books and things for the bookstore to order.

Q: You said you worked with the women's art center, and wrote poetry and stuff. How do you feel art fits in with women's liberation and politics?

Brooke: I don't think that art and politics can really be separated. Back in 1970, when I first began reading women's periodicals, it was very clear to me that there would be a renaissance in women's culture very soon and this is beginning to happen. The women's culture that is beginning will hopefully create a whole new aesthetic. All the aesthetics we've had so far are male-oriented.

Q: Are projects similar in both cities?

Brooke: Yes, there's not a rape center in Philadelphia as there is in D.C., but there's a Woman Organized Against Rape Organization. There's also a health collective. Radicalesbians no longer exists.

There's a better communications system in Washington. Philadelphia has one newsletter, Tell-a-Woman. I'm not including the National Organization for Women and the Women's Political Caucus in this. Washington has not only the women's center newsletter but also the rape crisis center newsletter and off our backs and the Furies.

Q: But they are national newspapers--

Brooke: Yes, but they are newspapers which, when people think of Washington women's movement, they can identify them with it fairly readily. Philadelphia used to have two newspapers, but they died.

### books & studies

Q: You are now going to Antioch College in Baltimore. Are you taking any courses that pertain to feminism?

Brooke: This past quarter I took two courses, one was male and female sex role identities in literature and the other was women and the law. My poetry instructor knows Rita Mae Brown's stuff and all. Antioch is a liberal school, not very feminist at all.

Q: What do you think of women's studies, as a consumer of two women's studies courses?

Brooke: Well, the women's studies things were both taught by liberal people, and in no sense did they want to be considered radical or separatist; the syllabi of the courses weren't very women's liberation movement oriented at all. Most of the people were just into personal liberation. The instructors of the social research and action section mostly are these very macho men. They are political, but not remotely feminist. In the director's collective there is not one woman.

Q: Would you tell me about First Things First Bookstore? When did you first start working for it?

Brooke: I first saw an ad in off our backs. For at least a month, I toyed with the idea of calling up and finding out what was going on, because I'd long been interested in bookstores. I wanted to see a bookstore start in Philadelphia and I just really like handling literature and books. So I finally did call.

At the first meeting I went to, I was sort of one against the million, but I've been in that position an awful lot, I think. One of the issues was whether we should carry books written by men. At the time I very vehemently said we should not. Now I have

# letter from the underground

jane alpert on feminism

On May 9, off our backs received a manila envelope containing a letter and a manuscript, which we have printed in full.

Jane Alpert pleaded guilty to conspiracy in the bombing of government property in the spring of 1970 and then went underground.

We, on off our backs, believe it is the responsibility of the radical and women's press to make it possible for revolutionary voices to be heard --especially when they come to us from the underground.

Although we cannot absolutely vouch for the authenticity of the manuscript, we have checked with a woman who knew Jane, who says that the straightforward writing style and exposition of ideas is characteristic of her.

Dear Sisters in the Feminist Media,

First of all, greetings.

Second, I am enclosing a piece hopefully for publication in your paper, which is entitled "Mother Right: A New Feminist Theory." Having gone underground three years ago as a committed leftist, and since become a radical feminist, I regard this piece as a distillation of what I have learned in these three years. The piece describes the process by which I became a feminist, and devotes a fair amount of space to my vision of the future, for you, for myself, for the planet.

The piece is in two parts which may be published consecutively if that is more convenient. The first part is in the form of an open letter to my sister-fugitives in the Weather Underground. However, I intend it to be meaningful to many other women, and particularly to women working in the left or on left causes. I expose hitherto unknown information about the Weather Underground, not merely to shock but to challenge other women to confront the oppression we face in the left. I urge women to leave the left and leftist causes and begin working for women, for ourselves.

The second part of the piece is structured around my political/religious vision as a feminist and as a woman. I believe that what basically unites us as women is our common biology, and that biology is therefore at the same time the source of our oppression and of our potential power. The feminist revolution will be at its root a religious transformation of society, in which society-wide recognition of the creative principle as female will take the place of worship of the modern (male) God, and women will simultaneously gain not merely respect but true power.

Should you publish this piece, I have three requests which are of great importance to me. 1) The piece is to be published without any cuts or editing whatsoever. 2) I would be grateful if you would refrain from publishing any photograph or drawing of me which would make it more difficult for me to stay underground. 3) Finally, I would appreciate your publishing the reactions of your readers, as well as your own reactions, to this piece. Because of my position, I have no way of getting feedback from most other women in the Movement and in the world!

Dear sisters, I want you to know that the existence of papers like yours has been crucial to me in coming to feminist politics as a fugitive. I feel very close to all of you, partly because of my former over-ground commitment to radical journalism (though out of a political vision I have since rejected), but mostly because your courageous work has constantly reassured me that I'm not alone. To all of you whom I know personally, and all of you whom I don't--yet, more thanks than I can say, and much love.

In sisterhood,

Jane Alpert

ual oppression of the left, if only to warn other sisters against the pain that has been inflicted on us. Perhaps you personally will never open up to feminism; yet the experiences I am going to relate may speak more effectively to women involved in other branches of the left, from McGovern organizers to Socialist Workers Party members. And I have some hope that the impact of a public statement may do what none of my private arguments have succeeded in doing: persuade you to leave the dying left in which you are floundering and begin to put your immense courage and unique skills to work for women--for yourselves.

Since this is an open letter, let me summarize for other women what you already know of my history underground and as a feminist. I became a fugitive in May 1970, a few days before my scheduled sentencing for conspiracy to bomb military and war-related corporate buildings in Manhattan. I was never part of SDS or of Weatherman, and although I'd had conversations with Weatherpeople which were influential in my decision to go underground rather than to prison, I lost contact with the organization shortly after I became a fugitive. I was a serious militant leftist at that time, and the most feminist activity I'd ever been involved with was the all-women's newspaper Rat, which, despite its exclusion of men, remained thoroughly left-identified. In the last three years I have become a radical feminist. The change in my politics has not been sudden, and I want to go into its causes and its substance much more fully later in this paper. For now, I only want to set the scene of my renewed acquaintance with the Weather Underground by saying that when it occurred I was decisively through with the left and had, at least mentally, rededicated myself to the cause of a revolution made by and for women.

It was in this general frame of mind then, just about a year ago, that I was attending a public lecture and, a few minutes after seating myself, noticed a man sitting nearby who looked vaguely familiar. I would not have noticed him at all except for the fact that he was very obviously staring at me and at the same time making laughing, surprised comments to the people around him. I thought with some alarm that he must be either an agent or a dangerous fool, and I was both more and less apprehensive when I finally realized who he was.

It was Mark Rudd.

After I recovered from the shock, I became excited by this rare and un hoped-for opportunity to share experiences with a fellow fugitive and for a short time I relished it in spite of the problems. Rudd was living with a woman I hadn't met before, whom I'll call Caroline. She seemed to be a strong and sensitive person and I would have loved to get to know her well, independently of Rudd himself. This was not possible because Rudd made it difficult for us to see each other without him, and because when the three of us were together he made a practice of interrupting her and seemed to regard himself as the spokesman for them both. Nevertheless, his obvious dependence on her combined with his frequent apologies to me for his manipulative behavior in past years (toward me in particular and women in general) gave me some hope that he had fundamentally changed and might even have become a sympathetic ally to the Women's Movement. I was soon disillusioned.

What finally woke me to the reality of this man's character was a conversation we had while Caroline was out of town. He made a special point of wanting to get together with me at this time and, as we were sitting on the front seat of a car on a rainy evening, he attempted to put our relationship on a more intimate footing by means of the following confession. He told me that approximately a year earlier Caroline had had a serious ovarian infection which made sex very painful for her. This, he said, was the root of a whole range of "problems" in their relationship, ranging



the other woman

Dear Sisters in the Weather Underground:

I am addressing this piece to you, in spite of the fact that my concern at this point is with a far broader spectrum of women than your tiny bank of forgotten leftists, because it was our arguments of the past year that convinced me to publicize my conversion from the left to radical feminism. I realized after these arguments that for me to deep silence would only support the illusion that the "Underground" is united around male politics which you still espouse, and these politics and practices are too reprehensible to me as a feminist to protect them by silence. I know that seeing this letter--which you thought you would receive as a private communication--here in print will shock you and that you will regard much of its content as a breach of the tacit code of honor among political fugitives. Nevertheless, my own politics demand that I share with all women my knowledge of the sex-

from his virtually raping her (he couldn't help himself, he said) to his imagining himself in love with another woman. He described to me how titillating he found it that this other woman looked on him as a revolutionary hero, how she excited him sexually without satisfying him intellectually, how he couldn't resist the excitement of an affair with her though it was causing great anguish to Caroline. The affair ended, however, when he learned that the "other" woman was pregnant by him and that she wanted to have his child. He regarded the pregnancy as entirely her own fault, since she had stopped taking birth-control pills without telling him, and he explained that this willful and self-destructive carelessness--as he saw it--was what had proved to him that "a man can't politically educate a woman." It slowly dawned on me that Rudd was telling me this story (1) because it proved what an irresistibly highly-sexed masculine creature he was, and (2) because as a "liberated woman", not to mention a presumably pro-abortion feminist, he quite sincerely expected me to cluck a sympathetic tongue over his problems with this Dumb Chick.

I told Rudd in the strongest terms of which I was capable how appalling his behavior was to me, but through my failure to sympathize seemed to startle him, nothing I could say would convince him of the seriousness with which I regarded his crimes. "Of course I trust you," were his benevolently paternalistic last words to me. "I know you wouldn't do something like those Boston women who denounced Eric Mann (a Weatherman who served a two-year prison term) as a sexist pig who deserved his imprisonment."

While it wasn't possible for me to establish much of a relationship with Caroline given the short time we were in the same geographical area and Rudd's obtuse omnipresence, I could at least look forward to getting in touch, through Rudd, with women in the Weather Underground. I was wary about this because I knew you Weatherwomen had never given a sign, publicly or privately, of being more receptive to a feminist point of view than Rudd himself. was; that you had never risked the esteem of leftist men in any statement or action; and that the few statements of your organization which made reference to the Women's Movement revealed a complete failure to understand it and an intense eagerness to co-opt it. Nevertheless, I respected--and respect--you in a way I never could Rudd. I knew it was your strength that had held the organization together when the men's desperate egomania threatened to destroy you all. I could count on the fact that as women--and specifically as women fugitives we shared certain experiences that could bring us closer together in outlook and feelings than would be possible with even the most sympathetic and sensitive man. Finally, whatever the risk, it seemed well worth it if I could give even one woman in our situation support that would help her stand up for herself, and for all women, against our oppression in a movement that puts our interests last. Encouragingly, my very first meeting with one of you was a wonderful experience for me, and I was much moved by the warm reception and attention this woman gave me and my politics, and the genuine respect that I felt from her as well as my politics, and the genuine respect that I felt from her as well as for her. (I suspect now, in the aftermath of other meetings, that this may have been partly because she was unprepared for the radical changes in my politics and therefore responded to me openly and honestly. The rest of you had, in advance of meeting me, already admonished yourselves against revealing too much of your "personal problems" as women in a male organization.) For whatever reason, I was, as it turned out, all too ready to plunge into a dialogue in which I used my own skin as wallpaper while you sidestepped and evaded every issue.

Your resistance to discussing your personal experience, your trivializing of your own pain and suffering, your insistence that the oppression of others is more important than your own--these are part of the self-contempt that has been bred in all of us women, and I understand it as I understand myself. I can even deal with your more contrived evasions,

the ones that were obviously developed only after years of building defenses against the threat that the Women's Movement seems to you. I can see why you overlooked security so that, apparently by chance, I ran into one more Weatherwoman than we had agreed I would meet during the brief time we were together, a woman who just "happened to be" rabidly anti-feminist. I know what advantage you saw in circulating a vicious, unfounded rumor about a well-known feminist and then asserting she herself was not to blame for her errors because the Women's Movement was responsible for her psychological destruction. I can understand all too well the reasons for your flip-pant claim that it "bores" you to talk about men, a pathetic way to avoid admitting your oppression.

But the wall I cannot surmount is your insistence that if I really practiced sisterhood I wouldn't make demands on you in the name of feminism, but would respect your political path as equally valid to my own. You want me to accept your claim that you are no longer dominated by men, as you admit you were when you first joined Weatherman, as in fact we all are as long as we live under patriarchy. Yet in the same breath that you claim, "Women run the organization," you admit that of the five members of the Weatherman Central Committee, three are men. And you have no shame in telling me that one of these three is Bill Ayers, notorious for his callous treatment and abandonment of Diana Oughton before her death and for his generally fickle and high-handed treatment of women; and that another is Jeff Jones, who once told that dull-witted misogynist Robert Palmer that if I thought Weatherman was a male supremacist organization, I could "suck his dick." Or have Ayers and Jones now become feminists too--like Mark Rudd, who, after a year's leave to overcome his "arrogance and insensitivity" (which you won't even call by its true name: sexism) you are admitting back into the organization?

The politico-feminist split is a real one, one that will vanish as soon as we accept ourselves as women first of all, but which will continue to divide us until we share that consciousness. It is you leftists, you male-identified socialist and liberal and pacifist and Weather-sympathizing women, who try to deny any significant difference between male politics and feminist politics. "We're all just women," you say, and we are--but to you that is a phenomenon of the most peripheral possible interest, indeed it only seems to occur to you when under fire from feminists. As long as you are working politically with men, as long as you are letting men define your attitudes, behavior and standards, then we stand on opposite sides of the line, a line that exists in spite of your blindness to it, but which I know you too will see once you have crossed it. And to cross it you need do only one thing: let your own self-interest be your highest priority. I am not asking you to stop loving men, or to break all personal and emotional ties with the men who are important to you. I know that those ties are never broken out of a simplistic political decision but only when and if consciousness of oppression makes them so inconsistent with self-respect that they can no longer be borne. Even then it is with enormous pain and grief and in spite of an ever-reluctant part of ourselves that we separate from men we have cared for. I firmly believe that one can be a serious feminist and still live with and relate to a man and to men. The gulf that is between us is not that, but rather that you allow men to rule on your politics.

Believe me, I understand your side of it. I've been on that side--I've practically drowned on that side. Over a year ago I wrote an introduction to a book of the prison letters of Sam Melville, a man I loved and lived with who was killed in the Attica uprising of September 1971. I was already a feminist when I wrote that introduction and had theoretically rejected the politics that Melville had taught me and that he had lived and died for. Yet I had never found the courage or the words to tell him that while he lived, and especially while influenced by the powerful feelings that his murder aroused in me, I was incapable of writing the truth of his male supremacy--that underside of men's lives that only women know--

in my eulogistic essay on his life. Since this is the last time I will ever write about him, I would like to tell some of that truth here.

I was very much pressured, against my own sense of tactics and timing, into playing the role I did in the group of radical bombers Melville half-led, half-dragged along with him. The pressure was of the kind peculiar and common to male-female relationships: he constantly threatened to leave me if I backed out. What he valued in me, besides having a dependable sexual partner and housekeeper, was what he took to be my "independence" and "self-sufficiency"--as he often told me. This made me useful to him as an ally, and further assured him that I had the quality he prized above all others in women: the capacity to love him devotedly, yet get along without him uncomplainingly whenever he chose to leave. The last letter I received from him exhorted me against writing narrow-mindedly of loving and needing him, instead of writing about great social truths (the ones he was concerned with, that is). "To speak of love, especially love between one desperate man and woman, limits our vision and ties us to the past." Yet the same letter ends on an explicitly sexual note: "Yes, sweet bitch, I'll find you." This was typical; he would never "degrade" himself by admitting love for a woman in any fashion not immediately tied to his sexual pleasure.

A few months before we were arrested, Sam began a secret affair with a woman friend of ours whom I hadn't seen in some time. In order to keep us from comparing notes on his behavior he told her he was no longer living with me. He also at least hinted to her that the sabotage of military and corporate buildings around the city was the work of himself and friends. I discovered his betrayal only by the coincidence of having acquaintances in common with the other woman, acquaintances to whom she had repeated Sam's hints. To this day I don't know how many other dangerous, possibly fatal, violations of security his masculinist need to boast led him to commit.

Some will say Melville's sexism was extreme just as his politics were extreme. Yet I have seen his behavior duplicated in the most bourgeois households by males of all political persuasions, economic backgrounds, ages and skin colors. I never know Sam to cook a meal for himself; he once wrote WASH ME in black magic marker on the side of the refrigerator as a cute reminder of my responsibilities; he threatened to leave me, and meant it, if I took up smoking cigarettes after having given them up to please him; he wouldn't allow our lease, our telephone, our utilities bill, our bank account or anything else we shared to be in his name on the ostensible grounds that he was delinquent with his income tax and didn't want to be found through public records. The real reason, it turned out, was that he didn't want his wife to find him and demand the child support he owed her and hadn't paid in years.

He was sexually impotent unless he could fantasize the woman he was with was a prostitute and she went along with his fantasy. At one point Sam joined a political group headed by Rap Brown. This group's attitude toward women was bigotry itself: they didn't include any and they didn't intend to. According to Brown himself, as quoted by Melville, women would be "a distraction from serious business." When I confronted Sam on this, he seemed slightly embarrassed but wouldn't even commit himself to discussing male supremacy with his new idol, Rap Brown. Recalling this, I'm reminded ironically of the division of all-Black bomber pilots stationed out of Texas during World War II who, despite phenomenal sacrifices and heroism were forbidden the supposed privilege of being integrated with the White battalions. How strange it is that not only the man I lived with but one of the most brilliant and sophisticated Black militants of the 1960's should turn out to have the same kind of crass ignorance about women.

And so, my sisters in Weathermen, you fast and organize and demonstrate for Attica. Don't send me news clippings about it, don't tell me how much those deaths moved you.

I will mourn the loss of 42 male supremacists no longer.

See page 22 for Jane Alpert's article on a new feminist theory.

(more)

## paper boys

Everyone had been invited over to the Mayflower in order to watch the fair-haired boys of journalism and politics play with the powerful and dangerous tool mass media is. The occasion was the second annual A. J. Liebling Counter-Convention (counter to the American Society of Newspaper Editors convention going on simultaneously the first weekend in May).

When journalists engage in pedantry they squabble over news judgment and correct attribution. Such squabbling characterized the workshops on "Reliable Sources, How Reliable?" and "Who Decides What is News."

At the Friday May 4th panel on reliable sources, one of the panelists even suggested that there be a standardized classification system for sources, according to level of reliability.

Panelists included John Lofton, of the Republican National Committee, who sent a letter to the People's World on the occasion of Picasso's death saying the only good communist was a dead one. With his encouragement, the audience seemed to be considering the Watergate scandal as the newest comedy act, until a woman from the audience said "Watergate isn't funny" and another woman asked him why he sent the letter. When powerful white middle-class men fuck up, we're supposed to consider it just a boyish prank.

Dick Tuck, publisher of Reliable Source at the Miami convention, Democratic spy for Barry Goldwater, and political prankster, got laughs for his political sabotage, such as arranging for embarrassing Chinese signs to be photographed behind Nixon during an election campaign.

Milton Gwartz, a Kennedy campaign aide, said that the press is often manipulated by leaks. He believes that if reporters have to identify sources they stick closer to the truth.

The panelists came with clippings for evidence, like high school debaters.

James Boyd, the source who blew the whistle on Senator Dowd, advised reporters not to discount what an informer has to say because of his motives. Check out the story, anyway, he said. Other useful advice was given by Leslie Gelb of the Brookings Institute, who said that when dealing with people on the staffs of officials, the reporter must remember that no staff is on top of things. People just have pieces of the truth. It is up to the reporter to fit those pieces together. A jewel of wisdom in a pile of bullshit.

"Who Decides What is News?" was more informative. Opinions ranged from "journalism gets too bogged down in stories of significance" to "newspapers should stop printing polls."

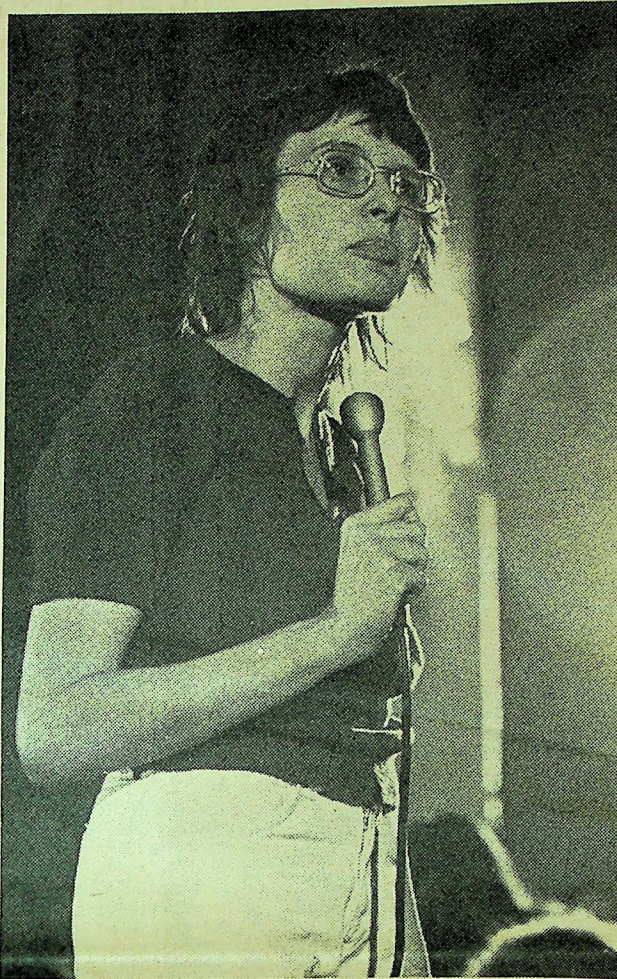
Victor Gold, Agnew's press secretary and one of the panelists, said that since the press manipulates the news anyway, he wants the news to be manipulated the way he wants it to be.

