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broadsheet

new zealand's feminist magazine

september 1980

no. 82

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TEACHING

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**Are you crippled
by fashion?**

**Inside: The Folly of
Fashion
and
Beyond Fashion
and into Style**

**We talk to two
stylish women.**

**New theory section!
Beginning with
"The State of Feminism"**

**Infertility: not a subject
for discussion.**

**WOMEN AT THE
HUSTINGS:
Interviews with women
candidates at the local
body elections.**

Fronting up

Broadsheet Office

is at:

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Our box number is:

P.O. Box 5799, Wellesley St,

Auckland, New Zealand.

Deadlines for future issues:

Deadline for November issue: September 10

Deadline for December issue: October 10

Deadline for January/February issue: November 10

Display ads, classified ads, and small announcements and news can reach us up to 3 days after this date.

Enveloping

Enveloping of the October issue will be on Saturday, November 1 at the Broadsheet office. Women and children welcome.

Broadsheet Seminar

The seminar held by Broadsheet on Saturday July 26 called "How to live as a feminist and not go mad!!!" was a great success. About 220 women gathered at the Auckland Secondary Teachers' College to hear two speakers and discuss how feminism related to their personal lives. For a brief report see Behind the News.

Consciousness-raising groups

Many women at the Broadsheet seminar expressed an interest in belonging to a consciousness-raising group and asked did Broadsheet organise them. Unfortunately producing a magazine takes all our energy and we can't cope with organising CR. However, we have decided to make our classified ads page available for free for any women or groups wanting to place an ad to get in touch with other women to form CR groups. Maximum length of ad — 20 words. Just send us your names, telephone number and area and we will do the rest. We are particularly keen to help women from out of Auckland and in isolated areas who find making contact with other women very difficult.

Non-violent training weekend

Broadsheet is organising a non-violent training weekend to be run by Rachel Bloomfield for the weekend of October 10-11-12, to be held at a camp near Auckland. The weekend is woman-only and will look at non-violent methods of political action and at group dynamics. There is room for about 25 women and we are hoping to keep the cost down as far as possible. We see this as a weekend for feminist women who have been working in feminist collectives or on feminist projects. Anyone interested please phone the office or write to PO Box 5799, Auckland.



ARE YOU PLANNING on travelling?

We specialize in all aspects of travel for women and would be very happy if you contact Sally Mills for all overseas travel, Trend Travel, NOW

**Office at: 3 Bankside Street, Auckland 1
(opposite Shortland Street car-park)**

**All mail to: CPO Box 1916, Auckland.
Phone: 31-189 or 793-594**



The Committee on Women congratulates Broadsheet on eight years of feminist action

"... we are not just attempting to climb into the positions currently held by men. We are trying to use our combined resources to develop something better — to change the system".

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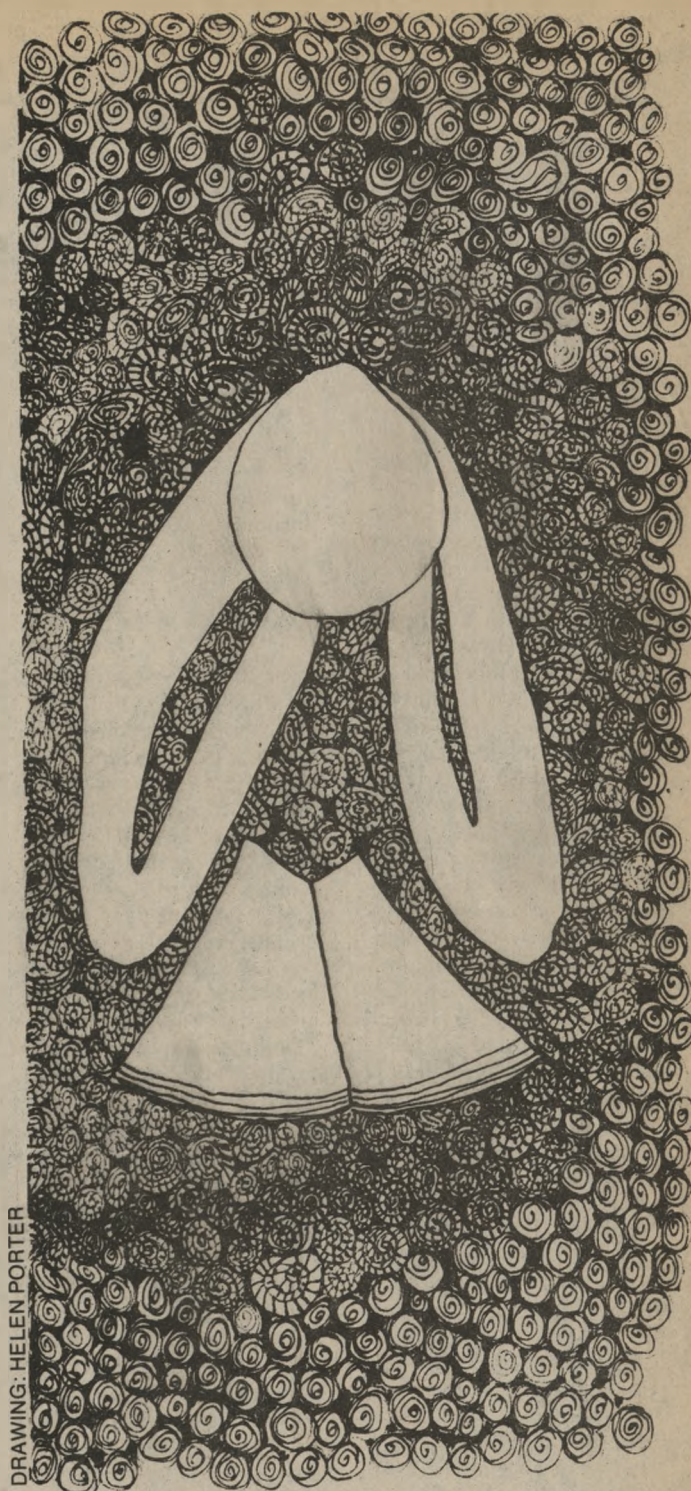
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The Broadsheet Collective: Sarah Calvert, Sandra Coney, Sandi Hall, Miriam Jackson, Anne Macfarlane, Jenny Rankine, Sarah Ransom .

These women worked on this issue: Ro Cambridge, Heather McLeish, Amy Peryer, Joyce Porter, Jill Ranstead, Barbara Rock, Lesley Smith, Doreen Suddens, Anne du Temple, Jean Volkerling, Liz Stuttard and the enveloping women.
Cover photo: Gillian Chaplin



DRAWING: HELEN PORTER

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LETTERS

Close to home

Dear Broadsheet.

In my usual blowing it all free for Summer Employment two years ago I ended up in an iron-ore mining, crushing and shipping plant in North West Australia for three months. Of course I didn't say I was only there temporarily and would have to return to Dunedin Grey and so with one other woman was sent to liberate Finucane Island. Two single women officially (you don't acknowledge all the half-caste aboriginals in the single men's quarters 'cos they don't count as human). 900-odd men. We worked as TAs — trade assistants, fitters mates.

The lovely, independent Aussie woman I originally went with who'd just returned from packing fish in a fish factory and thought she could cope with anything fell foul of the Lady-Slut dichotomy, got bitter and "conformed". "gave in" but that's a whole life story for another time. Since we wogs stuck together, I got to know some of the large Christmas Island community at Port Hedland. Their Indian Ocean Phosphate Home now cheaply grows fat NZ and Aussie sheep. Only Aus has given them somewhere to live. South Hedland has a community for about 500 families of these Muslim Malay people who work for Goldsworthy Mining (a Utah subsidiary) and Mt Newman Mining Ltd.

Clitorectomy is the usual practice among their women. At the age of 12-15 a short week in a Singapore Hospital ensures their purity. There are only a few girls who have escaped this mutilating operation only to

have very strict chaperonage, and no freedom to mix with non-family men instead. Needless to say they are saving their own money for the operation. It is closer to home than we often think. Thank goodness compensation occurs, at least partially, and nerve endings spread and orgasm can still occur. God bless man's myth that orgasms are purely clitoral.

Arohanui

Jacqueline Allen

Dolores disappoints

Dear Broadsheet.

I have just finished reading Marilyn French's **The Bleeding Heart** and then, afterwards, two reviews. The first by Adrienne Blue in the 20 June **New Statesman** (which surely should be renamed **Statesperson** by now!) and the second in **Broadsheet** by Sandi Hall. Adrienne Blue's review and its accompanying cartoon in rather bad taste says "Dolores is a ruthless, stentorian Socrates". She is criticised for the way she questions Victor and accuses him of being a "cruel agent of patriarchy". I felt that both Dolores and Victor were given equal opportunity to express their past experiences and show how they had developed their attitudes towards the opposite sex. What I found disappointing about Dolores was that she was unable to resolve the situation with any other than stereotyped methods. Dolores is still unable to accept adult womanhood. In crisis situations she turns to drink and ultimately finds strength in Victor. The final paragraph leaves her unable to think on any solution other than the arms of Victor around her. Can this be a feminist novel when the heroine

longs for the ever-loving, embracing arms of big-Daddy? Like Sandi Hall I feel angry with Dolores and Marilyn French. It seems to me as if French is apologising for being a feminist and she bends so far backwards to accommodate and excuse male insensitivity that she negates the few positive feminist aspects of the novel.

Dianne Yates

Thanx a lot

Hiya People.

Recently I wrote and ordered back copies, which I got (thanx a lot) and in the note you sent with them you offered me a bundle of back copies for school.

Trident High School (my school — I'm in the sixth form), could sure do with some Broadsheets! It's the most old-fashioned sexist school you could think of. The "senior mistress" is male and so is the guidance counsellor. There are no female HOD's etc etc.

I can assure you they will be well-thumbed! so the more the merrier. Hopefully they will act as an incentive for our librarian to take out a subscription. Also you asked for old envelopes so I have sent you some — one of which I have stamped and self-addressed.

Thanks a lot for the good vibes and good issues.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Younger (16).

PS A good suggestion for hogwash is a kitchen sale in the shop I work for which has "Dear Mrs Customer ... !!!"

PPS. I hear the school motto at Whakatane High School (the other high school here), even though over half the pupils are women is, "I shall act like a man!!!"

Family Day Care defended

Dear Broadsheet.

Sandra Coney has written an emotional, destructive and distorted article on Family Day Care. To give the example of only one such scheme, and to use that example as a blanket dismissal of Family Day Care is poor journalism indeed. Although there is limited liaison between the ten schemes at present operating in New Zealand, we do know that the Dunedin Centre is not alone in providing a very good option to all parents seeking child care, and a supportive service to carers.

All those involved in this scheme have been adamant that we must, by all means possible, avoid the very situation Sandra seems to believe is the Family Day Care norm: women at home with young children, confined, immobile and unsupported.

Towards this end Dunedin's Family Day Care scheme offers positive benefits and supports for both women and children that are the result of careful planning.

- The scheme has as its base of operations, a registered Child Care Centre which has received a Class A licence under the 1960 Child Care Regulations.

- Paid staff include two part-time co-ordinators, a preschool supervisor and four preschool staff, a secretary and a cleaner, all working as a team at the Centre.

- Group meetings are held weekly offering films, speakers, workshops and informal talking time. Whilst used regularly by carers, parents are welcome and join in when they can.

- Transport sharing between co-ordinators, pre-school staff, parents and carers ensures the Centre facilities are available to all.
- Preschool sessions, including toddlers groups are held each morning at the Centre, planned to meet the needs of different age groupings between 0—5 years.

- Equipment support is available from the Centre and these items are borrowed constantly: toys, books, pushchairs, cots, bikes, puzzles, etc, etc.

- The Government fees subsidy is available to parents unable to meet the full cost of Day Care.

- Advice and referral to all Social Services related to Family Day Care is equally available to all adults and children in the programme.
- Carers receive public and annual holiday pay, sick pay and a retention fee if the child is absent through illness or holiday.

At present we pay our carers a base rate of \$25.00 weekly per full-time child, \$30.00 for babies, \$50.00 for two children. Whilst we agree that these payments are totally inadequate for the quality of care that selected families offer, we work to counteract this through the provision of the practical benefits and support services referred to. We can offer little more until Child Care realises greater government recognition and support.

Once children are settled at the pre-school sessions, carers are free to leave to follow their own inclinations — read Broadsheet in the bath, meet a friend for coffee, shop alone, attend appointments etc. Where someone has a particular interest they'd like to retain — music lessons or sport — we organise back up care with a familiar adult. If transport is a problem Family Day Care staff regularly bring children to and from the sessions. The topics at weekly carers meetings are

usually child-related and viewed as an extension of the carers' parenting skills. Equipment from the Centre is available for home use, as is a pool of cots, pushchairs etc. This physical contact at the Centre, plus home visits by the co-ordinators and frequent phone contact, means that each care situation is visible to a number of trained adults.

Sandra's nightmare of 3/4 preschoolers in one home has been realised only occasionally in two-and-a-half years. Each situation remains fresh in our minds because of the pleasure the carer derived from having a family group of preschoolers of compatible ages — the fun of picnics, expeditions to the supermarket (experiences laced with humour and discovery, not horror) and their regular pre-school activities at the Centre.

Because we are registered as an approved voluntary organisation to claim the government fees subsidy, the government therefore finds encouraging Family Day Care no less painful than it does Day Care Centres. A scheme such as ours requires a building, equipment, salaries for co-ordinators and pre-school staff, plus mileage expenses incurred in over-seeing home based care. We have successfully exploded the hopeful myth of Family Day Care as the new cheap alternative. A careful comparative analysis of Day Care Centre costs and Family Day Care costs in June '79 revealed that the per capita cost requirements for Family Day

Care are in fact slightly higher than Day Care Centre costs.

To compare home based Day Care with Centre based Day Care is a non-productive exercise — strengths and weaknesses are evident in both. We are surprised to learn that freedom of choice is no longer a basic tenet of feminism.

People wishing to care for a child in their own home usually approach us, and the decision to go ahead is made following a family discussion: their choice is to be with young children. We feel we are working along with other Dunedin services to make options available to all parents.

Yours sincerely,

Pauline McKinlay & Jill Cameron,
Co-ordinators, Family Day Care.

Dear Broadsheet,

There are women who actually find fulfillment in being a wife and mother at home bringing up their own children. I am one of these. There are also women who would like to stay at home with their children, but out of necessity join the workforce. A third group of women find themselves incapable of staying at home to bring up their children, but would like their children to be in a family situation they cannot provide during the day. People such as myself, a "carer," make that possible.

The main reason I became involved in the FDC programme was that at the

time, my own children were aged 3 years and 15 months and my older child badly needed peer companionship. We also have a large house and a large section with plenty of equipment. Family Day Care had a solo mother with a little boy who needed care. He came to us a year ago, and because of careful matching by the co-ordinator of mother and child with carer and family, he fitted in right away. Close friendship has developed between the children, his mother and myself. I now have another companion for my younger child, as my elder child is starting kindy and his companion is going off to school.

The children each have their own favourite toys, bikes, teddy bears etc. and they share all other toys provided by myself and the FDC Centre.

Nobody would deny the wages are low and hopefully government will see fit to do something about it. However, I do not feel I am being exploited. There are other benefits for my family and myself. Our FDC provides a good back-up service. I have two free mornings each week when all the children are picked up at the door and taken to the FDC Centre for pre-school sessions. Once a fortnight I go to the Centre to meet with the co-ordinators and other carers for coffee, discussion, talks and workshops, while another pre-school session is in progress for the children.

I find caring for other people's children does not conflict with my role as a wife, mother and housewife. I am not isolated or alone. Apart from the back up service described, there is weekly phone contact between carers and co-ordinators and personal contact available when necessary. This prevents any difficulties that may arise from getting out of hand.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Marriage is a great institution — but I wouldn't want to live in an institution for the rest of my life."

Anon

Graffiti in women's loos,
Wellington Public Library

I am more organised and efficient than to let my life become "one horrendous round of cooking and cleaning". My housework is quickly dealt with in the mornings while the children play or "help" in their way, just as they would in their own homes. The children clean up their own toys before meals and are generally helpful, responsible human beings. Because they are well matched playmates, disputes are few and not serious. Any that do arise that the children cannot solve for themselves are dealt with fairly.

With four under five's in our house we find the older two children are protective of the younger two and the four of them either play together or split into twos. We manage outings all together (even to the supermarket) without mishap. We usually all enjoy ourselves.

My husband and I find time spent with just our own children is really appreciated and used to the fullest. When our own children play together in the evenings and at weekends they also enjoy each other's company more.

I think the FDC programme, when well organised, is a valuable service to the community.

Jocelyn Wara
Dunedin

Dear Broadsheet.

We are a group of women who organise, provide and use family day care in the southern suburbs of Wellington. We were interested in Sandra Coney's article in the May Broadsheet and having discussed it, we would like to make some comments on what she wrote about family day care.

First, parents using family day care schemes are eligible for government subsidy on fees, when these schemes are run by non-profit-making organisa-



DRAWING: HELEN COURTNEY

tions. This is just the same as for day care centres. The cost of family day care to the parent is also much the same — with us it is \$30.00 a week per child, \$50.00 for two children of the same family. The administration of this subsidy is part of the work of the two women who share the job of organising the scheme, though the actual payment of the caregivers is done by the parents themselves. These two women are paid by Barnardo's NZ and the Wellington Community Child Care Association jointly with assistance from the Wellington City Council, and they work from a small office in the Newtown Community Centre, where they run play groups for the local community as well as for the carers and their children.

Most of our group are "carers" and most of us are also mothers and housewives. We have found no conflict between these roles in our lives, nor have we felt trapped in our homes. In fact, we have often found that the presence of the extra child/children has made things easier — the housework gets done faster

when the children play together, and there is more time and incentive to go out and do things. Play groups, playcentre and kindergarten are all meeting places for adults as well as children. We feel that children, both our own and those we care for, benefit from the experience of sharing. Naturally there can be difficulties in integrating a child into the day care home and there is grief when a child must leave it, but this is common to all social groups, and where it is sympathetically handled by adults, can be a maturing experience for the child. It is true that a day care centre is not here today and gone tomorrow, but neither is a responsible carer. Those of us who work as co-ordinators of the service have found that most carers do offer "continuity of location, peer group and personnel". They have volunteered to be carers because they like children and respect themselves as carers for them. Certainly they have no other staff members to share the responsibility and provide alternative adults for the children, but they do have families, friends and neighbours, other play group parents and the family day care workers available for general support and practical help. The workers are there to help both carers and parents and to keep an eye on what is going on.

They are in touch with minders, they are accessible to parents, and they are interested in, and responsible for, children. The children in family day care schemes are not forgotten or neglected, even though they are not covered by child care regulations — and for some families this is the only form of care that can meet their needs. Shift workers, part-time workers, families with young babies or more than one child, families in emergency situations,

families needing after-school and holiday care — centres with fixed hours, age limits and waiting lists cannot meet their needs. Family day care services can.

Finally, we would ask Sandra Coney — what about all the parents and children who need help *now*? They will not wait for free 24-hour child care. Should those of us who are at home, with time, energy and the will to care for another child, so that another woman can go to work or take a break, refuse our services? We are not living in an ideal society but in New Zealand now, and we do not feel that adding another choice to women's options by caring for their children in our homes should be seen as "not in the best interests of women or children". We who are happy to have our children, especially our babies, cared for in family homes, could not agree with that either. Nor could we who organise the family day care service. We are sorry that it is Sandra Coney's view.

Matilda, Irene, Evie, Pam, Sally, Sue, Raye, Lindsay, Jan, Rosie, Karen and June.

Waiheke Attack

Broadsheet printed a letter last month from a witness to an attack in April by three men on four women at Waiheke Island in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf. We received a letter from Jenny Bare about the delay in getting the attack discussed in the Island's weekly paper, the **Gulf News**, and one explaining the delay from David Waters, the paper's editor. To treat the issue fully we would have to print both letters and the relevant article in the **Gulf News**, but since we have severe limitations on our size, we feel we cannot justify devoting that much space to the issue. Interested people can look at the correspondence in the Broadsheet office.

