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CANADA

a women's
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WOMEN OF AFRICA: a review

WOMEN OF TROPICAL AFRICA. Edited by Denise Paulme. Translated from the French edition of 1960 and published in paperback by the University of California in 1971.

This consists of a collection of papers by French women anthropologists, and is based on fieldwork in "French speaking Africa" during the 1950's.

It revolves around the usual anthropological themes of social structure, kinship networks, sex roles and political and economic activities before the advent of the colonial era.

The authors cite life histories, legends, historical accounts, personal interviews and participant observation to describe the lives and activities of women in nomadic, agricultural and urban settings.

The life and work of women are illustrated in detail from childhood to old age. The most important role of women is shown to be that of mother, who is "the very core of the African family".

Marriage itself is less important than motherhood and takes numerous forms. Polygyny (marriage of several women to one man) is discussed, with its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, it is pointed out that although wives frequently quarrel among themselves, they also cooperate to put pressure on their husband or conceal their activities from him.

Among the nomads of the Niger, two forms of marriage exist. One is arranged by the families of the young couple and disregards their personal

feelings. The other is a later marriage based on personal choice, in which a previously married person can wed a lover in a simplified version of the first ceremony. This marriage takes place without the necessity of divorce, which does not exist.

A chapter on the role of women in the political organization of African societies proves particularly interesting. Although there is little room today in the political sphere for African women, thanks to colonial influence in the past, women historically played very important roles. They "founded cities, led migrations, conquered kingdoms." Women formed their own legions and fought in armies. They governed kingdoms, too, either with another woman or in cooperation with a man. Ibo villages in Nigeria had women's councils which wielded so much influence that they rioted in 1929 to protest a rumour that the government was about to put a tax on women's property. It was known as the Aba riots or the War of the Women, and involved more than two million people, few of them men.

The book has a very extensive bibliography and a number of photographs. The maps are inadequate, especially for readers having no previous knowledge of Africa, and there is no up-to-date material on the effects of urbanization, industrialization, or national independence on social conditions affecting women.

In spite of this, it would be useful in a course on women in non-industrial societies, and is a handy reference to detailed information on the traditional life of African women.

Five Do-it-yourself divorce clinics staffed by volunteer law students are now operating in the Vancouver area. To qualify for assistance, you must be living on social welfare or in "marginal economic circumstances" and be referred by Vancouver Community Legal Assistance.

The locations of the Divorce Clinics are:
Sunset Community Centre Fridays: 9am-12
777 Hornby Wednesdays: 2pm-5pm
REACH Wednesdays: 7pm-9pm
North Shore Tuesdays: 7pm-9pm
54th and Argyle Thursdays: 7pm-9pm

Phone the Vancouver Community Legal Assistance at 872-0271 for an appointment.

want
a
divorce



Liberated Nostalgia

The Women's Calendar for 1972 is now available from the Women's Centre at 511 Carrall St., Vancouver for \$1.00. The following description of the photos used should convince you that it's worth every penny!

Cover—a women's swim team. The picture was bought, framed, for \$1.25 along with a matching picture of a men's polo team of the same early period.
January—British suffragette being dragged off from a demonstration by the police.

February—Two women from the Women's Army Reserve in Britain in World War I.

March—Maple sugaring in Ontario, at the turn of the century.

April—A photo from the U.S. titled: "As close together as nature would permit"

May—Canadian photograph — two sisters

June—An egg and spoon race on Centre Island (Toronto)

July—From the prairies — a gopher hunt

August—Our daring young girls, all smoking

September—Gathering cranberries with children: "On sale at 28 cents a pail."

October—Driving the Red River Cart that she came across the prairies in as a small child.

November—The Pankhurst sisters in prison clothing

December—A women's hockey team. c. 1901.

Back—our all-time favorite photograph



THE SITUATION

The Sex Qualification Act of 1919 allowed women over thirty to vote and gave women access to a few professions. In 1928 the vote was given to all adult women. There are 28 million women in Britain and 26 1/2 million men; men however outnumber women in all age groups below 35. (1966 censuses). Women here are more than a third of the labor force; half of all working women are married. More than half of the working women earn less than thirteen pounds a week; the corresponding figure for men is twenty-four pounds. (\$33, \$60) There are twice as many married women at work now as there were twenty years ago.

EDUCATION

Approximately one third of students are at single-sex schools. This lessens the pressure on girls to conform to teenage fashion and beauty standards but also heightens the mystery of men-women relationships. Boys' schools never have facilities for cooking and housecraft; girls' schools rarely have property or any facilities for woodwork, metalwork, athletics. Specialization comes later for girls and they are usually given general education until the age of fourteen. There is less sex education for boys; the attitude here is presumably leave all the responsibility to the girls.

A dearth of math and science teachers for girls' schools leads to a limiting of the number of female candidates for science, math, and technology in the universities. There are more science places available than good candidates to fill them. (A survey of 842 girls doing O-levels found the most favored subject to be mathematics; so much for girls being less analytical.)

O-level exams are taken at 16; A-levels are taken at 18. Girls do as well as boys at O-levels but not at A-levels. Sound familiar? More girls leave school before A-levels than do boys; fewer girls attempt 3 or more A-levels but those who do, achieve as many passes as the boys.

In 1964 36 percent of boys finishing school entered apprenticeships compared to 6 percent of the girls. Forty percent of the girls went into employment that offered no further training. In 1963, 2 percent of the girls entered university compared to 5.1 percent of the boys. Colleges of education took 2.9 percent of the girls and 8 percent of the boys. The Robbins Committee found that if part-time was included, 8 percent of the girls and 22 percent of the boys received higher education.

Women need to be better qualified than men to achieve a university place and women in this country make up only 24 percent of the student body. Only one in eight students at Oxford is a woman and Cambridge is even worse with one in ten. The leaders of tomorrow's world are naturally all male. Most medical schools limit the number of women they accept to about ten percent thus having to turn away many qualified women.

WORK

The general situation is probably worse than in North America. Much lower pay (and things are no longer that much cheaper here), fewer women with university training or higher education of any sort. An Equal Pay Bill will go into effect in 1975 and there are so many loopholes it will be virtually worthless. An appeasement similar to Canada's liberalized abortion laws of a few years ago.

Under the Bill an employer can legally grade all jobs done by women into 'grade six'. All the male workers can be graded into higher paid categories. Male sales clerks doing the same work as women will become 'management trainees'. Extra pay will be given for unbroken service excluding millions of women with families. Higher pay will also be given for heavy work, dirty work, or night work. By the Factories Act women are not allowed on night shifts. And the more modern factories are fully automated having three shifts. Employers can lower the average male worker's pay to the new 'unisex' wage and bring

the women's liberation movement in ENGLAND

it up with all these sneaky tricks, leaving the poor women at the bottom of the heap as usual.

Needless to add, women come off very badly concerning sick pay and pensions. Married women receive sickness and unemployment benefits at seven-tenths the rate paid to single women. Widows receiving National Insurance pensions may have them taken away if they are suspected of cohabitation with men.

In 1967 10,620 workers were retrained at Government training centres and only fifteen were women. There is a shortage of most skilled workers. At government vocational training centres in the same year the total number of women trainees was 3 percent.

BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION

In 1928 Marie Stopes opened the first birth control clinic in East London. There are now 1022 clinics in this country. It has never been legal to give birth control advice in England as it has been in America and France.

The Family Planning Association would not give advice to unmarried women until two years ago; now there are special sessions for the unmarried (over-16's). The F.P.A. will not turn away women who cannot afford to pay but cannot afford to advertise this too widely. This is a registered charity staffed by many voluntary female workers. The atmosphere can be very intimidating and some women go once never to return again. Couples interviewed in a recent survey by Ann Cartwright a year after the birth of their

first, second or third child favoured the condom over the Pill as a form of contraception.