The audience also learned that only easy-to-explain stories get on television (don't stop buying your daily) and that Jann Wenner of Rolling Stone turned down Carl Bernstein -- one of the Post's Watergate reporters -- for a job. The Counter Convention turned out to be academic exercises on Establishment themes.

by frances chapman

## 'a pat on the ass'

The organizers of the Second A. J. Liebling Counter-Convention coordinated by (MORE), a New York journalism review, were liberal enough to set up one workshop out of 21 assorted panels



frances chapman

photo by gail samuels

Their tokenism was pitifully exposed by the topic: the original title was Newsgathering on the Canape Circuit, later changed after protests from one of the panelists and others to How Women Cover Washington: Do They Need a Special Style, View, Eye, Portfolio or Other Refuge?

When you think about it, the implications in the second title may really be worse than the original one. Unfortunately, two of the four women on the panel consciously or unconsciously (this reporter thinks consciously) furthered the lie that women want to use the power of their bodies as well as their brains to perform their jobs. While it may be true that they need to use their "femininity" to get the scoops their bosses want, the remarks by Sally Quinn of the Washington Post that "if a senator is putting his hand on my fanny and talking about how he's thinking of impeaching Nixon, I'm not sure I'm going to remove his hand" sound a little bit strange coming from a woman who calls herself a feminist. She did add that she is "a reporter first and a feminist second."

While Marlene Cimmons of the Los Angeles Times said her editor, a woman, views the combined women's and entertainment section called View as a forum for "contemporary human behavior" and therefore presumably not insignificant gossip, Isabel Shelton of the Washington Star-News admitted that she wouldn't be working for the women's section if she weren't a woman. She mentioned how she had tried to get moved "city side" two times with no success.

In an interview directly after this workshop, Flo Kennedy, founder of the Feminist Party, commented that these women exemplified those who use the "technique of sucking," which

is understandable, she said, "in a heavily oppressed community." She remarked that women are "entitled to decide on their own best survival technique" and added that she is "glad women can earn a decent wage where the worst consequence is a pat on the ass; a housewife might get slapped."

by tacie dejanikus

## what's the alternative?

"It's [the More Conference] been pretty boring so far, but we're a different kind of media and we do things differently," said the moderator for the workshop "Alternate Media: What Can They Teach the Straight Press?", as joints were being passed around and preparations for movable microphones were being executed.

## conspiracies

About 1000 people gathered to hear underground press representatives detail the ways in which they operated and the scandal/conspiracy stories they had broken months before the straight press even started investigating them.

(continued on next page)

## now's 'adjunct'

Art Kunkin of the L.A. Free Press launched into an hour-long account, with visual aids (numerous back issues of the Free Press), of how he and his colleagues had tracked down and printed stories on the Kennedy assassination and numerous facets of the Watergate mess a long, long time ago. He recounted, too, his efforts to induce straight press reporters to utilize their superior resources and finances to investigate his leads -- with little response.

Dialogue between the straight and underground press was minimal. Some people stated there could be no exchange because the straight press wasn't willing to accept information sent its way due to its basic belief in the viability of the American system. One underling reporter for an establishment paper noted the bind he was in -- wanting to followup stories not palatable to his corporate management.

A lawyer in the audience denounced the session as a "revival meeting" instead of an information exchange.

## exclusion and tokenism

Establishment types, however, weren't the only ones disturbed by the workshop. A writer for the Daily World (Communist party paper) castigated the workshop organizers for omitting the black, radical, and labor press from the agenda. "The underground press is not just astrology columns and fuck ads," he said, "it's all the media of the oppressed -- and you haven't taken any of us into consideration." He was hissed.

Frances Chapman, of off our backs -- the only feminist publication of the seven included on the panel -- took the underground press to task on several counts.

Following Art Kunkin, which she said was a hard thing to do, she stated: "The underground press thrives on huge, sensational conspiracies -- conspiracies propagated by a male-dominated society. It doesn't consider the shocking, daily conspiracy perpetrated against the women in this society as newsworthy. It doesn't take women seriously, either in its news coverage or in its treatment of the few women who remain on its staffs, who find they are treated as underlings and cannot write about subjects relating to women."

"Off our backs was started three years ago by a woman for whom working on the Guardian became intolerable."

"Off our backs is alternative in two ways -- alternative to the straight press and alternative to the male-dominated underground press, both of which operate according to a competitive one-upmanship credo. We don't. We work cooperatively, we teach one another our skills and develop our potentials for doing everything involved in putting out a paper."

"We share the difficulties of the underground press -- meager finances, lack of access to distribution facilities, the constant threat of having to fold -- but we are a token at this conference, a token at this conference and excluded from the NOW workshops. [NOW had conducted an "educational adjunct" consisting of four workshops because the More conference had largely neglected women and the media. Women from the straight press, radio and tv and recognized women authors had been invited to speak on the panels. Although the "adjunct" had been organized by NOW women in New York and Washington, D.C., off our backs had been ignored, presumably not considered legitimate enough to participate.]

Chapman concluded by stating that off our backs, in both its content and the process by which it is produced, is an alternative truly "revolutionary."

She was followed shortly after by Paul Krassner of The Realist, whose characteristically lively presentation was liberally sprinkled with sexist jokes.

by fran pollner

The New York and national capital area chapters of NOW organized "an educational adjunct" to the (MORE) journalism counter-convention held in Washington, D. C. the first weekend in May to protest the small number of women on the (MORE) panels.

## freedom and feminism

The first NOW panel this reporter was able to attend dealt with the problems of women writers. The panel consisted of many well-known women writers, some who freelance such as authors Nora Sayre and Claudia Dreifus and others who have regular columns such as Nora Ephron in Esquire and Ellen Frankfort in the Village Voice. There were no representatives of feminist media and only one woman from a straight newspaper, Judy Flander of the Washington Star-News. About 80 women and 15 men crowded into the small room at the Mayflower Hotel.

The problem cited most frequently by the panelists was the often conflicting relationship between the "truth" and one's feminist politics. Ellen Willis of the New Yorker magazine said that some feminists expect to find ideology in all her writing and can't understand why she wants to write criticism of rock music. "To them, she said, "once you've said rock music is sexist, you've said everything there is to say about it."

Ellen Frankfort, health columnist for the Village Voice, discussed how she handled the problem of politics versus professional ethics in her column. In her recent coverage of the women's self-help movement of the East coast, she did not mention an incident where a woman got a serious infection after menstrual extraction although Frankfort did write about the problem of infection generally. When the women who were proselytizing for self-help menstrual extraction claimed there were no complications, Frankfort criticized them in print and "was attacked more harshly and in a more distorted way than by a doctor" who had criticized her for giving the self-help methods publicity. She said the attacks by other women were very "old-fashioned" such as describing her a "hysterical" or commenting on what she wore. She said she was "sorry she waited so long" before criticizing those who "withheld information under the guise of feminism."

Nora Ephron who writes a column entitled "Women" in Esquire said that she "found herself holding back, not using details and quotes which made women look foolish." She remarked that when Phyllis Chessler's book, Women and Madness, was reviewed by women reviewers, they tended to examine her ideas but ignored the fact that it was a "sloppy book."

The panelists did not fail to explain their hesitation in criticizing the ideas and actions of other feminists. As Claudia Dreifus, author of Radical Lifestyles, mentioned "men editors encourage anti-feminists to cover things." Ephron said that she "feels as if she is giving anti-feminists a wedge" when she is critical of the women's movement although she claimed that she "feels free in Esquire but feels restrained in women's magazines or the New York magazine." However, she did remark that after a column on consciousness-raising she "threw a bone to Esquire" by writing a piece on the movie, Deep Throat.

Nora Sayer, author of Sixties Going on Seventies, asserted that women "must report bad news even if it will be used by opponents. We have no alternative or we will become hacks for the movement and lose our credibility." Willis commented that "where you put your piece is important. It is better to put a piece in Ms. so as to criticize from within rather than pleasing some male editors."

Flo Kennedy, author of Abortion Rap and founder of the Feminist Party later commented when the floor was opened to questions that the preceding issue of politics vs. "truth" was "relying on the myth of objectivity which never existed anyway."

The panelists also discussed the problems of writing for traditional women's magazines.

Dreifus commented that her first publisher was Cavalier, a "tit" magazine, which sent her to Northern Ireland. "No women's publication would have sent me," she said. Roslyn Lacks, a freelancer and writer for the Village Voice, said that the Ladies Home Journal and other women's magazines are "disparaging and belittling of women" in their constant coverage of "how many pizzas women eat and the curler count." Susan Braudy of Ms. said the only magazine she wouldn't write for was Cosmopolitan. She denied that a party line existed at Ms.

However, a woman from Newsweek claimed that Ms. had changed her article on child care because she had strongly criticized a pro-child care lobby headed by a woman as being weak." Two of the panelists later told this reporter that the only magazine they wouldn't write for was Ms. However, Willis asserted that there is "no absolute freedom on any magazine."

## biased coverage

The next workshop, entitled What Reporters don't bother to Find Out About Washington, had a totally different atmosphere. An author, a reporter, a senate staff member, and a woman on the ERA Ratification Council talked about the distortion or lack of coverage in the straight press of events affecting women.

Mary Gereau of the ERA Ratification Council claimed that a state legislature defeat of the ERA always warranted front page coverage, but passage or a reversal as in Connecticut were hardly ever mentioned. She also commented on the inaccurate view that all labor opposes the ERA and she cited the Teamsters, the Auto Workers, the American Federation of Teachers and other unions as supporters of the amendment.

Lucy Komisar, author of The New Feminism, remarked that the press often examines issues superficially and she revealed the reason for Mayor Daly's opposition to the ERA: When Daly opposed the ERA in Illinois, the press did not report that his opposition was not philosophical but merely political retribution because the woman who introduced it had once supported Stevenson.

## power plays

The last workshop, Power in the Newsroom: Women Organize to Get It, consisted mostly of a "how to organize" session and the panel and audience examined some of the most common problems that arise with sister workers and management.

Lucy Young of Newsweek gave organizing advice:

- . Extensive groundwork through questionnaires and talking to women is essential.
- . So is legal advice.
- . Use publicity. The threat of publicity is often more powerful than that of a law suit, especially for journals that pride themselves on their liberalism.

Some of the problems mentioned by other women included deciding whether to organize only the writers and researchers or to include women in the business and advertising departments as well, fighting tokenism, organizing small staff and getting women to take the jobs they've pressured for once they are finally offered. Young said that at Newsweek the women have set up an independent training program staffed by the publication's women writers. The program, she said, was the "single most optimistic thing in terms of morale."

Nancy Stanley, who works in the office of the General Counsel at the EEOC, sounded a pessimistic note when she said that real change in employment discrimination only comes when one threatens to or goes to court with a class action suit.

by tacie dejanikus

## lesbian conference—1200 strong?

Due to the financial insolvency of *off our backs*, we were unable to send a reporter out to California to cover the West Coast Lesbian Conference held in Los Angeles April 13-15. We had contacted a correspondent in the area, but her arrangements to attend the conference fell through at the last moment.

Twelve hundred women from eighteen states showed up; Robin Morgan, Kate Millett, Rita Mae Brown and Margaret Sloan were spotlighted; there were workshops and entertainment. But we really don't know first-hand what the spirit and content of the conference were nor its possible consequences.

With apologies for our not having our own coverage and analysis and with appreciation for the descriptions afforded by the two writers below, we are reprinting excerpts from two articles -- with rather different perspectives -- that appeared in two other publications.

We also phoned Barb McLean of Lesbian Activist Women, the group that had organized the conference, and asked her to respond to charges leveled by the San Francisco women (the second article). A report of that phone interview follows the excerpts.

### 'renewed strength'

Twelve hundred women joined hands, wept and laughed together as Robin Morgan closed her keynote address to the West Coast Lesbian Conference.

The conference was to be a political gathering of what has come to be a merging of the various women's groups around the country. A political gathering...but emotions were high, spirits were flying, and doing political work (at least political in the strictest sense) was the last thing on our minds.

There were all the expected workshops: consciousness raising, sexuality, collective living, radical therapy. And new ones: writers workshop, gay mothers, fine arts, music and politics, racism, socialism.

The program was impressive, but there were problems -- like when the gay mothers met and found themselves once again dealing with how to settle the problem of day care for their children at the conference instead of dealing with their own problems as lesbian mothers; and when the divisions began between women's movement lesbians and gay movement lesbians, and between socialist feminists and sex-role liberationists.

We spent hours together, trying desperately to pool our forces, because above everything else, we felt the power of collectivity.

Sitting in the midst of this confusion I couldn't help but notice things I had never seen happen before:

A game of football on one side of the lawn; baseball on the other.

The sound of flutes, guitars, bongos and tambourines penetrating the atmosphere.

Kate Millett, a real person, reading her intensely personal poetry.

On Sunday, after dancing and partying the night before, the sessions began with more focus on issues and direction.

The workshop on lesbian activism centered on two areas: women working toward establishing a new culture (living in the country, women's media co-ops, theater groups, music) as well as working for social change (sexual law reform, gay civil rights, alternative services providing day care, feminist counseling, job placement, and challenging existing services to better meet the needs of women).

Third World women challenged the conference by asking that the issue of racism be a strong priority in the women's movement. A suggestion was made that time be set aside at future conferences for Third World and other groups to caucus around common concerns.

The call was for unity -- for women to be conscious of their differences, but to rally on their similarities.

And the 25 or so of us women who traveled from Arizona came home with renewed strength, knowing we are not alone.

by colleen elegante  
Arizona New Times

### 'inept mess'

And the \$64,000 question is -- "What is supposed to happen at a lesbian conference?"

No one seems to know the answer, least of all the people who planned the West Coast Lesbian Conference.

The conference turned out to be a bitter weekend of in-fighting, coups against the people who organized it, and strong-arm tactics by the organizers.

The organizers were Lesbian Activist Women (L.A.W.), of Los Angeles, affiliated with the Lesbian Tide. Something just didn't set right about that group. They ran the conference with an iron hand, rammed their speakers and agenda down our throats, over our objections, and made the microphone generally unavailable to the 1200 lesbians who had come to the conference.

We were manipulated like a big dumb crowd.



photos by colleen elegante/Arizona New Times

Our attention was directed to superstars and huge useless plenary sessions the way a lot of people's minds are sucked in by television.

Saturday was workshop day. It started at 10 with a two-hour speech by Robin Morgan. How come we didn't have a lesbian speaker like Del Martin, or one of us. Why was the chosen speaker well-known, a writer, a "somebody"? Some people were turned off by Robin Morgan, some people were turned on, but it didn't matter much anyway because there was no opportunity for us to discuss her remarks with each other, analyze what had been said, ask her questions. No time had been allotted for our participation.

Workshop time. There are no workshops on classism and racism or agism. Childcare not provided for. Meals not provided for. Transportation not provided for.

We fought and screamed at each other all day Saturday. Musicians fought with each other for the privilege of displaying their precious art in front of their sisters. "SISTERS!" they pleaded, "listen to us." Until the word -- sisters -- became obnoxious, manipulative.

Where was everybody from? What is women's liberation doing in Seattle these days? What's happening across the nation and on the west coast? We wanted to talk to each other, to hear from each other, but that part of things didn't pan out. Who wants to hear Kate Millett

babble about her publishing problems, poor famous dear. We want to hear from sisters, to exchange ideas with them.

The final outrage was that Lesbian Activist Women expected resolutions to come out of this conference. How could we agree on anything! We didn't know who we were, who was represented, what we had in common, how we differed.

The final plenary session was a dramatic and appropriate finale for the whole inept mess. Resolutions were proposed, hissed, booed, screamed at. We were streaming out the doors by the hundreds until there was no quorum. The West Coast Lesbian Conference died a divided, lonely, confused, abused death.

Back in San Francisco most of us were still wondering what had hit us. A week after the conference there was a meeting of San Francisco women to piece together our fragmented understandings of what had gone on.

There was a general feeling that L.A.W. might be affiliated with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Whatever L.A.W.'s politics were, and this was fairly mysterious, we felt helplessly unorganized against the concrete agenda of the L.A.[W.] Conference.

Supposedly 25 women had planned it. Was there another political body (SWP)? that wanted to tap lesbian political energy? Was L.A.W. its front?

We can't say. San Francisco women were, I repeat, mystified. And we felt the lack of a San Francisco lesbian/feminist political bloc.

Must we organize to make ourselves heard at future conferences, to prevent L.A.W. or any other organization from manipulative ventures in the name of sisterhood?

How can the average dyke in the street keep from being co-opted? It is a political problem no one is prepared to deal with.

by carol de arment  
San Francisco Women's Newsletter

### 'a nightmare'

According to Barb McLean, Lesbian Activist Women (LAW), a Los Angeles-based, 30-member group, arose last fall out of a convention of the National Caucus of Gay Organizations (now defunct). The women there held a closed lesbian assembly, at which it was decided to form a Southwest Lesbian Working Committee to plan a lesbian conference. The conference was to be held in Los Angeles, with women in that city acting as sponsors and others as area coordinators.

The precise goals of the conference were "vague. We wanted to give birth to and unify the lesbian/feminist movement. We didn't know exactly what the lesbian feminist movement was, but we figured we'd find out at the conference. We'd find out whether we could have our own movement [as opposed to the gay and women's movements] and how it could relate to the others."

Women of diverse interests and ideologies attended: lesbians who were separatist in relation to men, lesbians separatist in relation to straight women, humanist lesbians; some came with political purposes to pass resolutions, others to share culture; and some, who probably would not have come otherwise, were there to hear the women who were slated to speak.

Concerning the "superstars," McLean said that Robin Morgan had been specifically requested by many L.A. women who had appreciated her poetry reading there several months before. She said, too, that both Millett and Morgan had been invited to speak at UCLA's (the scene of the conference) women's week and that the university had paid their transportation there. She added that participation was open to all women to present whatever they wanted to the conference.

The agenda, too, was open, McLean said. A skeletal structure and agenda had been prepared, but on the assumption that it would be revised and supplemented at the Saturday morn-



## lesbian conference (cont'd)

ing plenary. LAW had arranged previously for many more rooms than the initial agenda called for, anticipating that the women would require additional workshops.

"The problem was that there were so many women there with such different priorities that people were always grabbing the microphones. The microphones were there, no one was blocked from them, but there was a great deal of turmoil. There were arguments about what workshops to have, whether there should be workshops at all. There were 60 entertainers who wanted to share their culture with everyone at once -- they didn't want any workshops or to have to compete with workshops going on simultaneously with their performances.

"Maybe we were naive in trying to combine culture and politics. But LAW had felt that both aspects were critical to the movement and to our own lives."

McLean said workshops were set up on classism and racism and that both worked out resolutions to present to the closing session for a vote. Objections overrode any voting that might have taken place.

Child care arrangements for 150 children had been made with the university, but the university reneged several weeks before the conference. Men from the local gay community service center volunteered to provide child

care, but women at the conference complained that facilities and staff were not adequate. Only one or two of the 1200 participants offered to help, however, according to McLean.

Five members of LAW are also part of the Lesbian Tide staff. As for other affiliations, McLean said, "LAW is an independent lesbian/feminist separatist [from men] organization. We will work in coalitions with other women's groups on issues of concern to lesbians. We will have nothing to do with the Socialist Workers Party, the Democratic party, the Republican party. We don't believe in political parties and we won't permit any organization to co-opt us.

"We have been red-baited before because our politics are similar to the SWP's in that we are an activist organization, seeking a broad base, believe in demonstrations and in unifying our movement. Many of us are socialist. The difference is we don't want a strong lesbian/feminist movement simply to facilitate a socialist revolution."

McLean said the conference was a "nightmare," but that some good had come of it.

Lesbian mothers decided at their workshops to hold their own conference.

Publications people got together the day after the conference ended and made plans to establish The Grapevine, a national commun-

ications network for lesbian and lesbian/feminist publications.

Many new women were attracted and several new groups were initiated.

Communications were opened up among women of similar interests.

The L.A. lesbian community was offered a radio program one hour a month and the L.A. Gay Community Services Center is opening up new programs for women.

And the one thing "everyone agreed on was the profound impact of our culture, particularly music."

When asked if she thought a large conference was a feasible vehicle for unifying a lesbian/feminist movement, McLean answered, "Now I don't think it's a good idea. We have too many differences. If you're going to hold a large meeting, it should be single-purposed. People who come will all be concerned about a specific thing, be it a music festival, law reform, or lesbian mothers."

McLean said there will be several long articles on the conference in the May 25th issue of Lesbian Tide.

by fran pollner

## controversy cont'd

Some people are enthusiastic over the prospect of letting the FDA assume these responsibilities and others are resigned to it. But many women in the women's health movement think the FDA has let women down too many times, especially with the Pill and most recently with DES.

[The FDA has approved the use of DES (diethylstilbestrol) as a morning-after pill to terminate possible pregnancy although it has been shown to cause a rare cervical cancer in the daughters of women who were treated with it to prevent miscarriages or for scientific research on pregnancy. Its use in cattle feed has also been banned because of a link with cancer.]

## what can the fda do?

Even those who feel the FDA should do the regulating have problems because at the moment the FDA does not have the authority to regulate devices. Devices can only be regulated after they have been shown to cause harm. Wolfe in his testimony before the Kennedy committee said that legislation to regulate devices is "much needed." He pointed out to this reporter that since 1962 (when a law was passed to give FDA authority to demand efficacy as well as safety of a new drug), the FDA has had a much better record in keeping some harmful drugs off the market.

On the question of informed consent, he stated in his testimony that "the patient must be fully informed as to the benefits and the risks. It becomes increasingly clear that the only reliable way this will occur is to require the physician or other health professional to have patients sign an informed consent sheet--specific to the drug or device or procedure--indicating she (he) has read the information and has made a fully-informed choice to accept the therapy." To insure "quality control" he calls for "surveillance at a local, state, or whatever level is best to ensure good quality of care" and he praised "the revolutionary program of abortion surveillance" initiated two years ago by the CDC.



## what can women do?

One of the major questions "The Philadelphia Story" paper raises is how can women control experimentation over women. They write:

We must continue to develop a network of information accessible to women all over the country. We must investigate and share our information concerning abortion and birth control techniques. This network is crucial not only to our ability to react responsibly and quickly in crisis situations such as Karman's experiment in Philadelphia, but also to our development of long term strategies for gaining control over medical practices in our local situations.