COMMENT

by Jenny Rankine

The Crimes Amendment Bill, which could have created thousands of lesbian criminals overnight, was recently withdrawn before it reached the New Zealand Parliament.

The bill was an amendment to the Crimes Act, which legislates against freely chosen as well as exploitative sexual acts. Auckland MP Warren Freer introduced the bill, proposing to legalise homosexual acts between consenting males over the age of 18. Dail Jones, another Auckland MP, intended to restrict lesbians to an age of consent of 18 as well.

(At present all sexual behaviour between consenting males is illegal, but a woman only breaks the law if she's over 20 and "indecently assaults" or does an "indecent act" on a woman under 16. Heterosexuals can legally have intercourse if they're 16.

Lesbians oppose the idea of Freer's bill because, although we do need laws to control sexual exploitation, we do not need laws against freely chosen, victimless relationships. Any bill that proposes more restrictions for homosexuality than for heterosexuals is simply a restatement of our society's hatred and fear of homosexual love, and perpetuates the idea that heterosexuality is both the only natural and the superior form of human sexuality.

Lesbians oppose Dail Jones' proposed amendment for several reasons:

- It will result in thousands of teenage lesbians, as well as the older women they are in relationships with, becoming criminals overnight, and being forced into psychiatric "treatment" even more than at present for lesbian "acts".
- People would be able to use the law to harass women at women-only dances, social venues and in our homes.
- Lesbian health workers, teachers, community workers, or any others working with women under 18 would become even more vulnerable to harassment, discrimination and dismissal in their jobs.
- Just as the bogey of lesbianism has always been used to discredit the women's movement, so could such a law be used to limit women meeting and organising together. It would join the ranks of the SIS law and others which are selectively enforced to harass women's groups and individuals who present any challenge to male domination.
- Such extra harassment would also have the desired effect of generating resentment against lesbians, because it is always easier to blame another woman than the males with power over us. A recent Washington feminist newspaper, **Off Our Backs**, reports that a rule forbidding sexual activity is being enforced in the Oregon Women's Correctional Centre. Prison inmates say the rule makes it impossible for any women to show signs of support and affection for each other. Holding someone's hand, putting your arm around her, or sitting alone with her in her room is "homosexual activity". The rule has, as was intended, generated

resentment against the practising lesbians in the prison.

- All laws against freely chosen, non-exploitative relationships run into problems of definition. Lesbianism is expressed in many ways; it is not genitally fixated. How would "indecent acts" between women be defined? Do they occur in self-help health groups, in the home birth movement, in the public farewells of friends, or only in physical contact between suspected lesbians? Will all women be watched for signs of affection for other women, as they are in the Oregon prison?

Laws restricting lesbians such as that proposed by Dail Jones end the right of all women to live independently of men. If you are independent and aggressive about your life, you are called a "dyke" regardless of your sexual preference. Lesbians are women who stand outside society's expectations of our sex. A higher age of consent reflects society's view of lesbians as a subversive and corrupting force, especially of the young. In other words, lesbians are considered more of a danger to young women than men are.

But the real danger lesbians pose is to male domination. Our society is woman-hating, lesbians are woman-loving; patriarchy demands passive and obedient females, lesbians seek strength, assertiveness and dignity for women. Our society bases power on one's gender and skin colour; lesbians are looking for new ways of defining and using power.

Women in Western society are taught that they are incomplete without a man and can only live fully in relation to men. A woman gets her class, status and name from the man she's attached to. Her acceptance by her family and by society, her economic security and her physical safety depend on this attachment, and this is what lesbian-feminists call heterosexual privilege.

We can't sit and wait until Dail Jones or any other MP attempts to introduce a bill restricting lesbians or male homosexuals again. We need to start thinking now about how much our security depends on our ties to men and the resulting heterosexual privilege. To imagine how that would erode if we became progressively more committed to fighting for other women, more open and loving to our women friends and less tolerant of private and public insults from men; the "little rapes" of every woman's day. How much longer will we be able to "pass for white" — conform to the passive, uncomplaining female stereotype? Women, no matter what our sexual orientation or personal ties with men, must realise that our ultimate survival is more connected to that of all women than that of one man. No woman is free unless she is free to be a lesbian. ■

Acknowledgements to Charlotte Bunch's article on Lesbian-Feminist politics in "Our Right to Love", reprinted in Broadsheet No. 71, July/August 1979, and the pamphlet by Wellington lesbian-feminists.

BEHIND THE NEWS

THE OCEAN BEACH FREEZING COMPANY V. THE WOMEN

JANET MOORE reports on a dispute which was the first to be brought to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal by the Human Rights Commission. As we go to print the Tribunal had not yet reached a decision.

In July the Equal Opportunities Tribunal heard the case of three women who were unable to train to become qualified butchers because of their employer's anti-woman policies.

The complaint was laid before the Human Rights Commission in July '78 by three women, Ms Ross and Ms Rattray both of whom are employed at present by the Ocean Beach Freezing Company as slaughterhouse assistants, and Ms Ruki who is at present employed by the company as a labourer.

All three had applied to be trained as butchers on the slaughter chain. For Ms Rattray it was her fourth application for last year's killing season; for Ms Ruki it was the third

application to have been refused for the current killing season. All three women have worked for the Ocean Beach Company for the past six years and all three have very good attendance records in an industry where absenteeism is a problem.

At a later date, the Commission discovered another case where a woman had been turned down for training as a butcher and they took up her case as well for a sum which is still to be assessed. The other three women are seeking \$28,800 damages based upon loss of earnings (\$26,400), loss of benefit, and injury to feelings (\$800 each total \$2,400).

In October '79, the Commission met with Company representatives and the plaintiffs' solicitor in an at-

tempt to reach a settlement and to secure compensation for the women. This was entirely unsuccessful because the Company refused to admit that it had breached section 15 of the Human Rights Commission Act '77 which reads as follows: 15 EMPLOYMENT — (1) It shall be unlawful for any person who is an employer, or any person acting or purporting to act on behalf of any person who is an employer

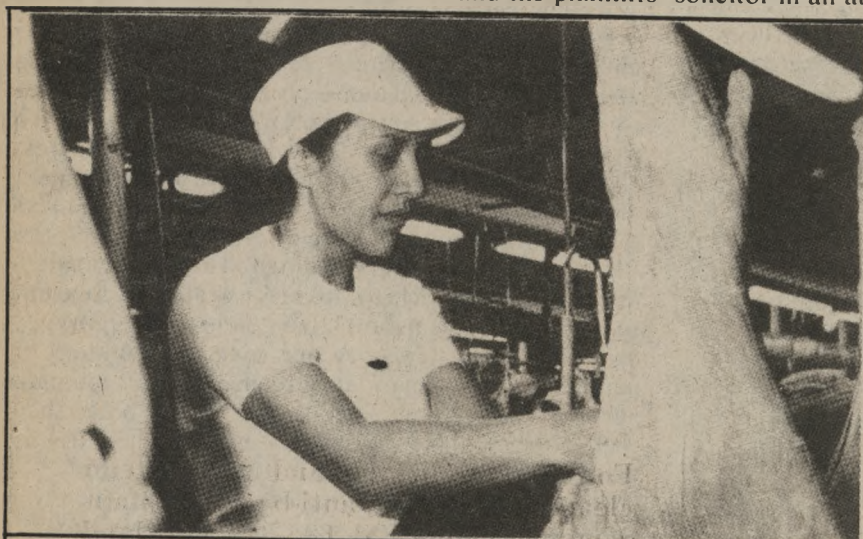
(a) To refuse or omit to employ any person on work of any description which is available and for which that person is qualified . . . by reason of the sex, marital status, or religious or ethical belief of that person.

Nor was the Company prepared to give any assurances about the future. Consequently in March of this year a press release was made by the HRC expressing their intention to take their case to the Equal Opportunities Tribunal "as soon as possible". Considering that the complaint was laid almost two years ago one can only conclude that the wheels of justice grind painfully slowly.

As the first case to be considered by the Tribunal it is going to be something of a test case and if it does go against the respondent Company then it is highly probable that it will appeal. Fortunately women have learnt over the years the importance of tenacity and the need to hang on despite all manner of adversities. However, it is not made any easier when the union takes the side of management as it has done in this case. Union officials and some company personnel thought the women would be taking jobs which "unemployed men might otherwise fill" and this was seen as being socially unacceptable.

If nothing else, the Human Rights Commission sought input from a wide variety of groups with some interest in the training of women butchers (or avoiding the training of women butchers if we are to state the case more accurately).

The Company put forward the following reason for not employing



Jean Sidney, working on the chain at Feilding — work which is denied the women at Ocean Beach.

PHOTO: BORTHWICK'S JOURNAL

women as butchers: "It is not possible at this stage to employ a woman on the slaughterboard as a slaughter person because of the *lack of separate facilities* and the fact that it is not reasonably practicable to provide them.

The Company considers that in the meantime it is entitled to the benefit of the temporary exemption conferred by section 17 of the Act."²

However, the Commission found that facilities available to slaughterhouse assistants and small goods workers were situated sufficiently close to the slaughterboard for women butchers to use them so that lack of separate facilities *per se* would not prevent the Company from training the women as butchers even though the union had expressed a preference for separate facilities. Sharing of facilities (lockers and toilets), had already taken place when it had suited the Company. For example, female meat inspectors had shared the female slaughterhouse assistant's facilities while awaiting the building of their own separate facilities.

The New Zealand Freezing Companies Association raised the question of ILO Convention 127 which states that the maximum load for women should be substantially less than that for adult male workers. On this question the Commission's visit to Feilding Freezing works proved most illuminating:

"One of the women was obviously highly regarded for her skill as a butcher. It was interesting to note that this woman was of *average height and slim build*, she had worked on the gut-block until she was seven months pregnant and had tried her hand at all the jobs on the chain when she first went on."³

The Commission also described all three women complainants as being: "of solid build and would certainly be physically stronger than most women."⁴ The argument as to the heavy prohibitive nature of the work was carried further by the Company's General Manager, the NZ Freezing Companies Association and some union members and it required a lot of careful investigation by the Commission to resolve

the argument and to get to the truth of the matter.

Interchangeability on the killing chain was seen as a paramount aspiration by both management and unions. They alleged this would exclude women because women would not be capable of doing all the jobs on the chain although they might be able to manage some of the lighter tasks. The Commission exposed this for the pretext it certainly was, for it found that whilst interchangeability was carried out *within* certain areas on the chain this was not true of all the jobs involved in the entire process. Interchangeability was seldom carried out *between* areas and the great majority of male workers were used to working within a task area and could only work within the area they had been trained for. The unreasonable reactionary attitudes of the male respondents becomes all the more petty when it is considered that all three women wanted to work in *the gut block, one of the four heaviest areas in the whole killing chain* and the company admitted having so few learner butchers wanting to begin training in that area that they were usually given their preference. Furthermore, many men were found to stay on the same task for many seasons and it was more often the exception than the rule that any male worker was required to retrain in a new area to become more versatile. However this may be altered by recent announcements to introduce mechanisation of some of the jobs on the chain. The introduction of a pelting machine has put unions

on the defensive and they are plumping for retraining for men on the killing chains rather than redundancy. This will undoubtedly harden the union's attitude toward resisting any changes which will improve the lot of women wanting to be trained as butchers.

Another argument advanced quite frequently by both the management and union ran along the lines that women should work their way patiently into various areas of the works so that their presence would be more acceptable and less traumatic to men working on the killing chain. The Commission recognised this for what it was — a stalling device, and their exposition of the faulty rationale underlying this argument was pointed out:

"This contention from some representatives of unions and management ignored the fact that the complainants have been patient, one having first applied to be a butcher four years ago.

While this view of the tactics women should employ in becoming butchers may have merit with regard to soothing relationships between themselves and some of their male co-workers, the fact remains that equal opportunity is the law *now*. Women must be given equal opportunity in employment without regard to social attitudes. This is a right under law and permits no modification except under law."⁵ ■

¹ p 7 March press release '80 HRC

² HRC report September '79, emphasis added.

³ March press release HRC p 3 No. 5 emphasis added

⁴ March press release HRC p 2 No. 3

⁵ March '80 press release HRC p 4 No. 6



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Winter's here so we're concentrating on inside work: gib boarding, stopping, wall papering, painting, tiling, carpentry, lino laying, draughting and section clearing.

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Acting Against Ignorance

CHRISTINE DANN reports
on a sex education seminar
held in Wellington last June.

Only 1% of teenagers engage in sexual intercourse, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child told the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion in 1977. The Commission dutifully swallowed this ludicrous statistic. Christchurch bookseller and president of "Freedom to Read" Gordon Tait was incensed at the Commission's failure to undertake research to find the correct figure, and ended up doing it himself. He compared births to teenage girls with total numbers of teenagers at risk over a twenty-year period and discovered that the numbers of teenagers engaged in sexual activity had been steadily rising by about 20% each year over those years.

This was one of the significant facts to emerge from a seminar organised by the Women's National Abortion Action Campaign held in Wellington on June 28. The seminar was on sex education — and facts such as the one above show how desperately New Zealanders need education in this subject.

Mr Tait went on to talk about the suppression of sex education books so that young people can not get the information they need. He told the seminar how he managed to keep selling such books in his shop. The Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act says that a registered medical practitioner may give instruction on contraception — and so may a person acting under his authority and supervision. Mr Tait obtained a letter from a doctor saying that he was providing information under his authority and supervision — and happily sold books like *Make It Happy*, a sex education book for teenagers which is not for sale for



those under 16 years of age.

Christine Dann was another major speaker, and she talked about the politics of sex education, pointing out that the suppression of information about sex was literally a fascist tactic, employed extensively in Nazi Germany by church agencies which were state funded. She quoted examples from Nazi era "sex education" pamphlets and from the Council of Organisations for Moral Education (COME) "moral education" programme "What Do You Think?" which was prepared for use in New Zealand state schools — the anti-sex, anti-woman thinking is identical, even to the choice of metaphors. She warned that New Zealand is rapidly entering a prolonged period of economic hardship and social distress — a time when fascist ideas could easily spread. It is important to counteract this trend at all levels — and widespread factual information about sexual matters is one such way.

Other speakers outlined the programmes and activities of their par-

ticular organisations. Lainey Cowan stressed the necessity of knowing the people you are trying to educate — as a social worker she encounters a lot of young Maori women who use a different vocabulary for sexual matters than the standard middle class pakeha terms. Listening to young people to find out what *they* want to know was emphasised by several speakers. Glenda Rule talked about the necessity of educating the educators — again and again and again. She spoke of her experience in informing the Samaritans, a counselling organisation, about lesbianism. She gave them the addresses of lesbian groups, and stressed the need for lesbians to offer each other support in groups. She then rang the organisation posing as a young (25-year-old) lesbian — and was told to see a doctor. After pressuring the counsellor she was grudgingly given the contact for a lesbian group — and again exhorted to see a doctor!

Jack Mulheron of the Committee for the Defence of Secular Education expressed his organisation's concern over the Integration Act which is allowing a privileged group of state-funded religious schools to be set up, with dire consequences for teachers and parents wanting secular and liberal education for children. He also drew the meeting's attention to the Personal Freedoms Network, a recently-formed coalition of all groups concerned with the growing erosion of personal freedoms in N.Z. The Network will be putting out its first newsletter soon, giving information on the suppression of human rights in the sexual, educational and other personal areas.

About 100 people attended the seminar and discussion was lively. There is obviously deep interest in the matter and it is to be hoped that some constructive initiatives will soon be made to wrest control of this area out of the hands of Bartlett and Co.■

Christine Dann

Sticks And Stones...

Federation of Labour and Labour Party endorsement of the Working Women's Charter, including the clause supporting a woman's right to choose, has provoked a vicious response from anti-abortion forces. SONJA DAVIES, founder of the Working Women's Council and now its national advisor, reports on the latest attacks.

"It was like attending a religious stoning," reported Kirsty Campbell, Secretary of the Canterbury Branch of the Working Women's Council. She was speaking of the stacked public meeting held in Dunedin on July 29th 1980, when a crowd of over 300 priests, nuns, Salvation Army members, SPUC supporters and the Catholic editor of *The Tablet*, J. P. Kennedy, shouted down a resolution to form a branch of the NZ Working Women's Council which supports the Working Women's Charter endorsed by the FOL, and Labour Party Conferences this year.

Molly Robson, Secretary of the Otago Clerical Workers Union, chaired the meeting and at this point declared it closed. She and forty women then left the meeting and went to another venue, where they formed a Dunedin Branch of the Council. However, those who remained behind formed an Otago branch of the Working Women's Council, with a woman president, two vice-presidents, one of whom is the Secretary of the Otago Trades Council, Mr E. Miller, two male treasurers and a committee of men and women, two of them are male Salvation Army majors.

It was subsequently discovered that on July 17th an application was made to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies in Dunedin, to register the NZ Working Women's Council (Inc) and naming the registered office as John O'Neill and Devereaux, Barristers and Solicitors, Dunedin. This organisation rejects the Working Women's Charter and is drawing up its own "Workers and Family Charter", which will not contain any reference to contraception, sex education or abortion.

What's wrong with the WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER



This anti-charter leaflet, is published by an Auckland group called "The Tortoises" — "Behold the tortoise who makes progress only when he sticks his neck out . . ." The leaflet sees the charter as anti-family and specifically criticises the charter's clauses on abortion, free contraception and day care. The illustrations are straight out of SPUC propaganda.

Readers may well ask how this has come about — how the parent body got itself into this position and what the consequences will be.

We have to look at the historical sequence of events. The NZ Working Women's Council was formed in 1975 to support and improve the status of women whether in paid employment or in the home, and to encourage their participation in the

trade union movement at every level.

In 1977 the NZ Working Women's Charter was endorsed by a National Working Women's Convention, was again endorsed by the 1977 conference of the WW Council and in 1978 appeared as a remit at the FOL Conference. Because affiliated unions had not discussed the charter's provisions with their members it was decided to defer a vote on the charter until the 1979 conference and Trades Councils were asked to hold seminars on the charter. By the 1979 conference only four had done this, so once again a request went out to Trades Councils to hold seminars by December 1979 and report any amendments to the FOL for consideration by a committee specially set up for this purpose.

What happened was that not only did Trades Councils comply with this request but many unions held stop-work and other meetings of members up and down the country to discuss the charter. Some had as many as 80 meetings. Never before has a piece of proposed FOL policy been so widely canvassed.

Otago was one of the last Trades Councils to hold a seminar. This took place at Otago University and was attended by a wide range of interest groups including some of the people from SPUC who have tried to destroy the parent body. The charter was adopted at the seminar with those present representing unions affiliated to the FOL voting.

It was also resolved that an Otago Branch of the Working Women's Council be formed. Ann Rodger, a foundation Secretary of the NZWWC, after consultations with women in the trade union movement, issued invitations to 36 women who had attended the Trades Council seminar and whom she thought would be interested in forming a branch. The meeting was to be held on May 28th. On that morning she received a telephone call from J. P. Kennedy of *The Tablet* who asked why she had sent invitations to a selected group, why it was not a public meeting and why the meeting was being held at her house. NOTE the WWC is a private

organisation and does not need to have public meetings unless it chooses.

The next telephone call was from E. Millar, Secretary of the Otago Trades Council, who asked her what she thought she was doing and why *he* hadn't been invited. Who did she think she was? . . . and why was the meeting being held in her *husband's* home. He suggested that she give the ladies a cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit and send them home!!!

All day long Ann's telephone rang incessantly with people asking to attend. At 7.30 there were 53 people in her lounge. After discussion of the charter, one of those present read from a typed notice "that the election of officers be not held at this meeting, that a public meeting be held at a later date, the time and place to be decided." This was carried. A steering committee was set up, the members of which were evenly divided on the issue of the charter. The events outlined at the beginning of this article tell what subsequently happened. It is obvious that the adoption of the charter by the FOL and the Labour Party has incensed the extreme conservative elements within the Catholic Church, and what is happening now is a back-lash.