30 percent used the condom, 20 percent used the Pill, 5 percent used the cap, and 27 percent used withdrawal or no method at all. Many G.P.'s are ignorant of F.P.A. services and are not much help to women seeking contraceptive advice. Women seeking abortions are often given the run-around, and by the time they get an abortion they could be four months pregnant. Nurses are put on abortions for whole days; these practices increase hostility to the poor female patients. In 1966 the Birmingham Brook Advisory Centre was opened to give help to unmarried women. This was a very radical move at a time when no existing agencies would help. Unfortunately it is illegal still to give advice to under-sixteens as sex itself is illegal for these girls! In 1969 22,000 babies were born to teenage girls and only 10,000 abortions done on teenagers. In 1968/69 40% of women having abortions were charged 100 pounds to 250 pounds by private clinics. So although the abortion laws here are much more flexible and liberal than those in North America, poor women and young women are penalized by the patriarchal society.

THE MOVEMENT

There is some difficulty pinpointing the exact beginning of the second feminist movement in Britain. First rumblings of discontent - the strike of

women workers at the Ford plant in Dagenham in 1969, the First National Conference of 600 women at Oxford in March 1970, the beginning of Women's Liberation Workshop in London.

The Oxford Conference decided that the W.N.C.C. - Women's National Co-ordinating Committee - be formed to call a national meeting every two months. Four campaigns were begun - equal pay, equal educational opportunities, free 24 hour day nurseries, free contraception and abortion on demand. Until now our movement has been too small to make much headway on any of these demands. Following the November 20th Teach-Ins throughout the country on contraception and abortion there is reason to believe we will join our sisters in Canada and France and the U.S. on this campaign.

Less women here in the movement have had political experience prior to Women's Liberation. American sisters had the civil-rights movement, the student movement and the anti-war in Vietnam movement. Although we also are called a middle-class movement most of the women are not university-educated. Less than five percent of students at the secondary level continue through university. Many of the traits we are struggling with as part of the old slave conditioning are doubly oppressive in England. Continual efforts to be 'nice', apologetic, non-aggressive (not that aggressive in a violent way is good); hold back your emotions, don't discuss your private feelings, be polite.

At a recent meeting to discuss the police repression of the sexist rag 'OZ', I disrupted the discussion with the help of a Swedish friend. We kept yelling out 'what about women', 'whose revolution', 'what about serious issues like contraception and abortion?' The women in the audience sympathized with us afterwards. There is not very much action at the universities in this country on Women's Lib. or any other political issues. We were too loud, too aggressive, too passionate. However this sort of behaviour is perhaps a good tactic here, because the English are polite enough to listen to you!

Attitudes towards lesbianism are much more relaxed here than in North America. It has been a crime here for men to make love to one another but not for women to make love to women! Ho-hum.

The Second Women's Conference was held at Skegness in October of this year. The W.N.C.C. died its due death and we are going to organize on a regional rather than national basis.

The media here still treats us incredibly badly. We are fed our small doses of the 'Queen of Women's Lib.', Germaine Greer, cutting up on television or writing in her weekly newspaper column on the advantages of wearing no knickers. The Welfare State here disallows people actually to starve to death as they do in Appalachia but many more people live at a nourished-enough-to-crawl-off-to-the-factory-and-the-pub level.

To be optimistic the movement is growing here and growing quickly. The two names associated with W.L.M. here are Women's Liberation Workshop and Socialist Women. The W.L.W. is the largest with over 60 groups with 6-20 in each in London. Socialist Women is smaller and there were only 25 active women in London last summer. There are groups scattered all over the country.

Financially we are very badly off and envy the N.Y.C. women who received \$10,000 for the Journal take-over. Speakers are almost always sent for free and sometime we will have to get more hardheaded about money. The difference between what you get if you work and what you get on the dole is much less here. Two of the founders of groups in Nottingham and Bristol live on the dole so they may work full-time for the movement. These are also two of the most active groups in England.

We have much to learn from your successes and mistakes and realize that you have as much to learn from us.

SISTERHOOD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!
ALL THE WAY THIS TIME!



working at the unemployment insurance commission

or,
a dream come true

As a result of the new federal Unemployment Insurance Act, the UIC is now a good source of fairly well-paid, temporary jobs. The best way to get on with the Commission seems to be to enroll with Manpower in the clerical division, specifying an interest in insurance and stating you want a temporary job.

Last November, after useless attempts to obtain unemployment insurance benefits, I got a surprise call from Canada Manpower (yay!) telling me the Unemployment Insurance Commission (boo!) was hiring casual employees. So I trotted down to the regional pay centre at 750 Cambie for my job interview. They were doing a roaring trade processing claims and were about to hire yet another training class of 15 people to work from two to six months. During a brief interview I was told that one condition of the job included as much as ten hours a week overtime. I was NOT told until much later that we only got paid straight time for overtime, rather than time and a half, like the "term casuals" and permanent employees. As "casual" employees we could be laid off without notice (fair enough, as we could quit without notice too), we were not eligible to belong to the union, we got no extra hourly rate overtime, and no supper money for working late. "Term casuals" were those who had been there for longer than six months, got paid time and a half for overtime were paid supper money, and could join the union. Presumably, if we lasted there six months, we too would attain this pleasant state of affairs. Pay for casuals is about \$2.67 an hour for filing, and \$3.26 an hour for pay (figuring out how much a claimant is entitled to each week).

Visit the washroom at your own risk. We don't guarantee to save your skin

The Cambie street office is a cement-slab shoe box affair, discreetly labelled the Centennial Building, and boasting a security guard at a desk in the lobby. (When the doors are locked at night, he moves upstairs to baby-sit the computer). The building has a central core for elevators and washrooms, and each floor is a huge carpeted open area with brightly-coloured, portable partitions to separate supervisory personnel and differentiate between departments. This is supposed to improve both supervision and worker morale!

Over 100 people worked on our floor, using improvised desks ranging from old school work-tables



to cardboard desks and second-hand office furniture, all crammed closely together. It seemed they were always being shifted around to make room for yet another group of newly-hired casuals. There were two very curious omissions in that building - no pay phones anywhere and no sanitary napkin dispensers in any of the seven or so women's washrooms. Workers wanting to make a private phone call, about another job, for instance, had to use the supervisors' phones or run over to the bus depot a block away. And if any of the several hundred women workers need sanitary napkins, they had to seek out a woman on the second floor who would sell them one. The excuse was that the federal government did not feel it could meet the expense of installing dispensers in the washrooms.

The pace at the UIC was killing. We had to be in sharp at 8 a.m., we got 15 minutes for coffee in the morning and afternoon, and half an hour - without pay - for lunch. We were supposed to quit at 4 p.m. but usually had to work from two to five hours overtime to a maximum of ten a week. We had no time for Christmas shopping and there was a lot of pressure to work statutory holidays, with no extra overtime pay in our case. After one month there I was \$450 richer and too tired to spend it. A surprise feature was that we got no pay cheque until three weeks after we started - government policy, it seems.

In addition to the usual hierarchy of bureaucratic authority into which we fitted, there was an informal arrangement whereby people who had been in the same training classes usually stuck together at coffee and lunch breaks, regardless of where they worked. Our group of nine men and six women got together frequently and found ourselves comparing notes on the different supervisors and work situations.

Things your UIC information booklet forgot to tell you.

We also picked up some useful tidbits regarding unemployment benefits, and of course we all had our own unemployment benefit program worked out for the day we would be laid off.

One thing we really learned was that if you quit your job or get fired, you don't just WAIT an additional one to three weeks before obtaining benefit. You actually LOSE up to three weeks benefit, depending on your reason for quitting or being fired. (Apparently, it's up to the insurance officer in your area office to determine how long you're disqualified).