The Health Collective also thinks it is imperative for women to "develop informed sets of medical standards to guide us in evaluating experimentation performed on women." In discussing these standards in relation to "the experimentation into endometrial aspiration", the collective came up with several guidelines:

\*Reserachers must be in regular contact with a consistent group of women, including feminists with health skills, who review their progress and can control decisions about their experimentation.

\*Financial arrangements--are massive amounts of money accumulating in the hands of researchers, backers, or marketers, or are funds being channeled back into the women's health movement for further reserach, clinics, education, etc.?

\*Are women given complete information about the experimental nature of the method, including all possible risks?

On the question of regulation, Shalluck of the Health Collective said that "the women's movement to a limited extent can use procedures and publicity the FDA offers, but we can't count on the FDA to set up guidelines we can trust because they never do things to women's satisfaction." She explained that "especially in the abortion and birth control areas, the women's movement is going to have to take the responsibility to monitor [clinics and procedures], but it doesn't have the resources." "As a logical first step, because we don't have resources ourselves but don't completely trust health officials and doctors, we are trying in Philadelphia to work with people who have the facilities. Another method is working with women health workers trying to provide care." Shalluck is a member of a group called the Abortion Resources Committee, which is trying to monitor abortion clinics and learn about new abortion methods. Although monitoring and research are not long term solutions to the problems of women's health care, "in the short run it makes sense," she said.

The super-coil incident was serious, Shalluck said, because people, like Karman, outside the medical system can exploit women as well as the traditional medical establishment. But the main emphasis of the struggle should be on the medical establishment, she added.

Women involved in the women's health movement are performing an invaluable service by undermining, through monitoring, study, self-help, and other ways, the power and unquestionable reverence accorded the medical establishment which has for the most part cooperated with or tolerated experimentation on women, especially third world women in this country and abroad.

However, while women are beginning to accept the idea that just because someone who is a physician is not necessarily good, the "Philadelphia Story" points out that it is also true that just because someone who is branded a renegade by the medical establishment isn't necessarily good either.

The accumulated evidence casts suspicion upon Karman's abortion practices in Philadelphia, but women should cast an equally watchful eye on all who are trying to work for women.

by tacie dejanikus

## a course becomes a study collective

The following is a description of a course on "Socialism/Feminism" given at the D.C. Sojourner Truth School by women members of the New American Movement.

The series of presentations for the course on "Strategies and Tactics for the Women's Movement" will continue next issue.



country women

Many women in the movement have felt a need to integrate their own feminist insights and the perspective of the women's movement with a socialist analysis of class and how power works in capitalist society. The D.C. chapter of the New American Movement (NAM) wanted to further develop the integration of these two sides of our politics, and so we decided to do a course on "Socialism/Feminism" as part of the Women's Center Liberation School. We chose this method of reaching other women rather than another because we all had had experience with studying and felt we had the necessary skills for this kind of project. We planned eight sessions of films, readings, and discussion, and distributed hundreds of syllabuses around D.C.

The course began with "Salt of the Earth" a film about the role of women in a Chicano miner's strike, and how their participation and eventual leadership in the struggle led to raising the consciousness of both the women and the men in the mining town. The film is a moving example of the interrelatedness of feminist and working class struggles.

### 'contradiction' in theory

During the next three weekly sessions, we discussed general topics: "Introduction to Socialism," "Contradiction" (basic Marxist philosophy), and "Women as Workers." We talked about the division of society into classes, the concept of surplus value, the economic basis of a society's culture and ideology, and some current manifestations of capitalism's workings. We discussed materialism and the dialectical method as a way of viewing reality; we saw dialectical materialism as a means of putting our own lives and the present situation into a historical context, and felt the liberating experience of understanding that history follows a deliberate pattern and is not determined by God or genetics but by people, and can therefore be redirected. We saw "The Women's Film" and each woman talked

about herself as a worker -- how and why she had chosen her "career" and the discrepancy between what she wanted and what she got. During these sessions different women from the NAM chapter gave talks on these subjects and tried to encourage questions and discussion. With each session, there was more and more participation; with wider participation came increasing dissatisfaction with the presentation/discussion format and with the tendency toward teacher/student patterns.

We had planned that the following three sessions would be discussions of particular areas of struggle in which women are engaged: "Women and the Law," "Women and Imperialism" (specifically women in national liberation struggles), and "Women in the Social Services" (health and education). After a short presentation by an Antioch law student on "Women and the Law," we discussed our personal experiences with the legal system, but we failed to bring it into focus from a broader, social point of view, and only began to touch on the function of the legal system in a capitalist society--upholding the power of the few.

At this point, we changed the meeting place and opened the class session to the public in order to show "A Luta Continua" (a film about the Mozambique Liberation Front) and the Indochina Peace Campaign slide show about women in the Vietnamese struggle. This was immediately following Thieu's visit to D.C. and we had hoped to tie the anti-imperialist films in with the anti-imperialist demonstrations that had gone on that day. The attendance was not as large as we had hoped, however, and the discussion turned out to be disjointed and only partially related to this topic.

### contradictions in practice

There was only a small group at the next meeting, and we all realized (at this point "we" includes both the NAM women and the other women in the course who were taking an active part) that we had to come to terms with the direction the course was taking. It was obvious that what we had hoped to accomplish--a collective learning experience that combined the insights of feminism and socialism--was not happening. But what was happening? What were the contradictions between our "plans" and what we wanted or needed from such a course?

We were faced with the necessity of evaluating where we were heading and how we would get there. We called each woman and asked her to come to a meeting to collectively decide future directions. This was the turning point of the "course", and we underwent a qualitative transformation to a small study collective. From 20 to 25 women participated in the course altogether; our study group has eleven members. Now we are deciding together what we will study and what to focus our readings on. We've decided to first try to get a grounding in the dialectical/materialist method, so as to approach our future study (and practice) with the right tools. Along with readings and discussion, we are engaging in self- and mutual criticism, so that each member, and the group as a whole, can use these tools in understanding our own group processes.

The most important thing we have learned from this experience is that people can and do transform a situation through a conscious collective process. We realize that this is not a fixed formula for "success" but an earnest attempt to collectively build a theory which will both guide our present practice and form the basis for our future work, a theory which will unite our feminist and socialist perspectives.

This is a shortened version of an article written by six of the women involved in the study group, which will appear in the NAM Women's Newsletter.

## cambridge-goddard



CAMBRIDGE, Mass.--Students at Cambridge-Goddard School may be keeping journals about their activities in local women's groups as part of their contribution to a history of feminism in the U. S. project to be directed by Rochelle Ruth-child, herself a women's movement activist.

Other projects within the Feminist Studies program are "Women: Class and Consciousness," directed by Ann Sandi Polaski and Laurie Duhme; "Developing and Feminist Media," Gail Pellett; "Forms of Female Expression," Ann Kautzman and Lanayre Liggera; "Socialization-Education, or Let the Children in on the Revolution," Sheila Hoffman.

Also, the "Lives of American Working Women (1870-1970)," by Ann Rubio Froines, and "The American Family: History and Critique" directed by Elizabeth Ewen. May Pardee's course "The Politic of Child Care" and Lise Vogel's "Women, Work, and Class Society" are seminars related to feminist studies listed elsewhere in the Cambridge-Goddard Catalogue.

These courses are to be offered in the fourth year of the Feminist Studies Program beginning this fall. Although the seminars are varied, all students and faculty within the program are feminists. The program is governed by the Women's Council which meets weekly and includes all faculty and students.

The Cambridge-Goddard graduate school of which the program is a part includes not only women's studies but projects in radical therapy, film, and the Third World. The school was founded in 1970 by Goddard College in collaboration with the Cambridge Policy Studies Institute, an independent research institute, an affiliation which was formally ended in 1971.

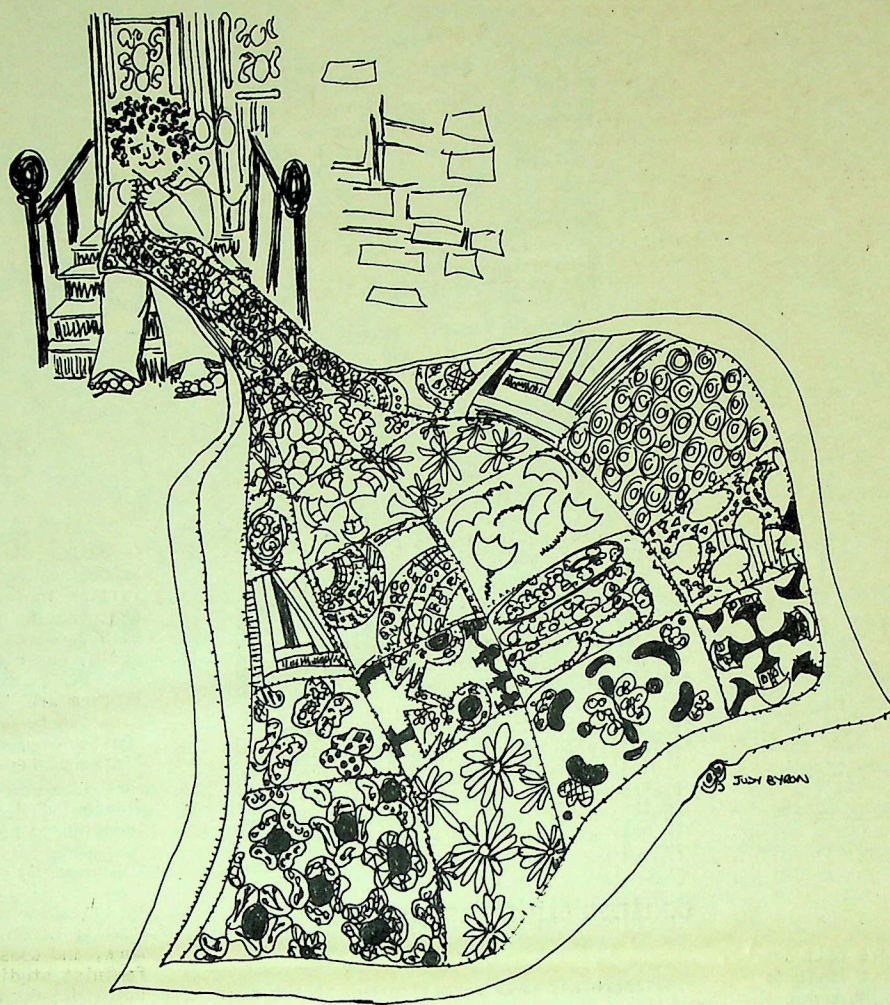
Each project seminar has about 3-8 students who work with it for 12 months. Students and faculty then select the projects for the next year. The program offers a fully accredited masters degree.

The deadline for applying is June 30. Tuition is \$2000, payable quarterly. For information, contact Cambridge-Goddard Graduate School, 5 Upland Road, Cambridge, Mass. 02140.



TYPE SETTERS

## culture(s) pullout



### quilting: a history

Quilts are extremely popular today. There has been a rediscovery or a revival if you will of this very old art form. The galleries and boutiques on 5th Avenue sell quilts for hundreds of dollars. Collectors buy them up as home decorations and as investment. Many of the major museums display quilts both old and new. They are hung on walls with descriptions of the material used, the name of the design, where it was from, when it was made and sometimes even the name of the woman who made it.

It is true that these quilts are beautiful and deserve to be finally thought of as art, but to look at and collect the quilts without considering the context of the times and the women who created them is a tremendous oversight.

Excluding the examples that are made today, quilts are part of the material cul-

ture of the early days of this country. Only by studying them in this context can the art form be appreciated fully.

#### origins

Quilting combines two techniques of needlework both originating in the Ancient East. One involved the piecing together of different colored materials (piecwork) or the laying of one fabric on another (applique), and the other was the sewing together of three layers of fabric to provide extra warmth. (the actual quilting). These two techniques were brought back to Europe during the Crusades.

In Europe, both these techniques flourished. Applique and piecing were used for banners and repairing clothing. The quilting was used for clothing, bed clothes, and even for heavy drapes in the drafty houses of the time. At first only practiced by the peasants, the rich people

soon started using quilts in their homes too. Even in the warmer places such as Sicily quilting was practiced, mostly for its decorative use. It was here that very fancy quilting stitches were developed. Most European quilts relied on the quilting stitches themselves for the design. The tops were made of one piece of material although it was sometimes appliqued or embroidered.

#### in america

When the New World was first settled the colonists found themselves in a completely new land with great hardships. Virtually everything they needed, they had to make themselves. There was a scarcity of materials but no less need for the comforts of home. It was in this context that the art of quilting as we know it developed.

Fabric was scarce so the women used only scraps that were left over from other needle-

*continued on page 14*

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quilts(cont'd)

work or good pieces of old clothing. These scraps were pieced together to make the top of the quilt. Although the American patchwork quilts were first of all utilitarian, they are no less art for that. The women of the time had a keen sense of art and a need to create beauty in their otherwise plain homes. They well remembered the great art and designs of Europe and applied them to their quilts.

women's work

Needlework was the only pastime for women outside of their normal household activities. Wealthy position did not save women from needlework. Having servants in the home only freed the women of the house to do more and finer sewing. Manufactured goods were just not available so every woman made clothing and quilts.

The other arts of the period (silver, iron, pewter, wood) were all done by men. Men owned property and ran businesses. Men got together and discussed important political issues. While men were encouraged to attend school to learn reading and math, women were encouraged to stay at home and learn sewing.

Women without formal education proved their natural sense and cleverness in their quilts. Many of the quilts had complicated geometric designs and required patches of exact size so that they would match perfectly. Women devised a system of folding and cutting to make various shapes. Even the most complicated shapes could be made this way. Everyone remembers the story of how Betsy Ross made a five point star with a few folds and snips to the surprise of General Washington (a surveyor) who could not think of an easy way to create the star.

quilting bees

Since quilting was the only activity which women were permitted needlework became the medium for social relationships between women. It was a sign of friendship to exchange scraps, patterns and even blocks for quilts. And of course there were quilting bees at which one woman's finished top was "set" with the other two layers and quilted.

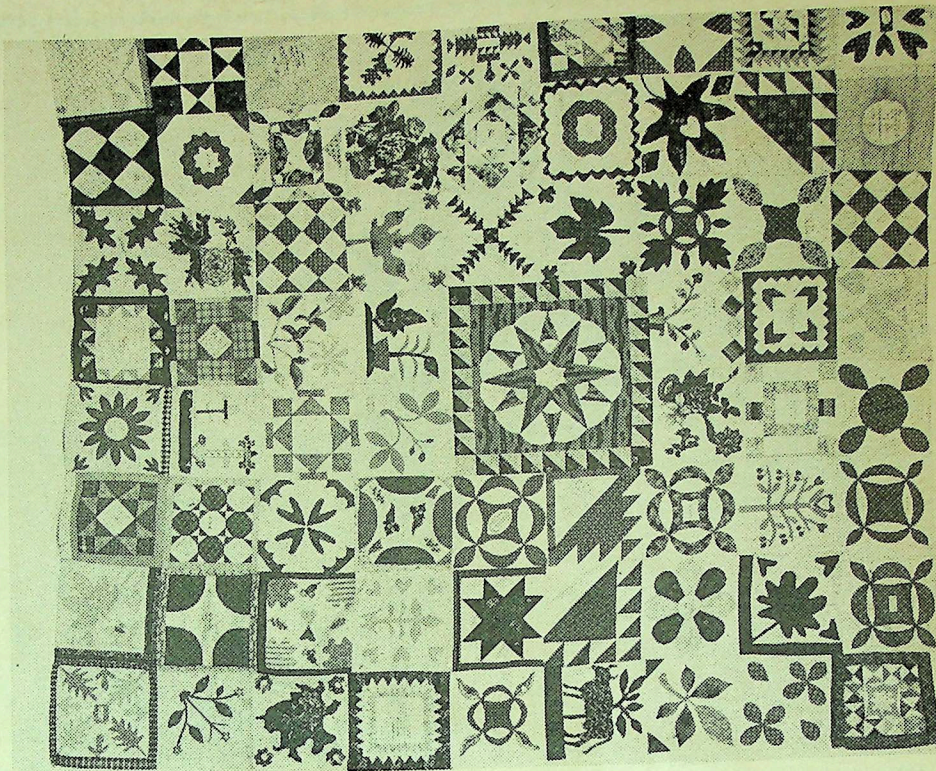
Special quilting bees were held when a woman was engaged. At this bee her special wedding quilt was designed and the top was made. At another bee it was set and quilted. Quilting bees were also held to quilt the tops that the woman had been saving from her childhood. The padding was the most expensive part of the quilt and was only added after her engagement was announced.

Special quilting bees were also held when several women collectively pieced the top and made the quilt for the purpose of a special friendship, album or presentation quilt (see oob January 1973).

The quilting bee served the purpose of getting women together who were for the most part tied to their own homes. When there was occasion for a quilting bee the women would gather at one woman's home or at the church. They would spend the day quilting and preparing a large supper. At the end of the day the men would join in for the supper. Singing, dancing and courtship often took place after quilting bees.

A woman's social life depended to a large extent on her expertise as a needlewoman. Invitations to quilting bees were selective, as a woman wanted only excellent stitches on her quilt. No woman wanted to be excluded from socializing with other women, and from being able to display her talents in the areas of needlework and cooking to the men.

Quilting bees are often misunderstood. Many think that it was at these bees that the quilts were designed. When considering this possibility, it is easy to dismiss women's individual creative talents and say that beautiful quilts required a number of women to create. But this was not the case. Most quilt tops were made by individual women and



Pieced and appliqued quilt by Mary Toy Lor probably from Morristown, N.J. around 1842. Photo courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.

it was only the setting together of the three layers that was done collectively. Usually the women pieced the top during the winter when it was difficult to get to other homes and they were alone most of the time. In the spring quilting bees would be held to finish those quilts made during the winter. Exceptions to this rule were the quilting bees held to make album, presentation and friendship quilts. But even in these quilts, the individual blocks were each designed by one woman and then pieced together.

The other way that the quilting bee is often misinterpreted is to ignore the point of how important it was for women to get together without the men. The quilting bee was virtually the only place that women were not dominated by the men and could speak freely on their own views. Some of the conversation was certainly gossip but the women also talked about political issues. Political issues were crucial. Women were not allowed to speak on these subjects in public, but they most certainly did by themselves. This is evidenced by the designs which they named "Kings Crown", "Whig Rose", "Union Star" and "Clay's Choice".

That all talk was not gossip was also evidenced by the fact that the first suffrage meeting held by Susan B. Anthony was at a quilting bee. The conversation must have often turned to themselves and their common experiences as women.

the great quilt revival

Quilting in America flourished until the turn of the century when manufactured bedding became available throughout the country. During that time, quilting reached various levels of development and returns to simpler forms. As the country expanded, women on each new frontier found themselves in situations where materials were scarce. They also found new influences for design in their new surroundings. Quilt designs and names were influenced by new flowers, occupations, people (including Indians) and political activities. Meanwhile, especially in the South and later in New England, where women's free time and access to materials allowed it, quilting designs and stitches developed to a high level of advancement.

As manufactured bed covers became available, quilting began to die. It was still practiced by many women but it has never been the same as in the early days of the country.

Quilts became an extra, decorative way of covering a bed. It was no longer something women had to do but an extra pastime. It is only since this has happened that anyone has ever considered buying or selling a quilt.

A great revival in the art of quilting has created a market for the buying and selling of quilts. But it is not a true revival. It can't be; times have changed. Even those who collect old quilts do so in a way that ignores the context in which they were made. They admire the art of the quilt only, as if they had always been made for that reason only.

It is not that quilts should not be valued as art and as something beautiful, but they should not be made into something they were not. Art historians who write about quilts often compare them to modern art in their similar use of geometric designs and colors. By doing this, art historians probably believe that they are giving some sort of legitimacy to what is usually thought of as folk art. But it would be better for there to be more writing on the times and the women who made quilts, and finally give legitimacy to women's art. It is possible that the art world is just not ready for creative art which was made by women out of need and with what they could find.

by carol edelson

SUGGESTED READING

Ruth Finley--Old Patchwork Quilts and The Women Who Made Them. J.B. Lippincott, N.Y., 1929  
 Delores Hinson--A Quilting Manual. Hearthside Press, N.Y., 1966  
 Marguerite Ickis--The Standard Book of Quilt Making. Dover Publications, Inc., N.Y. 1959  
 Patricia Mainardi--Quilts: The Great American Art. In the Feminist Art Journal, Winter 1973. (41 Montgomery Place, Brooklyn, N.Y.)  
 Pattern Books are available from: Grit Publishing Co., Williamsport, PA.

# this year in brooklyn:<sup>1</sup> a seder to commemorate ourselves



## introduction

I've never gone to Seders for the religious ceremonial of this commemorative rite; but rather for what Durkheim called their "recreative and aesthetic elements."<sup>2</sup> Namely, I like getting together with friends or family, and partaking in the festival's ritual feast. The Seders of older generation Spalter-Roths, that I am likely to attend, are noted for the brevity of traditional religious ceremonial. Usually this "sacred" part of the celebration is limited to the reading of a few prayers, the asking and answering of the four questions, and the singing of a couple of verses of "Dyanu."

My own theory on the absence of religious activity at Spalter-Roth Seders is that for at least two generations, the family has been a matriarchy. The "sacred," at Seders, however, is the preserve of a patriarchy. It is the "master" of the house, not the mistress who brings the Seder participants in touch with the sacred, through benedictions, blessings and through the telling of the story of the deliverance by God, the King of the Universe, of our "forefathers," the chosen people from bondage and oppression in Pharaoh's Egypt. But in Spalter-Roth households, the mistresses are masters of the house; consequently it is their world view that dominates the Seder. As a result, the most important rituals at the Seders of these matriarchs, are the daily rituals of proffering or withdrawing support and reciprocity. While there is an absence of traditional religious ceremonial, there is an abundance of ceremonials around greetings, inquiries as to health and well being, the giving of gifts, the serving and consuming of food, arrangements for future meetings, and caring for children (the real sacred objects at these ceremonials).

This year after my Aunt Ida's Seder, my cousin invited me to accompany her to another seder, the following evening. This second night celebration was being given by four women who lived together in a reconverted brownstone in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn. Pressed for details, my cousin told me that while male guests were to be in attendance, despite initial reservations, the hagadah<sup>3</sup> had been written by the hostesses. It was agreed that I would accompany my cousin, and we moved on to discuss the latest family gossip.