The parent body now has a problem with its name which will be resolved and this well-organised and insidious attack on its aim and objectives will greatly strengthen the organisation. It has been a lesson on the need for a tight administration and attention to detail. We will need these to carry out the implementation of the charter.

What are our opponents saying? All their publicity infers we are anti-family, anti-children, radical and marxist-based and that the charter will "cost the taxpayer". When people are desperate, name calling is often effective. But all women must be strong and stick to their aims to support in every way their sisters in the paid work force and those remaining at home. In doing so we must work alongside, and with, the trade union movement for the good of all. ■

SLEEPING IN SHIT

On March 8, International Women's Day, Irish and British feminists demonstrated in support of Republican women prisoners in Ireland. ANNE-MAREE WHITTAKER reports on the issue.

30 women are being held in Armagh Gaol, Northern Ireland, by British authorities in conditions which can only be described as horrific. The women are claiming political prisoner status which was granted to both female and male prisoners between 1972 and 1976. However prisoners convicted of the same offences committed after March 1976 are denied this "special category status".

As a result women prisoners refused to do prison work. This action was in solidarity with male prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh prison camp. There are now over 400 men in the H Blocks who are locked in their cells for 24 hours per day with no clothing, no furniture and no sanitary facilities. These men have only a blanket and a mattress, and their cell floors are covered with urine and excreta.

Because women in the British prison system are not required to wear a uniform the Armagh protest was more low-key until February 1980. Since then the women have been locked in their cells 23 hours per day, denied change of clothing or washing facilities, and during their periods are rationed to two sanitary towels per day. In addition the prisoners are beaten by both male and female warders.

This treatment has seriously endangered the women's health. All the women have skin disorders due

to the dirt, and weight loss because of the small food portions. In particular Pauline McLaughlin has a severe digestive disorder which has reduced her weight to just over 6 stone, and Maria McClenaghan has recurrent ulcers for which she is not given prescribed special foods. Medical treatment will not be given unless they cease their no-work protest.

H Block Committees have been formed in Ireland and around the world to publicise the plight of the prisoners on a humanitarian non-political basis. It is hoped that H Block Committees will be formed in New Zealand to collect signatures for a petition which will be presented to the British government on 5 October.

The petition calls for medical attention for the prisoners in Armagh and the H Blocks, and for the return of special category status which comprises:

- the right not to wear prison uniform
- the right not to do prison work
- free association among political prisoners
- the right to organise educational and recreation facilities, and the right to one visit and one parcel per week
- no loss of remission

Anyone interested can write to PO Box M329, Sydney Mail Exchange, NSW, Australia 2012.



Women picketing outside Armagh Jail, last March.

PHOTO: ROSIO CASERES, FROM SPARE RIB

Seminar in the sun

SANDRA CONEY reports on Broadsheet's July Seminar.

The sun shone, literally and figuratively, on the 220 women who attended Broadsheet's seminar held at Auckland Teachers' College on July 26. Entitled "How to live as a feminist and not go mad!" the seminar was, as speaker Rosslyn Noonan noted, a very successful example of the feminist process of sharing our experiences and examining our personal lives to better understand our oppression and decide how to act to bring about change. In over 20 workshops women talked about what it means to be independent or feminist or lesbian (or all three) in a steadfastly patriarchal world.

Opening speaker of the day Sandi Hall shared what being feminist and going crazy had meant for her: she talked about the pain, but also the strength, that can emerge from traumatic personal change. To her the fundamental word of feminism is sisterhood — "the recognition that, wherever in the world, in whatever way one woman is oppressed, I am oppressed. This recognition, Sandi said, *can* drive you mad. She also spoke of the difficulty of staying sane without a movement which at times tries to be "all things to all women." She warned against losing sight of feminist objectives by being diverted into struggles which are important but which drain our energies from the central struggle. "The feminist movement is dedicated to stopping the oppression of women, and we won't achieve that by saving the whale or building a new park for our kids."

Sandi's address certainly fired people up and there was much energetic discussion as women headed for their morning workshops. Participants at the seminar attended both a morning and an afternoon workshop, having the choice of a wide range of workshop topics.

There were a number of workshops on aspects of work, from being in the system to opting out; from being a feminist on the factory floor to being a professional in an anti-woman profession. Only four women turned up at Claudia Mason's "Feminists on the Factory Floor" but Claudia felt very positive about it. "At the last workshop I took like this," she told me. "I was the only one who turned up! So this is definitely an advance." At Sue Fitchett's "Opting out of the System" workshop women stressed that opting out was "ir-

reversible" and spoke of the need for a "plan of action" before such a step was taken. "Opting out of a traditional work situation may also lead to major changes in how women are relating to others and the quality of their relationships."

Many of the women who went to one of the six lesbian workshops had never attended a lesbian group before. Miriam Jackson reported that at the "Lesbian Mothers" workshop only one woman had been to a lesbian group before. "All the women were very supportive to each other and felt close to each other. The women got a lot out of it. It was very positive in spite of the difficulties expressed, for example, adolescent children running to the doctors or police reporting their mothers' lesbianism after a family quarrel."



Judith Ems' workshop on "Lesbian Relationships" discussed the necessity of cutting through learned ways of relating in an intimate relationship, but also criticised the pressure to conform within the lesbian community. "For lesbianism to be an alternative lifestyle requires that each of us allows others to be themselves without criticism or coercion." There was a feeling that "monogamy interferes with lesbian life because it divides women. Free flowing in and out of sexual relationships with friends and lovers would enhance individual choice and freedom and help create both a lesbian community and an alternative lifestyle."

Large numbers of women crowded into the rooms where the various workshops on relationships with men were being held. From the workshop on "Living with a man — for feminists in long-term relationships with men" Hilary Haines reported that the group consensus was that "although feminism and marriage was possible, it was an extremely stress-related situation." Becoming feminist created a crisis which

only a few women were able to resolve. "Some individuals indicated that ultimately, apart from the sexual satisfaction that heterosexual relations offered them, marriage was an unjustifiable compromise."

Women at two workshops have decided to keep on meeting and would like to meet more interested women. Megan Grant reported that "such positive attitudes came out of our group of nine women — 'Older Women' — that we have decided to meet again to talk — to dispel the myth of the menopause for our younger women friends, to talk about living alone, opting out of the system . . . ring Megan 501-113 or Kim Rosenbaum 555-168." And the "High School Women" group which included 7 high school students and some teachers also decided to keep on meeting (phone Ana Macfarlane 410-9424 and Sue Matthew 483-099).

At the end of the day Ros Noonan, addressing all the women present, stressed that through "sharing individual experiences comes collective wisdom support and strength." But, she said, while group support sustains us and is necessary as we struggle "it is also very important that the group support sustains without smothering. We must each be allowed in our personal lives to make decisions for ourselves without feeling endlessly guilty that we aren't living up to someone else's expectations, to someone else's dogma." She also warned against stopping with looking at the personal. "From our sharing of personal experiences must come an analysis of our situation which leads to effective action . . . There is a very real limit to how much we can change our own lives without changing the structures round us." She called on women to form "a coalition of the powerless . . . to overthrow the current power elite."

Workers at Broadsheet received many positive comments about the seminar: "It was like a shot in the arm, just what I needed"; "I'd like to congratulate the organisation that made the day pass so smoothly, and the really neat music at the end"; "I thank Broadsheet for my first feminist meeting. It was a rare opportunity to meet and discuss with other women the problems that beset us all. The speeches were inspiring and the entertainment fun." And this woman surely expressed what many must have felt: "Women at both the sessions I attended felt many men were boring and unimaginative, and that after having an exciting, interesting, stimulating time with other women, men were not nice to come home to." ■

IN BRIEF

WOMEN AGAINST WAR

A Sydney reader asked in the last Broadsheet for contacts with any NZ groups working against war. It seems that women in other parts of the world are also concerned about the possibility of a third world war and are organising around the issue. The April issue of **Spare Rib** reports on Danish women's efforts to rouse public opinion against the eventuality of war. They've started a movement and in a week collected 100,000 signatures of women supporters. They want to tell the men who have power in this world that women won't stand for war any more and want peace. The idea has now spread to Sweden, Norway, Finland and Germany and at least five other groups have been started in these countries.

The May issue of **Spare Rib** reports on a one-day workshop held in Nottingham which was attended by women from all over Britain. They made the point that with defence currently costing \$1 million an hour while cuts are being made in social services it is time for women to start discussing how militarism affects women. An international conference is planned for later in the year when the issues raised at this conference will be discussed further.

New Zealand women wanting to make contact with either of these groups can write to:

Women and the Military. Corner Bookshop. Woodhouse Lane. Leeds 2. United Kingdom.
Kvinder for Fred. Suomisvej 1. 1927 Kobenhavn V. Denmark.

NZ FILMS IN CORK!

"After a two-year lull, feminism was welcomed back to the quiet Irish town of Cork in March. Over 100 women squeezed into a hotel room to watch films and discuss

health and sexuality . . ." So begins a news short in April **Spare Rib**. Believe it or not, the films in question were the ones made in New Zealand by an all-woman crew with director Deidre McCartin in late 1977. Deidre is now a producer for Irish TV and showed the films on sexuality, birth, and mental health from the "Women" television series. Apparently the Irish women found many similarities between N.Z. women's experiences and their own but comments were made about "sun-drenched rooms" and "feet dabbling in streams."

FORWARD INTO THE THIRTIES

Newspaper headline, June 14, 1980 "Hungry kids get free meals". Text: "A soup kitchen serving hot meals for hungry children opened in the Te Puke Otara community centre, Auckland, yesterday . . . Children in need of a meal are referred to the kitchen by schools or found in the street."

"Mummy, what's a depression?"
"Shut up and eat your free soup!"

Feminist protesters were removed from the site of the Miss Auckland contest by police, said Inspector R. J. Skilton, because of exhibitionist behaviour!

BEDTIME READING

MP for Helensville, Dail Jones, got his jock-strap in a twist recently over lesbian literature. He asked the Minister of Justice whether he would be prepared to send a number of books by and about lesbians to the Indecent Publications Tribunal. Among the books he cited were Rita Mae Brown's novels **In Her Day** and **Ruby Fruit Jungle**, Kate Millett's academic tome **Sexual Politics**, biographies of lesbians: **Three Lives** and **The Biography of Alice B. Toklas**

and the sourcebook **Our Right to Love**. Coincidentally (!), acting on a complaint from "decency" campaigner Patricia Bartlett, the police raided the offices of the homosexual magazine **Out!** and seized copies of the very books cited by Jones. If the police decide to prosecute the books will be referred to the Indecent Publications Tribunal. If at first you don't succeed . . .

ARE YOU DENTALLY AND MENTALLY HEALTHY?

In that case you can well dispense with the services of Ronald White, a Hamilton dentist who advertised for the services of a "mature Christian girl". The man expressed his low opinion of women in the very wording of the ad. (Who ever heard of a "mature girl"? Next time he'll be wanting a "youthful geriatric") It's funny how some men will go to great lengths to avoid admitting that what they are talking about is a *woman*.) After receiving applications from lots of women who are presumably oblivious to this contradiction Mr White then revealed his reasons for wanting a female employee. The primary reason was that female patients needed a female chaperone when being treated by a male dentist. I thought that as a feminist I was pretty paranoid about "unchaperoned" encounters with strange men! But I must admit it never occurred to me to imagine that I was exposing myself to the threat or actuality of sexual molestation by exposing my teeth to the drill without another woman constantly present in the surgery. But perhaps I am only at risk if I patronise Christian dentists, who require a "good woman" present to keep their repressed lusts in check?

Mr White also went on to say that he wanted a woman because women have attributes which males don't — they are quite attractive. Well, with respect to males like Mr White, we can unconditionally agree that

he is unattractive. With respect to women like us, we can say that not only are we more than quite attractive, we also have more sense than to patronise dentists who have such a low and oppressive opinion of our sex.

WHAT'S UNDER THE COVERS?

Three national education groups supported the Johnson Report's recommendations on sex education in primary schools and none opposed it. 53 local education groups supported the recommendations completely and none opposed them completely. 17 other groups and 27 individual submissions supported the Report's recommendations completely and none opposed them completely. With this sort of



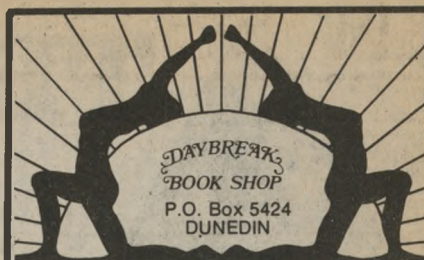
DRAWING: DONNA HOYLE

mass support from most of the education organisations the report was implemented, right? Wrong. Because 40 church groups and 427 individuals opposed the recommendations, and the Minister of Education was unaccountably swayed by this minority preference. The public has been refused access to the exhaustive analysis of submissions on the Johnson Report prepared for the government by Link Consultants. Perhaps because the educa-

tional organisations, representing thousands of teachers and parents, presented careful and detailed cases in support of sex education and the 427 individuals merely registered hysterical protests? Cover-up jobs generally hide something nasty — with the few crude figures about the nature of the submissions which we have been allowed to see I think we are entitled to suspect the worst.

A HOME FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

While some groups are pressuring for the reopening of the Karitane Hospital in Mount Albert, women of the Council for the Single Mother and Child have made representation to the Prime Minister in favour of an alternative use for the building which at the moment lies vacant. They argue that the hospital, which is already set up as a residential unit for mothers and babies, would be ideal for the long-term accommodation of single mothers and their children. CSMC often receives enquiries from women in search of permanent, affordable accommodation and sees this as an area of need in the community. They envision a collective pooling of the energy and finances of the women in a sharing and supportive environment. Women would be relieved of the sole responsibilities for child care and gain stimulation and support from other adults. Children would benefit as well from this arrangement with more varied adult contact, the company of other children and access to learning equipment and facilities. With women housed happily in this fashion it is suggested that more housing would be available for other members of the community. So far no official support has been received from the Social Welfare Department or the Health Department although it is known that individuals within the Social Welfare Department are sympathetic. The Prime Minister has handed the matter to Mr Gair for his consideration. Anyone interested in supporting this idea could contact Lorraine Irvine at CSMC. Ph: 760-476. P.O. Box 47-090.



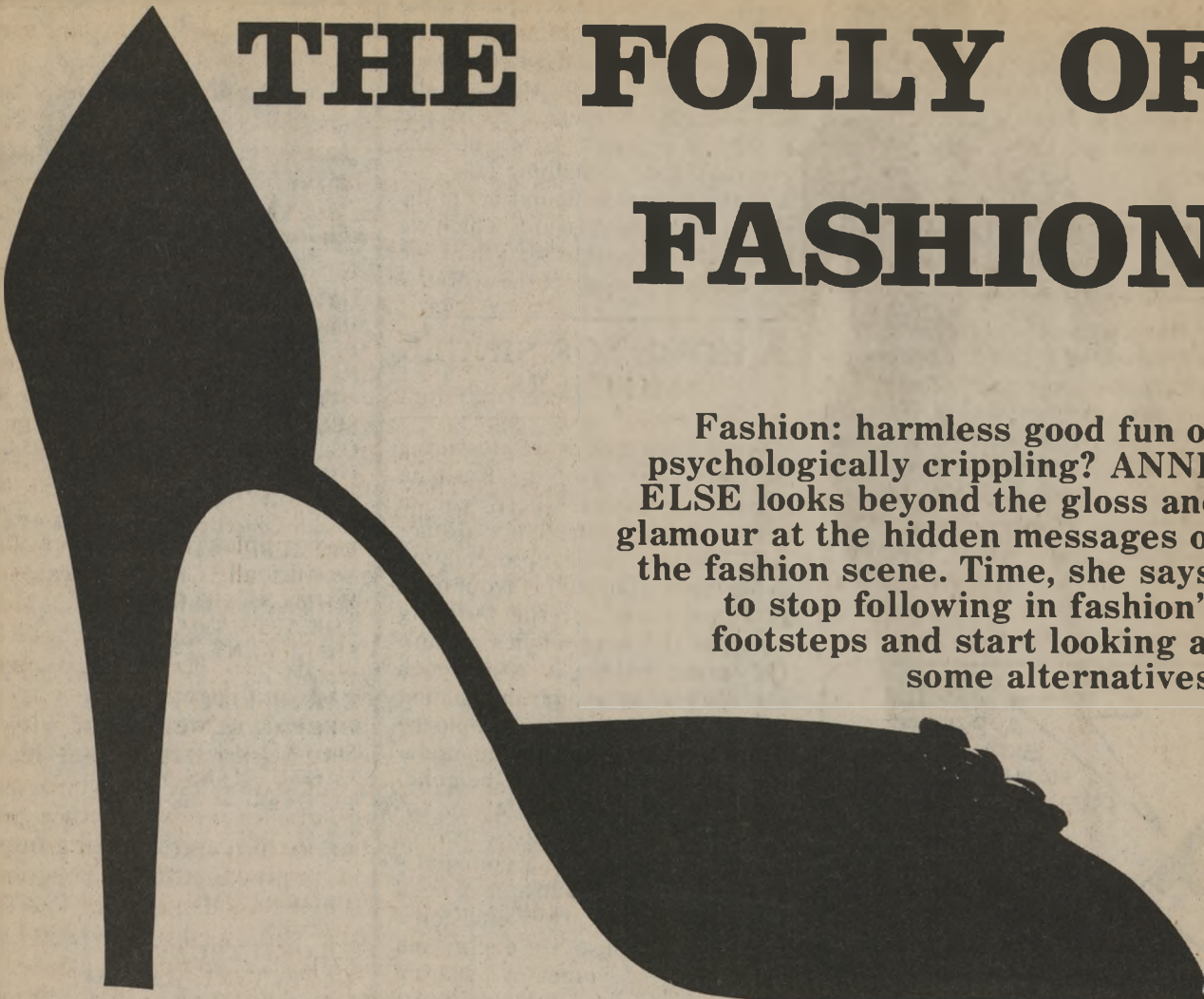
- GYN/ECOLOGY — Mary Daly \$12.55 ☐
 BEYOND GOD THE FATHER — Mary Daly .. \$6.75 ☐
 OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES — Boston Health Collective \$8.95 ☐
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 THE WOMAN ALONE — Patricia O'Brien \$6.50 ☐
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THE FOLLY OF FASHION



Fashion: harmless good fun or psychologically crippling? ANNE ELSE looks beyond the gloss and glamour at the hidden messages of the fashion scene. Time, she says, to stop following in fashion's footsteps and start looking at some alternatives.

A new fashion season is upon us, and the rag mags are awash with persuaders designed to make us step into line. This time the message is (as often) contradictory. It's a new look (provided you're too young to remember the fifties) but it's also full of classics and investments. It's elegant and sophisticated; it's also sensual and exciting. Above all, it's expensive. How many of us will fall for all this hokum yet again?

Let's take a long, hard look at how fashion works. Until this century, fashion was reserved for the rich. Both men and women used clothing to show off their wealth, fill the peasants with awe, and reinforce their status. They came up with some pretty amazing creations, too — especially for women, whose clothes were invariably more restricting and more ridiculous than men's.

A new peak of idiocy in Western dress was

reached last century, when the combination of Victorian prudery and lasciviousness produced an outline at once totally "modest" and exaggeratedly "feminine". Those tightly laced waists pushed out breasts and buttocks, as well as causing fainting fits and stomach illness.

Today, as the ad says, we've come a long way — or have we? Women may no longer half-kill themselves with corsets, but the attitudes which brought on such excesses are still with us; they surface again with every "new look" foisted on a willing public. No longer the privilege of the rich alone, fashion has discovered the mass market, and the men who run the rag trade are laughing all the way to the bank.

The economic motive for fashion is clear: it's only the blatant "built-in obsolescence" that keeps the whole thing going. Every new look will be an old look sometime; and the quicker it ages, the faster the bucks will flow in.