Also, contrary to one of the information booklets published in the summer of 1971, claimants are NOT refused benefit if bi-weekly reports are late. Claims dating back to September were processed during Christmas week. So, if you have any doubts about whether or not you can claim for unemployed periods in the past three or four months, it might pay off to mail in your application form, available at your local UIC office.

On the whole, I enjoyed working at the UIC. There was no problem about clothes, and the only thing the supervisors got excited about was if we didn't work enough overtime. Even in four weeks we all learned just about enough about unemployment insurance to be a bother. The day I left, the whole staff got copies of the only thing aside from our contracts that the UIC put in writing in the four weeks I was there. It was a directive stating that only three top people were allowed to release information, or participate in any hot-line discussions or news interviews. Any infraction would be "dealt with severely".



Had Myself a Merry Little Christmas

*'Joy to the world, the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her king...'*

The sounds of Christmas cheer echoed down the green tiled corridors — that color of institutional green that speaks so eloquently of disinfectant even as you lie there scratching.

It's the Salvation Army — Joy! Joy! Oh no! you've got to be kidding! It can't be! But there goes a blue and red bonnet by the window, and another. That window — strategically placed so you can't see the clock in the office across the hall and have to ask what time it is and they can tell you or not — depends on how they feel.

They're asking how many and they're told "only two". Yup. Only two, but we're safe in here, safe from the Salvation soldiers. More glad cries and the key in the lock — No, we should be safe in here — and in they come, rosy-cheeked little ladies with silvery hair and smiling and smiling. "All the joy of the season!" You've got to be kidding — and a venerable soldier stops smiling long enough to admit "within reason".

Care packages in clear plastic — an orange and an apple and chocolate bars — a feast for the deprived. I'm not hungry and my orange is a mush of runny blue mold sticking to the cellophane I don't say anything, because it fits so well with my mood. Moldy orange? Sure, why not?

She comes over to me, smiling silvery lady to share my sorrow — keep away, keep away. I don't want your smiles; you don't know me.

"Why are you here, dear?"
Keep away, keep away...

So I look her square in the approaching eye and say "I done murdered a man in cold blood." (in my best Abilene, Frankie and Johnnie voice)

She didn't believe me. Right from the beginning she didn't believe me. But the smile flickered OFF-ON and the approaching eye retreated.

"I didn't really, of course" (Just to set the record straight)

"Heh heh No of course you didn't dear" But she didn't ask me any more questions and they all swept out, the men and women in Christian blue and the cell door locked behind them.

"Unreal" I said
"Yeah"

Christmas Eve and the door is locked and I've had my one phone call — and no way home until the next morning, Christmas Day. And knowing that, knowing it wouldn't be till the next day, made it easier to bear than the waiting and not knowing.

My cellmate is not so fortunate — she hopes, needs to get out this evening or she'll start to come down. So she spends desperate time on the phone — first her mother, who is now inured to her pleas. Friends, but who has cash, \$300 cash on Christmas Eve?

The warden lets her phone, and phone again, but there is no rescue. Finally the last ploy—

"Matron, would it make any difference if someone was a juvenile?"

"Why? Who's a juvenile?"

"I am. I'm really only 17"

"Maybe I'll get transferred to Juvy and then my mother can get me out."

But nothing happened. A few phone calls, one or two indifferent questions, but no one came. Then a realization: "I shouldn't have said anything. I won't get out of Juvenile — I can't even get bail in Juvy."

"What about your mother? Won't she come?"
"She can't get me out. She can't guarantee that I'll stay at home."

No bail, no release. At least I knew that friends were standing by, with the money. I had a lawyer before I even knew it, engaged by my friends. I knew that whatever could be done would be.

She had no money, no friends with money. She would stay in jail until Tuesday for lack of money. She would plead guilty on a charge easy to defend in order to get out of jail. No money, no bail, no lawyer.... GUILTY, yer honor.

It was cold in there — it's always cold, except in the middle of summer, she said. Vancouver jail has fewer amenities than almost any jail — no day rooms, no TV, no nothing — just large dormitory cells with the flair of public lavatories. No toothbrushes. No fruit or cheese to buy, just chocolate bars to rot the teeth you can't brush. People stay a year there, you know.

And the final irony — hoping for her sake that they'd pick someone else up, so that she wouldn't be alone for all of Christmas Day and Boxing Day and after that.

See ya — good luck. Hope you get out soon. Maybe your mother can raise the bail...

Yeah. Sure hope so...

*"Let every heart prepare him room
And heaven and nature sing..."*

**But
things
is
getting better...**

maybe



January 3, 1972 and I'm walking by the TV which is babbling away hysterically in the corner of the room... "Bail reform law," he says, the funny-looking guy on local TV. Bail reform? sez I to myself. Hmm...

Turn up the TV.

Comes on this hip lawyer, probably one of the good ones, talking about bail reform. He thinks it's a good idea. More surprisingly, it's more than just an idea, apparently; it's real. It happened on January 1, 1972, and what it means is that many more people may not get screwed around by bail laws that discriminate against the poor.

How does it work? First of all, the new law assumes that a person is innocent until proven to be otherwise. Therefore, the Crown has to show cause why any bail should be demanded.

There are now several options open to the police and to the magistrates in considering bail. Firstly, the policeman (it's almost always a man) who arrests you now has discretionary power to simply issue a summons and not haul you off to the cop-shop and not have any bail at all. In practice there was only

one arrest on the first day under the new system instead of the usual 12-20.

If you do get hauled off to the pokey, all is not lost. Once you've been charged with an offense, the magistrate or J.P. has several options. He (it's almost always a man) can let you out on your word (!), or on some amount of \$\$\$ which you are obliged to cough up if you fail to appear (and if they catch you)—that's called O.R. (own recognisance - the spelling is quite uncertain). Or, he may accept the Crown's contention that you really are a desperado, and set property or cash bail as in the bad ol' days.

So things is improving - although our enthusiasm must be held in check until we see how it all works in practice. If the police and the judges respect the intent of the new law, many fewer people will be incarcerated without cause (other than poverty). Of course, probably more people will fail to appear in court when they're supposed to, but that's the price that the society is apparently willing to pay for extending the freedom of its members.

That's what the guy on the TV said, anyway—if you can believe anything you read on TV.

Happy New Year!



At the Shanghai Youth Culture Palace, children welcomed us.

“we are all sisters”

As a young woman fortunate enough to have had the opportunity of joining the 15-member Canada-China Friendship Association delegation to the People's Republic of China in November of this year, I wish to share my impressions and experiences with other Canadians in the first part of two (the second part will be published by the Pedestal next month) articles dealing with the role and position of women in the New China.

The first is a broad overview of the present status of women, while the second delves more deeply into the various facets of their daily lives.

It is extremely difficult to do justice to the intriguing new social relationships which have emerged in modern China. These articles must be regarded merely as a peek, the beginning of a total and more profound understanding of a vital, dynamic and progressive society.

As is the case for almost every aspect of Chinese life, in order to fully comprehend the position of women it is necessary to keep looking over one's shoulder to pre-1949 China. Only in light of the appalling oppression before liberation can one truly evaluate the Chinese woman's perception of her own movement, and the dramatic changes in her own life. From slavery, prostitution and beatings has come dignity, respect and strength; from begging, abuse and forced labour has come productivity, awareness and liberation.

The Chinese woman is today regarded as a comrade - she is man's full partner and help-mate. As we were often reminded by our interpreters and Chinese friends, Mao Tse-tung has written that men hold up half the sky and women the other. The Chinese woman may be seen operating a gigantic crane at Wuhan's Iron and Steel Works or running a tractor at Hsi Pu Brigade of the Guen Ming Commune, or pouring molten lead in the Peking Internal Combustion Engine Factory. She may also be found performing a delicate surgical operation, doing painstaking silk embroidery by hand or gently prompting little children in a dramatic production.