## pre-seder ceremonies

The next night, my cousin, her room-mate Liz and I climb the Brooklyn brownstone stoop, with our ceremonial offering of food in hand. Liz knocks, and the heavy front door is opened by a dark haired, dark-eyed young woman, with a touch of the sabra about her. Liz, the first over the threshold is warmly, heartily, even passionately kissed and hugged, again and again by the door opener. My cousin is also kissed and hugged but in somewhat attenuated fashion. Last over the threshold, I am introduced, and by smiles and nods I try to indicate to my hostess that I will be a pleasant guest.

Greetings accomplished, we follow our hostess, Barbara, through the downstairs of the house. Accompanied by the music of the Chicago women's Liberation Rock Band, whose album "Mountain Moving Day," emanates from the stereo, we pass through the living room, dining room and into the kitchen. The kitchen is the scene of food preparation, pre-Seder wine drinking and giggles. Not yet ready to join the intimacy of the kitchen, I grab a glass of wine and make my way back into the empty living room.

I stake out a territory on the couch, and sing along to the Pete Seeger record that has replaced "Mountain Moving Day" on the stereo. Hallie, the two and one-half year old child of the house, joins me in the living room and together we await the remaining guests. They begin to arrive, mostly in two's and threes, all carrying ceremonial offerings of food or wine. Hallie is warmly greeted with hugs, teasing games and shouts as the guests mostly come over and introduce themselves to me, before settling down on the floor in small groups to tease, chat, giggle and catch up with one another. Most of them; I later learn, know one another through the Mongoose, a local coffee house/community center. The only other child to arrive, two year old Miriam, quietly takes in the conversations from her father's lap.

A few people, like myself, are not engaged in conversation and join in softly singing along with Seeger to such Civil Rights Era favorites as "If You Miss Me at the Back of the Bus," and "I Ain't Scared of your Jail, Cause I Want my Freedom." When our eyes meet we smile, an acknowledgement of a shared background... During this period of initial acknowledgements, the hostesses disappear upstairs and return clad, not in the everyday blue jeans and shirt worn by most of the guests, but

in ceremonial attire. Barbara wears a long velvet-like sleeveless red robe, and the others, Rosette, Bobbie and Jan in long skirts or aprons and peasant blouses. They bear the musical instruments: guitar, dulcimer, flute, snake drum, finger cymbals and wooden rhythm instruments that will provide the integrating accompaniment for the Seder. Upon their return, last minute preparations; egg peeling, parsley chopping, setting a low table with ceremonial symbols and arranging of the candles and gas lamp that will light the ceremony are accomplished by all the Seder participants. A few play their role in the pre-ceremonial division of labor by alternately playing with and policing the children.

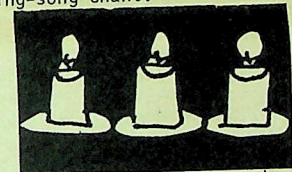
Preparations completed, we are beckoned by the women of the house who sit together at its head. The electric lights are turned out and Barbara, illuminated only by the old-fashioned gas lamp, begins to speak of the difficulties she and her housemates had writing their women's hagadah; a hagadah still in process. The only Jewess among our hostesses, Barbara comes closest to playing the role of ceremonial leader found in the traditional hagadah. As ceremonial leader (a term she would probably be reluctant to accept), she indicates the manners by which the ceremony will be conducted. Each of us will read a page of the hagadah in turn, going around the ceremonial table. We are granted permission, indeed requested, to add anything we like to the ceremony, and told that if we don't agree with the page we are to read, to pass the hagadah on to the next reader. Scanning the expectant participants, I wonder if anyone will avail themselves of this permission.

Before we can begin reading, Barbara requests that we each tell our name. A brief silence descends as everybody waits for somebody else to volunteer. Finally, a woman at the opposite end of the table, shrugging, calls out her name, "Pat" and indicates to Hallie, who is perched on her legs, to call out her name. Hallie, taking advantage of the prerogatives allowed small children, refuses. The mistresses of the house, probably recognizing a continued refusal on Hallie's part to tell her name, break into what appears to be a long standing name chant.

Hallie Hallie Bo Ballie  
Banana Fana Fo Fallie  
Fee Fie Fo Fallie  
Hallieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Hallie hides her face during the chant, while the hostesses distribute the musical instruments to the assembled, and everybody joins in as we go around the room saluting everyone by using the name, once given in the sing-song chant.

## the seder



All acknowledged, the reading of the hagadah can begin. The two children, by now sitting on Rosette's lap, are removed under protest to other laps, so that Rosette may begin the reading. She shyly begins to apologize for the unworthiness of the candle lighting ceremony she is about to read, explaining that she had worked hard for it to express her feelings, "but it just couldn't come out." Her apology does not put a damper on the air of expectancy that fills the darkened room, as she begins:

"Let our senses rejoice quietly at the humble flame  
we are about to give life to  
Let it tickle our eyes, warm our fingertips and  
caress our lips."

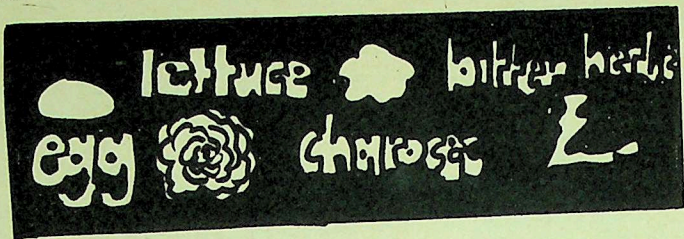
The children haven't settled down. Rosette's voice is joined by Miriam's, who yells "No!" in random fashion, while eating under protest to other laps, so that Rosette may begin the reading. She shyly begins to apologize for the unworthiness of the candle lighting ceremony she is about to read, explaining that she had worked hard for it to express her feelings, "but it just couldn't come out." Her apology does not put a damper on the air of expectancy that fills the darkened room, as she begins:

"Let the flames before us be as a beginning  
Be as a reminder of the brothers and sisters  
Within us smoldering  
Until the flames within each of us find release."

Miriam has her hands in the charoset (a mixture of apples, nuts, raisins and wine), as Rosette concludes the candle-lighting ceremony with the traditional blessing of the children. "Amen," a voice reciprocates, and we all join and sing. When the last amen is sung, Barbara begins to read what are traditionally called the "rules of the seder," probably a misnomer in this case.

"mix the contents of this  
Holy book freely  
With song  
with laughter, with tears  
make additions, make music, make out  
We are all part of the godhead."

I am struck by this last phrase, an acknowledgement in a religious ceremony of our own sacredness: homage to the group, an acknowledgement that it is we who create the power and the magic that our ancestors attributed to divinities. Jan, taking up the hagadah, notes, "This is Barbara's page," and begins to read the explanation for tonight's rite.



"passover, pesach is a double celebration. It is the ancient rite of spring it is a yearly remembering of the rebellion of our fore-mothers against their oppressors and of their long wandering to freedom."

The words freedom and oppression are familiar to me from the traditional hagadah, but the words foremothers and rebellion are new. Jan continues to read by the light of the gas lamp that Barbara holds for her.

"for me, it has become a time to remember my roots the roots that were planted firmly, very firmly by Sarah and Ruth and Esther and nourished by Ann and Emma and the chalutz and six million dead the years just before I was born nourished by a Kibbutz in the Negev and the dirt of Brooklyn."

Jan pauses for a moment and then goes on,

"it is also a time to consider the uninherited roots I've chosen to plant and how best to nourish them the wondrous roots of a woman-loving woman relationship, the roots of old and new friendships the roots of commitment to revolutionary changes in my life and all the communities I live in. This has been a hard year for me and most of the people near me In these times In this city, in this house we have often felt uprooted and even unrooted. So, very fervently, I wish that this Seder be blessed by a magic that will nourish and strengthen all of our roots."

And I silently say a fervent amen to that hope, as the hagadah is passed to Bobbie, another hostess, and the lamp is placed so she can read. She holds up a piece of the homemade matzoh, that resembles Indian chapati more than the "Manischewitz kosher for passover" pieces of cardboard that most of us are used to. This, I think, must be what the original unleavened bread looked like, and I feel pleased at this thought, as Bobbie reads:

"this is matzoh the bread of rebellion that our foremothers baked and ate in a time when they had to be organizing more and cooking less..."

"Right on" a voice shouts out, and we all smile in acknowledgement of this common sentiment, as Bobbie continues:

"it is traditional to open our doors at this time and say may all who are hungry come and share our matzoh may all who struggle for freedom come and share our spirit."

"Can somebody open the door?" she requests. The door opened and we turn our eyes to the next reader. Barbara is not yet ready to go on with the reading and instead tells the group that she wishes to sing "Oh, Freedom." Pleased by the request, an appropriate song for what the traditional hagadah calls, "the season on our freedom," and a song that many of us had sung on marches, picket lines and meetings in the halcyon days of the Civil Rights Movement, we sing:

"ohoh Freedom  
Ohoh Freedom  
Ohoh Freedom over me  
And before I'd be a slave  
I'd be buried in my grave

and here Barbara sings over the group so we can catch the new lyric she wishes to substitute for the traditional line:  
"and go home to my Lord and be free"

instead she sings:  
"and I'll struggle all my life to be free..."

The ceremonial leader calls out for the group to make up verses; and we sing to the end of a large variety of social ills. We sing to no more racism, no more sexism, no more oppression, no more Wounded Knees, no more corporations, no more bombings and no more armies. All who can play musical accompaniment. Even my cousin, who declares herself patently unmusical in the great Spalter-Roth tradition, is playing rhythm with a set of finger cymbals. Moved by the spirit, I join the instrumentalist by blowing through the cellophane from my pack of cigarettes: the smoker's ever ready kazoo. Reluctantly we play a final chorus; and the hagadah is passed to Hannah, Miriam's mother. Lifting her cup in a toast, she reads:

"this is a toast  
this is a blessing  
we drink to spring  
to flowering  
to joyful messages from deeper darker places  
We drink to the singularity of us all. to roots.  
to cores.  
to the unseen, underground labyrinths we move  
from  
only occasionally accessible  
for others to glimpse  
we celebrate that mystery  
we bless the difference. We celebrate hope  
we drink to cycles  
to the natural beginning  
development  
and end of things  
We drink to spring.  
L'chaim."

We all raise our glasses and drink. The wine flows freely throughout the evening, in contrast to traditional Seder rules which prohibit more than four glasses: at traditional older generation Spalter-Roth Seders, as a tribute to Jewish sobriety it's hard to get more than three.

I drink quickly, for it is my turn to read perhaps the best known dialogue in traditional hagadah's. I put down my wine, and ask the four questions, a means of bringing out an explanation for the symbolic objects and behaviors of the Seder (a Jewish pedagogical device). My cousin answers, explaining the Seder symbolism ending with:

"We eat to remind ourselves that like our foremothers, we can and will overcome our bondage-- that we and our sisters and our daughters will be free women."



### the story of the exodus

Starting with Liz, the remaining participants read with increasing speed and excitement the story of our exodus from Egypt.

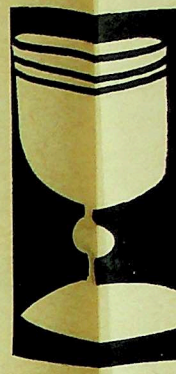
"The daughters of Sarah and all of their sisters and their children, who are called the Jews, were for a long time wanderers. And it happened that they settled in the Nile Valley, where, for awhile, they were in favor with the rulers of the land. They flourished in that fertile valley and grew strong. But a strong visible minority is a threat to any hierarchical political system. And strong women are a threat to any patriarchal system. So the ruling class did feel threatened and they used their power to enslave the Jews. And for a long time the Jews were slaves and their lives were bitter.

Their work was without meaning and forty hours in the fields and in the brick factories left them no time for learning about themselves and with no energy for seeking a way out.

Now it happened that a group of women began meeting secretly to explore their lives and the sources of their isolation and oppression. They talked and exercised and wept and wept and smiled and laughed and hugged and loved and learned:



about themselves  
about each other  
about their bodies  
about their hearts  
about their heads  
about process  
about pain  
about anger  
about strength  
about power  
about love  
about freedom, and how hard it all is  
and how good it all is





hagadah

the cake. An organic feast, almost self-conscious in its simplicity. The eating utensils, chopsticks, and bowls, have the same air of delicate simplicity. There is none of the heaviness of many older generation Jewish feasts: no chicken soup with canadeluch, no over-cooked pascal lamb and canned vegetables, no stewed prunes or cooked fruits, served in huge quantities. This meal is a feast of a different order.

I fill my bowl with fish and vegetables, and spying an empty rocker, claim it. Applying my chopsticks uncertainly to my food, I watch the action in either room. In the living room Kenny has taken possession of the drums. Clearly skilled, his playing provides a uniting sound for the rest of the evening. The records continue, and so does the dancing. Small groups dance in circles, each doing their own steps. The women join together and dance the hora, while Miriam, who is watching, experimentally lifts one leg and then the other in imitation of the circling hora dancers. In the dining room, much of the talk, as people eat mostly sitting cross-legged on the floor in small conversation groups, is in praise of the food. Barbara and Jan come in hugging; Barbara murmuring that she's too excited to eat.

Gradually, everyone eats their fill; everything except for the cake, which remains untouched except for a small gouge made by Miriam in the chocolate whipped cream frosting. After eating, sated feasters drift back into the living room. The toss-the-balloon game still continues, with each adult, sooner or later, taking a turn throwing to Hallie. There is still some dancing, and the drum continues, but mostly people lie around on the floor, listening to music. Jan gives a brief backstage direction to the drummer to read the post-meal grace. Kenny puts aside the drums, opens the hagadah and reads the grace, written in the form of a memo; "To whom it may concern:"

grace

This is a grace, being sent from the depths of this house to any interested party, of this or any other world. We are humbled, we are grateful, we are proud. For that which we have partaken.

We are mindful of the interlocking parts of creation. Of the harmony (however increasingly fragile) out of which our meal has come.

Thank you dirt, thank you worm and seed and water and carbon dioxide and chlorophyll.

Thank you all critters high and low and far away from Brooklyn.

We are pleased to be part of this magic. Life preserving. Life giving and taking, life supporting circle.

And we pledge to play our positions with renewed energy and thoughtfulness.

May we continue to walk together  
from the assembled  
to the assembled

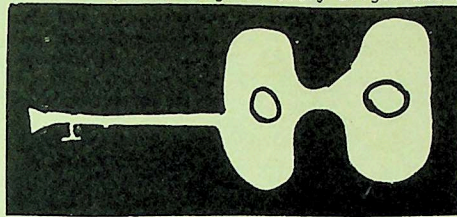
The grace in the form of a memo, once again affirms first principles of the group: ecological harmony, revolutionary changes, and the sacredness of process and collectivity.

The hagadah is passed to Jan, who reads the final blessing of the assembled, the final turning of the profaneness of daily lives into the holy:

"Last year this page was all holy, the world holy.  
holy silence, holy scream  
holy process, no more or less holy than results  
holy misunderstanding, holy understanding, holy this  
holy that, holy hurt, holy pain not less than holy joy.  
holy cigarette. holy avocado. this year some holy doubts.  
some wholly forgetting holy. okay  
holy holy  
holy liberation yes. holy pretending? holy doubts  
holy revolution, holy effort, holy failure. to try is  
holy. Holy Cow. Holy noise, holy rush, holy demands,  
holy doubts. holy loneliness, holy loved ones.  
holy hesitation, holy confrontation, holy confidence.  
holy spontaneity.  
the mystery is holy  
to preserve is holy, to rest is holy. The struggle is  
holy. To struggle is holy.  
victory holy and very far away, and within and without  
every holy moment.  
holy potential, no more no less than holy actuality,  
to hope is holy  
holy try  
holy multi-leveled re-definition, holy victims. to  
build from scratch is holy.  
holy support. holy respect. holy recognition.  
To doubt is holy, to try is very holy, holy is to trust  
Holy Sweet Spirit of us all. Blessed are we, and holy  
is our determination.

post seder ceremonies

"That's really fine," Barbara smiles in acknowledgement of Jan's blessing. A contemplative silence pervades the room, broken by Donnie, the guitar player, requesting that we sing "Amazing Grace." The song is an old favorite, though its fundamentalist views are not exactly in keeping with the sentiments of the evening. When we have completed all the verses, a second request is entered. A woman from Colorado suggests "Summertime," with some diffidence; possibly in acknowledgement of its tin pan alley origins and sentiments. We do not deny her, and sing all the verses of the Gershwin tune. The pattern for the remainder of the evening has been set. Musical instrument once again provide accompaniment, as the group responds to a long series of request of favorite songs. We sing Hebrew songs, religious and secular; some appropriate to the "Feast of the Unleavened Bread," some not. We sing broadsides, led by Donnie with guitar and song book. One is a song of profanation, "Four More Years of Richard Nixon," another a song of homage to "Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who Never did Give in." And we sing folk songs of every origin and style.



Even I have gotten out of myself enough to suggest a particular favorite, "Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Foot?" and since nobody else knows the words, I sing two verses and a chorus alone, joined by the others on the second chorus.

Like most of the others, I was by now sprawled out on the floor, tired, at peace and singing mostly to myself. During this low level trance, the hostesses go into the inner reaches of the house and return with teapots full of mint tea, and the cake which they cut and pass out. The cake, sponge inside, chocolate whipped cream on the outside, is close to perfection. I savor it in little bites, taking tiny sips of the hot fragrant tea. Hallie has gone to sleep on the sofa, and the Seder participants begin to leave amidst hugs and kisses. All of the earliest leave takers make apologies to the gathering, and especially to Barbara. Their apologies indicate an unwillingness to leave the company of celebrants, if the exigencies of the profane world did not make leaving necessary.

The singing and the music continue. Some time later, my cousin, Liz and I signal one another that we are ready to leave.

Gathering our things, we keep our departure from being abrupt by continuing to sing. We are smiling good night at our hostesses, when one of us begins to sing, "May the Circle be Unbroken." We all join in, and sing our departure song with as much harmony as we can muster. My cousin and Liz kiss and hug their hostesses, especially Barbara. I give tribute by thanking my hostesses for allowing me to be a participant in the evening's rite. Jan, speaking for the group, responds that they are glad I could come. I bow, then turn and follow the others out the door and down the stoop.

Spring is clearly in the air. In the dark, the dog shit that randomly decorates the Park Slope streets is no longer visible. But even if this, normally regarded profanation could be seen, so what. After all, holy dog shit, part of the cycle and the magic. Liz still has sprigs of babies breath in her hair, a reminder of the cake; and to the amusement of my cousin, I sing out loud all the way home.

by bobbie spalter-roth

footnotes

1. A traditional farewell salutation at Seders is, "Next year in Jerusalem." Somewhat of an embarrassment to anti-zionists, the farewell is often explained as being metaphorical.

2. From Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Durkheim argued, by the way, that the specific content of a religious ceremonial was unimportant. What was important, according to Durkheim, was group spirit and "moral effervescence," produced by these ceremonials. This is a good place to acknowledge debts to Erving Goffman, Clyde Kluckhohn and Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: the Voodoo Gods of Haiti*, for some of the notions in this article.

3. The hagadah is the book containing the body of rituals, prayers, songs and narrative that commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from bondage in Egypt. There is no one standard hagadah, and while all contain the same basic liturgy; there are great variations as to style, and to some extent the values that are emphasized. Most hagadahs are either printed by Jewish publishing houses, or by giant food corporations interested in pushing their kosher for Passover products.

4. The blessing, "holy," was written after Jan read a freedom Seder by Arthur Waskow; which included Allen Ginsberg's poem, "holy." Lines such as "holy cock," made the Ginsberg blessing taboo for a women's hagadah, so Jan wrote her own, "holy."



## conference on women and language

There's no way for a conference organizer to cover or even really sample what everyone thinks should be covered during a one day conference on Women and Language, like the one held at Rutgers University on April 27th. But, chairperson Judith Farber prepared a day that was a good experience: a strange symphony combining familiar notes from women's caucuses and others from academic conferences. There were three papers and a panel discussion. Only women had the podium. Here's a sample of what happened.

Jacqueline Sachs from the University of Connecticut presented a paper reporting ongoing research on sexual differences in the language of young children. She recorded children of both sexes all speaking the same sentence. Adults listened to the tape recordings and identified the sex of the child. Certain physical properties of the sound wave acted upon by the vocal organs are different for boys and girls and a listener uses these to identify sex. However, some girls were regularly mistakenly identified as boys. Correct identification for sex seems related not only to acoustical facts about voices but also to the cultural conditioning of the children speaking. The girls who were incorrectly identified turn out to be active and agile, not "typical girls" according to their neighbors. They show lack of "lady-like" cultural conditioning in their dress and play activities and they also show it in their tape recorded voices. Why the correlation exists and how wide spread it is is not yet known.

Current research by Sachs and her students includes investigation into people's attitudes toward voices of children easily identifiable for sex. Listeners are asked to rate tape recordings on a series of scales with opposing words like strong versus weak, bright versus dull. The research question is: Do the responses cluster to show positive or negative attitudes toward identifiably female or male voices. They also are studying attitudes of children toward adult women and men as shown by their manipulation of their own voices during role-playing activities. What characteristics children pick to imitate, and how much distortion they introduce can be gathered as evidence for their attitudes toward sexual differences in vocal behavior.

An anthropologist from Rutgers, Ann Bodine, surveyed the literature on languages that differentiate according to sex. The differentiation can be determined by the sex of the speaker, the spoken to, or the spoken about. The differences can be a matter of pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar. Some languages, for example, may have a particular sound always pronounced as an l by women but as a y by men. The gender of pronouns is another example: in English she or he is chosen according to the sex of the spoken about but the differentiation is lost in the plural they. Most interestingly, Bodine found that the male bias of ethnographers often led them into errors of false or incomplete reporting. For instance in the investigation of Bengali, a male ethnographer basing his work on the language of men came to the absurd conclusion that the language gave its speakers many ways to address men but no way to address women, unless they were kin. An analysis of women's speech shows this to be untrue; women have many ways to address men and no ways to address men unless they are kin. The male ethnographer assumed that the male language was the language, most male ethnographers have done that. It seems that bad sexual politics leads to bad academics.