PHOTO: GILLIAN CHAPLIN

But far more than the profit motive underlies the whole fashion game. As long as women can be induced to play it, their time, attention, energy and cash are being harmlessly frittered away, rather than diverted to more threatening ends — such as their own liberation. Playing the game also means that they are concentrating inward, on their own image. The deadly result of this essentially passive preoccupation is lack of confidence and low self-esteem — because it is impossible to attain perfection, or even get close to it. Why are women always checking in the mirror? Is it because they are vain and love admiring themselves? No way — it's because they are constantly aware of their "shortcomings", compared to the image they think they ought to present. This is a catch-22 situation. Society disapproves of women who don't care how they look. They are mannish, unfeminine, unwomanly. But those who do care

are despised as vain and scatty, preoccupied with trivia. It's a similar double trap to that faced by mothers. If they go out to work they're neglecting their kids. If they stay at home they are mere housewives, without status or power.

For women and men both, a woman's true identity is seen to be closely bound up with how she looks, rather than what she does or even who she is. She chooses an image when she chooses an outfit or a hairstyle, and that image takes the place of her real self. The "look" she chooses — saucy, wholesome, sophisticated — gives her a stereotyped pseudo-personality. But whatever the signals her appearance is meant to convey, it has an underlying message which is loud, clear and unchanging, and affects both how others see her and how she sees herself: women are not to be taken seriously. They are dolls, not real people. They are passive, weak, helpless and above all, silly.

In this way fashion cripples women psychologically, as well as physically. But it requires a great deal of effort to keep us all enslaved. More than any other commodity, fashion is sold by devious appeals and threats. There are two main methods: first, the ads and shop windows prey on our insecurities by telling us we must be with it, up-to-date, in the latest gear (at the same time, of course, managing not to look like everyone else). This is really pressure to conform with a peer group — except that in this case the peer group is half the population. In practice, fashion becomes a not-so-subtle form of class distinction. The Top Class are the young, slim, well-off, sexually available group, and all other women are classed as more or less inferior. The catch is that although many women may manage to move into the Top Class for a few years, marrying, having children, or simply aging means that it is impossible to stay there, and there is nowhere to go, fashion-wise, but down. The further you move down the fashion spectrum, the less claim you have to attention and consideration, as a woman or even, in the end, as a human being. The old, poor and badly dressed finally become virtually invisible. This fashion sell is based on fear.

Even the Top Class are not safe, however. They must constantly measure themselves, and be measured by others, against the unattainable standard of perfection displayed in the glossy magazines. This impeccable illusion is presented by models who are paid to do that, and that alone. And a model herself must find it difficult to sustain — hair, face, clothes, shoes — for more than one photographic



session. She is, after all, not actually *doing* anything in front of the camera. A model is the fashion equivalent of the display home, and just as irrelevant to real life. Anyone else who aims to imitate her is doomed to failure. But the constant pressure to keep on trying — and keep on buying — is relentless.

The second sell is supposed to be sexual. In just one magazine, I noted that fashion slippers(?) come in a "sensual range", scarves are meant to "trail provocatively", evening dresses are "vampish" . . . and so on, ad nauseam. Whatever the fashion, it is presented in sexual terms. Invisible male eyes are on you, and being in fashion will make sure you get, and keep, a man.

As you might expect, this is a lie too. Men may indeed notice overtly sexy clothes, but their reactions are mixed, varying from rape to stoning. As for what is in fashion or what isn't, very few men either know or care. Any man who does take much interest, in women's clothes or his own, is regarded as effeminate, i.e. like a woman — the ultimate insult. The obvious stupidity of much that passes for high fashion merely serves to reinforce the prevailing stereotypes of women. Not surprisingly, those men who do want their women to look fashionable are among the most sexist. They regard women as accessories and status symbols; their women must be as up-to-the-minute as possible, along with their cars, their houses, their clothes and their children (though some may forbid reproduction, as it mars the lovely surface shape).

So how do we get out of this bind? The answer

is certainly not dressing like men. That's just as big a cop-out as going over to male-defined codes in any other area, whether it's birth, business or politics. Besides, apart from their ability to resist change, and the greater freedom of movement they offer, men's clothes are no more rational than women's. Although we've passed the stage when any chap who wore a coloured shirt was automatically a "pouf", the permissible range of colours and fabrics is still incredibly limited. Men's clothes are needlessly complicated, frequently uncomfortable (too hot or too tight) and difficult to keep clean. It would be hard to devise a garment which would trap dirt more effectively than the business shirt, with its stiffened cuffs and collar, held tight round the neck with a meaningless strip of cloth — the one flamboyant item allowed. (The amount of washing caused is irrelevant to men, because they have women to do that.)

The problem is that *anything* we wear in public proclaims itself as either "masculine" or "feminine". Spare Rib puts it well: "Even while rejecting sex role stereotyping, we are still caught reacting between the two opposing poles of clothing conventions." We can no longer make a subversive statement by looking masculine — it's almost the reverse, thanks to media bleatings about the feminist image, so that it's often good shock value for a feminist to look mildly fashionable when she speaks to ignorant groups, just to upset their preconceptions. (Men, on the other hand, can easily create shock waves by looking feminine. It was front page news for



days in Wellington when Bob Moody, Police Association secretary, wore a caftan (a dress, that is) to work. He's still getting away with it, too.)

Unisex clothes do exist — but only up to a well-defined point. As **Spare Rib** says, "Consenting adults can wear just about what they like in private, but in the public sphere you stick to sex distinctions in dress or lose your job." And that's where the crunch comes. The fashions of the moment don't matter a damn. What *does* matter is that women should conform, wear what they're told, and fit in. Even where there's a uniform, if it's for women it may be ludicrously impractical — such as stockings for nurses or schoolgirls.

It doesn't stop at work, either. Conformity is vital in the mating game and marriage as well. If you don't play the game properly, i.e. put out the right plumage for the season, you won't catch a man; once you've caught him, he may well insist you dress "appropriately", which often means dowdily and conventionally, especially if he's taking you out for the evening. As he often holds the financial whip hand, there's not much you can do about it — if you want to keep your "job", that is.

Clothes have a political life of their own, and fashions tend to reflect the prevailing climate. I don't believe it's any accident that the latest look is a return to the neat little suits, black dresses and high bloody heels of the fifties. Ostensibly "business-like", the lines emphasise sex differences far more than the loose, soft look they're designed to replace. They're quiet, conservative

and still ultra-feminine — I've even spotted a rack of pink dotted organdie blouses with Peter Pan collars. Come back Doris Day, all is forgiven.

Spare Rib is bang on target again when it says: "Unfortunately, dress is not just an incident, but an integral part of the construction of masculinity and femininity and the whole economic and political edifice they support."

Blue boiler suits all round, then? Well, no. Clothing will always, whenever there is any money to spare after the bare necessities, be an outlet for creativity. Over the ages, countless women have poured into dress all their pent-up artistic energies, with formidable results. Male dismissal of their achievements — in weaving, embroidery, batik, smocking, tapestry, dyeing — is now being redressed by feminist recognition. There is a world of difference between clothing as an art form in this sense, and the sterile, degrading practices of male designers, who treat the whole living, breathing, thinking woman as a dressmaker's dummy on which to hang their own ludicrous fantasies. Instead of supporting this system, we can seek out those women who are currently producing comfortable, beautiful, durable clothes, and matronise their work. (Some were written up in the June feature, "Minding their own business".) There are also second hand shops. But well-off middle class women should perhaps think twice before they pick the eyes out of these, thereby preventing needy students and less affluent working women from acquiring a cheap wardrobe. However, the principle of recycling clothing is excellent. Menswear shops can also provide cheap, sturdy basics.

Just about everyone in New Zealand can manage warm, clean, dry clothes. They could also make them colourful and varied beyond the dreams of the richest Victorians. So why not stop playing the game? It's possible to look great and feel good — but not fashionable. The sense of freedom you get at a women's convention is in part due to a feeling of getting outside the whole stupid fashion scene, and not being looked over and given marks for how well you've got it together. Carry that sense further — refuse to buy shoes you cannot walk or run in comfortably; refuse to buy anything because it's in fashion; refuse to wear anything which makes you look like an idiot. Withdraw your support from the whole disaster as far as possible. Protest long and loud at each new insanity. Wake up, Sleeping Beauties — we've had the wool pulled over our eyes too long. ■

BEYOND FASHION



Maggie Eyre

A feminist in glitter and spangles? SANDRA CONEY talked to dance/drama facilitator Maggie Eyre about being flamboyant in the Women's Movement.

Maggie Eyre at a second-hand clothes sale — Maggie ecstatic at a strapless panne velvet top the colour of creme de menthe and soft as rabbit's fur — Maggie draping herself with a length of silver striped crepe and whirling round, her red hair forming a molten arc around her head — Maggie doubtfully fingering a slinky red sunfrock and asking "Could I dance in it?"

In a monochromatic Movement Maggie Eyre stands out like a 500 watt light bulb. To Women's Movement gatherings, bristling with denim and drab, Maggie's silks and velvets, reds and russets, lame and panne bring a startling touch of the idiosyncratic, the witty and dramatic.

Coming home after a feminist party Maggie's quite likely to have a bit of a rave about frumpy feminists: "Why," she asks "do feminists wear such boring clothes? Why do they choose not to look physically beautiful? Why do lesbians cut off

their hair? It really upsets me. I think there are a lot of feminist women round who would like to be flamboyant but who are afraid of stepping out of line. I feel many feminist women are afraid of stepping out of line. I feel many feminist women are afraid of looking sexy with clothing for fear of being accused of trying to attract men. I'd like women to concentrate on closer relationships with themselves. I love to look sexy — for me!"

Maggie explains that when she first came into the Women's Movement she felt constrained to tone herself down. "I felt like I should be wearing overalls. Unconsciously I started eliminating — I stopped wearing lipstick and got rid of my nail polish. I didn't want to appear flamboyant. I felt I was too colourful." But events at last year's United Women's Convention made Maggie so angry she staged what she calls "a rebellion". "I decided Maggie would only be accountable to Maggie and no-one would tell me what to do. I started bringing the lipstick back . . ."

Before the Women's Movement there were other constraints. Maggie reminds me of my own childhood, blighted by blue — "to match your eyes", when she tells me her mother wouldn't let her wear

orange or yellow, red or pink, because it "clashed" with her red hair. "I was never allowed to stand next to a red wall."

Now the adult Maggie craves colour and she doesn't let corny conventional colour co-ordination cramp her creativity. "I need a multitude of colours and as far as I'm concerned you can wear any colour with any colour . . . orange with blue with purple . . . no colours clash for me. Colour cheers me. When I'm depressed I immerse myself in colour."

Fabrics are selected, too, for their feel. "I've always loved velvets and furs, they're so soft. I love walking in the wind and feeling the flow. Silk and satin and velvet because of the touch. I love sleeping on satin, it's so soothing and cool. I find really rough fabric affects me. I feel I could never put my cheek on that."

Jan O'Connor, Maggie's "special dressmaker and designer" calls Maggie's style "glamour with a touch of humour." "Maggie's an anarchist with clothing. She's right ahead of fashion and far removed from any of the rules."

Certainly Maggie, reclining in a strangely elongated luminous pink top and shimmering stockings defies categorising. And if the rag trade relied on the Maggie Eyre's of this world to fill the tills it'd go bust overnight. "I go to second hand shops and I acquire fabric and get Jan to make it up for me. I very rarely buy any fabric. A lot of my stuff is remade up. This," she takes a blue creation off its hanger, "was an old dress and it's just been remade up. It's a combination of leotards and new sequin things at the top. I do a lot of bartering in exchange for my dance classes and workshops. Change is really rapid in my life. So that goes with clothes too. I give away my clothes or use them in kids' drama classes. I recycle them". And with that Maggie produces a luscious looking bundle of cast-offs and we get down to the serious business of looking at clothes. ■

& INTO STYLE ...

Fashion is for the young, but style is ageless. SANDI HALL talked to Theodora Gibson-Hughes, a woman with a very individual mode of dressing.



Theodora, wearing her Concorde outfit.

"Women through history have been chattels, the donkey carryall, fit only for reproducing," says Theodora Gibson-Hughes, standing in her front room, surrounded by Chinese nesting tables, ruby wine glasses and miniature animals. The elegant grandfather clock chimes agreement. Theodora half glances at it, and her delicate laugh peals out. "But no longer," she smiles. "Now we are educated into knowing more — it's no longer our sole role." She looks at me, grey-blue eyes watching to see if I understand. "It's not our sole role" she repeats and I nod. She is wearing a floor length scarlet skirt, black stockings, black lace smooth fitting blouse, two long gold necklaces, dangling earrings and several rings scattered across her hands. "Oh, but I do like pretty things!" she exclaims, bringing her hands to hold the gold necklace that was her grandmother's. "I make most of my clothes myself, always have. And I think they're quite nice."

As Theodora was a girl in the 1920s, her "always have" is a long time. Women in New Zealand were quite different then: "I had lessons in deportment," she confides, and I think how her girlish air is very appealing in this slender, sprightly woman whose zest for life seems not one whit diminished by her long experience of it. "For instance, I could never sit as some women do, like this," she says, dropping into a wing chair and spreading her legs open. "No, I learned to do it so —" she stands up and sits again, legs together, gracefully seating herself, hands naturally draping themselves

on the chair arms. "Those lessons stay with me, you see." We talk for a time about those long ago days, and she shows me a photograph of her mother, who played the violin and made the young Theodora aware of the importance of feeling good about what you're wearing. "I don't say everyone would like what I wear, oh dear no! But I design my clothes for what I like, and as for the others, oh well! About two years ago, my daughter told me that our friends said Theodora was somewhat eccentric. Well, what a revelation! I say, viva all the eccentrics!"

Her walk-in wardrobe is full of bright colours, splashy spots of brilliance, huge flowers, purple stockings, gold shoes. "I have never had much money," she says, "but I think I have a good sense of design, for me, for what suits me. Look, here's the outfit I designed for me to wear on the Concorde. I thought it would be a nice gesture to wear the Concorde colours, and have something a little unusual, a little different." She pulls out a sky blue half cape lined with scarlet uncrushable nylon, which goes over the blue and scarlet skirt and blouse. She designed and made the outfit herself.

and wore it on her Concorde flight from Singapore to London. "Did they like it?" I ask. "Yes, I think so," she nods. "Yes, I'm sure they did."

Her life encompassed two husbands "My English husband and my New Zealand husband," and gave her two of her life's delights — "My daughter Tao and my son Aiden, I just love them." She plays the piano, which she has done regularly for ballet school and performances for many years. She loves to dance, and I quote to her Elinor Glyn's belief: "You can eat what you like, drink what you like, do what you like to your body, as long as you dance every night." She nods enthusiastically, and the loosening strand of her long hair pulls free of its mooring, floating as she half whirls in memory of dances she has enjoyed. "Oh yes, indeed! How I miss it. Oh damn — oh no, I didn't say damn!" And, as if it were a conspiracy against some still-listening deportment teacher, she laughingly clamps her lips together and motions me over to the waiting cups of tea. ■

Photos: Shirley Gruar



A R *Lives In*

Being a feminist in a somewhat backward, isolated, rural area of New Zealand is an unenviable position to be in — mostly; though it does have its rewards and certainly its challenges.

It is difficult because of being very much alone in your ideas, and having no back-up support of any kind; in the cities a woman can turn to her sisters, to the movement, to support groups who have and can give strength from their solidarity, their togetherness and experience. But in a community such as I serve, being different means being alone, a focus of certain hostility, and having no-one and no-where to retreat to, to let off steam and get the strokes needed to replenish the energy depleted in the day-to-day scene.

It is sad, too, that so many women, fine young women, older interesting women, are oh so conditioned into conventional roles, just accepting as inevitable the same old grind women have been enslaved with for centuries. They do not question it, nor see for themselves or their children any other possibilities, and worse, they do not want to see them, nor entertain change. Even when totally miserable, abused and invalidated, they just accept and cannot see themselves as capable, individual and vibrant real people.

It takes courage to shoot the concepts of freedom, woman-power and feminism into such a void; tact, diplomacy and often silence as feminism evokes hostility from men. It also, unfortunately, receives it from some women too, sisters so conditioned by society, family, religion, environment that they cannot see the vision, and worse, don't want anyone else to either. Like the men they are threatened and afraid, and like men, when afraid, react with anger and hostility. In the face of this I move quietly and sow seeds, only



minist

Porongahau



little things can be done, like teaching wives to drive, a small step to independence, filling the waiting room with Broad sheets only, so that those coming for consultation are forced to look and be aware that there is a world outside this closed one, a world where women also exist but are moving, coming alive, being born into the reality of themselves.

And talking, talking to anyone who will listen, who shows the faintest interest. Of course, it's not all negative; there are woman who glitter as jewels, hidden here and there in the area, not many, one or two.

Perhaps the problem is in part that rural women do not know and have little if any access to information on the women's movement, only the mass media, and we all know what it often does to feminist issues! "Women's Liberation," — a subject of crude jokes and male hilarity at the pub, and a vague something women do in the cities and in America, a subject husband, father, lover, brother put down with contempt, therefore a subject to avoid in any way. "What's it to do with us? Not going to help me any" — a common feeling and thought.

Lack of communication and divisions between women are weakening us, making us often ineffective. I do not know the answers, if there are any, but look forward to a day when all women everywhere will be properly informed and moving together. Where women like myself who see a vision and want to share it, won't be put into that void of aloneness and forced to wear the labels society gives us — different, queer, outsider, too modern, mad and the many, many more we all know about all too well. ■

**Karina,
Porongahau**



Women at the Hustings

Increasing numbers of women are putting themselves forward for local body elections. For what must surely be the first time, two women are contesting the Auckland and Wellington mayoralties. Other women are standing for councils, and the many local authority boards. Broadsheet talked to three of the candidates.



PHOTO: NZ HERALD

CATH TIZARD

If Cath Tizard is elected Mayor of Auckland she will be the first woman mayor of a major New Zealand metropolitan area. In Wellington, Ros Noonan is also standing, but Ros, when I saw her at the Broadsheet seminar, said frankly she knew she had only the slenderest of chances. Cath Tizard, has (at least in my opinion) a better than average chance of succeeding.

I want to know how she, the woman, feels about her potential role as mayor. "Among other things, I am interested in demystifying local body politics, especially for older women. I know that you *don't* have to have a University education, or a diploma in business management to look at a series of facts and say this is wrong. There is a huge need for large dollops of commonsense in both local and national politics. Society seems to me to be at the moment one vast internal haemorrhage. The put-a-bandaids-on-the-

wound attitude is ruinous to achieving the sort of future I constantly hear people saying they want."

Catherine Tizard has been listening carefully to what people say for a very long time. Her first political memory is of not being able to get to sleep on the night of the 1936 election because everyone in the street was cheering and hurrahing as the Labour seats came in. She remembers Labour supporters being called Marmites, and National supporters being termed Peanut Butters. (Why these terms were coined, she doesn't know!) She listened to the "feminine myth" for a long time too — marry and have children and live happily ever after. And it is perhaps wholly due to her parents that following that "myth" did not mean no tertiary education. "My horizons have always been fairly wide," she says, with a touch of gratitude. "Mainly, I suppose, because my parents were immigrants. There was never any question that I wouldn't go to University, and I did go." The feminine myth had her leaving it with only 5 units of a nine-unit BA completed, and the intervening years of wifehood presented the Tizards with four children in 5½ years. It was the shock of Bob losing his seat in Tamaki (currently MP for Otahuhu-ed) after three years of seeming security there that changed Cath's life. It was a time of chaos — and decision for Cath, who returned to University, did zoology, and embarked on a financially helpful university teaching career. That was 1961. By 1967, she was working full-time, and also had moved into what are commonly called "public service" activities, being, among other things on the South Auckland Marriage Guidance Council. These kept her in touch with the reality of life as

so many women experience it.