Women in China, from what we observe, are productive, politically astute and highly proud and aware of their contribution to socialist construction. While loving and attached to family and husband, the Chinese woman will, when necessary, subordinate these concerns to the needs of the state. Indeed, so highly integrated are her perceptions of her personal and social existence that decisions of this nature pose few contradictions for her.

One woman we had occasion to meet was 28 years old, proud and friendly. Shu acted as one of our guides in Tsun Hua County. Married for two and a

half years, Shu had been separated from her husband as he belonged to the People's Liberation Army and was stationed in the North of the country. Shu herself worked for the Chinese Peoples' Friendship Association of Tsunhua County which meant that her work took her away from a year-old son. He was consequently taken care of by Shu's mother in the countryside. The child was visited twice a month and Shu's husband returned to spend time with his family at least one month each year. As Shu explained: "My husband and I are doing important work and we must be where we are needed by our country." Her vitality and radiance demonstrated her sincerity.

Young and Old

The old, the young and the middle-aged woman all participate in a meaningful way in the work of building their society. Elementary school girls were seen shaving wooden legs in the Peking Timber Mill with their young teachers similarly engaged. At the Middle School in Shanghai, teenage girls were hard at work repairing automobile or machine engines and at the Youth Cultural Palace twelve and thirteen year-old girls participate in the identical military drills as their male friends.

In relation to the older woman, a striking illustration of their involvement and productivity was brought home to us at the Kung Jan Workers' Village in Shanghai. In this particular "village", which in Canadian terms might be referred to as a large complex, there were approximately 800 women, largely between the ages of 45 and 55 years whose youth had been mainly spent in pre-liberation days. These women knew no skills, had no experience of work in a factory, had little if any education and many were impaired in their movements by bound feet. After the Cultural Revolution the women organized and mobilized themselves, determined to make their own contribution to the state. From a nearby light bulb factory, in two months' time, the women were taught how to produce miniature bulbs used in flashlights or decorations for export abroad. Armed with a skill and supplied with machinery by the factory and materials by the state, the women were still in need of a physical structure in which to carry out their trade. Hence, brick by brick, the women built a processing plant from which they could expend their energy in society's behalf. In contrast to our own society, the beauty, the value and vigor of a modern Chinese woman does not wane as she approaches thirty!

Old Attitudes in the New Society

Yet as we witnessed these strides in development we were also aware and told quite frankly that while the ideology is one of equality, in fact many traditional attitudes still persist, especially in the countryside. Our interpreters levelled with us about the continuance of the traditional favoritism for male children in the rural areas, or the reluctance of the People's Liberation Army to recruit a family's only son in spite of the fact that there are daughters still at home.

When questioned about the predominance of women involved in silk embroidery work at the Chungsha Embroidery Factory we were informed that the work, being so fine and delicate, is more suited to women. Or wondering about the almost total absence of men from childcare work in the nurseries and kindergartens, we were told by our guides at the Shichiahuang Textile Mill that women are more "patient and tender" than men and therefore more suited to dealing with children. (This attitude did not appear to carry over into domestic relations where we were explained by numerous families that child-care and babysitting were more commonly assigned on the basis of practical realities—that is, work shifts or political responsibilities, for example). At Bei Dah (Peking) University, a young woman student explained that women made up 30 percent of the university population. The majority of these women could be found in the humanities, social sciences and languages as opposed to the technical or physical sciences.

The disproportionate representation of women on decision-making bodies or on the revolutionary committees of factories, communes, schools or government organs at some places that we visited supports the contention that old attitudes exist in spite of the new ideology. Woman workers comprise only about 15 percent of the work force at the Peking Timber Mill, and but one out of 19 members of the revolutionary committee. At the textile mill referred to above, 13 out of the 44 revolutionary committee members are female while 53 percent of the workers are women.

In all respects, however, the Chinese woman perceives herself as equal to her male counterpart and in the context of her past and the liberated social relationships, this is comprehensible and true. In fact, so often our interest in female representation on this or that, committee met with surprise or misunderstanding. Questioning from our Western bias, we often confused our hostesses who many

times responded: "But what does it matter if we do not have statistical representation. Our interests and our needs are more than adequately met." Trust, a very apparent and impressive component of all social and human relations in the new China, finds particular expression in male-female interaction.

Great Strides for Women

And the Chinese woman indeed is correct in lauding the factory of the state in meeting her needs. All women are accorded at least 56 to 70 days maternity leave at full pay in the countryside and in the city, depending upon the difficulty of the birth. Indeed in some factories such as the Shanghai Lui-Yuan Chemical Plant, women, after 5 months of pregnancy, need only work a 7 rather than an 8-hour day. After a birth, a woman is generally allowed one hour a day, again at full pay, for nursing her child. Adequate nurseries and kindergartens for babies from the age of 17 days are in abundance at the work place or in the living quarters.

But perhaps more than her amazing strides in the improvement of her own living conditions, more than her commitment and devotion to the development of her country, more than her role in almost all facets of production and in spite of the minor discrepancies which do exist, to reiterate what is most striking about the Chinese woman falls within the realm of social relationships. Here lies the greatest lesson and success of the woman's movement in China. Lack of competition for men, devotion of one's life to meaningful goals and the development of the moral, spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects of the revolutionary human being in a society that respects and honors womanhood have produced the most genuine feelings of sisterhood that this writer has ever witnessed. The warmth, physical and



The author, Joyce Marvin, with a woman on the revolutionary committee at Kung Jan New Village Housing Project.

emotional closeness that Chinese women exhibited towards each other and towards the female members of our delegation are certainly not common to our experience in this society.

As I grasped the hand of a little girl during our

tour of the nursery school of a coal-washing plant in Tang Shan, one of the female guides showing us around slipped her arm in mine. With obvious delight and pleasure, she bubbled: "Look at us. We are all sisters!"

talking about China



Women comrades at the Canton Trade Fair.

The Pedestal talked to Joyce Marvin about her trip to China and was fortunate to meet also Catherine Willmott, who spent many years in China both before and after the Revolution.

Could you describe some of the women you met in China? What were their interests? concerns? Were there any women you got to know fairly well?

Joyce: Well what comes to mind is a woman we met in Tsun-hua county (near the Great Wall in Hopci Province). Her name was Shu. She is a young woman about 29 years old. She was with us all the time we were visiting her area. Unfortunately, she didn't speak English, so all the communication I had with her was through an interpreter. Her husband was in the PLA, stationed in the north. Her one-year-old son was staying with her mother in a commune in the country. She would spend weekends with him. She worked for the Friendship Association of Tsun-hua county. She was quite a dynamic woman as were most of the women who showed us around China—warm, vital, and very committed to the job she was doing. I talked to her about her husband. They had been married for two years, and he being up north, they could only see each other for about one month each year. I tried to find out how she felt about that. She talked about her husband with some sadness, I felt, but that was judging from her facial expressions more than anything. Yet she was satisfied and proud that her husband was in the PLA, because the PLA has incredible status in China. She said they felt they were both doing important jobs and that it was natural that he be there and she in Tsun-hua because that was where they were needed. But she also expressed the hope that possibly they would find a position for her fairly close to where he was.

continued on page 10



The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours.
You young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at 8-9 in the morning,
our hope is placed on you....
The world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you.

Mao Tse-Tung

(Catherine after the interview, while we were munching on Christmas cookies and sipping jasmine tea, mentioned that a friend whom she had known well when she lived in China had followed his wife to Sinkiang where she had taken a post as a midwife on the frontier of China's western plateau).