Carrying her analysis into English, Bodine noted an area of conflict between grammar textbook writers and the everyday speakers of English. The former feel that in using a pronoun to refer to a single person whose sex is unknown or irrelevant, a speaker should use he. However, in just the common everyday speaker uses they in these cases, evidently preferring to give up number distinction rather than to label for sex inappropriately or to accept the male pronoun as the basic one. English speakers do this in the books and exercises designed to establish the usage of he. Somehow, the grammarians can't catch on.

In the discussion following Bodine's paper, several people mentioned "Language and Woman's Place," a paper by Robin Lakoff of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Michigan. In this paper, Lakoff documents sex differentiation in English and argues that this is used to discriminate against women. She cites for example the large vocabulary of color terms that people readily associate with women, words like beige, ecru, mauve. Men in certain professions or with certain hobbies might know them but such terms are not common in men's speech. Women are expected to know these; men aren't. But these differences are considered trivial, peripheral to really important concerns-- the man's lack of knowledge is a proof of his superiority of his being too important to be concerned with such trivia.

The papers discussed above were the kind expected at a Woman and Language Conference--specifically about sexual differences. Georgia Greene from the University of Illinois gave a paper that did not fit in so obviously. It was a finely honed technical argument supporting the generative semantic school of linguistic analysis. It isn't useful to give a less technical summary that would be open to misinterpretation and/or would be boring to non-linguists. Instead, it seems useful to talk about how such papers fit into such conferences. The value of women giving fine papers on points important to a specialized area but not particularly relevant to women's concerns lies in the intangibles like role-modeling and self-image projections for students in the area. This is true of studies outside of language and of oppressed groups other than women. While many of our resources must rightfully be directed to answering questions that men mis-handle or don't handle, others can be directed to basic research remote from the concerns of sexual politics. It is important to know and be reminded that this is a true choice, not a forced one. Women students need to know that both focuses are legitimate. Social relevance versus theoretical importance -- the issue can be raised and argued but the fact is that they are not really totally separate from each other and the choice of focus is finally an individual one.

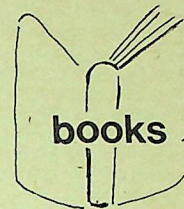
In the past women couldn't often be seen giving papers of the type and quality of Greene's. This undoubtedly was related to factors of sexual politics in academia. Such concerns were discussed by the conference panel which included the three women who gave papers, joined by Lynette Hirschman (University of Pennsylvania) and Georgette Ioupp (City University of New York) who are coordinators of the Women's Caucus of the Linguistic Society of America and Judith Klein who is a psychologist from Douglass College. Both old and new problems were aired. Discrimination against women in linguistics departments is as rampant as statistics and personal reports attest. In recent years, there seems to have been "some" improvement among "more aware" people in the "more overt" areas. That is, more women are on linguistics faculties now; and the sentences used as examples in linguistics articles aren't often blatantly sexist anymore. One notorious old example sentence in which a woman enjoyed being raped is countered by new articles with example sentences in which women solve problems in higher mathematics. One of the women pointed out, however, that most papers still use example sentences with women in passive roles as recipients of action rather than actors. Indeed covert sexism still goes on, in both example sentences and in hiring practices.

The affirmative action plans, the government sponsored solution to hiring and promotion problems for women and ethnic minorities, came up for discussion. They don't seem to be anything like a complete solution, and sometimes the form but not the spirit is present. Putting out advertisements and hiring token women isn't going to solve anything much, but may only save a few administrators conscience problems. But for a lot of women, these affirmative action plans are realities of the job market that we must deal with, a gain not only in the language study areas. How much about women and jobs is a problem of the "old

school tie" hiring practices or a problem of out-moded tenure policies? Will women who are activists be affected adversely as they go on the job market? How can women in the language professions do practical work in popular magazines without totally jeopardizing their chance to do theoretical work?

There weren't many answers from the panel, many of the problems are too big--problems of academic work in general or of society in general. But it was good to see women who do good work professionally, do good thinking politically. Any specific papers or facts and figures can be obtained from the participants through the appropriate departments.

by peg griffin

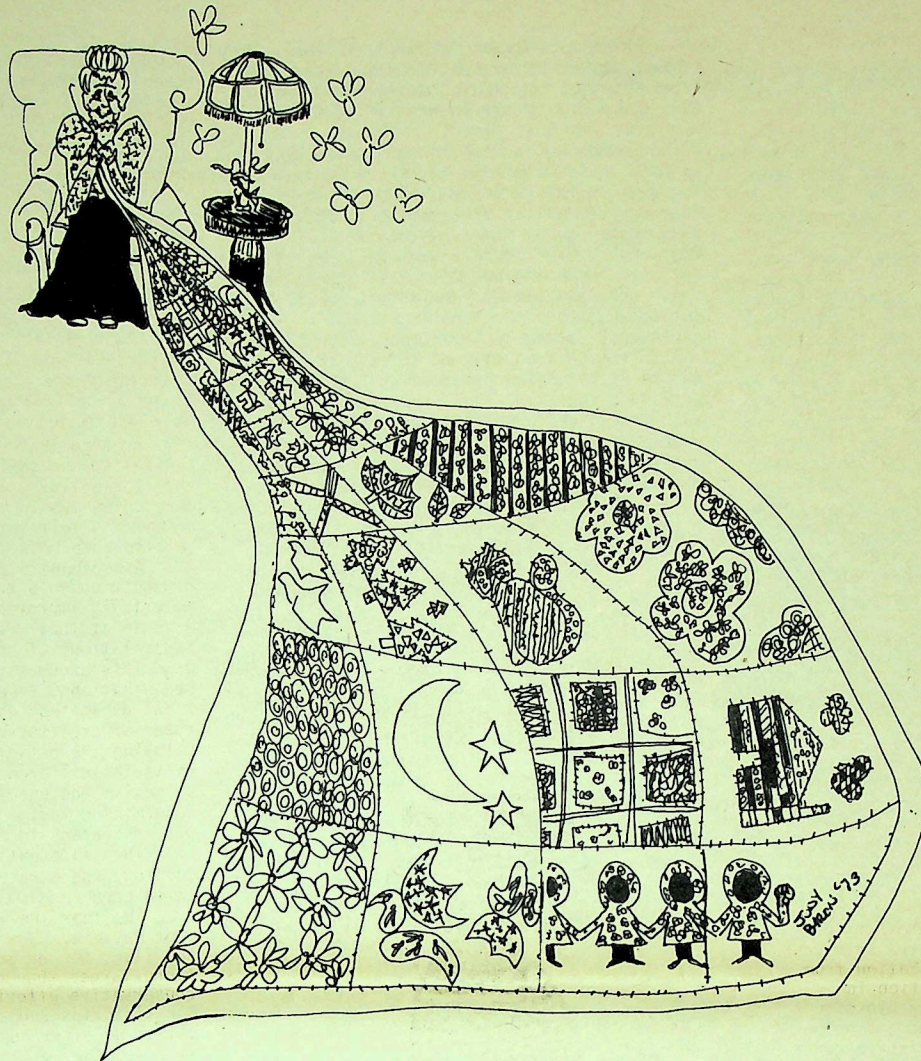


Seymour Fisher. *The Female Orgasm: Psychology, Physiology, Fantasy*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1973.

Dr. Fisher's book is largely a study of Freudian and post Freudian attitudes towards women and their applicability to us. Most of the information concerning the vaginal-clitoral orgasm debate has been covered in other places, including Fisher's tentative theories on the influence of father-daughter relationships on types of orgasms.

One interesting piece of information is the results of a test of Freud's theories of penis envy and feelings of inferiority in women. A group of Northern, white, middle class, married women were studied on their attitudes towards their bodies and their sexuality. Married women were chosen because it was presumed that marriage would offer a certain regularity of sexual experience. The women's ages ranged from 21 to 40. In short, the sample was composed of women who society considers "normal." Contrary to theory, the women tested were found not to be anxious about their bodies, did not view themselves as castrated men, were not unduly bothered by hormonal changes during menstruation and pregnancy, and, in fact, were more comfortable about their bodies than their husbands were about theirs. The evidence casts doubt not only on the Freudian myths but on the claims (that even some feminists ascribe to) that women are brainwashed into hating their bodies. Fisher attributes this to the different male and female roles in an industrial society; men define themselves by their profession (the middle class bias in this is apparent) and survive in spite of their bodies, while women are defined as having primarily reproductive functions, and survive because of their bodies. It is interesting that more tests have not been done on male hang ups concerning their bodies and sexuality.

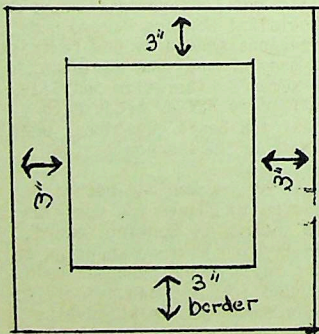
Dr. Fisher, in response to an oob query, does not see why any question would arise about a man studying female sexuality. The book's style is scholarly, "objective," and heavy going. Since *The Female Orgasm* deals primarily with "normal" women, namely white, middle class, heterosexual, and married women, those of us who deviate from the golden mean may well question it.



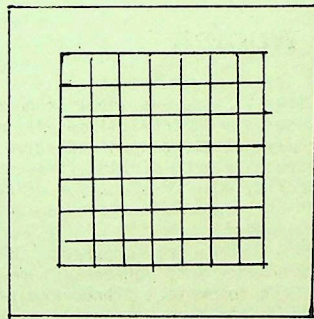
women's crafts :  
smocking

*Smocking was sent in by Donna Goebler, of Prestonburg, Ky, who says its very easy and makes nice cushions.*

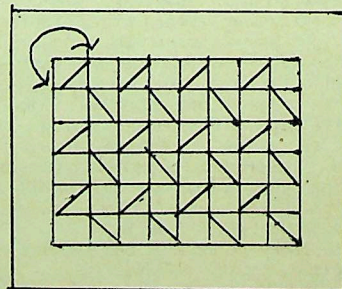
1. For your cushion, take a nice strip of velvet or satin or any good-feeling material. With a ruler or yardstick, measure a 3 inches border all the way around. Make sure the material is larger than you want the finished cushion to be.



2. With a crayon or pencil mark off the inside area into one inch squares. Do this on the wrong side of the material.



3. Draw in slanting lines in every other space, alternating slants on each row. These corners will be "tacked" (sewed) together. After smocking is completed, cut out a back for your cushion, and sew pieces together. Stuff with foam rubber, feathers, old nylons or any appropriate material.



poetry

If I willed it  
It died.  
When it came  
alone  
It survived.

by alana

HELP!! Betsy Donahoe has moved to Woodstock. We need a new poetry editor, or we're not going to be able to keep up with and print incoming poetry.

manners

"I Was a Demonstration Hostess," an article on the obligations and expectations of hostesses, invaded by demonstration visitors during New Left or Women's Movement political rites is awaiting more data (never to be put into a data bank). Of particular interest are the experiences of commune dwellers and hostesses that had only women quests. So write in your experiences during demonstrations past (like Mayday) or demonstrations present. What did you have to eat? Who cooked? Where did people sleep, get dressed, make love? No detail too trivial.

by

bobbie spalter-roth.....editor  
kary shulman & .....layout  
norma lesser  
and peg griffen, judy byron and the  
culturettes.

## current trends

SAN DIEGO--When a union of which a radical feminist organization is a member is based on a few principles consistent with the principles of all the organizations involved, the political edge of radical feminism is not blunted: it becomes sharper because of interaction with other organizations, resulting in a sense of internal unity without the price of sectarianism, says Carol Rowell, in a paper published by the Center for Women's Studies and Services (CWSS).

Current examples of such unions are the "much respected model", the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, the Feminist Coordinating Council in Seattle, and the recently formed Federation of Women's Organizations in San Diego.

The Chicago Union has maintained an umbrella organization with an "outfront radical feminist perspective", and programs including the Liberation School, the Graphics Collective, the *Womankind* newspaper, and the Health Project.

The Seattle Council is a federation of about 30 organizations including: Radical Women, the National Organization for Women, the Gay Women's Alliance, the Fremont Women's Clinic, Abortion Action Coalition, and a Divorce Cooperative.

Membership in the San Diego federation includes the women's newspaper *Goodbye to all That*, Determined Women Recipients, the CWSS, Project Repair, Women's Lawyers Club, WONAAC.

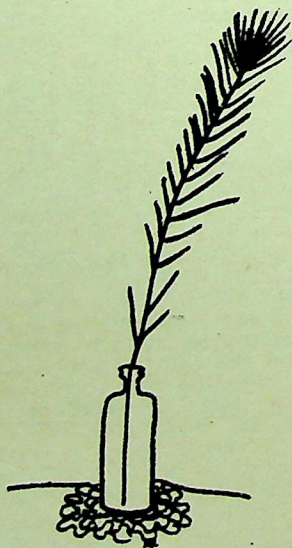
There is a readiness within the women's movement for regional organizing, as part of the growing rededication to unification. Another new development is the large percentage of women now active in the women's movement are new to the movement, Carol says. At this time, then, we must give our attention to healthy organizing.

One method of resolving the problem of providing services, while still remaining politically radical, is to separate the service arm of a radically feminist organization from the main organization by a distinction in name and location. CWSS maintains a storefront as a way to render services such as job help separate from the political arm of the organization. This helps to maintain a tax exemption, Carol recommends.

Feminists need not be afraid that they will necessarily be coopted if they accept government and foundation funding. If to get funding from the National Institute of Mental Health, a group must call its prison work "crime prevention and rehabilitation", it is merely using straight language for straight people.

"The proof of the pudding is in your work" she says. Feminists must use the system to their best advantage.

Carol's paper, "Current Trends in Feminist Organizing: Sisterhood Can be Powerful" is available from CWSS Publications, 908 F Street, San Diego, Calif. 92101.



## now goes international

WORCESTER, MASS.--About 150 "invited international feminists" and 300 to 400 "observers" are expected to attend an International Feminist Planning Conference June 1-4 at Clark University here.

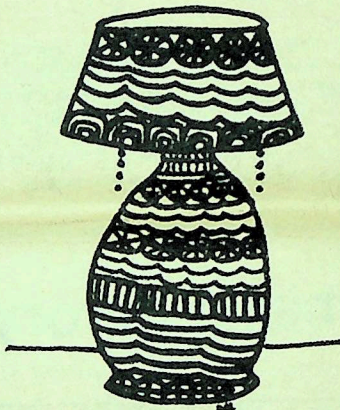
Co-sponsored by the National Organization for Women and Clark University, the conference goals are to study the cross-cultural status of women in the U.S., to organize feminists internationally, to consider convocing a larger International Feminist Conference, to establish an information exchange to discern common goals of the feminist movement and to plan their implementation.

Women planning to participate have been invited to submit papers and to rate themselves ("mild interest," "great interest," "special expertise") regarding the eight scheduled workshops: 1) Welfare, child care and population, 2) Women of minority groups, 3) Marriage/divorce and alternative family styles, 4) Women in industrial nations, 5) Women in emerging nations, 6) Women in national liberation struggles, 7) Religion and women, 8) From the masculine mystique and war to the feminist world.

The self-ratings are to be used to assign workshop groupings, resource persons, and workshop leaders.

There will be an all-day plenary session June 4.

Registration is \$35 and meals \$6/day. For additional information and registration application, contact Patricia Hill Burnett, 18261 Hamilton Road, Detroit, Mich. 48203.



## loose women

SAN FRANCISCO--Vice squads should regard venereal disease as a "mechanical defect" much as the highway patrol regards defective autos, which need only be signed off by the proper authority upon presentation of repair, says Margo St. James, of Coyote, a loose womens' organization.

Considering the avowed purpose of coercing prostitutes into unnecessary treatment for VD is to protect "innocent wives," the husband should also be considered promiscuous and be examined and quarantined as the women are, she says in a May Day news release.

Although 9 out of 10 prostitutes do not have VD, she says, they receive unnecessary therapy, under the threat of staying in jail three days until the culture comes back.

Coyote is trying to change the policy of enforcement of sumptuary laws governing prostitution in this city. Instead the organization recommends the issuance of citations as a deterrent to aggressive street solicitation.

Coyote projects are aimed at removing the stigma from the profession of prostitution. They include publishing a magazine "Trix Comix," projects for incorporating prostitutes into the community, and the establishment of a 24-hour emergency phone (415)441-8118.

Contact Coyote at P.O. Box 26354, San Francisco, Calif. 94126.

## case for feminist socialism

CHICAGO--The Hyde Park Chapter of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union has produced a paper on "Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement."

In their introduction they describe their synthesis of "two ideological poles representing the prevailing tendencies within the movement. One is the direction toward new life styles within a women's culture, emphasizing personal liberation and growth and the relationship of women to women..."

"The other direction is one which emphasizes a structural analysis of our society and its economic base. It focuses on the ways in which productive relations oppress us..."

"As socialist feminists, we share both the personal and the structural analysis of our society and its economic base. We see a combination of the two as essential if we are to become a lasting mass movement."

Arguing that we are oppressed by both capitalism and sexism, they present a strategy for building a "majority movement" by developing mass women's organizations based on women's self-interest and focusing on the relationship between reforms and power.

A worthwhile reform around which to organize women's energies would be one that materially improves women's lives, gives women a sense of their own power, and alters existing relations of power.

They argue strongly the necessity for organizations, responsible leadership, political debate and voting. The complementary roles of creating counter-institutions and battling the established ones are discussed as is the difference between considering men or sexism the enemy, that difference being a determining factor in arriving at an appropriate strategy in specific instances.

They also outline the ways in which their ideology and strategy shaped a struggle around child care in Chicago.

"We fear the women's liberation movement may die. How can we survive struggling for five, ten or more years without organizations larger than ourselves to carry on? More conservative efforts will be able to claim our victories and attract women and resources unless we offer our own organizational alternative. They will set the tone and the agenda for the movement and it will no longer be ours," they warn.

Copies of the paper can be obtained for 50 cents plus mailing costs from the Hyde Park Chapter, 819 West George, Chicago, Ill. 60657.

## ... and large open groups

DENVER--Women should form groups big enough to be effective in the fight for our rights and remember that the issues are more important than anyone individual within a group, says Karen Kordisch in a review of the history of women's liberation here.

Karen, who was active in Denver Women's Liberation, Sisters in Solidarity, and the Mountain States Women's Abortion coalition, traces the familiar story of offices being started and folding, retreats to get things going again, closed collectives, antagonism toward women from the Socialist Workers Party, and new organizations formed by new feminists who repeat many of the same mistakes.

Denver Women's Liberation and Sisters in Solidarity failed because they failed to ask the basic question, what is the purpose of this organization? she charges.

"The focus of a women's liberation group should be to change the position of women in society by working toward specific goals such as free abortion on demand," she says. Such groups should be open because a closed group inhibits the flow of ideas. New relationships cannot change society, though they may be worthwhile to the women in closed collectives who are involved with them.

Karen's article is to be published in *Big Mama Rag*, a local Denver women's paper.

droppings...

**BIGGEST NEWS STORY OF THE DECADE**--We here in the armpit of the Empire, have found that reading the front page of the Washington Post everyday is something to look forward to. Everyday someone else sings. We are still waiting for the whole cover-up to explode and our neighbor down 16th St. to be implicated. Some of our best friends are even passing around impeachment petitions. However, somehow the whole ruling class is not going to let things get out of hand. So we suspect four more years of a castrated president and then maybe Teddy.....

**DROP-IN**--Three day conference on June 8, 9, and 10th in Montreal on the various aspects of the Vietnamese resistance and its impact on the world situation. For more info contact Ass. of Vietnamese Patriots in Canada, P.O. Box 220, Sta. G, Montreal 130 P.Q., Canada, (514) 279-6658--N.O.W. Eastern Regional Conference, May 25-27 at the Wm Penn Hotel Pittsburgh--National Welfare Right Organization and Women Strike for Peace are calling women to D.C. to a rally in support of slashing the military budget and restore money for people's needs 1:30 on the East Steps of the Capitol--When in Tucson, drop-in at the Women's Drop-in Coffeehouse, 410 4th Ave., Tucson 792-1383.

**TALK OF THE TOWN**--the Watergate and the Maha rag Ji. Are they connected?

**LOCAL SEND-IN OR CALL-IN**--Having trouble renting a house or apartment. Contact the Rental Discrimination Project of the D.C. Women's Legal Defense Fund--in D.C.: Cookie Polan, 2809 Woodley NW, 4626513; in Maryland: Leslie Carothers, 2515 K St. NW, 965-5346; in Virginia, Susan Early, 2808 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, 920-1254

**SEND-IN--?**, a revue by the Westbeth Playwrights feminist collective, May 17 to June 9. For tickets write to the Little Church Around the Corner, 11 East 29th St., NYC--The Monthly Extract, An Irregular Periodical, published by New Moon Communication, Box 3488 Ridgeway Station, Stamford, Conn 06905 \$3.50. by Lolly and Jeanne Hirsch the first mother/daughter team since the Pankhursts. The purpose of the newsletter "is to fire the Revolution by which WOMEN WILL RIGHTFULLY RECLAIM OUR OWN BODIES".--The Cutting Edge, A Look at Male Motivation in Gynecology, a paper by Kathleen Barry, 75¢, available from The Feminist Voice 2745 N. Clark, Chicago 60614 or Her Self, 225 East Liberty, Suite 200, Ann Arbor, Mich--Freeing Ourselves, a study of the radicalization of a group of women who first came together in 1965-66 in the wake of the rebellions in the black community of Chicago. Read 18 personal true confessions. \$1 each from WMC c/o YWCA 37 S. Wabash, Chicago 60603--The Abortion Game, a pamphlet by the Women's Health and Abortion Project, NYC, 75¢ from WHAP, P.O. Box 136, Times Plaza Station, Brooklyn, NY 11217, very informative.--The Illustrated Women's Almanac and Yellow Pages, for more info write to Nancy or Holly at Armitage Press, 1430 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass 02138 (617-492-0999).--A questionnaire is being distributed by the State of the Movement Group, of the Feminist Collective, in Philadelphia. Don't like questionnaires myself, but check it out, if you are. Box 5417-P, KingsessingSta. Philadelphia, 19143.