"I can pinpoint exactly when I developed an independent political stance of my own. It was over the abortion issue. Bob was Minister of Health at the time. I had been chairing a meeting of local body women candidates in the Wellington Town Hall; someone came to tell me that there was a rally at the Parliament Buildings the next day, protesting the Wall Bill. They asked me to speak. Well, it was an issue I couldn't talk about at home, because of Bob's position. I honestly didn't know how he'd react to the Wall Bill in the House. I asked him how he'd feel about me speaking, and he said fine, the decision was up to me. The next morning, I had a migraine — I just felt so distraught about the whole thing. But I did it. And got a lot of support from hundreds of women for what I'd said. I got some hate mail too — one man who said I was a female Mussolini whose brains should be mashed up and fed to maggots; and a letter from a convent girls school, asking me how I could propose murdering little babies."

Insofar as the mayoralty of Auckland goes, Cath sees the job as providing a means by which she can promote the worthwhileness of women in power positions. "The mayoralty would give me some clout, after all. When the mayor of Auckland speaks, she does get reported. It gives credence to have demands for increased child care centres supported by the mayor, as it would for good quality low cost inner city housing. I don't think that we can make any great steps forward any more. But I am sure we can take one small step at a time, and those are steps I'm prepared to take." ■

Sandi Hall



ROS NOONAN

Rosslyn Noonan is the Labour candidate for mayor of Wellington City. She was asked to stand at the last minute, partly because none of the more traditional groups could come up with a candidate. None of the sitting Labour councillors were prepared to stand, nor were there any businessmen to do it. Rosslyn has already been approached to stand for the council. She is the first woman to run, and in fact the first Labour candidate for 25 years other than Sir Frank Kitts, who held office for 18 years but lost the last two elections to Michael Fowler (of Citizens and Ratepayers, a group Rosslyn describes as 'a front for the National Party'). Personally, Ros says "I became involved with council matters mainly as the result of some research organised for the Hamilton Convention in 1979. We had been looking at housing, transport and other related issues which affect women, and we subsequently made objections to the Wellington district scheme. We took a slant which was completely different — the effect on women in particular had simply not been considered before. Through that I became interested in the whole planning process and how local body decisions were made. At the time I was asked, too, there had been a flood of reactionary, anti-woman, anti-working class propaganda in the media, and I felt it was at least a chance to get

media time and attention for an opposing point of view, if only for the three months of a campaign. I've never felt right about standing for parliament, but this seemed a much better idea. Just by being the candidate, regardless of who wins, I will have made a departure from the stereotyped picture of who could be mayor."

It is mainly Ros's feminist background which has given her the confidence to stand. And it is definitely feminism which has formed her aims. Typically, the media have seized on her outspoken, uncompromising stance on abortion — "the present law is iniquitous; it is a woman's right to choose" — but she sees four main areas as important in her campaign. First is the defence of council services, such as housing, transport, community child care. "All these things are a vital part of working class income and support systems, particularly for women, but they're really under attack at the moment." The type of housing is important too — for instance, there is very little provision for disabled people, or for large family groups. At present, inner city areas have a good economic mix here, but unless the council steps in to preserve this, many areas could become gentrified and working class families will be pushed out.

The second important area is developing structures for decision making which include ordinary people. "Participatory democracy has to grow from the grass roots. Working on the local level gives people, particularly women, a chance to put it into practice, so that they gain skills and build confidence for the wider battles that must be fought on the national level. I'm very concerned about the alienation of people from the broad political process. If you think you're powerless and there's nothing you can do to change anything, then you are kept down. As de Beauvoir says, change doesn't come from despair, but from hope. I want to be in a position to help build these new structures, and put into practice ideas which spring from a feminist analysis of society, on how you can

make the bureaucracy responsive to the needs of groups other than the elite, the white middle-aged middle-class males."

Third, Ros says, are job creation programmes, in conjunction with government and businesses. This is urgent, in view of the imminent loss of jobs through new technology, which will take effect in the city and on women first. "The Labour Party is working on a major policy announcement in this area." People are already helping themselves, through work trusts and so on, but they need support.

And fourth comes general encouragement for pluralism in the city, from giving ethnic communities real assistance to carry out whatever programmes they see as best meeting their needs, to making the suburbs more interesting, satisfying places to live. "At present, for example, it's hard to set up child care centres in suburbs, because of regulations, but these could be changed."

Reactions to Ros's campaign run the gamut, through total disbelief, hostility (mainly because of the abortion issue), to excitement and warm support. "The other day a woman I didn't know came up to me in the street. 'I'm from Lower Hutt' she said 'but I just want you to know how thrilled we are that you're standing'. I've had lots of good letters, too. Some traditional Labour supporters are still a bit wary, though really I've proved myself — I've worked pretty hard for the party through three elections."

The campaign isn't really underway yet, but at present Ros is kept busy attending party branch meetings, meeting members and formulating policy. Her husband Michael has taken over most of the housework, "though we won't know what to call him — I'm thinking of running a competition to find a word for the husband of the mayor. We're all part of history in a way. I see my candidacy as giving ordinary people some hope that things needn't be the same for ever, that change is possible." ■

Anne Else



SUE NEAL

When Sue Neal heard two speakers at Broadsheet's 1979 Suffrage Day Seminar urging women to be more active she took it personally. This year she's running for Auckland's Hospital Board, a powerful body controlling a region of 21,000 square miles stretching from Warkworth in the north to Pukekohe in the south and encompassing every public health facility from small rural maternity annexes to the region's major women's hospital, National Women's. Sue's no stranger to hospital boards but so far her contact has been as a kind of unofficial unpaid consumer advocate for women living in the South Auckland area. "I first got involved in the health area through La Leche (a group for breastfeeding mothers). Most women at home are fantastic people, they're very adaptable, but they're treated like morons in the hospital system. Through my work counselling mothers women get to hear about me. I've become known as a troubleshooter. I try to get women to act, rather than act on their behalf. But some women aren't well enough, they're feeling rotten and in no position to argue and I'll step in for them."

Although her confrontations with medical authorities have won admiration among those she's championed, among those she challenges she's known as "that terrible Sue Neal". She says simply, "I'm

hated." She tells the story of a Midlemore Hospital doctor who wants to "be given the first go at me if I ever go in there." Sue smiles as she tells me this: such vehemence doesn't daunt her. In the quest for action on the Depo Provera issue she once petitioned the Queen.

Sue might bring the medicos out in hot flushes but she calls herself "a moderate feminist". On examination we agreed that probably had more to do with her style than her politics. She's prepared to talk to women, any women, in her "non-aggressive way". And she goes down well, because as she says she's not frightening — "I'm a house-trained feminist. I won't pee on the carpet or say 'fuck'".

Running for Hospital Board gives Sue a chance to be in where the decisions are being made. In preparation for that day she's been attending Hospital Board meetings which are open to the public. The present 14-member Hospital Board is numerically dominated by lay women, but, in fact, dominated by the all-male medical contingent.

What does Sue think she can do by being on the Hospital Board? She wants to see the Board backpedal from the race to technologise the health system and play a more educative role. She sees this as consistent with feminist views of health care. A hospital board can promote educative and preventative medicine rather than health care of the "ambulance-at-the-bottom-of-the-cliff" variety. She feels that this has to be directed at women at the present time because women are "the natural healers and have more contact with children." "You can't have a healthy community without healthy women but women are presently alienated from a health system which patronises them."

She is also concerned about secrecy and wants more open scrutiny of health services and doctors' performances. She cites, as an example, the Minister of Health, George Gair's, recent announcement that there will be an investigation of deaths from anaesthesia following the release of alarming figures for

the past year, but that legislation will be introduced into parliament to make the results of such an investigation secret. "I get phone calls from people working in public hospitals who are concerned about bad health care and medical negligence but who are prevented from speaking out publicly because of the Official Secrets Act."

Sue's critical of current hospital board planning. Within her own area — South Auckland — she instances the Manukau Health Centre, erected for a planned population which never came to exist because of the building recession. "The hospital board really only acts as a landlord at the centre because all of the services available there are privately provided. There's no Plunket or FPA because there isn't the population to sustain them. We've been trying to get the hospital board to provide an ear, nose and throat specialist at the centre because this is a persistent problem for children in the South Auckland area, but they haven't acted. They're looking after private interests which cut across the interests of the people in the area."

"I expect to be a consumer advocate," says Sue. "I expect any person to be able to come to me and I might be able to do more than they could as an ordinary citizen." While she acknowledges that to a certain extent all a feminist going into such a position can hope to achieve is "patching up the bad bits" she also says she's an optimist. "As long as we try we can achieve quite a lot. I'd like to see a lot more feminist women getting involved."

Sue recognises the danger of co-option, but sees keeping involved with women's groups and in touch with strong feminist women as a way of avoiding this. "You have to keep angry to be effective. Some people think I'm naive and soppy because I'm so easily shocked but if I stop being shocked I just join the rest of them. I won't give up my work with the refuge or La Leche because that keeps me in touch with what it feels like to be a woman in the suburbs." ■

Sandra Coney

Domestic Service

the compulsory female apprenticeship
with the certificate of ultimate responsibility
to the career of
toeing the clothes line

ironing a wrinkled daydream of not being there
doing what's never done at all
like scrubbing tomorrows that come with the local rag
and turn out to be yesterdays
or talking to the housebound radio
as you cook the invisible meal, for the invisible man.

— Kathleen Bates

poetry

Melting Away . . .

Determined — threw spaghetti
from the tin
mixed the omelette
popped the toast
prepared the meal
for all to eat
cried a little into the pan
sizzled the fat
warmed plates with
cold grey hands
served on a platter
my head for you
not cooked longer enough
all agreed
stabbing at my eyes
with sharp skewer pins
ignored — melting away
in rancid butter
mouth open wanting to . . .
apple blocking aperture
marinated in tears
considering me well brined
they attacked
eating me alive

— Dorothy Golder

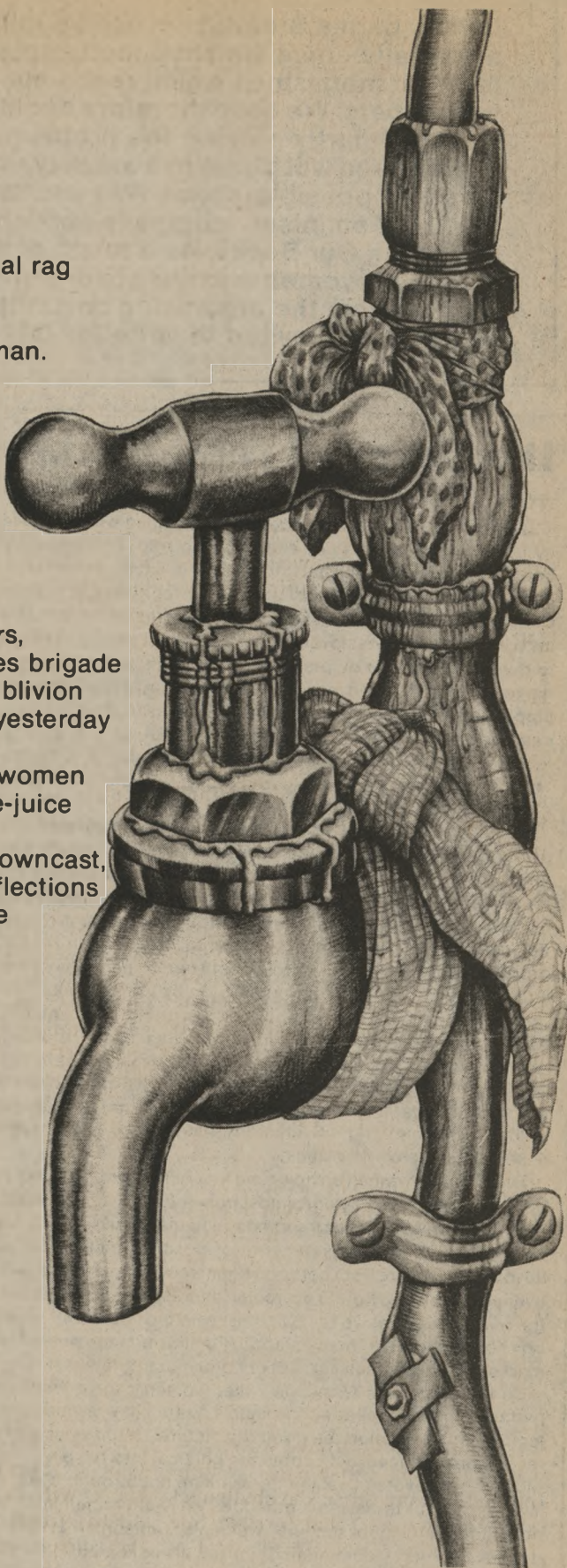
Clean-O

human erasers,
cleaning ladies brigade
buffing into oblivion
footprints of yesterday

electric-cord-women
hooked-to-the-juice

waxen eyes downcast,
measuring reflections
in tiles of time

— Sue Davis



In forty pages *Broadsheet* can't publish much theory. This is frustrating for us, especially since we read many splendid analytical articles in the overseas feminist magazines which reach our office which we would like to share with our readers. We have therefore decided to institute a regular theory section as a way of partly solving the problem. This section will always be unadorned visually and will be set in a small type to get the largest number of words in the smallest possible space. We are starting these pages with Brooke's "The State of Feminism" originally published in the February issue of the *US publication Off Our Backs*. As a result of the publication of this article a number of American women are trying to organise a national network of radical feminists. A letter from the organising committee is published at the end of the article. Readers are invited to write for this section of the magazine.

the state of feminism.

The Women's Liberation Movement has gained what we have by being a movement — by acting as a group. This decade's cooptation turns us back into atomized individuals cut off from any history of collective action, scrambling for a piece of the pie. Cooptation is diversion from women's liberation by individuals and groups whose first loyalty is not to women's liberation, but to outside groups, or by presentation of goals which look like women's liberation and may even be beneficial to feminism, but stop at less than half a loaf, to borrow Susan B. Anthony's expression about suffrage. Seeing the ERA as the goal of feminism is an example. We are pointed in another direction or "cut off at the pass," by people who claim to be (and sometimes are) part of us or even leading us.

Most cooptation of women's liberation now confuses the personal and the political. When Carol Hanisch came up with "the personal is political" in 1968-69, and women's liberation took it up as one of its most successful slogans, it meant that women's problems in relationships with men (lesbianism was not considered), heretofore considered personal, individual problems, were political, since women shared them; they were collective and resulted from oppression by men. Outside that context, "the personal is political" is poetic but unclear, and is open to misinterpretation. It has been taken to mean that one's personal life is one's politics; making personal changes (like assertiveness training or becoming a lesbian) is political change. In practice, it's placing personal life above politics — something US ideology has always encouraged especially since World War II.

The idea that women are to blame for our own oppression has been around the movement almost from the start, along the *MS* line "improve yourself and someday you may make it — be like our role models." The sub-genre of positive thinking books devoted to women, from corporate games-womanism to assertiveness training to how to overcome depression also gloss over the realities of what we're up against with the "our fault" ideology so that fighting them is taboo. Feminism is for women en masse or it isn't feminism. Superwomen aren't feminist.

Cultural feminism is the view that women can be freed by participating in an alternate women's culture. It sees the problem, thus the solution, as primarily cultural. It too is counter-revolutionary because it coopts the political into the personal. Most of it is devoted to self-improvement, not through going to law school, but to having a pure lifestyle. Cultural feminism is not entirely individualistic; the "women's community" is vital to it. The "women's community", however, is shared life-style,

social life and services. Doing laudable, brave personal things, even doing them together, is not the same thing as doing politically significant work. Feeling good (as in comfortable) should never be a goal of movement work, although it can be and is a happy side-effect.

Cultural feminism and upward mobility provide an ideology for a movement bureaucracy. This trend began in 1973 with feminist businesses; by 1975 there was a full-fledged ideology, not only of the "women's community", but of expansion of feminist businesses as the road to takeover of the US economy. Many of that view's most fervent proponents have had to backtrack because so many of the businesses have failed. Now funding, mostly from government sources, is moving in. The women's movement itself can now be used as a personal solution: while women as a group have no political stake in perpetuating the status quo, many active feminists now do. This contradiction is what the mid-1970s splits were all about, and more, and more battles are due. Women's movement leaders' emphasis on the Right as the cause of our afflictions attempts to give us a political stake in the current political system. Another problem with the structures we have built for ourselves is the division between employers and employees, with consequent risks of ill treatment of employees or using one's employees as a front for one's own political views.

Our movement's inward turn has increased through the 1970s; its media seldom deals with most women. One would never guess through reading a women's newspaper that most women are heterosexual, married, watch TV, pay rent or mortgage, raise children, hold down a job, do housework, are more likely to listen to disco than Holly Near, read Ann Landers, etc. If "other" women exist, they're clients.

Separatism by sexual orientation is a serious problem in our movement although lesbian separatism seems to be less rampant these days. Lesbian separatism comes in several varieties, with dyke separatism most extreme (see *CLIT Papers*, especially *CLIT No. 1*, oob 7/74). All share lesbian chauvinism: lesbians are inherently superior to heterosexual women — *CLIT*, in 1974, said genetically superior — and one must be a lesbian to be a feminist. Further, heterosexual women sleep with the enemy, so they're traitors, even surrogate men, whose duty is to become lesbian.

On the other side, a small but vociferous group of heterosexual women, led by Redstockings but supported by closet bigotry, push heterosexual separatism: only heterosexual women can be feminists (Redstockings prohibits lesbian members). Heterosexuality, because it involves relations between men and women, where the battle is joined, is inherently feminist and a goal of feminism. Lesbianism and celibacy are copouts, lesbianism at best is solely a (misguided) rebellion against men.

Homosexuality is unnatural, only heterosexual intercourse which reproduces is natural or is sex; producing babies is Production and a desirable goal of The Revolution. Lesbianism will vanish with male supremacy's end, and lesbians are biologically unnecessary.

Both lesbian and heterosexual chauvinism are anti-feminist; neither allows women sexual freedom, each is ready to make another group of women the enemy and to condemn them for their sexual orientation. Separatism by sexual orientation displaces concern from politics to how to live our personal lives.

The history of lesbianism in the movement is more than just separatism. No thorough or honest study of the history of lesbianism in the movement has yet been done. Lesbianism itself has not been subjected to feminist analysis, nor have theories of lesbianism been sufficiently critiqued. For example it's useful to remember that lesbian separatism arose from heterosexual bigotry, enforced invisibility, and much of the women's liberation movement's refusal to consider men the problem. Both lesbian and heterosexual cultures and the surrounding social pressures that provoke these cultural responses should be searchingly criticized.

we need our history

To date we have no good general history of the women's liberation movement, and we badly need one. We need to know what happened, who did what, our mistakes and our successes. A generation gap exists in the women's movement which has nothing to do with chronological age, but with the time of entrance into the movement. *Sojourner* (a Boston women's paper, 12/79) mentioned it, but described it completely inaccurately. Throughout the 1970s, women have been entering the movement, but those who came in 1975 joined an entirely different movement from the one in 1970. By the mid-1970s the women's liberation movement was gone. The political atmosphere was gone, consciousness-raising was gone. Instead there was the women's community, which essentially is "women-only" social life and institutions. Women who came to their great moment of truth, which was apt to be "how beautiful it is to work with women!" via the mid-1970s movement are likely to see things quite differently from those of us who went through women's liberation. Our moment of truth was apt to be "we ourselves are oppressed as women and the purpose of the women's liberation movement must be to end that oppression!" How can one explain what women's liberation was like? Added to this difficulty is ignorance of the history of feminism (first and second waves). Where can they learn it — and the lessons learned by living it? Such ignorance leaves feminist groups wide open to disruption.