*

You mentioned that there were women to meet you at each of the places you visited. You were the only two women in the Canadian delegation. Were you treated any differently as women in China?

Catherine: As women we were treated exceptionally kindly and carefully in China and I as an older woman (I did not ask Catherine her age, but I do know she and her husband celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last fall) got even more of it. They were so afraid that I would step into a hole. When I went up a little hill they would practically push me up. I was almost killed with kindness as I could have gone up easily on my own, swinging my arms. People tend to think now that they scorn the aged in China. But they don't. They are very kind to them and take very good care of them.

Joyce: I must say that I never felt so proud of being a woman as I did in China. Just seeing the kinds of things women were doing and feeling, just how women felt about themselves, and how committed they were to the socialist construction and to their jobs. It was such an incredible optimism you began to feel about the kind of thing women could do and not be stuck in the kinds of roles that we place them in here.

*

Did you come away with a new perspective about the condition of women in North America?

Joyce: Yeah. Well, one of the things that struck me, if you want to compare say the women's liberation movement here and there, is that at our particular stage of development, the emphasis is on women doing things themselves and on women finding a non-oppressive identity for themselves in which they can express themselves as women separate from men. Whereas in China, what the emphasis is on now is on working with men together toward a common goal.

*

I get the feeling that here a lot of women feel that working together with men will not be possible until men's consciousness has been raised to the point where they really understand not only intellectually but practically, what women's liberation is all about and that our liberation is ultimately bound up with the liberation of the whole society, men, women and children. To what extent do you think men in China have an understanding of what women's liberation is about?

Catherine: They seemed to be as proud of the progress that women have made as the women are. At one textile factory we met with the women workers and we questioned them about the proportion of women on the Revolutionary Committee (the basic decision-making bodies at every level in work, education, and political administration). Some of us felt the proportion should have been higher but the comrade in charge pointed out that compared with what it used to be, considerable progress had been made. All the women there insisted they felt quite equal to the men and the men agreed emphatically. They added that the only reason the proportion was not quite equal was that many women had more responsibilities with their families.

Another thing I wanted to say about what impressed me about the women was their priorities. If you just look at any TV advertisements here, you will see what people think are women's priorities: don't have a smelly kitchen, put on the proper kind of eyelashes and so on. It's so absolutely far from what the priorities of a Chinese woman are. They pay very little attention to personal appearance. They are



Deaf woman worker at the East Red Deaf & Mute Electrical Equipment Factory

neat, attractive, rosy-cheeked and healthy, but they don't use rouge or false eye-lashes. Their clothes are very modest and not intended to bring out their figure. They are attractive because they are so genuine and happy. As for the priorities—serving the people, doing their part in production, and they make that worldwide—they feel that they are serving not only their country but the peoples of the world. After that, really after that, they begin to think of their household, their family, their cooking, which gets done one way or another between the husband and the wife. And even after that, they think of beautifying the home. We did see instances of little things beautifying the house, but certainly there is no attention paid to it such as is paid here.

Joyce: A story that came to mind when you were talking about lack of concern with appearance as a priority. One of the members of our delegation wanted to take a picture of myself and Liu, another woman we got to know quite well on the trip. He wanted to take a picture of us standing together in sort of an artistic way whereby one of us would be in profile and the other facing the camera to bring out the differences between us. The point was that he wanted to do a picture that related very much to her appearance as opposed to a simple shot of us together. She agreed to do it and then he was fooling around with his camera and taking quite a long time to take the picture and she was getting extremely nervous and finally said she wouldn't do it. Afterwards when we talked about it, what came out was

that appearances are not important and that in fact, it's vanity. Sitting there and posing for a picture that would emphasize her physical or superficial characteristics would just be considered immodest and vain and much too individualistic. She said that she as a human being was valuable not because of what she looked like. It was a valuable lesson.

Another thing I wanted to mention was an observation of one of the men on the delegation who said that it was the first time that he had felt he could have a relationship with a woman and see her totally as a fellow human being and not as a physical thing.

Also the whole business of clothing in China really struck me. In our society it's not surprising to see men all dressed rather similarly, but to see women dressed that way without any kind of adornment in their clothing was kind of strange at first, and then I started realizing how important that similarity is in relation to how people relate to one another. I began to realize the incredible degree to which clothing is used to discriminate between people here. In China you can't tell by a person's clothing what role or status a person has. It had the effect of making it easier to relate to people in a more direct, less self-conscious and human way.

Catherine: It was interesting that what beauty we did see in China was always in things everybody used. In the homes there were bright flowered quilts and often a vase of flowers... Things that everyone enjoyed but which did not point to any one person. It also shows in the art—in beautiful ivory carvings and painting and writing.

continued next month



China May 7 Middle School girls working on repairing machine engines

women working

women &
pancakes

A large number of women work at some time in their lives as waitresses. Both the pay and working conditions are terrible. This is due largely to the very high turnover in personnel, the small number of staff involved in a single restaurant business, and the lack of commitment of trade unions to organize working women.

The workers at Smitty's Pancake House (Fir and Broadway) decided it was time to fight these conditions. When some of the workers were first approached to join a union their immediate response was—"The boss will never allow it." That was Thursday. The following Monday a majority of workers had joined the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union and Smitty's Pancake House employees officially applied for union certification. Two women, active in the union organizing, were fired immediately. Suits protesting the illegal firings have been filed with the B.C. Labour Relations Board.

The following week resulted in increasing harassment of the workers. Standard "scare" tactics were used by the management; "We'll shut down before allowing a union in here." "Anyone one minute late will be fired immediately."

The union struggle brought the people together at Smitty's in regular staff meetings. Together they were able to successfully combat any demoralization, work out individual fears and hesitancy, and struggle with the problems of working within a male dominated trade union.

After a month and a half of waiting, they received notice certification by the Labour Relations Board. The actual certification brought a new burst of energy. The first step had been completed, and they had succeeded in putting the boss in an absolute rage. With their new-found solidarity, they saw his tirades as coming from fear rather than strength. However, obtaining union status is one thing; getting a contract is another.

The first two negotiation meetings saw the owner vacationing in Hawaii. On his return negotiations came to an abrupt end. He refused to bargain except on the basis of an "open shop". For restaurant workers especially, an "open shop" will decrease the strength, and perhaps even lead to the collapse of the union. The high turnover of personnel, along with the boss's refusal to hire pro-union workers, would before long undercut the workers' strength.

In the past week an application has been made by the Restaurant Union to the Labour Relations Board calling for mediation in the dispute.

During the entire struggle, the women have been in contact with the Working Women's Association, and should it be necessary to strike at Smitty's, the WWA would provide concrete and active support.

The problems with organizing waitresses are near overwhelming. Collective action is the only possible way that the exploitation of waitresses can be stopped.

women &
agriculture



Canada — which once brought thousands of immigrants from Europe to farm the land and build the country — is now allowing its small farms to die. And their death is being officially encouraged by the federal government. The Financial Times recently explained the government's reasoning: the federal department of agriculture has decided that Canada can support no more than 150,000 farmers; this means that 250,000 farms must go. (That's the federal government's advice this year, but just three years ago it was advising young farmers to stay on their land and learn how to "manage" it.) At any rate, if current trends continue, and if the recommendations of the federal Task Force on Agriculture are implemented, two-thirds of the people presently farming in Canada will be eliminated by 1980. Even now, farm people are leaving their land to seek employment in the cities.

This "move" from one way of life to another has had a profound effect on the people involved — most are confused, bitter and alienated. It is not an easy thing to admit defeat and start again when you

are 58 years old. (The average age of farmers is 58.) But for rural women, the experience is doubly humiliating. Witness the advice of one "expert": "Women must ease the transition from farm to city by working as secretaries and providing for their families in the difficult period when the men are out of work."

