

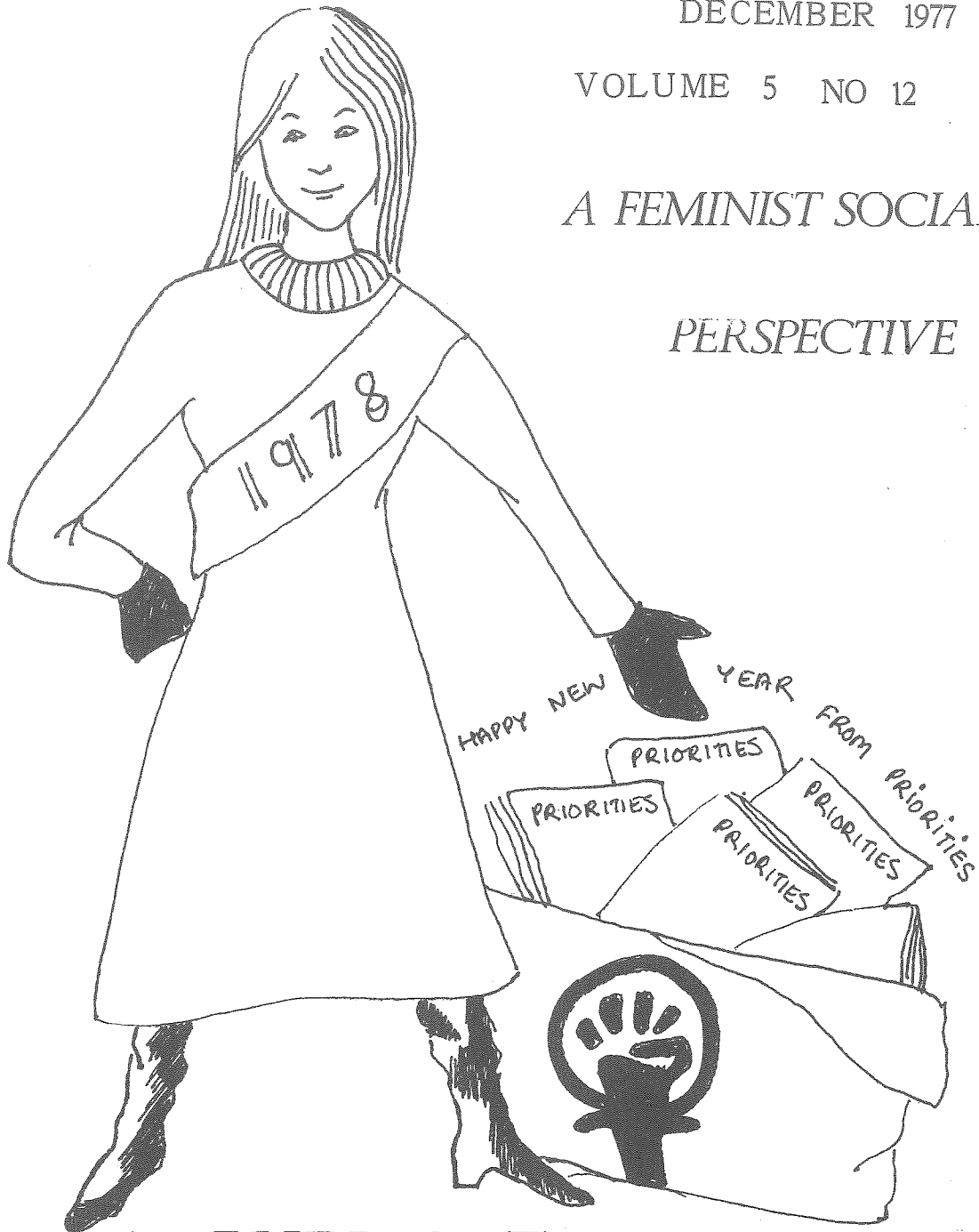
# PRIORITIES

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*A FEMINIST SOCIALIST*

*PERSPECTIVE*



A PUBLICATION OF THE  
N.D.P. WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

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responsibility of the Editorial Committee

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"The issues and demands raised by the Women's  
Liberation Movement are integral to the de-  
velopment of a democratic socialist society.  
The NDP actively encourages and provides  
support for women organizing around the de-  
mands of the women's liberation movement and  
commits an NDP government to creating the  
legislation necessary to realize these de-  
mands."