Radical theory has been removed from the practical movement. It's not too much to say that the current movement atmosphere is anti-theory. Most activity is around single issues and projects (which aids bureaucracy and cooptation nicely). Not only don't most activists see the forest for the trees, their vision is fixed on a few leaves in one tree. Theory has been left to the academics, who are indifferent feminists and don't aim their work at a movement audience anyway. Everyone requires some explanation of the world, where our lives and work fit in. If no radical theory is supplied, people absorb what's already there: arguments of biology, nature, psychoanalysis, religion, etc., bequeathed by male supremacy, Liberalism (capitalism), etc. All of these permeate our movement. Radical feminism is the only theory which has managed to avoid them, not without fights, because it alone takes account of male supremacy and has been steadily creating a radical theory. So what's happened to radical feminism?

defining radical feminism

Defining radical feminism is part of the problem. When radical feminism first formed as a tendency in 1969, all radical feminist groups agreed that all women are oppressed as wo-

men, men as a group (male supremacy, male chauvinism sexism) oppress women as a group. However, radical feminists differed on how and why this was done, or whether women are a class (New York City radical feminist organisations), a caste (Cell 16, Boston), or a colonized group or fourth world ("The Fourth World Manifesto," Detroit). It was also agreed that this oppression is political and the means to end it are also political: a collective struggle, a mass independent movement of women for women's liberation. It was also taken for granted that every WLM member, including radical feminists, were politically radical in the general sense — anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, etc. — although the organized Left in theory and practice was attacked by radical feminists for not being radical enough.

Things have changed. Political emphasis, especially the radical political emphasis on revolution, disappeared. For instance, in 1973 I was complaining to another woman who called herself a radical feminist about how unhappy I was with an organization which named itself radical feminist: "They think radical feminism is alternate lifestyle and changing some laws." She was astounded. "What more do you want?" It was my turn to be astonished; I was speechless.

Women's liberation, let alone radical feminism, following Simone de Beauvoir, found environmental influences, not "nature" or biology, brought about our oppression (although some radical feminists like Shulamith Firestone and Ti-Grace Atkinson felt male supremacy originated historically in female biological impediments). Radical feminists decisively rejected women's "nature" opposed to "men's nature", and any ideology emphasizing differences between the sexes, including assuming women's innate moral superiority and altruism. The early radical feminist writers all call for the abolition of sexual categories as a goal of women's liberation. Now a large part of what passes as radical feminism emphasizes biology, sexual difference, and a special, better, women's essence.

Radical feminism has always been a minority tendency in our movement, because of our naming men the oppressor, and ending male supremacy as the WLM's purpose. This frightens many women, including movement women. By 1972 several early radical feminists like Anne Koedt has changed their target to sex roles. Since 1974, patriarchy has become the preferred term for the declared enemy, a change also connected to cultural feminism and its call for matriarchy. All of this removes radical feminist theory's political component, making our situation a cultural problem.

between legitimacy and disruption

The view that every issue is a woman's issue and any struggle by any woman is part of feminism is another way of avoiding the man problem. Women are diverted from ending male supremacy into social welfare and activities against racism, capitalism, war, nukes, and anti-gay bigotry as part of the women's movement. Feminism is the one movement expected to hurl aside its specific goals for every other battle against the world's ills. Has anyone demanded that the black liberation movement, for instance, should make ending male supremacy its top priority?

While this position is mostly used to attack feminism, it also can spring from misinterpreting the view of most radical feminists that not only is male supremacy the original oppression, but all other oppression springs from it (note that this does not deny that other oppressions exist). Sometimes nonfeminist issues like racism or class snobbery crop up as eternal problems in women's liberation. These are often legitimate internal issues. However, many have used them opportunistically to disrupt and destroy the feminist movement. The only way to differentiate between legitimate criticism and disruption is to look at the tactics, politics, and purposes of those bringing them up.

Another example of directing radical feminism away from politics is defining structure, or process, as the central issue:

what makes radical feminism is small, decentralized, nonhierarchical, "unstructured" groups. This technique first became popular in comparisons of the radical and reformist wings of the women's movement (see Jo Freeman's work), but the primacy of process ("the collective says") was a staple in most of women's liberation and later cultural feminism, to the point where external goals have been considered "male" and uncool. I'm not against democratic structure, or nonhierarchy and small groups where they work, but it's a mistake to define a political grouping by its structure.

Feminism, and radical feminism, are distinct political positions which much of the women's movement does not share, except perhaps in the vaguest and broadest sense. The feminist position is: women are not equal to men because we are oppressed by men. (Our use of "oppression" explicitly rejects biological and natural explanations of our current status in favour of environmental and/or political ones.) This oppression exists in all economic systems and classes, races, nations, and other groups; the method to end this situation and get women equality and power is to organize a movement whose goal is women's equality and liberation, accomplished by mobilizing around "women's issues": oppression or discrimination which affects women primarily or exclusively.

To coincide with the 1968-70 movement's definition of radical feminism, I must add to the above that our oppression is political and the solution must be political: the only effective way of even mitigating, much less ending, the situation is a strong, independent, mass movement of women whose goal is women's liberation from male supremacy. Ending male supremacy requires revolutionary, feminist change and any movement to accomplish this must be political, and politically radical.

To recapitulate, the main goal of the women's liberation movement is not: ending racism, capitalism, imperialism, militarism, or nuclear power, instituting goddess religion, matriarchy, or a female nation, making energy circles, or friends, having places to go, becoming a stronger or better person, or a lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual or pansexual. It is to end male supremacy: the domination by less than half of the world population of the rest.

Radical feminism by the above definition is practically nonexistent in our movement. Radical feminism's current problems go beyond watering down definitions. Many of them are internal faults, with the biggest one being lack of organization. Despite national media coverage and dissemination of literature, radical feminist organizations have not been national; radical feminists outside New York City have had to work in affiliation with groups or projects with mixed women's liberation politics. By the mid-1970s this was also true in Manhattan. New York Radical Feminists, the last of the early organizations, had watered down by 1973 and essentially folded by late 1976. It revived last year. Many old members are active in Women Against Pornography. But even when the Manhattan organizations (The Feminists, (old) Redstockings, and NY Radical Feminists) existed, we never identified with any of them completely.

Unlike most other movements, radical feminists and most WLM members have been unlikely to be organization-identified in ideas or activities. Radical feminists meet each other by serendipity, and hear of each other through reading or through friends.

This description is even more true now. Women's movement activists who consciously set out to pick up political ideas do so through reading the women's press or books by individuals; the few local groups are cells of 3 or 4, who can put out a pamphlet or two but can't mount larger actions. The grouplets succumb rapidly to isolation and sectarianism, and when splits occur, they're bloody.

Without organization, we, with few exceptions, are doomed

to work in other people's groups, march at other people's demonstrations, and write for other people's publications. To add irony to it all, many of them call themselves radical feminist, when they aren't by the previous definitions, even if some of their members are. This is one of many examples of how phrases and slogans which were part of radical feminist politics 10 years ago are watered down. It's also a sign of radical feminism's — at least the phrase's — credibility.

Not one radical feminist I know, including myself, has escaped from late night musings about giving up the movement, doubts, fears, self-consciousness, depression, even paranoia and agoraphobia, produced by isolation and attack from within and without the movement. The women's liberation movement's decline, along with the tightening economy, has sapped our courage. Once our lives are made a little easier through the movement (improved social life and a social position), many of us are willing to rest on our (dubious) laurels, relax and enjoy it — on the other side of the coin, we want to hold onto what we have.

Quite a few radical feminists have left our movement. Some, like Redstockings, glorify them and say the evil lesbian menace (or lesbian chauvinism at least) drove them out. Sometimes it's true, but I suspect even there that other factors were involved, because many heterosexual women, maybe most, didn't leave the movement. We need to know more about this. A lot of radical feminists have submerged into various issues and projects or transferred to other parts of the women's movement, like NOW. During that time cultural feminism rose and the WLM came to an end in the big cities. NOW converts I talked to all wailed, "At least they're doing something." It's true — a lot of women's liberation small groups weren't doing anything, and those which were, being small and local, confined themselves to small and local activities. Also reformists have a built-in advantage over revolutionists in that their track is laid out for them: they work within a set system to change the laws. For those of us who want to overthrow that system or can't stand working in it, it's harder to plan a strategy with our limited resources and support. Others went the other way, into the Left. And many went into cultural feminism and lesbian separatism. Some of these women probably would have left regardless of what state our movement was in. For most, the movement's current condition is to blame, if only because the discouraging signs pushed them to choose personal escapes they were already considering.

feminism lives!

We not only need to revive the women's liberation movement, we need a strong radical feminist wing, and radical feminism is the most likely source of a new (improved) women's liberation movement. All our activities now must be aimed at producing a *political, radical, movement*. Politics is all about who has power and who doesn't and about seeking and exercising power in the public arena. Radical means going to the root or origin of the problem. In politics this means our analysis must go to the root and our solution as well.

Radical feminists have to be found and linked, *nationally*. A national communications network is the logical first step. Once communication is established, probably through a national newsletter and central address where we can contact each other, the next step is co-ordination-information and suggestions for actions and meetings. The immediate goal is organization, with a national organization (and by national I don't mean "national headquarters" in Washington, DC or New York City) the preferred result. I'm not sure what kind of organization this should be, but this organization should have local chapters or whatever we want to call them. A national organization is necessary because it supplies a continuous presence and backup, it can have clout, it can mount national actions, it will provide a center for radical feminists, it can provide responsibil-

ity, it can be joined by outside women (unlike a network), it can exist independently of personalities, and local branches will make it immediately accessible, flexible and knowledgeable about what's going on throughout the country.

I will lay down one law immediately: aside from restricting membership to women, politics must be the sole condition for membership. Specifically, I won't consider joining such an effort unless it explicitly opposes separatism of sexual orientation: no discrimination against or pushing superiority of heterosexuality or lesbianism. I would want this required of everyone who joins, which includes not pushing lesbian or heterosexual chauvinism in other groups.

Many feminists lately have called for a return to consciousness-raising groups. I concur, with cautions. While consciousness-raising is a major radical feminist contribution, it, like everything else discussed here, must work in a radical context to contribute to radical change.

Consciousness-raising is a crucial tool in grassroots organizing. To be effective for radical feminism, it must be integrated into the larger radical feminist movement, and it must somehow be combined with internal education (study groups?), not only of theory, but of our movement's history. We also have to face the fact that repetition is essential to radical organizing. Most women in the movement weren't in it 10-12 years ago and have never heard women's liberation ideas except as rhetoric, frequently garbled.

Outreach is critical. Our movement needs new blood and we radical feminists in particular won't get far without it. Radical feminists, like women, are made, not born. We have to create situations where women can move towards radical feminism and be rapidly integrated into the movement or organization. As individuals and as an organization (or network) we need to go public as radical feminists. To begin, we must clearly define radical feminism, as I've tried to do here, *differentiated* from other viewpoints. Clear definitions may not halt inevitable watering down, but it can slow it. We will have to rely less on beautiful, unclear slogans which can be misinterpreted. We, especially an organization, not only must announce ourselves, but miss no opportunity to get the message to other people, through speaker's bureaus, our own publications, distributing other good, helpful radical feminist and other articles, periodicals and books, writing for other publications, leafletting, staffing tables, demonstrations, and other actions. Radical feminists must also emphasize real-life issues which affect most women: who does the dishes, what's on TV, job situations, sexuality and orgasm, etc.

We need to present radical feminism positively: not just a critique, but a program (though detailed blueprints for the future are impossible till we get there). We radical feminists are few and can't afford sectarianism. Though radical feminists agree on the basic definition of the problem and solution, radical feminism is not monolithic. There are many issues which haven't been resolved like housework, sexuality, and the family; there are issues which haven't been brought up yet; there are strategies and tactics to consider. One of the most important functions of organized radical feminism will be to provide a forum for debate among radical feminists. We need it!

It will be hard to reorganize the women's liberation movement. Not only do we have to deal with disillusioned former or present activists who will resist raising their hopes only to have them smashed as before, we'll run into active feminists who will be reluctant to commit themselves to still another activity, especially such a chancey one. Others with vested interests in the status quo, or would-be sectarian vanguards, will consider any changes they don't control a slap in their collective faces. They will be right, and they will react accordingly. Women who entered the movement post-WLM, as well as those on the outside, have become inured to the phrases and rhetoric, and often

understand them differently from their original intent. They may not understand us at all and they will resist — initially.

We have to risk the perils of re-creation and extension for the women's movement to improve into the women's liberation movement in its fullest sense. They will be painful, but exciting, too, if enough of us are interested. If you agree with the ideas expressed here, please write to me c/o oob. If you don't want your response published, please mark your envelope PERSONAL.

by brooke

June 11, 1980

From: Radical Feminist Organizing Committee
Re: National Network of Radical Feminists.

Dear Sister,

We are radical feminists who have come together as a result of an article by Brooke "The State of Feminism" in the February issue of *off our backs*, enclosed. Two points in Brooke's article which reflect our common concerns are (1) the main goal of radical feminism is . . . "to end male supremacy: the domination by less than half of the world population of the rest." and (2) radical feminism . . . "must be aimed at producing a political, radical movement . . . (and that) aside from restricting membership to women, politics must be the sole condition for membership." These points are made within the context of an analysis of the history of the women's liberation movement, the current state of feminism, and a call for the development of a national network of radical feminists.

We are radical feminists who started in the women's liberation movement about 1970. Some of us have continued and some of us have left the organized women's movement as its emphasis has shifted to cultural feminism. We include lesbian and heterosexual women who have worked across the US in women's liberation and other social movements. Our movement activities have run the gamut from NOW to Redstockings to Feminist Women's Health Center to Radicalesbians. Our occupations include artist, construction worker, household worker, librarian, mother, professor, proofreader, proposal writer, supermarket checker, student, and welfare mother.

We are temporarily calling ourselves the Radical Feminist Organizing Committee because we want a label by which to identify the goal of starting a radical feminist network. The fact that we are separated geographically and do not all know each other personally but share the above concerns convinced us that radical feminists are scattered throughout the country, are often unaware of each other, and, thereby, may be unable to engage in discussion and action with other radical feminists.

In an effort to begin communication among radical feminists across the country, we each have written a statement on radical feminism. Our statements show that while we agree on some basic principles, we differ in perspective and interest. We hope that each of you will respond with your own statement which can be circulated. We are attempting to give radical Feminists a chance to begin an exchange of ideas, not necessarily in finished form. Statements on radical feminism, comments on books or events, tentative ideas for analysis or action, random thoughts, observations, notes, personal experiences, letters to the editor, etc., are welcome.

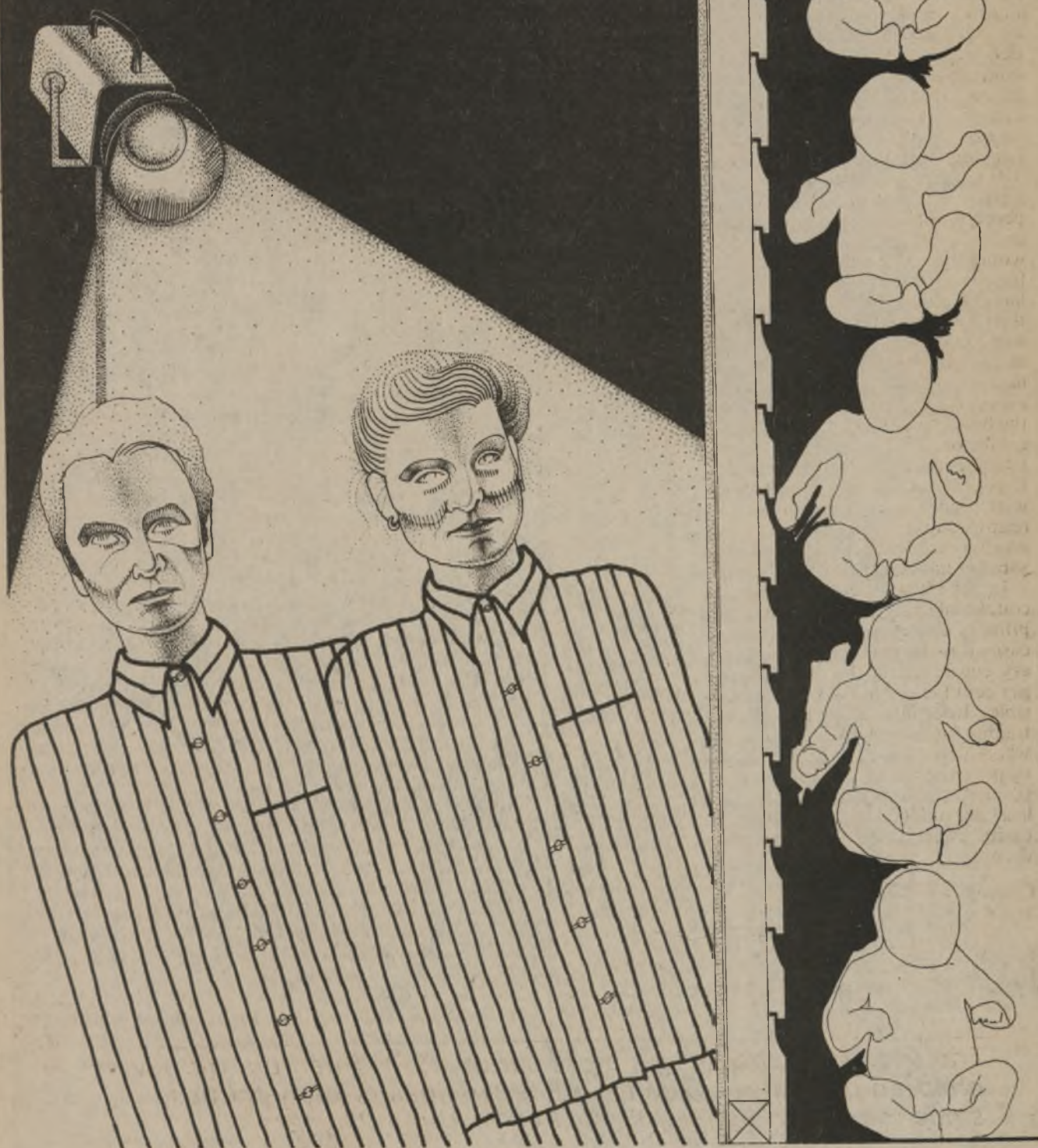
For more information from the Radical Feminist Organising Committee write to them at 2800 Devonshire Place, N.W. 103, Washington, D.C. 20008, U.S.A.

off our back's address is 1724 20 St. NW, Washington D.C. 20009, U.S.A.

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Infertility: Not a subject for discussion

SARAH CALVERT 1979



Those who are fertile spend so much time worrying about preventing pregnancy that they find it hard to comprehend the trauma for those who cannot conceive or give birth.

While most women find they are too fertile, and expend great amounts of energy trying to prevent unwanted pregnancies an increasing number of women are faced with the trauma of infertility. Infertility is defined as the failure to achieve conception after a year of unprotected intercourse. One in six couples will, in fact, experience some difficulty conceiving or carrying pregnancy to term. Out of every 100 couples (all infertility research deals with couples and not single people), 10 will have no children and 15 will have fewer than they would like. The problem is becoming more serious as women put off having children until they reach their late twenties or early thirties, since maximum fertility is reached at about 24 years. The effects of newer methods of contraception, especially the birth control pill and the bio-active IUDs, are also a critical factor; $7/1000$ women fail to ovulate after using oral contraceptives. Especially at risk are those women with previous menstrual irregularities, episodes of amenorrhea (no periods at all) and substantial weight loss on the pill.

In 50-55 per cent of cases of couple infertility the woman is the primary cause, in 30-35 per cent of cases it is the man who is the primary cause and in the remaining 15 per cent factors in both are responsible. Infertility is an unexpected trauma for as we look around us the whole world seems to be fertile. We do not expect infertility to happen to us and suddenly all aspects of our lives are touched by our inability to easily conceive and/or bear children.

Causes of Infertility

The Female

The causes of infertility in the female can be roughly divided into four major categories. In each

woman infertility may occur because of one, or because of a combination of a number of these factors:

- **Mechanical barriers:** Some sort of structural defect or problem, usually found in the cervix, uterus or the tubes. In some cases there is actual malformation of parts of the reproductive system, in other cases infections cause structural damage (especially of the fallopian tubes). Occasionally polyps, fibroids or the presence of a hymen may cause infertility.

- **Endocrine disorder:** Some sort of malfunction of the body message system might affect the menstrual cycle, causing a failure to ovulate or other hormonal problems that affect the ability to conceive or carry pregnancy to term. There can be problems with the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, the thyroid, the adrenals or the ovaries. In this area it is possible that factors such as psychological stress may affect ability to conceive. For example, it appears that stress may affect the fallopian tubes. Endocrine disorders may also affect the cervical/vaginal fluids so that these may be inadequate for sperm transportation or actively hostile to sperm. The problems associated with use of oral contraceptives are also included in this category. It appears that for some women the disruption to their normal hormonal cycle caused by the pill is irreversible.