Rural women have traditionally been strong, active, and involved in the operation of the farm. They have done the books, milked cows, pitched hay, and driven heavy machinery along with the men; and raised their families besides. Perhaps this is why they are in the forefront of the fight to obtain justice for farm people — indeed, many women are actively involved in organizing for the militant National Farmers Union. NFU women have participated in tractor demonstrations; Marie Hendricken from Mount Stewart, PEI, was a leading organizer of the tractor demonstrations on the Island last August. They have gained public support for the farmers' cause by distributing leaflets to consumers in shopping centres, and by giving food to the poor. Last year, in

Winnipeg, NFU women forged an alliance with the bakery workers' union by supporting their strike against the powerful Weston's corporation. (Weston's was importing bread from the States in an attempt to break the strike.)

Women have also played a leading role in the popular NFU boycott of Kraft Foods Ltd. The boycott originated in Ontario in August, when Kraft president Russell J. Greenwood refused to meet with the Ontario Dairy Farmers who supply the milk for Kraft products. The issue spread like wildfire across the country, and in November, NFU women in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Peace River picketed stores in major cities and handed out information leaflets to consumers.

Times are hard in the country. But a profound change has taken place in the people. They are no longer willing to accept the dictates of corporations and governments as to how they should live. They are breaking out of their isolation, and uniting, and creating alternatives. Times are hard in the country. But, this time, the people intend to win.



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST?

response to Mary Howland's letter
in the December issue

3

The domination of capital is the prerequisite of free competition, just as the despotism of the Roman emperors was the prerequisite of the free Roman civil law.

Marx in the Grundrisse

Mary Howland proposes that we should look to Spencerian liberalism to find a philosophy of women's liberation.

But liberalism is the theory which justifies the status quo in this society. Liberalism claims that capitalism, through "free competition", assures the survival of the fittest. Liberalism claims that those who are rich and powerful are those who are suited to dominating the rest of us. Or, as Mary Howland says:

"Women who show they can dominate, rule and enforce the respect of thousands — as industrial plant managers or policewomen — should be recognized as our true heroines. They haven't feared to succeed, and we should emulate them. To dominate, to rule, allows the highest degree of freedom, the greatest play of self-expression."

How can such an argument be made in the context of women's liberation — or any liberation? If domination of others allows the "highest degree of freedom" then the liberation of a few women must depend on the continued oppression and exploitation of the rest of us.

M.H. talks of "womenkind's natural competitiveness" but out competitiveness is not natural at all; it is deliberately developed and maintained by those who justify capitalism, and the oppression and exploitation of women which is part of capitalism. So long as each of us yearns to rule others, we are easily divided and bought off, particularly if our heroines are managers and policewomen. Almost every office has the woman office manager or supervisor who, for little extra pay, acts as the boss's eyes and ears and "dominates" the rest of us. These women are no more free than I am, though they may have considerable power over us — like the policewoman who turned in Dr. Makaroff for doing very safe illegal abortions.

It's true that most of us want to "get out of dreary, boring jobs in the bureaucracy." But the basic choice we face is whether to get out of them individually (a choice that is not open to most women), or whether to end dreary boring jobs altogether — a choice which is quite realistic on the basis of present technology.

DIANA

Survival of the fittest

Who's fit?

Jackie Kennedy's my heroine

I shall not want

Penelope Tree

Twiggy

The tall thin Vogue girls

They comfort me

They succeed, and success is all.

All what?

What for?

"Let about my short, fat, dumpy, not-blond sisters?

What about the unhappy housewife next door

with dirty diapers in a pail

runny-nosed kids

and shouting husband?

Did she succeed?

Can she defend herself against

ME?

"Let married women defend themselves vigorously against single sisters."

I'm all right, Jane.

Pat

2

The most disturbing aspect of Mary Howland's letter is its blithe embrace of the drive-competition-success tenets of opportunism. At a time when many people are aware that this kind of attitude only brings unhappiness it is cruel to wish that solution on anyone, especially women. No one is denying that women must feel a sense of individual worth but one can hope that it will be achieved by finding an alternative to clawing up the success ladder... like forming collectives to cooperate in finding a way to avoid loneliness and alienation. This is not going to be found by the once "slaves of husbands" telling their sisters to "dominate, rule and enforce the respect of thousands." Surely, women understand that escaping from oppression is not achieved by forcing it on others. The thousands (or in M.H.'s words, faceless proletariat) may not all be the fittest but their survival can't be ignored in order to create nirvana for the elite.

a tissue of red herrings

On Dec. 9, 1971, the Victoria Voice of Women presented a brief describing discrimination against women in the labor force to James Chabot, Minister of Labor for BC. Besides demonstrating differences between men's and women's wages and positions in industry and in the educational system, the brief showed that the government of British Columbia itself "condones and profits from this policy of economic apartheid."

Chabot replied that the brief had failed to take two factors into account. These are the high turnover rate of female employees and the increment structure of salaries in various pay classifications. This means that women do not receive the same pay as men because men have done the job longer. Minister Chabot also said that women could be executives if they wanted to but they failed to take advantage of their opportunities. He suggested that individual women who feel they are being discriminated against should file evidence with Industrial Relations officers and the Human Rights Act.

The Voice of Women's remarks about this are as follows:

His answer is totally unacceptable since all he comes up with are a few old red herrings. He uses the

tative spoke of how many government employees receive less in salary than the recommended welfare levels. The statistics in our brief show that it is predominantly women who are being paid poverty-level wages by the provincial government.

turnover rate of women as an excuse for their low salary, yet when men are hired at the same low wages as women, their turnover rate is even higher. Studies show that the return rate for those who leave government employment is three times higher for women than for men and that, in fact, the overall average length of service for female government employees is approximately equal to that of males.

Women are also segregated into female occupations where poor pay and poor prospects are the rule, regardless of the qualifications or length of service.

Many of those boring jobs are totally unnecessary and would be abolished if the filing clerks got to design the filing systems. Many make sense only in the context of a profit-motivated economy — practically the whole insurance industry, most of law, etc. Many more jobs are boring because of the division of labor which Mary Howland supports: between those who dominate and those who are dominated; the decision-makers and the shirkers. Many women's jobs in manufacturing exist only because our labor is so cheap that it's not worthwhile for employers to invest in labor-saving machinery.

The abolition of those jobs while the social system remains intact would simply lead to unemployment. To free all women from dreary boring jobs we must build a movement of women strong enough to abolish capitalism altogether.

I agree that we cannot look to China, Cuba, the Soviet Union as models (although we can learn from their experiences). These countries are undergoing a rapid industrialization which is necessary, but can't be liberating or fulfilling for most of their people. I agree that it is wrong for women's liberation to try to fit ourselves into anyone's blueprint for the revolution. But it is wrong to write off Marx on those grounds.

Marx's writings are in some ways more immediately relevant to us than to the people of China or Cuba. Marx talked about how the technology developed by capitalism made socialism possible. His vision of socialism is a realizable goal on the basis of the technology in North America. And it is not a vision of an oppressive bureaucratic state:

The surplus labor [which goes to profit and the accumulation of capital] of the masses has ceased to be a condition for the development of wealth in general; in the same way that the non-labor of the few has ceased to be a condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind. Production based on exchange value [selling price] therefore falls apart, and the immediate process of material production finds itself stripped of its impoverished, antagonistic form. Individuals are then in a position to develop freely. It is no longer a question of reducing the necessary labor time in order to create surplus labor, but of reducing the necessary labor of society to a minimum. The counterpart of this reduction is that all members of society can develop their education in the arts, sciences, etc., thanks to the free time and means available to all.

MARX, Grundrisse, again

Marx does not have all the answers. He wrote little about women specifically. He was a product of his time. As women, and as a movement, we must learn from our own experiences. But Marx's analysis can provide valuable insights into our own situation.