**FROM CBS TO OOB**--Valentines Day we got a communique from the Columbia Broadcasting System, that was lost in the Chicken shit scattered throughout this office. Anyway it said that CBS Chairman William S. Paley said that Marietta Tree (formerly with the U.S. mission to the U.N.) was elected a member of the Board of Directors of CBS.

**ON TUESDAY IT'S LONDON**--If you're going to Europe this summer, bring some copies of Monster, a book of poetry by Robin Morgan. Apparently, Random House is not distributing the book in England because one of her poems is offensive to Ted Hughes widower of Sylvia Plath. Our English sisters should not be censored.

**THE SECOND RULE OF FEMINISM--MORE PAY, LESS WORK**

**ON WEDNESDAY IT'S WASHINGTON, D.C.**--If you're in D.C. this summer, stop in at our air conditioned office and chat with us and take home some back issues for your group.

**THOUGHT OF THE MONTH**--Don't get fooled, even though it is warm in Kalamazoo there is still fear in the hearts of women. Pick up a female hitch-hiker and smile at the old lady down the block. Who knows where we will stay tomorrow night.

Forever yours,



*Chicken lady*

## mother right: a new feminist theory

My first year underground was very hard. Expecting to die for the Revolution in a matter of months, I was unprepared to find myself not only alive but living a rather unadventurous and secluded existence less than a year after "disappearing". I found it increasingly difficult to get along with the friends with whom I was still in touch, especially with the men who were becoming increasingly overbearing and critical of all my actions, as I was growing increasingly sensitive to their interference. Chafing at every restriction, hostile even to the one woman friend I really cared for, I finally decided to take off on my own, reasoning that it couldn't get much worse. I started to travel and for a few months just roamed, almost aimlessly, from one community to another across the country.

As I travelled, I slowly became aware that nothing was less relevant to the lives of most people in this country than the white left, with which I still identified myself. The leftist (and rightist, for that matter) distinctions between working class and ruling class, hippies and straight people, youth and Establishment, all seemed increasingly absurd to me. They seemed to determine nothing of certainty about anyone's attitude or political outlook. As I moved around I could see more clearly than ever the oppression of Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Indian peoples. Yet at the same time I was learning concretely that women existed in well-defined subcultures within each White and Third World community. Finally, all my experiences kept reminding me of one fact of my own identity I was continually trying to forget: that I was a woman. Men, Third World and otherwise, young and old, hippie and straight, related to me as Woman, all my other interests or characteristics being, in their eyes, mere

modifications of that one essential. Whether I was desired, rejected, abused, admired, ignored, treated with kindness or with hostility, it was basically because I was a female doing whatever it was I was doing. Women generally took their cue of how to relate to me from the way men related to me, or I to men. It occurred to me that this was no different from the way people I had known for years had related to me but because we had known each other well I had been aware of the subtleties in our relationships to the point of being blind to the underlying structure. Of course I had heard feminists express these perceptions before, and had even asserted them myself occasionally, but I had never internalized them. I now began to think that if my politics were to be based on my own situation and not on someone else's perception of reality, I would have to deal with the fact that the rest of the world thought of me as a woman first of all, before it even listened to what I had to say.

Together with these discoveries, I began to realize the astonishing impact the Women's Movement has had all over the U.S. in just a few years. I could see women everywhere, white Black, Brown, Indian, responding in their daily lives to the fact that some women somewhere had said, "men oppress us." I came to know Chicano women living in a barrio who were organizing women's health care programs and women's antirape squadrons to patrol their own neighborhoods. A White woman, mother of three, from a poor Southern family and on welfare, talked to me with great eloquence about how she saw the courts, the police, the welfare system and her ex-husband as all part of the same male-run system, which women needed to take over and run for their own be-

nefit. A woman I met who had been born into a wealthy and traditional Japanese family told me she was filing for divorce against a husband who physically and mentally abused her because she refused to go through life suffering from the same causes her mother and grand mother had before her. These women - all random samples - would not necessarily say or think that they were part of the Women's Movement. But they demonstrated to me, among others, that the changing consciousness represented by the Women's Movement has been more far-reaching than any public-opinion poll on Women's Liberation would seem to show. As for the frequently heard opinion that Third World women support Third World liberation but not Women's Liberation, I believe that this is true chiefly of a few women who are highly regarded by Third World male radicals and hence are considered newsworthy by the media. Among the majority of Third World women, it seems to me that the Women's Movement is spreading and its ideas are having increasing effect, just as among White women.

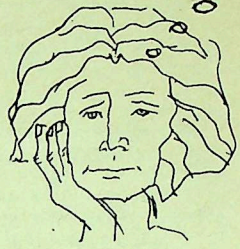
The turning point of my personal rapprochement with feminism came when, a year after I'd left New York as a fugitive, I joined a women's rap group composed of a half-dozen other women, of widely different economic backgrounds, ages and family situations, brought together only by our common desire - or desperate need - to talk with other women about our lives. No one in the group knew who I was, or that I was wanted on a federal warrant. I know, though, that they all sensed my unspoken inner turmoil (if not the specific causes of it) and in response gave me more positive emotional and intellectual support than I could have imagined possible from a group of strangers. They sustained me through

*continued on page 28*



Hiya babe, whats cookin' I mean whats shakin' besides that swiss assa yurss? (HEH, HEH) Whaddaya say we get ta gether, HUH? Maybe do a little home cookin' huh? (hear that boys?) I mean, like, HOW THE F'UK ARE YA, KID? (HEH, HEH)

OH KRIST



### metro hassles

They say that Metro will be the best subway in the country, but I wonder if all of the hassles are worth it. Besides the blasting, the traffic snarls and the cave-ins there are the Metro workers. Whenever they are on a break they just line up and watch the women go by. Even if they don't say a word, walking past that line of men is enough to give me the creeps. But there is one worker at the construction site in front of the off our backs office who is truly different. He stands out from the rest of the line and hassles me to my face. He has the same shit-eating grin on his face whether I ignore him or toss back a retort. There seems to be no way to stop it. Until 1976, when Metro is finished. Then there will only be the business men on Connecticut Avenue to hassle us.

### video

The City Council here in D.C. is in the process of considering the development of a cable television system. Since the Federal Communications Commission usually requires that at least 20 channels be installed, and since only about eight of these channels can be filled by existing network and local over-the-air programming, the rest of the channels can be used for programming that originates in the community.

A cable television studio is relatively inexpensive to equip and relatively simple to operate. Any large publicly owned cable system should have a number of studios throughout its service area to provide easy access for people who live in the area. Community functions, meetings and news will definitely occupy a large part of the available programming time. Educational services can expand enormously; health information and services could easily occupy a channel, and two-way capability can bring minor treatment and emergency advice into every home. Employment information, consumer information, legal counseling and housing information already are being given cable time in some areas. In addition, FCC regulations require that one channel be available in each system on a common-carrier (first come, first served) basis.

The possible uses of one or more channels extensively or exclusively by and for women are infinite. Current services provided within the women's movement could be expanded and enhanced -- services such as health and abortion counseling, employment counseling, legal services, etc. could be made available to women in their homes. Instructional programs in skills ranging from self-defense, to auto mechanics, to nutrition, carpentry, home repairs and whatever other survival skills we must teach each other could be widely disseminated. Creative outlets for women in cultural and entertainment areas would also be a possibility.

If hearings are held in Washington, women will be needed to prepare and give testimony in support of women's interests in Public ownership of the system.

To work to advance women's priorities in the proposed D.C. cable system, please write: The Feminist Video Project  
c/o Washington Area Women's Center  
1736 R Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

*Information in this article is from Cable Television: A Priority for the Women's Movement, by Janice Carrick.*

### and more video

Bringing video to the community was the theme of the open house celebrating the opening of the Washington Community Video Center April 29. Munchies and refreshments were served. Video equipment was available for kids and adults to use. Nick DeMartino and other staff members were on hand.

The center is located at 2414 18th St., NW, in the heart of the Adams-Morgan Community, which it serves. An ecology tape, a current project, was being shown on a monitor. The tape presents everyday ecological outrages in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood and is to be shown to a government commission appointed to study ecological problems in Washington. The tapes of the meetings with the officials will be shown to community residents.

A similar project last March resulted in a 90-minute special aired on WETA on "Housing in Anacostia." The tape was produced by Project Accountability, a video feedback project, in conjunction with the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum and other Anacostia community groups. The center provided technical support.

The center plans to train community groups in the use of video equipment. Speakers are also available to talk about video. Call 462-6700.

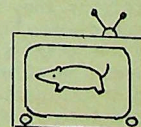
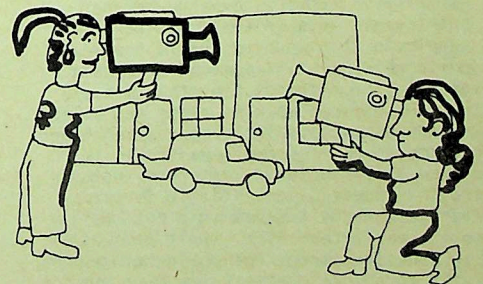
### local resources

The Washington Area Free School Clearinghouse Newsletter tells where to get orange crates for kid' play projects and who to contact to arrange for a two-week visit at a 72-acre "farm-school-experience." Also there is a directory of free schools in the Washington area.

The newsletter can be obtained from the Community Bookstore for 15¢, or by subscription from the Washington Area Free School Clearinghouse, Sumner School Building, 17th and M St., NW, Washington, 20036 for \$2.00 a year (\$4.00 to institutions).

The Washington Red Pages published by the Washington Area Free University is making its last appearance with its spring issue. The Tin Drum, the free university's catalogue, ended publication last October. The free university is changing to a card index-phone referral service. Called Tin Horn, the service is available from 7:00 to 11:00 at 387-5437.

Red Pages is a good listing of services, shops, craftspeople, dance workshops, entertainers, and media -- though there is no mention of off our backs.



# women's work

## the women's painting crew

Cynthia and Mary, two members of the Women's Painting Crew, feel that most people who hear of them and hire them see the crew as a novelty. Painting for a living is hard work. The Women's Painting Crew is definitely not a novelty, nor did it start out as one. It's a collective of six women all of whom are trying to make it a viable, full-time business in a very competitive field.

### evolution

Two summers ago five or six women appeared at a construction site painting job that they heard of through a friend. Two of these women, Sharon and Shirl, stayed on that job for a year, Cynthia stayed a few months, at this, her first painting job. All of the women considered this work better than office jobs, despite the low wages of the non-union contractor. Last Spring, growing tired of waitressing, Cynthia and her friend Edith who had been driving a cab, both decided to turn to painting as a way of making a living for themselves. This was, essentially, the start of the women's painting crew. Work slackened off during the summer months and Christmas season and after both these periods the business had to build up again. In January of this year Mary joined the crew on a full-time basis. The two women who had been working the construction site were laid off and joined the crew. Eventually they went on to become a subsidiary painting company of a realty firm, through a lead they got from the crew. At various points in the evolution of the crew, there had been different women making a marginal living serving on the crew part-time or as fill-ins. This is no longer true; the women don't see themselves as an employment service for women needing extra money.

### political skill

The essential political nature of the crew and the source of its best assets stems from the fact that it is an all women's business in a male-dominated trade. The crew feels that their business plays a part in increasing the work options for women, by making public a skill many women possess but only use in the privacy of their own homes. They hope that the visibility of the crew will spark ideas in other women about other trades to go into that require skills they have; ones that never occurred to them to make public. This actually happened with Evelyn, who saw an ad for the crew in a suburban paper and called to ask if she could join the crew. Working with other women, without the "implicit intimidation of sexist men," seems to be one of the most important things to the members of the crew, and one of their main sources of strength.

The Women's Painting Crew is hired mostly by women. Women care about their homes and in most households it is the woman who makes the actual arrangements for home improvements, regardless of whether a husband has been consulted. The women who hire the crew do so because of certain assumptions based on the fact that the crew is female: women seem safe (to leave kids home with, to trust with property), reliable, and more conscientious about not making a mess, also, easier to boss around. For their part, the crew is conscious about not making or leaving a mess because they don't assume that the women who hired them are maids to clean up after them, and they respect the fact that women care about the places they live in. The assumption that the crew will be easy to boss around is the one that is wrong. In these cases, however, the painters feel that their feminist consciousness helps to avoid conflicts because they have an understanding of the special status many women occupy in their homes.

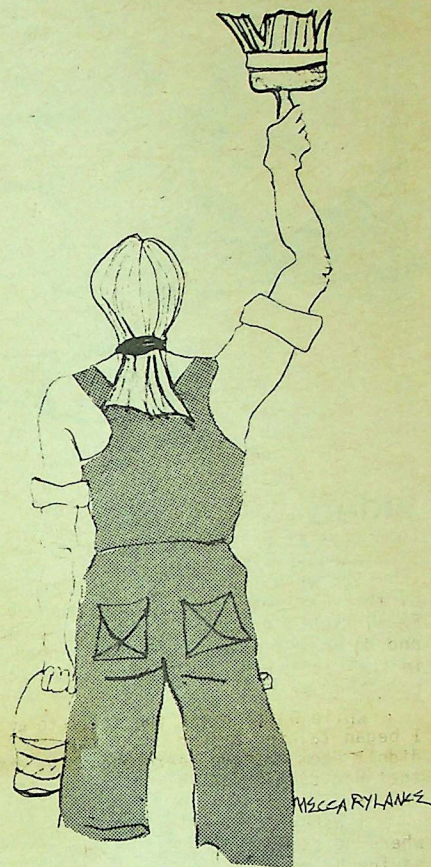
### collectivity

The operations of the Women's Painting Crew, both the work and the financial matters are carried on collectively. This is the other part of the political nature of the business. Older members of the crew work faster (do more work) to absorb the slowness of newer members who are just acquiring various skills, but the wages earned on each job are divided evenly. Jobs that don't require the full crew are divided up according to economic need. There is a lot of work aside from actual painting that must be done by the crew for each job and to keep the business going. Right now Cynthia and Mary do the estimates which involves going to the painting site and figuring out an approximate price. Cynthia taught Mary the details and when I last saw them, Laura was going out to do an estimate with Mary and in this way all the members will take turns going with an estimator until all the members of the crew learn this skill. In a sense, new members of the crew are considered apprentices in the trade, though their fellow tradeswomen are eager to share their skills, unlike the situation in most skilled trades today. Some aspects of the business must be thought out in order to make them more collective. An example of this is the problem of getting supplies (paint) for each job. Formerly it had been done by either Cynthia or Mary, both of whom could drive Cynthia's car. Now the supplies are bought on the way to or from their different jobs so that an individual woman in the crew doesn't get an extra job to do. Although there is no "boss" of the business, and there usually aren't any men around, there still is the person they are working for, and if a job situation is a hassle the women find comfort in the support they receive from each other as a collective. This support also comes in conveniently when the paint crew is occasionally harassed by their male counterparts when they purchase supplies and the men are probably so threatened that they don't want to take the women seriously.

Another positive reason why the women enjoy their work, aside from it being an independent women's business, and aside from the fact that they like painting, is that they always get to see the finished product of their labor, whether it be a totally white apartment for a realty company, or a custom job for Gabrielle Burton.

### business

Getting right down to the business of painting itself, we find that it is a long, slow process for the crew to fully realize its potential to become a self-supporting, growing business that could eventually have two simultaneous crews. Right now they are in the process of trying to build the business so that they are continually employed without any breaks between jobs. The only job that is done independently of the painters is promotion, which is done by Edith, a former crew member. Edith makes initial contacts for the crew and then the members do follow-ups. This part of the business is very time consuming and there is no financial reward. Some promotion in the past has been done through N.O.W. and newspaper ads in suburban areas. So far most of the crew's business has come to them through recommendation from past clients.



For the time being the crew is offering lower prices than their competition in order to drum up more business, but once they have a reasonable volume and they are well-known for their quality work, which is usually better than a contractor who charges double the price, the women's crew won't be a bargain any longer. Probably the single most important thing about The Women's Painting Crew is that this women's business gives its workers a strong sense of self-determination, and these days that ain't no small accomplishment.

by gale samuels

OH YES! the PHONE # IS 232-8653.

## pushing era in louisiana: an 11th wheel's weekend

### you can go home again, but...

To begin with, I live with my daughter in an apartment behind my great-aunt's large country house on the edge of a small town. This is my home town, and I moved here after 7 or 8 years of marriage in California to try to rebuild my life.

The family took me in, gave me a place to live, and a job as bank teller in one of the two banks. I don't have a degree, but I have three years of college. I am what they call over-educated for the job, and a promotion has been promised, but I'll believe that when I see it.

When I was hired the president was not interested in my other work experience; in fact, he did all the talking, and his favorite comment was: "You've got to learn to get along with women," as if we were a diseased species and I some sort of exception. The fact that I had worked for several months as a supervisor of women, more women than he had total employees working for him, never even came up. I was speechless with rage, but needed the job.

I have been back home for almost three years, and while I haven't been to a consciousness-raising group, I've been steadily raising my eyebrows to take in the scenery. Some days it appears that I don't hear a single non-sexist comment.

So, when I heard that Louisiana was one of the states that had not yet ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, I decided to pitch in and do what I could. I called our co-ordinator in the Capital, who promised to send literature and petitions.

While waiting for the stuff to arrive, I began talking around about it. Most people didn't seem to have heard about it, and those that had didn't understand it. Women and men were equally ignorant.

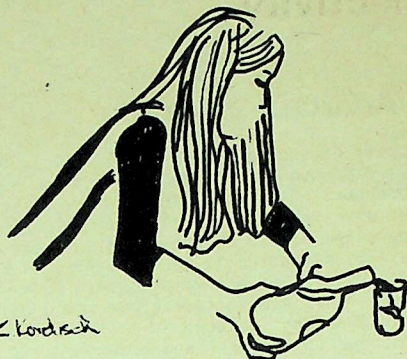
I asked our local state representative where he stood on it, and he hemmed and hawed, saying he really didn't know too much about it, but that he thought it would be okay for other states but not for Louisiana, which has a different legal set-up. For some reason, lawyers in this state are convinced of the infallibility of the Napoleonic Code and Community Property.

### in the service of men

The literature arrived and that Friday, at the bank, I asked one of the lawyers, a man, to sign, which he couldn't manage to do without giggling. He motioned to another man in the bank lobby, an influential planter. "Come over here, YY, and sign this." Mr. Planter took out his pen, read the petition, put the pen back in his pocket, and backed away. "That's one I'll have to think about for a while." Then he turned in my direction and screeched, "I don't want my wife drafted. That's equal rights." Mr. Lawyer said, "If they draft Angele, I'll go enlist." Mr. Planter said, "Lawyer will do anything for a pretty girl."

The next day, Saturday, I was out riding my bike and feeling sort of lonely. I wished I could visit somewhere. But single women have to wait to be invited. We can't just drop in on married couples the way single (or married) men are expected to. So it was a pleasure when some friends motioned to me to come in and have a beer with them.

Two of my male friends were playing pool, and the woman friend of one of them was sitting around looking low. The two men kept asking her to bring them beer so as not to interrupt their pool game. I told her, "Why don't you refuse?" quite rudely and quite out loud.



I whip out my handy little petition and she signs it. The other man already has, but the woman's friend says no. He's one of those people who thinks it's part of his personality to say no to everything, to make jokes about running over blacks, to disenfranchise all but white, land-owning males. It's his house I'm in and his beer I'm drinking, so I merely nod and put away my petition. The woman fetches another round of beer for the men. No one asks me to wait on him. She says, do I want one too? I say yes, but that I'll get it myself. I have vague feelings of disloyalty toward both sexes present.

Later in the afternoon, the father of one of my daughter's friends comes to pick her up. He promises to sign the petition as long as equal rights means that the draft extends to women.

### husbands, wives, & me

Later on that evening a large group of us decide to get together. My daughter's friend's mother calls to say they and the children will drive by to pick me up. I sort of want to drive myself, but they insist. So we go, and I feel dependent. When I arrive somewhere alone, I feel stronger, even though it gives me a small case of nerves. But these are my friends and they do make an effort to make me feel loved, even though I'm unattached.

I'm suspicious that they wouldn't be picking me up if the husband hadn't suggested it. In fact, I know they wouldn't because that afternoon he had said, "I'll pick you up," not "WE'll pick you up." You know, just a little something in the tone of voice. This is one of the reasons why I'd rather drive myself.

I am the only unattached woman at the party, but I am comfortable. I have not dressed up out of my blue jeans and pigtailed. I feel much better if I look sloppy, for then the wives know that I am not after their husbands.

The men sit comfortably with their arms around dates, until they need another drink. Then the date or wife hops up and refills the empty glass. Still, no one asks me to wait on him. (There are a lot of advantages to being an 11th wheel.) I go out to the kitchen where the date of the host is fixing a huge batch of lasagna. I feel like I ought to be helping, but am torn between guilt and rage. I mostly grate a few carrots and sit. I prefer the conversation in the kitchen to that in the livingroom, where men dominate and women don't say anything but yes, sir. The woman cooking tells of an office scandal in town. One of the men was having an affair with one of the "girls" and the girl is no longer with the firm. I bristle, but I ask myself, if I were in her place, would I resign? Probably.

### woman vs. woman

I go back to the living room. The ultra-conservative host of the afternoon reminds me of the petition. I think he wants to see the action. I hand it to a couple sitting tightly together on the sofa. "Is this an equal rights petition?" the man asks. Yes, it is. "Well, I don't want to sign it." He hands it to his date. She doesn't want to sign it, either.

I take it back. She begins a harangue: "I don't want equal rights. A lot of women are against this. You would be, too, if you had read up about it as I have. You heard about it, and you think it's a good thing, but you're only going along with the crowd. If we had to lift the weights men do..." and so on.

I am enraged at her assumptions about my education and my unconscious herd instincts, neither of which she knows anything about for we have only just met this evening and not exchanged two words before. I look at her bleached, teased hair with loathing and am disgusted by the fat deposits on her bare arms. I want to say that on my job I am the one who lifts all the weights because my male supervisor has a bad back. But I don't say anything.