- **Infections:** Many common infections can render women partially infertile, among these are pelvic inflammatory infection (often caused by the IUD), venereal disease (especially syphilis and gonorrhea, and sometimes other bacterial/viral infections of the vagina/pelvis. These most often cause infertility by causing scarring of the tubes, but they may affect both the lining of the uterus and the ovaries themselves.

- **Endometriosis:** this is when the inside lining of the uterus grows outside the confines of the uterus. In most cases this causes infertility.

In some cases a botched abortion will cause uterine damage or infection and thus lead to infertility.

The Male

In the male there are three major areas that may cause infertility:

- **Problems in depositing the sperm** in the upper vagina. Usually a problem of sexual technique. However some men have problems actually ejaculating at all.

- **Blockages of the male reproductive tract:** As with the female, infection or the presence of actual deformity, can prevent the movement of the sperm or the seminal fluid into the penis. In some cases more extensive damage to the system may have occurred.

- Most commonly male infertility is associated with what is called **poor sperm production**. Either the quality of the sperm is poor (i.e. the concentration of the sperm is poor, or their shape is wrong, or their movement and mobility is poor) or there are other problems. Some of the factors that affect this problem are: heat around the testicles; general health, nutrition, exercises; emotional stress; too prolonged a period of sexual abstinence; special factors such as a birth defect, the failure of the testicles to descend, childhood diseases, exposure to X-rays, infections.

Joint Factors

There are two so-called joint factors, that is a situation where both persons are acting on each other to create the infertility problem. Added to this some couples may each have a marginal fertility problem (usually one of the areas discussed above) which with another partner could be overcome but with their particular partner renders them infertile.

The problem is becoming more serious as women put off having children until they reach their late twenties or early thirties, since maximum fertility is reached at about 24 years.

● **Immunologic reactions:** In some couples there are anti-bodies present in either the woman or the man that prevent sperm action. Some women have an anti-body reaction to male sperm, and some men have a reaction to their own sperm. Some research has suggested that repeated exposure to sperm, where this anti-body reaction is known to exist, will only make the problem worse. However the area is still very much debated.

● **Coital technique:** In some cases infertility is caused by poor sexual technique. Maximum fertility is ensured if the sperm are deposited as far up the vagina as possible. Sexual activity as close as possible to ovulation will create a greater chance of conception.

Post Conception Problems

Under the general heading of infertility come the problems of miscarriage and stillbirth. These are acutely painful and traumatic experiences for the women concerned, especially if the experience is repeated. Approximately 1:6 pregnancies will end this way, 75 per cent in the first three months. There are five major causes:

● **Blighted pregnancy:** This is where the fertilized ovum fails to develop properly and is aborted by nature.

● **Hormonal deficiency:** Where some problem in the woman's delicate hormonal system occurs so that the pregnancy is not adequately sustained. Although this usually occurs early in the pregnancy and an early miscarriage occurs, occasionally the problems do not show up until the end and a stillbirth occurs.

● **Anatomical problems of the uterus:** Tumors, fibroids, or a divided uterus can cause either problem.

● **Anatomical problems of the cervix:** Most commonly a problem called cervical incompetence, where the cervix starts to dilate well before labour has commenced. This can lead to miscarriage. It is one of the side-effects of poorly performed abortions.

● **Incompatible blood type:** Hopefully most of these problems are picked up in New Zealand, but if there is an incompatibility in blood type between the woman and the foetus a miscarriage will normally occur.

There are a multitude of other explanations for both miscarriage and stillbirth: for example, sometimes the cord gets wound around

the neck of the developing fetus and this can later cause a stillbirth, but in many cases there seem to be no explanations for what has happened. This often makes it a great deal harder to accept. Women who go through this experience need special help and care, they need to work through their own reactions — grief and anger are a normal reaction to this event. It is also important to remember that it takes the body a while to readjust. While many doctors argue that psychologically it is best if women who have had a miscarriage or stillbirth get pregnant as soon as possible, in fact it is best to wait a while, preferably about 3-6 months.

Investigating Infertility

If you suspect you might be infertile (i.e. you have been having unprotected intercourse for a year and are not pregnant), you will have to go through a series of tests and procedures. Some of these can be carried out by your GP, many however will require specialist investigation.

"Surprise, denial, isolation, anger, depression and guilt" — these are the normal reactions of infertile people.

Make sure you like the people you have to deal with. Investigation of infertility is a psychologically traumatic time, much of what will happen to you will seem demeaning, painful, embarrassing, added to which you will have to deal with your own reactions when things don't happen. For this reason you need professionals you can relate to. Since it is easier to diagnose infertility in the male it is best to start with tests on the male, where there is a stable male-female relationship. Usually tests are done on the sperm produced by the male; tests will also be done to test sperm production. A check will also be done for abnormality in reproductive system structures. Since infertility in the female is more complex, checking female infertility is a longer and more complex process. There are four major areas to be checked:

● **A post-coital test,** done 6-18 hours after intercourse and as near as possible to the day of ovulation. A mucus sample will be taken to see if the cervical mucus is stopping the

sperm, there will be a check for sperm anti-bodies. This test shows the quality and quantity of sperm and their mobility as well as assessing the female factors that might impede their progress to the ovum.

● **Scraping of the uterus:** This is a dilation and curette and is a check on the state of the uterus. Only if it is normal, will the endometrium sustain pregnancy.

● **Salpingography:** This is a close inspection of the uterus and the tubes. It aims to look at their physical condition to check for abnormalities, scarring or growths. Sometimes gas is blown into the tubes to see if they are clear, this may clear them if there was a blockage.

● **Hormonal/endocrinological tests:** these check the ability of the woman to ovulate regularly, to maintain a pregnancy.

Detailed checks are also run on the timing and techniques of intercourse.

Treatment of Infertility

● **Changes in sexual technique:** Many couples achieve a successful conception/delivery after proper attention to fertility. This is especially true where a combination of factors renders a couple marginally infertile. Attention to the actual period around ovulation, and to deep penetration as a sexual technique, and to the woman subsequently keeping her buttocks above her stomach and remaining in that position for at least two hours will often achieve conception.

● **Surgery:** Where either the male or the female has an obstruction or barrier that is causing infertility surgery is often successful.

● **Fertility drugs:** These are most often used where there is a suspected hormonal/endocrine problem. There are three main drugs used: Clomid (Clomiphene Citrate), Pergonal (Human Menopausal Gonadotropin) and HCG (Human Chorionic Gonadotropin). Fertility drugs work best for the anovulator (never ovulates) woman or for those who ovulate irregularly. They will not help women who have ovarian failure or a primary pituitary problem. Each is a very powerful drug with side-effects and problems associated with their uses.

Clomid: The early wonder drug, and not the drug that causes multiple pregnancies. Best results are with women who do ovulate but irreg-

larly. Clomid stimulates ovulation; if patients are well screened about 70 per cent will ovulate and about 40 per cent will conceive. Sometimes the anti-estrogenic action of Clomid will affect the cervical mucus and prevent conception even where an ovum is released. Clomid should never be given to women with liver disease or disfunction, nor should it be given where ovarian cysts are present (since it will cause enlargement). Some patients experience blurring of vision and other visual symptoms with Clomid, and insomnia, depression and "hot flushes" also occur.

Pergonal: This produces ovarian follicular growth in women. It is a very potent drug and should only be given where all other treatments have failed. It is the drug that is associated with multiple pregnancies, about 20 per cent of all conceptions associated with Pergonal are multiple, most being twins. It should only be handled by a specialist with experience in its management. It should never be given where there is thyroid or adrenal dysfunction or where ovarian cysts are present.

• **AID/AIH:** Artificial insemination either by husband or donor is a solution available in New Zealand. It involves the woman checking her basal body temperature and as close as possible to ovulation a specimen of sperm is placed high up in the vagina, sometimes a small cervical cap is placed high in the vagina to retain the sperm. The woman lies on her back for at least half an hour. In most cases at least two attempts are needed to ensure conception. It is rare for AIH to be used since most male infertility is caused by poor sperm production which cannot be overcome by this technique. Any couple considering AID need to think very carefully about its implications. Some men do not really accept a child conceived under these conditions and there is still a lot of controversy about its use.

Psychological Reactions to Infertility

"Surprise, denial, isolation, anger, depression and guilt" — these are the normal reactions of infertile people. All childless people in fact go through some of these reactions, even those who have chosen to be childless. Most in fact go through a period of mourning in their thirties for a part of themselves

that is not going to be realised. If you are infertile (or have chosen to be childless) you should attend to, and validate, your psychological reactions. Yours is not the normal experience and there are few models of behaviour for you to follow. Being childless is a lonely experience for those involved. For women there are the problems of living in a

CAT'S CRADLE

I lie in bed,
Cradling the cat that
I want to be a child.
The bed is hot
Sticky and unpleasant
Workmen hammer and
shift
In the far rooms of this
ossuary.

I lie wanting to bathe,
Wanting to change my
tampon
Feeling the stickiness
Seep between my buttocks
Settling in a moist
Patch under my body
And still I lie.

I lie,
Longing for the child
I haven't this month
Longing for the child
I know cannot grow
From the dust and ashes
Of tomb living.

May Ose

society which continues to define women in terms of their fertility. There are the wider social pressures to have children, the sense of loss and of helplessness. Many women get severely depressed when their period appears each month. This is especially true for those undergoing fertility assessment and treatment and is made worse by the assaultive

aspect of the tests, and the clinical nature of sexual activity during this time. Women report feeling hollow and empty and men feel they are castrated. Some people have a sense of being defective and incompetent, they worry about sexual performance, that they will no longer be loved, valued and wanted because of their infertility. It is hard to grieve in these circumstances; there is no recognised loss, only a loss of potential. Infertility is often a socially denied condition, so we are unable to share our grief/loss with others. Even those closest to us may be alien in this situation; they may have children, or just may fail to understand our feelings. Infertility is often an uncertain situation, so though we can in some small corner continue to hope, we don't resolve the situation. Finally it is hard to get information about infertility, which makes us feel more helpless and alone. There does appear to be a distinct three-part psychological adjustment system that people go through if they are infertile:

- We adjust to the injury to our self image implicit in being infertile, we become preoccupied with the medical problem and try to formulate theories as to why it happened to us.
- If the medical treatment is unsuccessful, we go through a period of mourning, of loss adjustment. We go through an intense examination of what parenthood means both as individuals and as people.
- We come to terms with reality and make decisions about our future. If we do not pursue AID, or adoption, we come to see ourselves as childless.

Infertility, miscarriage and stillbirth actually affect a large number of people in our society, yet they remain hidden behind a wall of silence. Those who are fertile spend so much time worrying about preventing pregnancy that they find it hard to comprehend the trauma for those who cannot conceive or give birth. In recent years improved medical technology has given some women hope, and created new dilemmas for society. Understanding the psychological problems associated with infertility has not progressed as far. ■

Sarah Calvert

Recommended Book; Infertility: a guide for the infertile couple. By Barbara Eck Manning. Spectrum Books. 1977.

The Feminist Eye

Filmz • Filmz • Filmz • Filmz

Tantalising snippets, snipes and raves about films
seen in this year's Wellington and Auckland Film Festivals.

Fourteen films in fourteen days is apt to leave one suffering from celluloid poisoning. Displaying the first symptoms (a thickening waistline from cashews and chips) I piked on two which some feminists subsequently eulogised (**Maria Braun** and **Dream of Passion**). So these brief reviews make no apology for being other than selective and subjective.

The five films billed feminist in pre-festival publicity were a mixed bag and, in the main, disappointing. Czech Vera Chytilová's **The Apple Game**, while providing the odd moments of wit among the froth, was not feminist at all (any female filmmaker gets called feminist these days which is probably as irritating for them as it is for feminists). A few rebellious pouts about not doing dishes don't constitute a feminist statement and no feminist worth her salt would reduce the labouring women who provided the counterpoint to the sexual shenanigans in the film, to so many heavy heaving cows.

Rapunzel, Let Down Your Hair, examining the mother/daughter relationship through the successive retelling of the

Reunzel fairy story was clumsily assembled, frequently banal, sometimes obscure and failed to develop some themes while beating us over the head with others (especially annoying was the badly integrated documentary-style section on witches). The ending, in which the all-woman British rock group, Jam Today, danced through grey London streets collecting up "ordinary" women — suburban mums, grandmas, cleaning ladies etc — for an all-girls-together gig at the local pub — a persistent bit of feminist fiction which never actually happens — left me as cold as last night's flounder.

From Canada Anne-Claire Poirier's **Scream from Silence** (**Mourir à Tue-Tête**, called **Die Laughing** in Auckland) was much more gutsy and satisfying. This film about the making of a film about rape was harrowing and made me really *feel* the horror of rape and of other forms of violence against women. It was a complexly structured film, intercutting footage of a re-enactment of a rape with discussions between the filmmaker (played by Monique Miller) and her editor (Micheline

Lancôt) and sepia-toned newsreel footage of other victims of sexual crimes (prostitutes in Vietnam; shaving of women's heads as a mark of sexual shame in WW II; clitoridectomy). This structure allowed many subtle and important points to be made about sexual violence without us feeling preached at or bombarded with rhetoric. However, this said, the film was seriously marred by one long sequence in which masked victims of many forms of sexual abuse (incest, wife rape, sexual harassment etc) argued their case against an unseen advocate of patriarchal authority and justice. This whole scene was visually boring, over-generalised, embarrassingly didactic and had little emotional power. It flawed what was otherwise a fine film.

The image of the clitoridectomy will stay with me for a long time. The little girl's bewildered, stunned face as she sat up after being mutilated, her first clumsy steps after being helped to her feet, holding her legs wide apart from her wound, the blank faces of the other little girls waiting, watching. The silence behind the scream. Despite the contention of some overseas male critics who found the clitoridectomy scene "gratuitous", the connections between the forms of sexual violence shown were clearly made — they just don't want to know. Neither did the men in the small festival audience who left in a steady stream.

West German filmmaker Margaretha von Trotta's picaresque tale of a young woman on the run after robbing a bank to save her radical day care centre, **The Second Awakening of Christa Klages**, was short on plot but made up for its lack of action with its generous depiction of women and their friendships. Tina Engel's Christa Klages is passionately sincere, if ingenuous, in her approach to life and Engels is a very engaging actress to watch; her open face is a kaleidoscope of emotions.

Christa's care and concern helps a friend with whom she seeks refuge to break away from a stifling and conventional marriage. The film was never better than when showing the warmth and love



Glenda Jackson, not-to-be-missed in "Stevie".

between these two women, a love, we are made to feel, into which men can only intrude.

Finally, Christa, having been picked up by the police is confronted with Lena, the bank clerk she held hostage during the heist and who has been trying to track her down throughout the film. To our surprise (and Christa's) Lena denies that Christa was the bank robber. It seems that Lena was pursuing Christa with something other than revenge in mind.

From Wellington Christine Dann reports that Australian filmmaker Linda Blagg's **Just Out of Reach** showed "all the archetypal experiences of the female adolescent realistically and movingly — rows with parents, sneaking off with boys, body uncertainties, losing virginity in the back seat, the 'handsome teacher syndrome', gauche attempts at finding a spiritual and intellectual identity, getting married while still immature, suicide attempts... Broad-sheet readers will find something of themselves in this film and will find it worth viewing."

Some of the highlights of the film festival were not to be found in feminist films. Some films by men created memorable female characters and presented some wonderful performances by actresses. Absolutely not-to-be-missed was Glenda Jackson in the title role of Bob Enders' **Stevie**. Jackson has never been better than as the witty, but often haunted, poet Stevie Smith, living in domestic bliss with her much-loved "lion aunt" (exquisitely played by Mona Washbourne) in the London suburb of Palmers Green. Jackson delivers long monologues to the camera but these are consummately handled, thus creating an intimate atmosphere such that the filmgoer could imagine she was seated in one of the plush armchairs of the Palmers Green sitting room sipping a glass of sherry. Part of the pleasure of the film was in knowing that the relationship shown between Stevie and her aunt is so rarely depicted in cinema, theatre or literature — a truly devoted relationship between two women, based not on duty but on love. The aunt's death-bed scene where Stevie bitingly analyses the function of religion ("If I had been the Virgin Mary I'd have said 'No'") between oh-so-tenderly ministering to her aunt was especially beautiful and touching. Jackson's readings of Stevie's poems made me want to rush out and buy some books by this poet.

In John Cassavetes' **Opening Night** Gena Rowlands was magnificently larger-than-life as an aging and alcoholic actress struggling to come to grips with a role in an upcoming play. This was a constantly fascinating film because of the way Cassavetes gradually shifted our perceptions of all the characters as the film prog-

ressed. Rowland's final scene in which she arrives so drunk she can't stand for the play's opening night but goes on to transcend not only the booze but also her own fears about the play was a cinematic tour-de-force.

Jenny Rankine's writes that: "In **Dream of Passion** Melina Mercouri played an acclaimed actress who returns to her native Greece to play Euripides' Medea. Mercouri's growing friendship with and understanding of a "modern Medea", an American (Ellen Burstyn) who killed her three children in revenge for her husband's infidelity, leads her to reject her male director's idea of female passion and agony. Both women's performances were excellent, providing insight and empathy for the sufferings of trapped women in an unfamiliar place, dependent on a contemptuous husband. Mercouri comes to reject the attitude which blames the mother for the infanticide, asking instead what unimaginable pressures could drive a woman to kill those she most loves. That is the question the film asks the viewer, delivered with an emotional electricity that left many women dazed and overwhelmed at the end of the performance."

While educators and policy makers glibly talk of educating for leisure those 50% of school leavers who may never get a job, Australian producer John Duigan's **Mouth to Mouth** took an unsentimental look at the reality of life for unemployed teenagers. Carrie and Jean (Kim Krejus and Sonia Peat) escape from a girls' "home", but without jobs and unable to get the dole they are forced into a hand-to-mouth existence, surviving by shop-lifting and, finally, prostituting themselves. Into their bleak world of drink, drugs and easy sex

come similarly rootless and penniless Tim and Sergio (Ian Gilmour and Sergio Frazzeto) to add a few tender, but never romanticised, moments among the derelict buildings and sleazy pubs which they call home. The film is good as showing how come — the young-disadvantaged, working class — are never going to be able to pull themselves up by the bootstraps — they haven't got the boots to start with. All they can do is survive.

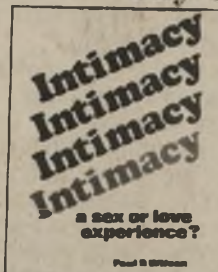
From Wellington, Christine Dann asks why **Mouth to Mouth** and another Australian film, Phil Noyce's **Newsfront** (shown only in Wellington) — "easily one of the best movies I have seen" — have never previously made it to NZ. She notes that **Newsfront** "has been distributed in every English-speaking country except New Zealand and South Africa (!). It was apparently offered to NZ distributors at the beginning of 1979 — and they turned it down." She asks why, when Australian films are getting better and better, they are not distributed in NZ. I'd go along with that. It's irritating to see Molly Haskell in **Ms** praising another Australian film **My Brilliant Career** (dir: Gill Armstrong; starring: Judy Davis) and know that US and UK women have all seen this acclaimed movie long before it takes a 1300-mile trip across the Tasman.

Some of the festival films mentioned above which may reappear on the commercial circuit and on film society programmes are: **Stevie**, **Opening Night**, **The Marriage of Maria Braun**, **Dream of Passion**, and **Mouth to Mouth**.

PS If you must go and see Bergman's hysterically anti-woman **Autumn Sonata** take a little brown paper bag. ■

Sandra Coney

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book review

For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women,
Barbara Ehrenreich and
Deirdre English,
Pluto Press, 1979. \$14.00

For Her Own Good is destined to become a feminist classic. It is written with verve and passion; it is a fascinating social history; and moreover it elaborates a provocative theory about the historical development of relationships between women and men. The authors of *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* and *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* have expanded on their earlier material in an engrossing way.