JEAN

FEMINISM AND MARXISM

There are several ways to view the world, depending on the problem and your solution to that problem. For instance, Marx and others watched with horror the gross exploitation of the new urban workers by the newly forming industrial society. Under the influence of nineteenth century assumptions about the "materialistic" and "absolute" nature of the universe (this was the age of Newton and molecular chemistry) Marx constructed his own theory to explain the Why of this ugly mess — and to propose a solution. In his view, people were wholly determined by the economic substrata of society. History to him was an inevitable progression, all change being caused by economic forces. He used the model constructed by Hegel (Thesis, producing Anti-thesis, resulting in a Synthesis, which in turn produces its own Anti-thesis), replacing Hegel's Idea-Spirit with Matter. His idea of progression and inevitable change towards bigger and better things fell right in with the nineteenth century popularization of Social Darwinism.

Within this system, the urban proletariat throughout the Industrial World was supposed to have more cohesiveness as a class than it ever had in common with capitalists within national boundaries. This theory was thoroughly destroyed by World War I. Economic class ties crumbled before the forces of nationalism and racism. Communist ideas triumphed in agrarian Russia rather than industrial Germany. Furthermore, during World War II, Stalin did not exhort the Russians in the name of International Communism; rather he spoke of Mother Russia. And the ancient enmity between Russian and Mongolian has not been buried in a Marxist-inspired peace.

The New Left makes much of the inclusion of the woman's movement into the theory of socialism. Before we stampe over to their particular truth, however, consider again the facts. Socialist theory became popular at the same time as the feminist movement. What good politician could ignore these forces? Furthermore, each movement has independent and separate roots. In fact, considering that the earliest (organized) feminists became fully conscious of their own oppression as a result of their activity as abolitionists, one would logically conclude that sexism and racism are more closely related than are feminism and socialism. This supposition has been strengthened by the fact that the first of the current generation of feminists were involved in the Civil Rights activities of the early 1960's. The consciousness-raising group, pioneered by these women, was partly based on the Negro Baptist tradition of public testimonial — and partly on the female tradition of sewing circle groups. Furthermore, the analogy with the Black people has proven much more useful to feminists than has a comparison between women and the "Working Class" (whatever that is, now that we're in the twentieth century).

Marxism is very similar to Thomist Christian theory in that truth is seen as being given from Outside, independent of the individual human being. A person acquires meaning through partaking in the irresistible progression of history — or through God. The Answer may be deduced from, on the one hand, the eternal verities of Das Kapital and writings of Lenin and Co., and on the other hand, from the Bible and those of the Church Fathers. This approach has very practical consequences for the feminist movement. At a time when we should be defining the groundwork for a feminist philosophy by clarifying our real situation here and now, we try to be good Marxists, theoretically pure, and attempt to fit our perceptions and concerns into the rationalist mould prepared by Herr Marx. At the price of ignoring our own "trivial" concerns, we are supposed to work for "The Revolution", despite the fact that no-one knows the name of Marx's, let alone Jerry Rubin's wife. Remember when Abbie Hoffman and Norman Mailer looked across the room in Heffner's Bunny Palace and saw Judge Hoffman? All of the boys together, enjoying themselves.

As one good Marxist (male) told me, "I don't mind your trying to liberate working women, but it is counterproductive and reactionary to liberate bourgeois women." I'm supposed to go shoot my sister, 'cause she's a bourgeois pig, and glow happily when He pats me on the back for doing a good job, baby. This, then, is the most dangerous result of trying to shove feminism into the socialist framework. If society is divided primarily into economic classes, it is necessary to divide women into "Working" and "Otherwise". So housework is not work. And prostitution is not work. Agonizing over your face for signs of age, and working every minute for years with creams and exercises and fad diets — this is not work, either, just silly concerns of some bourgeois bitches. But working in an office or on an assembly line fits into Marxist theory, especially the latter, so let's forget everything else and concentrate on that, because it's OK with The Prophet. We must work — selflessly of course — through the unions and try to ignore the fact that these are dominated by males and have a long and honorable history of fucking over women, working or otherwise.

And what are you going to do when the working male and the Black male and the Indian male and the Chicano male — all exploit women, without regard to their class or color? When Eldridge Cleaver boasts that he practised rape on his Black "sisters" in the ghetto before he went over to the White section of town and raped White women. No doubt good for the poor man's hangups, but...

And we are definitely to maintain an objective stance. For women are emotional, we are told, we must learn to react *politically*, like men. After all, don't get too personal, for such frivolity is womanish and therefore shameful. So we are treated to the unedifying spectacle of bourgeois intellectuals talking learnedly to each other about "working women", and condescendingly setting up classes on Marxism so that us poor goofs can learn to *truly* understand our oppression, within the larger struggle of the proletariat.

Please understand that I am not putting down the importance of class or race differences between women. These are extremely important and must be dealt with honestly with feminists if we are to gain anything. However, if we are to eliminate sexism, we cannot afford to make a policy of setting woman against woman. And this Marxism does.

But by accepting as given other people's theories, we are prevented from building a feminist approach based firmly on our own reality, our perception, our truth. And so it has always been. In fact, Klara Zetkin, despite her so-called radical credentials, had a great deal in common with Jane Addams and Nellie McClung. Zetkin worked for the Socialist Revolution, Addams worked for the Progressive Movement, and McClung worked for Prohibition. All flourished in a time when feminism was having a profound effect on western society. They all believed in women's rights — so long as it didn't go too far. In the final analysis, all ignored the problems peculiar to women, in the name of the greater aims of Humanity (i.e., men). And when they died, there were no women from the next generation to follow them. By riding the wave of feminism and squandering its strength on male-led movements, they failed themselves — and us.

And so it is today. We continue to help others. We ignore our own problems as women, and agree with our oppressors that these problems are trivial. Who makes the bed, who looks after the child all day, who becomes the mechanic and who becomes the typist, who gets the job as manager — if you can't make these fit into Marxist Theory, then we unto you. "Actually, it isn't because you're a woman that you didn't get the job, it's all the fault of the Capitalist System, and after the Revolution, when all the bourgeois pigs are dead, your problems will be solved". We can drown in our trivial hell with words and theories about the System Out There (never *here*, never people we *know*). We can ignore the words written by our foremothers and concentrate on those by men like Engels, Hinton and Fanon. Anything to retain the respect of our men.

Heather McFarlane
care of H.C. Lang
R.R.1, Whitehorse, Yukon.

LETTERS



81 Norma Street
Flin Flon
Man.

Dear Sisters,

I want you to know how much I enjoy your paper. I depend on it for inspiration and information. Your presentation and material are excellent. I hope you can expand your sales and become financially more stable.

Your article on "Crotch Rot" was very good. Many women have these problems and because of the ignorance and prejudice of the medical "profession" never get proper attention. I took the Pill for several years before I developed my first infection. I was in Africa at the time and was treated for every bug possible except what I probably had (the yeast) and finally was told by one doctor to get off the Pill, which I did, but it was 6 months before the infection cleared and back in Canada I had a complete range of tests for those sinful, exotic fauna - all were negative and finally it cleared, perhaps coincidentally with my starting to use Delfen foam.

Two years later I again started using the Pill and in the 5th month I again developed the infection - this time I knew enough to know that it was the yeast, established by the glucose change and my paranoia about doctors delayed my getting treated, so I went off the Pill and tried douching with Dettol and other things - no success, when I read "Crotch Rot" and noted that yeast need an alkali pH in the vagina, so I tried the obvious - daily douche with warm water and I teasp. vinegar(no, I don't smell like a dill pickle and anyhow that would be better than smelling like peanut butter, which is what the vaginal sprays do. I'm told they probably cause and encourage infections too). After the 2nd day the discharge was gone and I kept it up for 2 weeks daily and then only did it twice a week. I'm starting the Pill again this week so will see what happens. Anyhow it's worth a try, anything is better than having some slob poke around and prescribe horrible greasy concoctions.