I'm not quick-tongued and don't have the presence of mind to remind her that all sides have a political right to be heard, hers as well as mine. It is my first inkling that whichever way society goes, not everyone will be pleased. Before this I have conceived of my petition as being a good thing for all women, and I am on the side of all women. How do I now reconcile her hostility with my ideals? I guess I begin to take it more personally and regard this petition as a fight for my rights. Then I start becoming the very thing I hate, a politician, in search for personal power. So I drop the subject. One of the women is interested, and she and her fiance read it quietly before I put it away.

### an ugly finale

The couple who brought me prepare to depart. Their older child is going to spend the night with my daughter. Their three-year-old cries: "I want to spend the night at Miss Angele's, too!" Her mother comforts her.

"I want to spend the night at Miss Angele's, too, but what the hell's that got to do with it?" roars her father in humor to the assembled company. Do I have the grace to blush at this colossal Funny? Why does he put me in this position? Is he deliberately trying to hurt his wife, or destroy my friendship with her? How can she trust me if he continues to do this sort of thing? All eyes turn my way. A circle of men look appreciatively at me, an Available Female. The women either ignore it, hard to do, or smile with me in supportive discomfort. I think mostly I am embarrassed for the wife, who pretends it didn't happen. With a fixed, inhuman grin, I leave.

### a new petitioner

We drive home silent or talking with the children. Then I ask her if she will sign the petition. I tell her a little about it and add that it won't really change anything unless someone decides to bring a suit against a specific injustice. "Yes, Angele," she says, "I will sign your petition."

by angele blanton  
oob Louisiana correspondent

## feminist theory(cont'd)

the crisis I underwent after Melville's murder and the dramatic upheavals in my consciousness involved in that experience. Eventually, when a series of circumstances forced me to leave the area in which I'd come to know them, they gave me, as a group, the help and strength I needed to face yet another move into the unknown.

### defining ourselves

The process of the consciousness-raising group, for me and for the other women involved, was one in which we began to be able to define ourselves as individuals and as women. Some of us had previously conceived of ourselves as exceptional women, some of us thought being female necessarily meant being passive and dependent, but it soon became clear that we had come to the group each in a private panic of no longer knowing who we were. What we discovered in each other was the pulse of a culture and a consciousness which was common to us as women. We discovered it as something that had always been there, but that we had previously recognized or felt able to trust. Trusting it - or gaining confidence in our thoughts, feelings, resentments, desires and intuitions as attributes that we shared as a people and which were therefore valid - became the basis of beginning to trust ourselves as individuals.

I believe that the struggle to define oneself for oneself ultimately takes place in a realm of the mind in which one is always alone and unsupported. For some women the existence of a women's group or even a Women's Movement has not been a necessary precondition of that struggle. Individual women of genius - artists, scientists, philosophers, activists, and visionaries - have left us written and other evidence to prove that throughout the history of patriarchy some women have found it possible to call upon their inner powers to create and achieve and succeed. For each of these women, many others who were unable to leave us records have managed to define their individuality and assert themselves in the face of enormous male hostility. And yet the evidence we have proves ultimately only that no matter how many obstacles are in the way, a few women will possess the ability, determination, and special privilege to overcome them. In considering social change it is of much more significance that today's Women's Movement has encouraged thousands of women who would never have done so before to discover and develop their unique talents, and to stand up against male prerogatives and values with originality and courage. Moreover, as increasing numbers of women are turning to art, science, and other creative efforts, a truly female - that is, a feminist - culture is beginning to take shape. It seems little short of miraculous that with so little in the way of facilities - and still very few research grants, little access to the best laboratories, to substantial publishing contracts and the like, our own culture has nevertheless managed to take root and flourish. Feminist newspapers, literary magazines, cooperative child-care centers, anthropology collectives, legal clinics, poetry workshops, self-help medical clinics, counseling services, music groups, and graphics collectives are a few of the new-born alternative institutions providing the access for women whose values and vision are unacceptable to the patriarchy, or who choose not to pay the artistic and emotional price exacted by men in exchange for a share of male privilege. Even more significantly, the products of these alternative institutions (and of the individual women involved with them or working on their own) is qualitatively different from the products of men and male institutions. For instance, a feminist all-women's rock band sounds different from a male rock band or from an all-woman's rock band trying to reproduce male music; they are not only singing different lyrics but melodies and harmonies and rhythms are different. Feminist anthropologists are approaching their subject from a different perspective and with different assumptions than male anthropologists, or women anthropologists in the past who had only male-defined standards and methods at their disposal. Feminist teachers are creating a different style of

classroom situation with their women students. Feminist lawyers are helping their clients to use the law to help themselves. All of us are not engaged in such activities but many of us share in the changing consciousness that these women are expressing publicly. And in the light of the accomplishments already generated from this changing consciousness, I think we need to take another look not only at the old male-supremacist assumptions about women's "nature" but also at some of the assumptions of the Women's Movement so far. Just what is the powerful source of this consciousness?

### patriarchal roles

For centuries feminists have asserted that the essential difference between men and women does not lie in biology but rather in the roles that patriarchal societies (men) have required each sex to play. The motivation for this assertion is obvious: women's biology has always been used to justify women's oppression. As patriarchal reasoning went, since "God" or "nature" or "evolution" had made woman the bearer and nurse of the species, it logically followed that she should stay home with the children and perform as a matter of more - or - less ordained duty all the domestic chores involved in keeping and feeding a household. When women work outside the home we have the most menial and lowest paid tasks to perform, chiefly because any labor a woman performs outside the home is thought to be temporary and inessential to her, no matter how she herself might be inclined to regard it. Naturally then, the first healthy impulse of feminism is to deny that simply because women have breasts or uteruses we are better suited to wash dishes, scrub floors, or change diapers. As newly-roused feminists, we retorted to evidence that women might be intrinsically better suited to perform some roles than others by pointing out that men have been forcing these roles on us for at least five thousand years. After such time conditioning and habit are so strong that they appear to be intrinsic and innate.

However, a flaw in this feminist argument has persisted: it contradicts our felt experience of the biological difference between the sexes as one of immense significance. To begin with, it seems obvious that biology alone would, in promotive societies, have dictated different roles and different powers as appropriate to each sex. And biological scientists have assumed, for the most part, that the physical passivity of the female mammal during intercourse and the demands of pregnancy, childbirth and nursing clearly indicate the role of women as biologically determined, and inferior. In response to this, Shulamith Firestone, with the publication of *The Dialectic of Sex* in 1970, articulated the definitive feminist antithesis to this idea by denouncing biology as reactionary. Agreeing that biology had necessarily been an all-powerful determinant of social roles in the past, Firestone went on to argue that the advances of technology made this tyranny potentially obsolete. Women are still enslaved to their bodies not because of biology but because the patriarchy will not permit the use of technology to interfere with men's power over women. However, in Firestone's view, the dialectic of history, in which the sexual relationship underlies all other power relationships, indicates that a feminist revolution is inevitable. This revolution will put technology to work to literally free women from biology - from pregnancy, childbirth and the rest - thereby eliminating the last difference of any importance between the sexes and ultimately causing the sexual difference itself to wither away, in the course of evolution, together with all forms of oppression.

### women's power

I think that Firestone is visionary in perceiving the sexual relationship as the basis of all power relationships, and in predicting that feminist revolution will therefore result in the end of all oppression. However, the evidence of feminist culture, which has accumulated largely since the publication of her epochal book, suggests that her analysis of the role of biology was deficient and that

a third possibility - which is indeed a synthesis of the previous views - may well be correct. The unique consciousness of sensibility of women, the particular attributes that set feminist anthropologists all point to the idea that female biology is the basis of women's powers. Biology is hence the source and not the enemy of feminist revolution.

The root of this idea lies perhaps buried in history. It has increasingly been acknowledged that the most ancient societies worshipped a female deity or deities, and that menstruation, conception, pregnancy, childbirth and all other phenomena associated with female biology were associated with taboos. Furthermore, a number of these ancient societies were matrilineal: property and social identity were inherited through the mother rather than the father. Whether women had any secular power in these societies is a subject of dispute, and most archaeologists and anthropologists have felt that women didn't have any real power except over a few religious rites. But most archaeologists and anthropologists have been men, whose imaginations could not quite grasp a society in which women held real power, even a pretechnological society. (For example, the section on "Amazons" in the authoritative *Oxford Classical Dictionary* spends all of one sentence dismissing the notion that the Amazon tribes ever existed - though these tribes were acknowledged by nearly every ancient historian who wrote about preclassical times). Feminists in many branches of science and historical research have been re-examining the evidence for the existence of ancient gynocracies, or women-ruled societies. Among the more visionary and lyrically persuasive (if somewhat factually problematic) of these recent studies is the *First Sex* by Elizabeth Gould Davis. Davis hypothesizes that patriarchal society began only after barbarian male tribes violently overthrew the ancient, peaceful and relatively advanced gynocracies, in which women were not only worshipped but were actually temporal rulers. These ancient gynocracies may have existed throughout Asia, northern Africa, the Arabian peninsula and the Mediterranean area and persisted as late as 2,000 B.C. in some areas, such as Crete. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that Davis may be proven correct in the near future, and her thesis has been stated in a more tentative style than hers by several other highly respected scientists.

### feminist conception

The feminist conception of these societies is that there is no sharp division as now exists between home life and societal life. Industry was carried out in the home, travel was limited and the life of the society centered around the life in the home, in which women were the decision-makers. Therefore women held power not only in the home but also in the tribe or clan at large. They decided not only family matters, but when to plant and harvest, when to go to war and make peace, questions of marriage and property and all important disputes within the clan. Religion was so intrinsic a part of daily life that it was impossible for women to be at once worshipped in prayers and treated as inferiors in social relations. Instead, it could be argued, the very reason behind the enshrining of the female creative principle was the perception by women of the divine in their own image. Some of the extant literature which survived to a much later period seems to bear this theory out. For example, the Earth Goddess, Demeter, of the ancient Greeks is portrayed even in relatively late Homeric oral poetry as a maternal figure with a special relationship to women and children, yet with enormous powers over men as well. By contrast, the stern, autocratic, blood-lusting and supermasculine deity of the Old Testament is much more appropriate to a patriarchal society. The women this Jehovah curses as whores and heathens are perhaps the very matriarchal queens whose powers the invading masculinist forces needed to stamp out which many women are beginning to feel in touch and which is the soul of feminist art, may all arise from the same source. That source is none other than female biology: the capacity to bear and nurture children. It is conceivable that the intrinsic biological connection between mother and embryo or mother and infant



gives rise to those psychological qualities which have always been linked with women, both in ancient lore and modern behavioral science. Motherhood must be understood here as a potential which is imprinted in the genes of every woman; as such it makes no difference to this analysis of femaleness whether a woman ever has, or ever will, bear a child.

Biology alone is in no way an adequate explanation of what it is to be female. Women have been exploited in our society for at least five thousand years and female powers have been correspondingly frustrated and weakened. The effects of powerlessness on us is nowhere more obvious than in contemporary motherhood. In the patriarchy, we do not rise to a position of special esteem and authority when we have children. On the contrary, we are denied even the few options for meaningful participation in society that are available to us as childless women. We react to this powerlessness in a myriad of negative ways, ranging from the over-possessiveness of our children (as in the hypertense Jewish-mother-stereotype) to utter self-abnegation (as in the Madonna image) to child - murder (as in the myth of Medea.) But feminist culture is based on what is best and strongest in women, and as we begin to define ourselves as women, the qualities coming to the fore are the same ones a mother projects in the best kind of nurturing relationship to a child: empathy, intuitiveness, adaptability, awareness of growth as a process rather than as goal-ended, inventiveness, protective feelings towards others and a capacity to respond emotionally as well as rationally. If matriarchy means a society in which these are the qualities all human beings admire and strive to embody, a society in which the paradigm for all social relationships is the relationship of a healthy and secure mother to her child, then patriarchy means nothing less than the end of oppression.

## marxism

Interestingly enough, the materialist analysis brings us to conclusions similar to the ones I have just set forth from an idealist standpoint. In the Marxist dialectical - materialist view of history, the "Vanguard" of the "revolutionary class" is that group which is not only greatly exploited by the class in power but which is also performing labor essential to the functioning of society. The ruling class is thereby forced to respond to demands which it puts forth in the name of the oppressed. A third requirement is that the class be potentially collective; each member should not be severely isolated from every other. In classical Marxism, the "revolutionary vanguard" is composed of the "industrial proletariat" who must sell their labor to the capitalists in order to eat, whose labor is essential to industry and therefore to society, and whose work process is socialized. No revolution founded on the Marxist principle has adhered to the classic pattern: in Russia the proletariat was a tiny minority with no influence at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, and Mao had to rewrite both Marx and Lenin to suit Chinese conditions, defining the peasantry as the "Vanguard" in that context. The industrial proletariat in the U.S. today are a larger group than in either prerevolutionary Russia or pre-revolutionary China, but are not, by and large, an exploited one. Through unions they have acquired a significant share of power, and their right-wing views do not spring from "false class consciousness" but rather from a hard-nosed sense of their own self-interest. Taken alone, Third World male industrial are much less privileged, and women in industry are the most exploited of all these in respect to both wages and working conditions; but these very divisions and working conditions; but these very divisions of the "proletariat" show the obstacles to its solidarity more pointedly than anything else. However, if, with Firestone, we transfer our focus from economics to sex, that is, from production to reproduction, the Marxist terminology itself begins to make more sense. For there is very clearly a large group of women who by reason both of exploitation and importance to the society perfectly answer the requirements of the vanguard, and who are increasingly closely in touch with one another. These women are, of course, mothers.

## wageless labor

Mothers live by their labor yet generally without standardized wages. If they have husbands who earn good money and are generous, they are amply supplied - but only so long as they can keep their husbands. Otherwise, they have little or nothing outside the necessities and whatever they do have goes to their children first. The only mothers who do earn a standard wage for the labor of child-rearing are those on welfare, and that pay is barely enough to sustain life. The job is without guarantees or security of any kind. Its workday is twenty-four hours, workweek seven days, no vacations, no holidays. Total dedication to the job is expected, and yet a woman who works "only" in the home is regarded, with some contempt, as an unemployed housewife. Women with children are the women who most frequently suffer from fatigue, headaches, listlessness, depression, insomnia, digestive disorders, loss of energy, nervous tension, and other illnesses common to women. If the women who work in factories were all replaced by men, it would represent some economic cost to industry but no alteration in the power structure or the basic assumptions of society concerning sex and class roles. The labor of these same women in the homes, however - and of all women who work at child-rearing, whether their own children, adopted children or someone else's children for wages - cannot be replaced on a mass scale without cataclysmic changes in the social structure.

Mothers are a distinctly defined group. Nevertheless, their interests as a group are in no way opposed to the interests of women as a whole, but are rather intimately linked with these. For motherhood itself is only the concrete expression of that potential which defines all women. Accordingly, the domestic situation of women underlies the way we are treated on the job market. But the point of Mother Right is to reshape the family according to the perceptions of women, and to reshape society in the image of this new matriarchal family. Because motherhood cuts across economic class, race and sexual preference, a society in which women were powerful by virtue of being mothers would not be divided along any of these lines. Nor would any new division between, such as between mothers and childless women, arise, because the root of motherhood and the root of female consciousness are, I believe, one and the same.

## personal experience

Returning to my personal experience again, my self-interest in changing society is bound up with that of women who have children much more deeply than it is, for example, with women demanding equal pay for equal work, despite the fact that I am single, childless, and must work to support myself. If I had to sum up in a few words what I feel to be my own oppression in this society, I would say, "The enormous economic, social, and psychological obstacles against bearing and raising children of my own." While my situation as a fugitive seems to all but eliminate any hope that I might raise a child of my own, even these unusual circumstances are only slightly more handicapping than those any other woman faces when contemplating motherhood without marriage, or at least a stable relationship to a man. These obstacles and the tools to overcome them are beginning to be studied and developed by many different women, notably by Lesbians who have or want to have children. The oppression suffered by women whose sexual preference is for other women is peculiar to patriarchy, it seems to me, and would be eliminated as soon as women cease to be pawns in male power games. If Mother Right were the informing principle of society, it would make no difference whether a woman lived with men or women, let alone with whom she slept. A woman would be powerful and respected simply as a woman, and particularly esteemed as a mother, regardless of whom she lived with. For far from being in a position to exploit a woman because she chose to live and/or sleep with other women, a man would consider himself fortunate if a woman only chose to live and/or sleep with him.

## a majority

The conditions of life in the patriarchy are such that the overwhelming majority of women in the foreseeable future will continue to marry and raise children and to regard that role as the central one in their lives. This majority includes millions of women who also have jobs outside their homes. The Women's Movement is their movement not only because they are a majority, but because feminist consciousness springs directly from the role they play in society. Many segments of the Women's Movement are now beginning to implicitly recognize this fact and to act on it. N.O.W. is making a major push to speak to the needs of housewives agitating for an end to discrimination against married women by banks, insurance companies and credit unions. Radical feminists are demanding less that women leave men, and suggesting that it might be more effective in building a revolutionary base if women instead move to become the heads of families. Outside the consciously political segment of the Women's Movement, housewives are beginning to unite and to agitate for their common interests, starting with lower food prices. More mothers are expressing their dissatisfactions and talking about their problems, while not necessarily seeing these as related to the Women's Movement; more women within the Movement are beginning to experience their feelings as mothers which are integral to their identities as women. Demands relating to jobs, professional opportunities and electoral representation will continue to be important, partly because the unequal treatment of women in these areas makes people aware of women's overall inferior status, and partly because increasing numbers of women want and need to support themselves with jobs outside the home. But the Women's Movement must, and will, begin to focus on those demands which relate concretely to women's role in child-rearing. These more radical feminist demands include: wages for all women engaged in child-rearing; paid holidays and vacations; collective child-care centers controlled by mothers with the participation of all members of the community, including fathers, older children and childless adults; laboratories and research facilities to be turned over to feminist scientists so that research into contraception, fertility, pregnancy and birth can be conducted in women's interests; hospital and outpatient facilities related to women's health to be run and staffed by women; self-help clinics, financed by the government but under community control; artificial insemination, sterilization procedures, facilities for extra-uterine birth, and related technology to be made widely available. Technology is a powerful tool which will free us to bear and raise our children in our own way at our own time. It must be turned over to women now, in order to prevent its becoming an even more powerful weapon against us and indeed against all life.

## uprising of women

It is the uprising of women which will presage the end of oppression, but this uprising must be based on more than opposition to oppression and the definition of Woman as Other. It must be an affirmation of the power of female consciousness, of the Mother. The changes which it will embody can perhaps be better imagined as primarily spiritual and religious, rather than economic and social, though they will include and embody the latter. Thus a more apt analogy than the Cuban or Chinese revolutions might be the Reformation or the Christian revolution, or perhaps the revolution made by the patriarchy itself when the ancient gynocracies were invaded. I use these analogies because in each of these cases the economic and political changes were enormous, but they followed rather than preceded sweeping changes in human consciousness. The ripples spread through the institutions from the masses of people, rather than the other way around.

These were not, and never will be, gentle ripples. The oppressor is equipped with the

continued on page 28

## feminist theory (cont'd)

tools of mechanized violence as never before; we are only beginning to reclaim the ancient rage that will defeat his evil. Feminism is teaching us, again, the healing power anger trained on the true enemies of ourselves and our children, and our anger will supply us the resources we will need against the Man's weapons. Yet, from anotherpoint of view, we may remind ourselves of that violence of the cataclysm is no more nor less than the outward sign of a struggle of the human spirit. It seems very significant to me that simultaneously with the contemporary rise of feminism, there is a

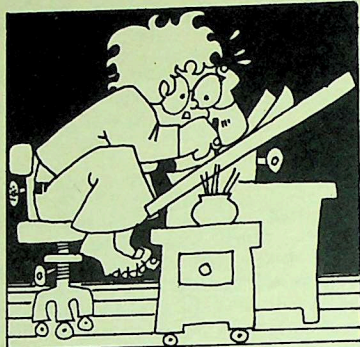
great rise of interest in psychic and spiritual phenomena. Because the Women's Movement gets lumped with the left in many people's minds, it is mistakenly regarded as narrowly "political". Yet feminism concerns more than political power, essential as that is. It is closely tied to theories of awakening consciousness, of creation and rebirth and of the essential oneness of the universe - teachings which lie at the heart of all Goddess - worshipping religions.

We are on the threshold of what all the ancient wisdoms, many of them handed down from matriarchal times, teach is a new age of consciousness and simultaneously on what seems

scientifically to be a threshold in the evolution of the species, as the genetic code is broken and life produced in the laboratory. Could it not be that just at the moment of masculinity has brought us to the brink of nuclear destruction or ecological suicide, women are beginning to rise in response to the Mother's call to save Her planet and create instead the next stage of evolution? Can our revolution mean anything else than the reversion of social and economic control to Her representatives among Womankind, and the resumption of Her worship on the face of the Earth? Do we dare demand less?

