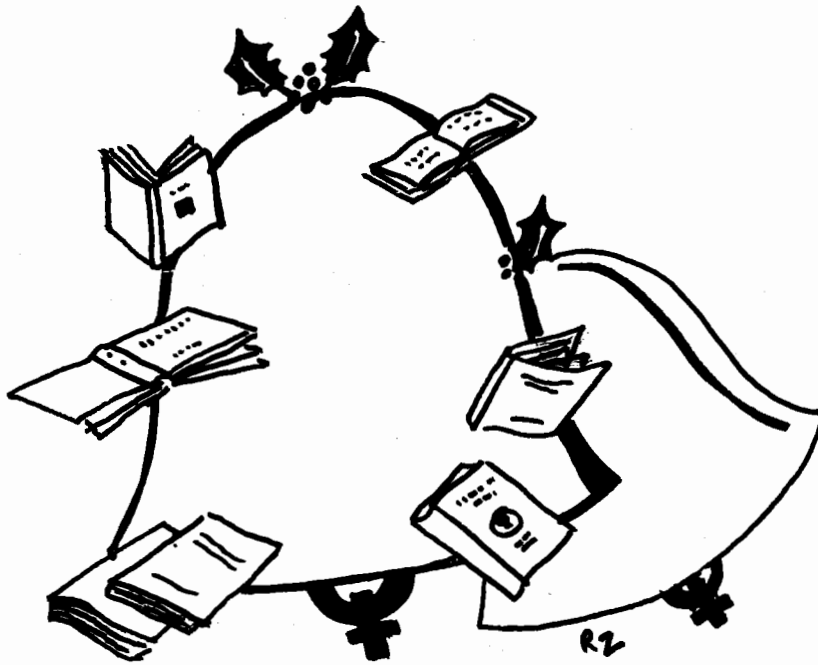


PRIORITIES

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N.D.P. WOMEN'S COMMITTEE
A FEMINIST SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

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meetings for the December issue appear
on page 15 of this issue.

BOYCOTT BiMINI'S

Ardith Roscoe

The night air is bitterly cold as a small group of people, mostly women, circle up and down in front of a neighborhood pub on West 4th Avenue in Vancouver - this scene has been continued daily since Oct. 20 when employees at Bimini's voted 13-7 to strike in support of their demands for a contract. Though this small local received certification with SORWUC (Service, Office, and Retail Worker's Union of Canada) last January, after 10 months of negotiation were still without a contract.

(SORWUC is a small democratically-structured independent Canadian union which is working to organize the unorganized.)

The union is fighting for increased pay and benefits. As well as being poorly-paid Bimini workers receive no benefits - no sick leave, no medical or dental plan, no seniority rights, and are subject to irregular and arbitrary scheduling of work. They are asking for \$4.50 an hour for trainee waitresses and \$5.00 an hour for permanent waitresses, as well as sick leave, paid holiday time, and job protection. One of the proposals which is most important to the union is that of a union shop. At present a tactic of management has been to keep the staff divided with promises to some and discrimination against others.

Hardly unreasonable demands - are there other issues that account for the reluctance of management to settle? Is owner Peter Uram's position as president of the B.C. Pub Owner's Association related?

Bimini waitresses, however, are fighting for more than wages and benefits - they are fighting for the right to be treated as human beings, the right to some control over the conditions of their employment, the right to be treated as employees, with respect.

The picket has remained solid and has



received wide support from the community, from patrons, other unions, and many women's groups. The struggle of the Bimini workers is an important one - bringing the benefits of a union contract to the unorganized worker is a vital strategy in the larger struggle and one with which all of us should identify. Women make up over 40% of the labour force, yet only 22% are unionized. Collective action is the only recourse to women who - easily replaced and with low resistance to exploitation -- occupy the lowest position in the economy. Through this strike and other actions the gap between job consciousness and class consciousness will be narrowed - it is these inner changes which will provide the basis for the continuing struggle for economic and social equality.