My experiences with childbirth are that no kindly doctor, nurse, man or lover (if all or any of these are

available) are going to have it for you - you're on your own. To a doctor delivery is like tonsilectomy - get it out the easiest way. So prepare yourself. Erna Wright's "The New Childbirth" has all the right information and the most important thing - the right breathing exercises - do them until they are completely mastered and almost unconscious. Apart from that find a doctor who will not be too heavy and agrees to go along with you and good luck. I had my baby in 10 min. of concentrated labour and one push - no pain - I felt refreshed and strong, ready to walk home. *Very important* - don't lie flat in delivery or labour, have pillows behind you. This prevents reaction to labour, which tenses you and arches the back - which will automatically result in pain.

As for all the books on feminism, I still find the most useful and serious one to be "The Dialectics of Sex" by Shulamith Firestone. Do recommend it to your readers.

All the best -

Terry Padgham

Dear Pedestal,

Please renew my subscription for another year. I was happy to see news of the Brantford strike in your paper - the only cause for objection I have to what goes on at the Pedestal is that news from my region is relatively scarce, and I would be happier to see more articles about Ontario. However I suppose the answer to that is that more people like me should get off our butts and write them. Until I do, guess I'll put up and shut up. That "disillusionment with socialism" letter is disappointing because the Waffles are the only people I've seen take us seriously enough to use us as an issue...even.

Keep the peace and bomb the state,
Bev Brown

2608 Ontario Street
Vancouver 10

Dear Lady,

May I draw this to your attention. There's a Dr. Benard, psychiatrist, who comes on CBC Channel 2, Vancouver, Monday to Friday each week. Ever since this program started all the patients pictured on his couch are daft, babbling females telling their dreams

and fantasies and how they feel while Dr. Benard, the psychiatrist, sits by.

Since this program started all his patients are foolish females. He has never had a male patient on his couch but all females talking foolish and mixed up. It gives the impression that only females need psychiatry. All I have written here is the real truth.

Why wasn't the logger charged with assault for grabbing the bloomers off the stewardess. Why should he get off, he insulted her as if she wasn't much. Maybe if he was charged with assault he would have more respect for womanhood.

I'm tired of seeing young girls and women used to titillate the sex lusts of males. Why should males be catered to in this way. Why should females be demeaned by business to lure dollars out of males by appealing to their lust desires.

It's awful girls, the way it is now. We are used as sex objects only (girls scantily dressed standing by cars) by Big Business. It's high time females demanded respect, isn't it.

Just thought I would tell you as I realize you are interested in justice for women.

Sincerely,
Mrs. L. Smith



P.O. Box 517
Merritt, B.C.

Dear women of the Pedestal.

I have received two issues of the Pedestal for which I thank someone. I agree with one article that the NDP seems to merely pay lip service to justice for woman, since I wrote to a highly placed NDP MP in Ottawa suggesting that an important plank in their platform should be to give women who have created and cared for two children the maximum Canada pension — the government should pay their contribution through the years. The reason I said two children is because of the population explosion.

Since woman creates all the taxable units the government gets a crack at, I believe these girls or women are due the maximum Canada Pension. Do you know how this M.P. answered me? That women in my position had not worked !! To say my reaction to that was shock and anger is to put it mildly. Mind you, Grace McInnis does fight for abortion on demand for this I applaud her — I believe girls and women must have complete control of their own bodies. I also believe Drs. or

boards that make any girl or woman wait weeks for a decision are criminal. I wish your paper had less crude articles. Forceful, yes, crude, no. I should like to submit a little poem pertaining to women. I call it

BLIGHT

Some leaves are quite pointed,
And others are blunted,
There 'are those that grow jointed,
And those that are stunted.

The pointed resemble the sweet human head,
Sensibilities blunted, with sex being fed
To babes or grandmothers, single or wed...
Hunted and punted and stunted and dead!

Sincerely yours,

Hilda J. Peterson



Women's Studies at UBC is sponsoring a Women's Week on campus March 6 through 10. The central topic is Women and the Arts. If you are interested in participating, call Ruth Calder — 731-0972.

*

The Art Gallery is having a show on Women in the Arts at the same time (March 6 thru 10). If you have work you would like shown, call the Education Department, 684-2488.

*

Colour us Red:

A Marxist analysis of Women

We will attempt to raise some of the crucial questions concerning the status of women in various political and economic systems. We want to develop our understanding of women [our culture, our consciousness, our life opportunities] from a Marxist perspective.

The registration will take place Monday, January 24 at 8 pm at the Women's Centre, 511 Carrall St. We will decide the basics of the course and get to know one another. Bring beer and pretzels.



Dear Pedestal,

Here's another point for women's unions. We need power—but unfortunately sometimes we realize this need too late. My mother found out the hard way. She worked for McCaulay Nicolls (the old, 'established' firm) for 7 1/2 years. The last day of the year one of the brave men from Head Office came to tell her (in his words), "I've come to make you the sacrificial lamb." It seems that two money-producing members of the hierarchy couldn't cope with their personality problems and there was need of a scapegoat, so a "professional decision" had to be made to let go the most expendable person. Of course, it was the secretary. So after 7 1/2 years of good service, she's out of a job. At the time she was told it was through no fault of her own, she had done a good job, everyone liked her but...

My point is this. Men as well as women are subjected to his kind of abuse. But women are far less organized in labour than men. They are also—as society stands today—more frequently at the bottom in job status. Big little men should not be allowed to make us the "sacrificial lamb" so easily.

Sincerely,
Kathy Getzke



Sisterhood is Powerful,
Catherine D. Crowther.

Anyone interested in working on a women's photography show at the Women's Centre, whether or not she is a photographer, should call Colette at 738-0164. People to help with all aspects of the show are needed.

The Pedestal is published monthly by the Pedestal Collective, a loosely disorganized clump of weird women including:

Pat Howard, Julie Perysko, Lynn Ruschinsky, Helen Potrebenco, Carol Weiner, Jean Rands, Anne Goldstein, Diana Kemble, Pat Hoffer, Josie Devlin, Ailsa Rands, Ann Hayes



RAPE

I am really down on rape. It is a BAD-BOOGIE! I think that if a guy wants to make Love to a woman he can ask her. But Rape is different. I have heard of some pretty bad situations of rape. I read Susan Griffin's report on Rape in ramparts (Sept.) RIGHT ON!
What does it do? NOTHING!!! That's the way I see it! Julie, the young sister.

WOMEN'S CENTRE
Rummage Sale



**JANUARY 29
511 GARRALL ST**

JANUARY 1972

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

	Gordon House Rap Group 8:00 #1	UBC Women's Studies Course 7:00 #2	Video #3 Workshop 11:30 Free U. working Women 7:00		Gay Women's Dreptn 8:00	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Pedestal 11:00 Theatre 16 7:30	Gordon House Rap Group 8:00	UBC Women's Studies Course 7:00	Video Workshop 1:30 Working Women 7:00	19	21	Kemmi Kids Cartoons 7, 9:30, 12
Pedestal 11:00 Theatre 23 7:30	Gordon House Rap Group 8:00 Studies Course 24	UBC Women's Studies Course 25 7:00	Video Workshop 1:30 Working Women 7:00	26	27	28
Pedestal 11:00 Theatre 30 7:30	Gordon House Rap Group 8:00 Studies Course 31	#1 #2 #3	Davie + Burnard Sub Ballroom UBC Free University Venables + Victoria			Open House Rummage Sale 29

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