(From the B.C. NDP policy on Women's Rights)

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# UPDATE ON THE BIMINI STRIKE

JOAN WOODWARD

For those of you who did not receive our November issue, Bimini's, a neighbourhood pub in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver, is on strike. The employees here are members of the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada, a union which was formed by and for working women. Bimini's was certified by the Labour Relations Board of BC as an official bargaining unit in January 77. The waitresses then proceeded to write their own proposed contract, with some legal counsel from the union, which they subsequently presented to the owner, Mr. Peter Uram.

The waitresses state that the reason they chose SORWUC as their union was that this union, unlike many others, would allow them to write their own contract and speak for themselves in negotiations.

When management first learned that application for certification had been filed, they reacted with a variety of anti-union tactics in an attempt to convince the workers to withdraw the application. Uram claimed a deep personal hurt at the very idea that his employees should feel that they wanted a union. When this tactic met with only partial success, he began to intimidate and state openly that he might be obliged to close in the near future. When this failed also, he began a campaign of harassment against those workers who most adamantly supported the principle of unionism. In mid-February, the waitresses presented their proposed contract to Uram, who refused to consider any of the proposed changes seriously.

Wages were not the central issue. The waitresses were primarily interested in grievance procedure in order to put an

an end to the harassment they were experiencing, and also to eliminate what is termed "fading away". I asked Mar-hot Holmes, one of the waitresses at Bimini's, what was meant when a waitress was said to be "fading away":

"It's a joke, really! What they do is they gradually shorten your hours to the point where you're obliged to quit, because you can no longer afford to work there."

The workers are also asking for a union shop. This would put an end to the favouritism exhibited toward those employees who claim not to be interested in unionism.

Other demands include one paid sick day per month and a medical-dental plan that would be partly paid by the employer. They are also asking for formal recognition of seniority.

Attempts at negotiations with Uram dragged on over ten months, during which time the waitresses met weekly with Uram, hoping that they could arrive at some compromise over the proposals. Finally, in desperation, the union called for a strike vote. The vote was 13-7 in favour, and on October 20th pickets first appeared in front of Bimini's.

During the first weeks of the strike, 85% to 95% of customers were turned away from Bimini's. All seemed to be going well, except that negotiations were still proceeding at a snail's pace; and the employer continued to use every means possible to either break the strike or to avoid negotiating with the union which he termed a "women's lib organization".

Soon after negotiations finally began to be conducted in earnest, after almost 5 weeks of strike action, Local 40 of the Bartenders' Union (Hotel, Restaurant, Culinary and Bartenders' Union International) were encouraged to come in and sign employees into their union with a promise that everyone would be back to work in a week. Forty-five incensed members of SORWUC went out to picket Local 40's offices in protest at this extreme lack of trade union ethics. The BC Federation of Labour also saw this as highly unethical and demanded that the Local 40 withdraw their application for certification at Bimini's. This left the employees in a position to get back to the bargaining table.

Since that time, the two parties have decided to resort to a second round of talks with the provincial government's mediator, Ed Sims, who immediately recommended binding arbitration.

This has been rejected by the Union, who feel that the two parties involved are the most capable of reaching a fair and just settlement, since they both have a better understanding of the issues than would an outside arbitrator.

The owner is still persisting in his attempt to have an outside party impose a contract. He is applying under Section 70 of the Labour Code, requesting that the LRB impose a first contract. Negotiations have therefore come to a halt while this application is considered.

SORWUC is urgently in need of people to picket. Please phone their office at 684-2834 if you can help, or drop by at Bimini's in the 2000 block West Fourth Avenue.

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## IN MEMORIAM

On Saturday, November 12, Lloyd Brereton, editor of the Humanist in Canada died. We share with Irene in her loss and share with you part of Lloyd's philosophy... "There is no area of human conduct which should be sacred from critical analysis. No assumption which cannot be questioned. Discarding dogmatically held concepts such as the supernatural, humanism considers human problems have to be solved by human means."

Lloyd possessed rare insight into the oppressive nature of tradition and willingly gave us his warm support during the past year. May we continue in our attempts to produce a more equalitarian society for all our children.

\*\*\*\*\*

## NO COMMENT

The two main problems in the pipeline camps were "booze and women." he reported. He said both commodities should be licenced and available to the men in the camps to prevent them from causing trouble in the towns.

from the YUKON NEWS, October 1977

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