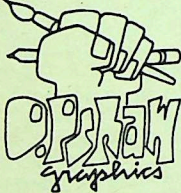
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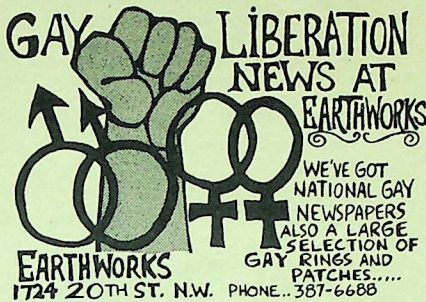


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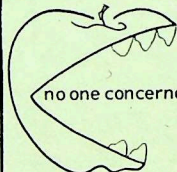
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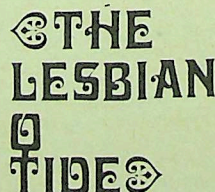


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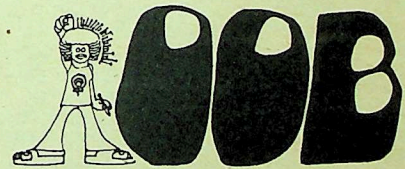
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## our bodies ourselves

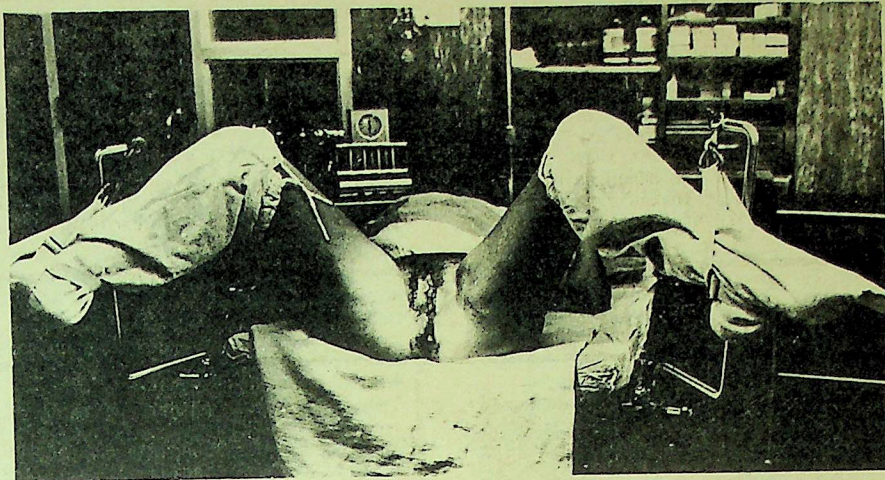
One day a few weeks ago while I was at the off our backs office, a local hip entrepreneur called to say that there would be a "rap session" that afternoon with two of the women who had written the new *Our Bodies Ourselves* (Simon & Schuster, \$2.95). Interested in meeting the authors of this perennial movement favorite which had made the big time in a slicker, expanded edition and in learning the inside story, I set out with Bobbie, the baby in one arm and a pad, pen and a stack of newspapers in the other.

As the women settled down in the front room, the men: the hip entrepreneur and the Simon & Schuster sales representative retired to the back presumably to discuss business. At the "rap session", I learned that the book had sold 75,000 copies in the first three weeks, that the 12 women authors were being sent around the country in pairs to promote the book and that there is over 100% more material in the new edition. Matthew occupied himself by crawling around the room and visiting each person seated on the floor.

I returned home with a complementary copy, anxious to read it and to compare it to the older version. When I had finished the book, I was left with a lot of mixed feelings.

My first doubt concerned the decision to go with a straight publisher. The book had come out of the women's movement. A discussion group at a 1969 Boston women's conference had led to the original version, *Women and Their Bodies*, a health course by and for women. It then appeared as *Our Bodies Ourselves* again with the New England Free Press (791 Tremont St. Boston, Mass. 02118), a women's collective as the publishers and distributors. The book was printed on newsprint, sold for 35¢ and was very definitely by and for women and the women's movement. The argument for going with Simon & Schuster was one of wider distribution, especially since clinic copies are being made available for 88.5¢ plus shipping (write S&S 630 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10020). However, if the distribution had stayed with the New England Free Press, a women's distribution system would have been developed, a resource would have been created that other women's publications could and would have used.

The new book in addition to being greatly expanded and printed on better quality paper also has a slightly different tone than the old one. Whether these changes were made as a result of dealing with New York publishers, in a desire to reach a larger audience, or perhaps because of personal changes by the authors, I don't know. But the new edition is less angry and contains fewer mentions of "capitalism", "imperialism", "revolution" and "male chauvinism." "Pee" was changed to "urinate" and "communal fucking" became "communal lovemaking."



Our Bodies Ourselves

However, the book does contain a great deal of useful and sometimes hard to obtain information. It is honest, supportive and self-accepting. It encourages women to share their feelings and knowledge, to control their own bodies and lives, to become whole people. The menopause chapter, for example, through the voices of many women is encouraging and understanding and offers suggestions on what to do, on how to obtain control over what is happening to your body. Personal statements in italics are used throughout the book. I wish there were even more. One criticism I have heard is that the book takes on the tone of a textbook sometimes and forgets the personal statements that are so important in consciousness raising. This chapter as the others contains some good graphics and is followed by a list of further readings.

There is a strong heterosexual bias throughout the book except, of course, in the one chapter called "In Amerika They Call Us Dykes" written by a Boston Gay Collective. Judy Norsigian, one of the authors of the book, was quoted in a *Washington Post* interview as saying "Most of us just love men..." This attitude is especially obvious in the sexuality chapter which is written mainly in terms of male-female relationships and has little on alternative ways of loving and living, of breaking out of traditional relationships, of extending different feelings to different people. There is nothing in this chapter that really stretched and expanded my consciousness. There was nothing so new that I had to let it sink in, go back and reread it, ponder it or that suddenly struck me. There was nothing in short that raised by consciousness.

The venereal disease chapter was one of the most informative chapters in the book, containing such specific information as gonorrhea can be spread through anal intercourse or through fellatio but not by cunnilingus and the fact that contraceptive foams and certain vaginal creams are preventive measures. But again the emphasis was on heterosexual relationships and not enough was said about the problems of lesbian women.

I found the nutrition chapter disappointing and introduced by a false dilemma: "Whenever Jimmy asks me for marshmallow I feel conflicted about what to do..." This chapter copied the style of the rest of the book unsuccessfully.

Large sections of the gay chapter were depressing, not imparting the same positive feeling of women loving other women that was conveyed by the graphics.

The section on pregnancy was also too negative, concentrating on the problems and very little on the joys. The post-partum section read like a series of horror stories. I felt the lack of positive feelings. I think the chapter was trying to be supportive but something else was needed.

There are many other chapters including ones on anatomy, women in motion, rape and self-defense, birth control, abortion (written before the recent Supreme Court decision and thus slightly out of date) and women and health care, which contains the all too familiar list of complaints about health care in this country.

Missing are chapters on women and psychology, on women and drugs and on prostitution. Nor is there any information on medicine in socialist countries, something which was included in a health book written by a group of Washington women and rejected by Random House as being too personal, too informal and too political. There is not enough written on the special problems of third world and working class women, (perhaps ideally covered in special chapters written by a separate group like the gay chapter was), on older women (they were relegated to a single chapter), on single women and lesbians with children or on the population control issue.

Despite these omissions and commissions, the book is worth reading. So go to your local women's clinic and obtain a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* for less than \$1., deny Simon & Schuster so large a profit and learn about your body--yourself.

chris hobbs



Our Bodies Ourselves



Our Bodies Ourselves

## new woman's clinic

Dear Sisters:

Members of the Health and Abortion Project have received some feedback about the article in the April oob on New Woman's Clinic, and so we are moved to comment. There appears to be an assumption that your readers are generally informed about abortion, if not this particular clinic. If that is the case, it is still not clear whether it was intended as an endorsement or just an objective evaluation. Some of us have visited the clinic and talked to Dr. Brooks at length. We'd like to share the following observations:

The overriding concern of Dr. Brooks is population control. It is fortunate that it happens to coincide with the choice of some women to abort. Unfortunately, other choices, like the ones you mention, about the use of tranquilizers or paracervical block, don't always apply in practice.

One of the main advantages of this clinic over others that only do them up to twelve weeks L.M.P. is that it extends the abortion continuum from 2 days after the missed period up to 95 days (13 1/2 weeks) from the last period, but this fact escapes notice in your article.

In discussing the pros and cons of menstrual extraction versus waiting for a later first-trimester abortion, the recommendation by the clinic is admittedly weighted in favor of menstrual extraction. The theory about menstrual extraction done with the Karman cannula which New Woman's Clinic uses, is that it is not necessary to administer a paracervical block, that dilation is not necessary with the use of a 4 or 5 mm. cannula up to 14 days after the missed period, that repeated dilation can cause damage to the cervical muscles and that dilation can be the cause of pain. Because of the mental anguish that Dr. Brooks admits that some women experience,

tranquilizers are offered to "relieve their distress". The menstrual extraction is geared, in part, to "fertility control" of the group of women who are ideologically opposed to abortion and birth control and avoiding a conscious decision. This justification of menstrual extraction, which is usually done before pregnancy is confirmed tends to have the effect of extending the same lack of control to later abortions. Most women in that category want to have total control, and know what is going on, even at the expense of feeling some discomfort for 3 or 4 minutes. It is difficult to administer a clinic under two sets of values. As you state in the article, "a tranquilizer is available on request." Most other clinics rarely use tranquilizers for first-trimester abortions. Women usually don't want or need them. The controversy among gynecologists over the use of tranquilizers, or even general anesthetics, is being revived, primarily because some doctors like the fact that tranquilizers keep the woman still, making it easier to avoid perforations. It can also be an advantage for some doctors who do not know the finer points of administering a paracervical block. This would not apply to Dr. Brooks who has demonstrated a great skill in this respect:

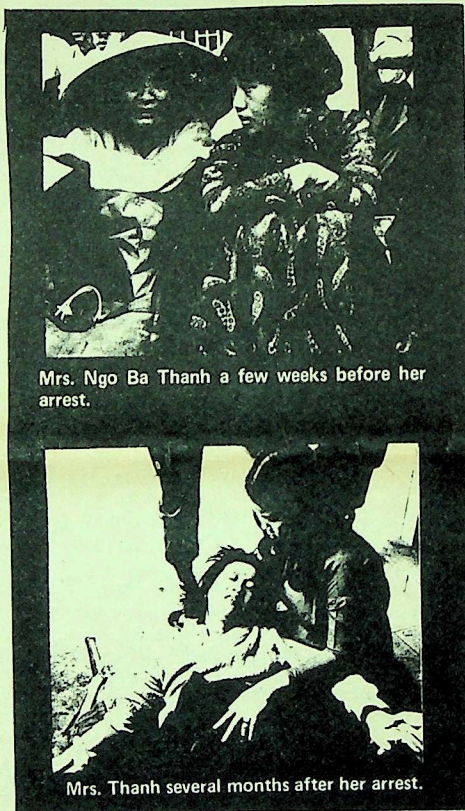
The unconcern about confirming pregnancy in menstrual extractions could be extended, by implication, to later abortions. Your article states rather cryptically, that "just before the abortion a physical examination is given." It does not mention the fact that pregnancy tests are no longer done if the woman has already had a test in advance that came out positive. The possibility that the test might have been inaccurate, or a miscarriage have taken place, are not considered until the woman is in the stirrups ready for the abortion. When challenged about the waste of time, at the very least, if the woman turns out not to be pregnant, Dr. Brooks said, "No, it's not a waste of time because we can get her on fertility control."

One very serious criticism that we have of the New Woman's Clinic is that they encourage referrals from the rip-off commercial agencies. The one we checked on, Volunteer Health Services Foundation alias Abortion Information Services of Washington, charges \$95 for a menstrual extraction for which the clinic normally charges \$55 and up to \$300 for a vacuum aspiration abortion for which the clinic normally charges \$125. Let's get together on an article about that!

We appreciate all the coverage you are giving to health issues. The recent article on herpes was great.

In sisterhood,

Josie, Jar, Marilyn, Jean  
Prue, Linda, Cookie,  
Barbara, Ruth, Beryl



Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh a few weeks before her arrest.

Mrs. Thanh several months after her arrest.

from a pamphlet of the war resisters league

## dear fran

Dear Fran Pollner:

I know this letter will seem quite overdue but I've wanted to thank you for the friendly review article on the second wave which you wrote way back in your October, '72 issue. I visited the second wave recently.

I'm a freelance writer and associate editor of a literary magazine, Panache, published in Princeton. I've had much work published (fiction, poetry, articles, satire, reviews) in about 40 magazines and anthologies. Am into writing books now, a novel about a community of liberated women, and currently a nonfiction book for Praeger on computers and creativity. But--the point of this letter!-- your mention of my story, "Hello to All My Readers," in your review of the second wave is one of the few times I've seen my work reviewed in print.

Thanks for the care and concern,

Best wishes,

Carole Spearin McCauley.

## senate aid

Dear Sisters-

Enclosed is a dollar to help pay for the April '73 issue to be sent or taken to Senator Richard Schweicher and Senator Edward Kennedy and Senator J. Wm. Fulbright.

On my behalf please see that they are given the article on P.O.W. Vietnamese women. The Department of State keeps sending letters to Congressmen and to people like me saying "U. S. assistance to the So. Vietnamese police force in the past has been disguised to help the government develop a more humane correctional system," etc., etc. The So. Vietnamese Embassy claims the Red Cross has said conditions are fine, no "inhumane" treatment, etc. Can you go to these Senators, take this article, and demand to know why U. S. money continues to pay for all this? Don't argue about the numbers (some of us keep saying there are 200,000. The State Department and the So. Vietnamese say that's impossible---but that's not the point)

Please do all you can---now! I'm doing what I can too.

Ann Davidson

P.S. Ms magazine has rejected an article Kay Camp and I wrote on Mme Thanh and I understand also rejected this Barton article. Can you also send them (Nina Finkelstein, Gloria Steinem) this article and bug them a bit?

## g.e. gripe

General Electric Co.  
777 14th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Dear G.E.:

Your commercial about your new device to help detect breast cancer is incredibly offensive (I saw it in between theories of Love and Hate on ABC-TV, April 14).

Om tje

In the commercial, while a man's voice is telling us that GE's new electronic device, which detects a breast tumor by the amount of heat the tumor emits, will enable doctors to "cure" 80% of the breast cancers found--if they're found early enough and "properly" treated--we see a man helping his (I assume) daughter with her homework, washing the dishes, pouring some chocolate milk into a thermos, buying his daughter a dress, and trying to thread a needle.

Living in the 1970's myself, at first I did not get the connection between the audio and the visual. Finally I caught on; the husband had to do what GE still considers woman's work because his woman hadn't gone to her doctor to get her breasts examined for tumors--or maybe her doctor hadn't had GE's device. In any case, she's dead and now he has to do all the dirty work.

GE, your message is clear: Women, if you don't get your breasts checked, you'll be guilty of leaving your husband with all of the work you should be doing. (Isn't that why you want to go on living? So you can continue to do the dishes?)

And, men, make sure your women get their breasts checked and be glad that GE has developed their new device so that you won't ever have to cook, clean, sew or (heaven forbid!) take an interest in your children.

Or maybe your own closing motto says it briefer and better: "GE--Men =Serving Man."

Sincerely,  
Judith Laura

*oob received a copy of this angry letter as did Ms. We thought we would share Judith's indignation with our readers.*

## women's fest

Dear Sisters,

It is difficult to respond to the review of the Washington Women's Fest in the last oob. The difficulty comes, in part, because the fest was reviewed as an event observed from some distance (part of the performer/audience syndrome). Oob's response to the fest felt disinterested and apathetic which in part might reflect a more general mood of fragmentation in the D.C. women's community which Frances talks about in the article. But, in addition, the review was insensitive to the context which the festival grew from.

Since the Community Bookshop began 2 years ago the people in the shop have been forced to recognize the primacy of a struggle against sexism. Last year the Bookshop made a decision not to support the Venceremos Brigade because of the National Brigade's refusal to be critical of Cuba's anti-gay position. Again last fall the bookshop decided to have a group of men who were volunteering leave the shop as they were literally driving women away. A women's caucus was formed and out of it energy for the fest grew. About 15 or 20 were involved -- from WGTB, SPARK, the Women's Health Collective, students, artists, women with varied lives and interests. Oob was told about the planning meetings, but chose not to come. Yes, as Frances says, "selection and program planning are 'heavy' decisions. Decisions that the women's community as a whole should put some energy into." Two weeks were given to the fest and the planning done tried to be sensitive to the needs of many different women --- in fact, we tried to be sensitive to a woman's different needs. We thought of the fest as a space where and exchange of energy, information and imagination might go on.

Only two of the events were given space in the article. In addition to the films and Rita Mae Brown's talk, there was an art show, 2 poetry readings (the first one being an open reading and important because the casual intimacy made it possible for several women to share their poetry as they had not done before), a self-help demonstration by the Health Collective, a very moving talk by Tran Khan Tuyet and Susan Gregory about women in Vietnam, etc. The entire calendar was in oob's March issue. By neglecting 2 weeks of other activities oob obviously overlooked that the planners did find "other questions of feminist analysis to be addressed and people to talk about them. Rita should speak, but others should speak too." Oob's focus on Rita only serves to further the superstar image that Frances is rightly distrustful of.

Although many of the events were not overwhelmingly attended, several things continued after the Fest. A study group about women and Vietnam grew out of Susan and Tuet's talk, a women's prison project continued to meet, and perhaps most importantly for the bookshop it was decided the next three coordinators must all be women. The separatist nature of the fest heightened conflicts that already existed (between female and male coordinators at meetings), and it was felt that a good way to overcome the imbalance of power was for only women to be in that influential position for some period of time, thus making a political statement to people who relate to the bookshop in any way, as well as building confidence for the women who are very involved in working there.

The films shown at the end of the two weeks were not a package deal. The point made at the beginning of the showing was that they were obtained separately and cost only about \$250.00 for all six.

A Very Curious Girl, L'Opera-Mouffe and two others were available as a package for \$1000.00 as advertised in Ms. It seemed a good surprise that community women could obtain films relatively cheaply and easily. And it was exciting,

but also frightening to try to organize a film festival. We attempted to make time after the showing when people could react to the films and the leaflet/interview, and talk about women and film-making. It was very important that women participate with us and not just observe.

We did see the films the night before the festival and were disappointed in some. We chose to show the one about Aretha first anyway because of her strong soulful spirit and also because of the very male dominance in the film (father/husband/producer) -- as a place to begin, in a sense like the place where we all begin.

The NOW seemed difficult in part, but interesting because it tried to deal with a woman's view of Eros and because hints of experimental film techniques.

L'Opera Mouffe we felt to be the most indicative of one of our basic visions of a woman's film festival: That a film need not be about feminism per se to be feminist. A film expressing the thoughts of a pregnant (woman) need not be about babies either -- the compassionate recording of bodies and faces, living and dying, is intimately connected with pregnancy, the beginning of a new life and death. Women are intimately connected with life. There are many, many films by women and it was hard to make choices. We deliberately didn't pick only documentaries or moralistic films because one of the essential things about feminism, as we know it, is that it deals not only with issues and power politics; it is also about re-discovering and celebrating our woman-ness, our humanity.

We women need to be critical of ourselves and of each other as part of our growth. We made mistakes--but what angered and was painful for us about the review was that it was not careful/supportive criticism; it felt instead to be bored and detached.

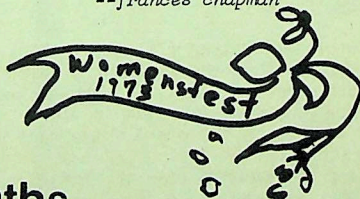
Natalie Reuss  
Annie Rosenthal  
Barbara Lubinski

*Just as planning a womensfest is loaded with pitfalls, so is publishing a newspaper, even an alternative, women's newspaper. We have to be selective and make judgments, sometimes poor ones, to get anything done at all.*

*Our staff is not large enough to have covered every event within the two weeks of womansfest. Mostly we relied on individual interests.*

*Brakes fail. Events don't get covered. Although we were able to review the poetry reading given by Rita Mae Brown and Lee Lally, we chose not to because we had not attended the open reading. But why have two poetry readings anyway--let the stars read with the ordinary women poets.*

--frances chapman



## baths

Dear Frances, Tacy, and everyone else:

I didn't get a chance at the conference to tell Frances her presentation was good -- very sensitive!

Also if possible could you send me a copy of the issue with the story in the women's baths. Thanks-- take care--

Deanne  
Underground Press  
Service

what did you think of the conference? I think it should be renamed the A.J.L. Leibling career opportunities convention.

## boycott:an analysis

Dear sisters,

I was disappointed to see a half page devoted to the meat boycott in your April edition.

I believe that the meat boycott is an irresponsible action. There are several conditions that must be fulfilled before a boycott may be used as a legitimate tactic. Some party must be identified as being of causal importance to a given problem. An understanding of the general situation is essential to insure, as far as possible, that the boycott puts pressure on the identified culprit.

No such background work has been done on the food industry for the meat boycott. There is no understanding of the role played by slaughter houses and meatpacking plants in relation to rising meat prices. No attempt has been made to determine whether or not retail chains are making excessive profits. As a result the farmer, as the weakest link in the food chain, is bearing the brunt of the boycott. Statements affirming the farmers innocence in rising meat prices from boycott groups does not alter this fact.

Nixon's latest price freeze was introduced in response to uninformed and misdirected consumer protest. Prices were not frozen at the farm gate but it is the farmer who is going to suffer. The meatpacking industry may have its prices frozen but their profits will not suffer because they can pass their losses on to the farmer by decreasing the prices they will pay for live animals.

The freeze will not benefit consumers in the long run. Lower prices at the farm gate will not lead to increased production. Demand will be greater than supply. When the freeze is lifted prices will skyrocket. A price freeze can never be an adequate solution because it does nothing to change the factors that were responsible for rising prices in the first place.

In both Canada and the U.S. the number of family farms is rapidly diminishing. As the farmers are forced out control over primary food production is being taken over by large corporations. If present trends are allowed to continue large corporations will control all stages of food production. We can then expect further excesses in processing, packaging, advertising, chemical additives and of course increased prices. Progress toward this situation is most advanced in California with Tenneco as the major vertically integrated food corporation.

Every family should be guaranteed nutritious food at a reasonable price. This objective must not be achieved at the expense of the farmer. The farmer cannot sell his products at low prices and stay in business. Costs of farm inputs have risen much more drastically than the prices of farm produce.

I think your paper should carry articles by women in the food industry. More effective action groups could be formed based on a well reasoned strategy.

I don't believe you should uncritically accept actions of a group just because it is made up of women. I believe that the choice of the Toronto boycott group to go under their initials of WASP says something about where they're at politically.

love and struggle,

Marg Buckley  
ottawa, ontario

NOTICE: In the future, letters will be limited to 500 words or less. If you need more space please submit your commentary in the form of an article, thanx.

5.00 21 872

# off our backs

Volume III, Number 8  
May, 1973  
Washington, D.C.

35¢

a women's news journal

**inside:** underground sister writes--see p.6  
supercoil: the inside story  
culture(s) pullout with more on quilts  
and a women's hagadah



photo by mecca rylance

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## HANK OOB!

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