As Ehrenreich and English see it, before the rise of capitalism and the market economy the old order was patriarchal, in that power was unquestioningly in the hands of men. Nevertheless the old order was more gynocentric than that which supplanted it, because women's skills and experience were indispensable to the running of the society. Women knew the herbs that healed; their knowledge assisted during pregnancy and at childbirth; they sewed, spun, made candles and soap, gardened, took care of domestic animals, made dairy products, butchered, pickled and preserved; in fact, they were central to countless operations involving a heritage of accumulated wisdom.

With the rise of the market economy, work and home became separated, and factory production made many of women's traditional labours redundant. The ethics of the market economy, too, were different from that of the traditional patriarchy. Now it was every man for himself, instead of men working in the close-knit domestic community with its rich interpersonal relationships. "Profits could only be won by some at the price of poverty for others, and there was no room for human affection, generosity or loyalty." All the human needs had to be met in private life, and the home became a sanctuary from the cold world outside. Women became the guardians of all the humane virtues.

In this context two alternative philosophies about the role of women developed, the sexual rationalist and the sexual romantic. The sexual rationalist position, as exemplified by many early feminists and by some more modern feminists such as Betty Friedan, preached equality, their ideal being that men and women should take equal positions in the

market economy. However, the sexual romanticist position triumphed. This view of women as innately different to men, deficient in intellect and energy, but superior in tenderness and nurturance, lasted as long as it did, say Ehrenreich and English, because "it asserted, in however trivialized and sentimental a fashion, the supreme value of love against self-interest, human persons as against dead things. It affirmed the human needs which could not be met in the marketplace — needs for love and intimacy, for nurturance and caring. It upheld the weak, the infant, the elderly, in an economic world which rewarded the victorious and the strong. But the romantic 'solution' was to take all the responsibility for love and caring and place it squarely on the backs of women: individual women, each one in isolation, holding out against the anarchy of the market place. And in this lay the fatal moral compromise of sexual romanticism: it chose not to remake the world, but to demand that women make up for it."

The sexual romanticist ideology was "buttressed by science and propagated by an army of experts". Much of *For Her Own Good* is concerned with documenting the history of this ideology. "Experts" on childbearing, gynaecology, psychiatry, psychology, and domestic science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries told women what their needs were, what their role should be, and how to do the job that they had managed themselves for centuries beforehand. Childbirth was removed from midwives and, in the hands of medical experts, became a "drama of misogyny and greed". Femininity was seen by Victorian doctors as a disease, with sickness being a normal state in women. (The President of the American Gynaecology Society said in 1900: "... many a young life is battered and forever crippled on the breakers of puberty; if it crosses these unharmed and is not dashed to pieces on the rocks of childbirth, it may still ground on the ever-recurring shallows of menstruation, and lastly upon the final bar of the menopause ...").

Psychiatrists and psychologists told women that education could be harmful because "girls and women are unfit to bear the continued labour of mind because of the disqualifications existing in their physiological life". In the psychoanalytic tradition, highly influential from the 1920s to 1950s, women were seen as passive, narcissistic, masochistic and morally inferior by nature. In this view "the path to healthy adult femininity was paved with sacrifice".

Once women were firmly entrapped in their isolated domesticity, the question was: what were they to do with any energy that they might have left over after all their

illnesses? The manufacturer of housework by domestic scientists and efficiency experts helped to fill the gap that had been left when most women's chores had been transferred to the factory. Thus the campaign against "microbes" began "To keep the world clean is one great task for women", exclaimed one enthusiastic domestic scientist. The major household germ carrier was believed to be dust (actually innocuous), and experts never tired of exhorting women to keep cleaning. One experiment purported to show that 3,000 living organisms had been cultivated from a pinpoint of dust. The other great task for women was, of course, the rearing of children. The twentieth century would be called the century of the child, with its emphasis on the importance of scientific methods of rearing future adults correctly. Childcare experts dictated the child's needs — and "the childraising science which developed was a masculinist science, framed at an increasing distance from women and children ... It came to see the mothers not only as the major agents of child development, but also as the major obstacles to it."

By the 1950s and 1960s, experts came to be more and more out of touch with women's aspirations. Various economic and social forces had combined to make a "crack in the picture window" of suburban domesticity. With the new wave of feminism, which has queried traditional accounts of femininity, it has become increasingly clear to many that the experts were not really experts, but were apologists for the status quo. Women are now asking themselves again: What are our needs? What is our nature as women? Is there a place for love and caring within the marketplace, and is it women's responsibility to provide it? "There are no answers left but the most radical ones. We cannot assimilate into a masculinist society without doing violence to our own nature, which is, of course, human nature ... The romantic/rationalist alternative is no longer acceptable: we refuse to remain on the margins of society and we refuse to enter that society on its terms ... The Market, with its financial abstractions, deformed science, and obsession with dead things — must be pushed back to the margins. And the "womanly" values of community and caring must rise to the centre as the only human principles."

Hilary Haines

SAPPHO'S BIRTHDAY

A poetry reading in the Women's
Common Room, Auckland University,
at 8 pm, Friday 12 September.

meet the broadsheet artists

Miriam Cameron



Since the birth of **Broadsheet** I've had commune neurosis, role-playing syndrome, sexist contradictions within myself, gone to China, been arrested at demonstrations, fought court cases, painted a few pictures, written a few articles, worked on a concrete gang, not to mention mortgages, a husband, babies... zee full catastropheeee... In fact, you could say, the system has got me by the ovaries

The role of an artist/poet/writer is to set off the lightning shot between head and heart, of the people with whom she identifies, relates and, above all, suffers with, in the struggle for liberation. The role of an artist is not to reflect the psychosis and neurosis of a bourgeois middle class society. There is a place for bowls of fruit and nude women, but a very small one when you consider we've got 800 million years of evolution to lose at the push of a few buttons. Life's too short to spend it in a studio playing games with one's imagination and searching the shadows of one's anguished soul etc etc... All artists love nature and wonder at the Universe (Beethoven once said he liked trees more than people) but I have decided to put people first — there won't be any nature if we don't resolve human problems. As an artist my aim will be to express and help fight against oppression in third world countries, the torture of political activists, the threat of nuclear war and the NZ issues of racism, sexism, environmental destruction and civil rights. Because the art scene is patronised by the bourgeoisie it is difficult to cover these issues; especially if an artist

is dependent on the sale of their work to make a living. Therefore I don't intend spending many hours on a single oil that is likely to end up on the wall of a trendy Parnell villa. I would rather work on mass-produced political posters.

My future aim is to help start a political poster/coffee bar/bookshop as a centre point of political art and literature. It will be called the Republic of Aotearoa and anyone interested please write to Green Bay Box 80068.

Helen Courtney

Helen Courtney — born Whitianga; often went to Kelston Girls. Belong to Ngati Raukawa, mainly Ngati Pakeha.

Subscribing to **Broadsheet** seemed (and was) the ideal way of keeping in touch with feminist activities as most of my working life has been spent as a shedhand in various shearing gangs around the North Island. It isn't the kind of job to sustain one's intellectual pretensions but there are compensations (which I conveniently don't recall right now). Once I impersonated a prison officer, briefly, at Arohata.

This is my third year at Auckland Uni. This year I started sociology which is really neat — except that my knowledge of history, economics and politics etc is quite limited (practically zero). So my ideas in many areas, including feminism, are "undeveloped" beyond the safe intuition that everyone has a right to enjoy life without being ripped off.



My attempts to draw cartoons are entirely due to **Broadsheet's** existence. Cartoon drawing doesn't require a lot of materials — black ink, pen and paper — though it can prove quite addictive if you're not careful. I would love to see more cartoons by women. As a medium of expression and entertainment it has unlimited potential. If

you like satire, NZ has a wealth of deserving targets and most of these are male — a fortunate coincidence for a feminist cartoonist.

Sally Hollis McLeod



Political puppets for hire

As part of International Women's Day activities in Whakatane, members of the Whakatane Women's Collective produced a consciousness-raising puppet theatre, writing the play and making the puppets themselves. In this article they describe their play, "Everywoman 80".

Although a number of groups of two or three women wrote individual scenes for **Everywoman 80**, it was surprisingly easy to achieve continuity by simply changing a few words once the scenes were put together. The exercise gave us an insight into the possibilities of this kind of collective work. Producing a play would have been a major task for any of us individually, but nobody felt intimidated at the thought of having to write a scene as part of a group.

The five puppets, however, were made by the same person, which ensured the same style. She worked mostly with recycled items, such as brown paper bags for the heads.

Everywoman 80 is not the work of professional dramatists, nor do people working the puppets require previous experience. Each scene is designed to be followed by a discussion. The plot raises questions on subjects like women's lack of confidence, child care, attitudes of employers, family arrangements around the decision to take a paid job. The play portrays a woman encountering and overcoming these difficulties when she decides to work outside the house.

The characters are "ordinary" people and the problems aired are familiar. The female characters are supportive of one another and show understanding.

The main character gains experience, confidence and maturity through motherhood, friends and support groups. Her achievements are not miraculous. She seems to be saying that the road is difficult, but within the reach of an average woman. She provides a possible model for women who are beginning to question society and themselves. **Everywoman** is portrayed as making a start, rather than as a confirmed revolutionary. We can only guess where she will go from there.

The play was not meant for an audience which has analysed feminist theory in depth, but for the general public. It would be useful for high school students, play centre, trade union meetings and other groups.

The play and puppets are available to women and groups for a hiring fee of \$10.

Whakatane Women's Collective,
P.O. Box 3049, Ohope, Bay of Plenty.

Waitakere ♀

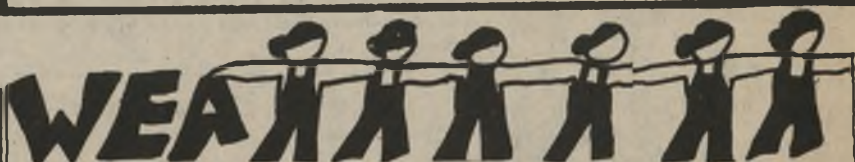
Feminists

meet every 2nd and 4th Thursdays at the
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10 weekly sessions. Fee: \$7

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COMMENCING DATE:

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CONVENOR:

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8 weekly sessions Fee: \$5

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Lynfield Community Hall,

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DATE:

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\$5 (includes tea/coffee) Bring a lunch to share.

Enrolments close 10 October (Limit of 30)



HOGWASH

Send your contributions for the Hogwash pages to Broadsheet, PO Box 5799, Auckland.

Modern Ms misses out

HAMILTON, Today. — The modern Ms will miss out on the Miss New Zealand contest this year.

A new rule introduced for the 1980 national beauty contest bars girls who usually use the prefix Ms before their names.

As in previous years, contestants must never have been married or given birth.

SILVANA SUAREZ, 21, the reigning Miss World, has been accused of being fat. Contest organiser Julia Morley said she would not dream of asking Silvana to pose in the costumes this year's contestants will wear. "She's too fat."

Sent by Elizabeth Sewell
AUCKLAND STAR
13/6/80

DADS!

Do you suffer from culinary thrombosis?

[A clot in the kitchen]

Yes!

Then get out of doing the dishes and buy a freshly cooked meal from

COLLEGE HILL TAKEAWAYS
Opposite Boys College, Waimea Rd

Sent by J. P. McCulloch NELSON EVENING MAIL 26/5/80

An eyeful

But The Bionic Woman has got one thing going for it — there are few better looking women on television than Lindsay Wagner herself.

Even when the script sags lower than a braless woman's libber, she's still nice just to stare at.

Although marriage is off, the writers keep her romance going with the Six Million Dollar Man. He comes in handy for guest appearances when the ratings dip.

And that should be enough to make adult males in the audience swell up and turn green.

Sent by Victoria Jones SUNDAY NEWS 18/5/80

Sent by Carol Rennell WEEKEND STAR 22/3/80



"Son, it's time for you to learn the three 'R's — raid, robbery and rape."

LOVE THAT MAN

Consider yourself fortunate if your man buries his head in "The Press" at breakfast — chances are he'll leave his paper at home when he goes to work and there's so much of it written specially for you. Maybe he is shrewd enough to know that through you those pages can benefit him. Whatever the score, love the man, he knows that you, and he and "The Press" belong to each other.



Sent by Kathy Light THE PRESS 23/11/79

Classified Ads

THE WOMEN'S GALLERY 26 Harris St, WELLINGTON.

Women and Violence Multimedia Show. 28th October — 6th December. Graphics, workshops, performance, etc. Work, participation welcome. Write:

The Women's Gallery
Box 9600,
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WOMEN IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION WELLINGTON WORKING WOMENS CHARTER SEMINAR

DATE: Saturday 27 September 1980

TIME: 9.00am-4.00pm

VENUE: Wellington Teachers College

SPEAKERS: Sonja Davies
Mary Garlick
Ros Noonan
Judy Whitcombe
Mary Sinclair

WORKSHOPS: Equal Opportunity
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Ph. Chch 892-862 evenings

Pat Wilkinson

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ALRANZ, PO Box 47-169, Ponsonby.
Broadsheet, PO Box 5799, Wellesley St. Ph. 794-751.
Council for the Single Mother and her Child, PO Box 47-090, Ponsonby. Ph. 760-476.
Feminists for the Environment, C/- Kathleen Ryan, Ph 868-399, Juliet Batten, Ph 696-123.
Feminist Lawyers (Nationwide), C/- Linda Daly-Peoples, Ph. 794-104.
Feminist Teachers, P.O. Box 47-095, Auckland.
International Feminist Network Co-ordinator, 663B Te Atatu Rd, Auckland, 8. Ph 46629.
Halfway House, PO Box 47-157, Ponsonby. Ph. 767-635.
Jigsaw, PO Box 9228, Newmarket. Ph. 543-460.
Media Women, C/- Vanya Hogg, 64 Clarence St, Ak.2.
NOW, P.O. Box 2946, Auckland.
NOW, Eastern Suburbs, C/- Pat Dury, 14 Kesteven Ave, Glendowie, 5.
SOS, PO Box 47-090, Auckland. Ph. 766-386.
WEL, 33 Ferryhill Rd, Auckland 3.
Women's Community Video, c/o 30 Bellwood Ave, Ak.3.
Women's Health Centre, 63 Ponsonby Rd, Ph 764-506.
WONAAC, PO Box 68-388. Ph. 764-027.
Working Women's Council, PO Box 68-480. Ph. 763-098.

BAY OF ISLANDS

WEL, C/- P. M. Halkett, Guys Rd, Kaikohe.

CHRISTCHURCH

ALRANZ, PO Box 13-129, Armagh St.
Christchurch Rape Crisis Group, Doreen Green, Ph. 858-088 (home), 62-116 (work).
NOW, PO Box 2720, Ph. 881-030.
SOS, Box 884, Ph. 796-970.
University Womens Group, Student Union Building, Private Bag, Christchurch.
WEL, PO Box 67, Christchurch.
Women's Refuge Centre, PO Box 7299, Ph. 69-187.
Women's Union, PO Box 2258, Christchurch.
WONAAC, 154 Colombo St, Ph. 35-254.
Working Women's Council, C/- Kirsty Campbell, PO Box 13206 Armagh, Ph. 68-262.

DUNEDIN

ALRANZ, PO Box 1289, Dunedin.
Community Childcare Centre and Family Day Care Programme, 97 Forth St, Dunedin.
HERA (support group for gay women), PO Box 11-009, Musselburgh, Dunedin.
Dunedin Collective for Women, PO Box 446, Ph. C/- Daybreak Bookshop, Ph. 775-899.
Dunedin Women's Refuge, P.O. Box 8044, Ph 771-229.
SOS PO Box 446. Ph 775-502 or 36-284 after hours.
WONAAC, PO Box 446, Ph 775-502.
Working Women's Alliance, 52 Montague St, Dunedin.
Working Women's Council, C/- Ann Rodger, Ph. 777-275.

GISBORNE

Lesbian Women's Group, PO Box 1398, Ph. 4285.
NOW, 3 Dickson St, Gisborne.
SOS, 32 Wairere Rd, Box 1398. Ph. 4285.
WEL, 122 Fox St, Gisborne.
Working Women's Council, C/- Benny Kape, Childers Rd, Ph. 82-640.

GORE

Working Women's Council, C/- Sue Crawford, 1 Viking Place, Gore, Ph. 5370.

GREYMOOUTH

ALRANZ, PO Box 421, Greymouth.
WEL, 7 Domain Tce, Karoro, Greymouth.

HAMILTON

Cambridge Feminist Group, C/- Wendy Ennis, 33 Shakespeare Rd, Cambridge.
Cambridge Feminists, 42 Queen St, Ph. 4350, 5998.
Hamilton Feminists, PO Box 751, Ph. 83-381.
Hamilton Feminist Teachers, C/- Shirley Smith, 92 McFarlane St, Hamilton. Ph. 67-491.
Hamilton Women's Centre, PO Box 7025, Claudelands, Hamilton.
NZ Women's Health Network Newsletter, C/- Sarah Calvert, 155 Galloway St, Hamilton.
SOS, 155 Galloway St. Ph. 82-789.
WEL, PO Box 9581, Hamilton North.
Women's Studies Assn, PO Box 13-023 Waikato University.
Working Women's Council, C/- Barbara Ware, P.O. Box 80 Hamilton.

HUNTLY

Huntly Women's Group, C/o Judy Wilson, River Rd, Huntly.

INVERCARGILL

SOS, Marama North Ave, Otarara R.D.9. Ph. 86-750.
WEL, PO Box 676, Invercargill.

LOWER HUTT

Hutt Valley Feminists, 3 Taka Grove, Normandale, Lower Hutt.
Media Women, 4 Godley St, Lower Hutt.

MARLBOROUGH/BLENHEIM

NOW, PO Box 607 Blenheim.
SOS, 13 Linton St, Box 607. Ph. 87-561.
Women's Refuge, C/- NOW, PO Box 607 Blenheim, Ph. 84-099.
WONAAC, 1A Stuart St, Blenheim.

MASTERTON

WEL, PO Box 201, Masterton.

NAPIER/HASTINGS

SOS, 28 Bristol St, Napier. Ph. 438-484; 600 Gordon St, Hastings. Ph. 68-642.
Women's Electoral Lobby, PO Box 90, Taradale.

NELSON/MOTUEKA/GOLDEN BAY

ALRANZ, PO Box 476, Nelson.
Onekaka Feminist Front, C/- Val Chapel, Onekaka, RD2 Takaka.
SOS, 5 Victoria Heights Ph 83-025.
WEL, PO Box 145, Motueka.

WEL, C/- Patsi McGrath, Todds Valley, Nelson RD1.
Women's Emergency Centre, Ph. 88-605.

Working Women's Alliance, 15 Mt Pleasant Ave, Ph. 88-061.

Working Women's Council, C/- Wynnis Beveridge, 587 Rocks Rd, Nelson, Ph. 85-333.

WIN, Newsletter of the Women's Movement in Nelson, C/- Community Education, Community House, Trafalgar Square, Nelson.

NEW PLYMOUTH

ALRANZ, PO Box 72, New Plymouth, Ph. 79-304.
SOS, 9 Te Mara Place. Ph. 84-937.
WEL, 42 Pendarves St, New Plymouth. Ph. 88-549.
Women's Action Group, PO Box 4030, Ph. 80-168, 83-354.
Women's Centre, 66 Brougham St, New Plymouth, Ph. 79-532.

PALMERSTON NORTH

ALRANZ, PO Box 639, P.N.
P.N. Women's Liberation, 38 Kimberley Grove, P.N.
SOS, 93 Monrad St, P.N. Ph. 75-460.
P.N. Women's Centre, 53 George St, PO Box 1608, P.N.
WEL (Manawatu), PO Box 200, P.N.
WEL (Kapiti), PO Box 66, Waikanae.
WEL (Levin), 68a Queen St, Levin, Ph. 89-713.
Women's Health Group, PO Box 1608, P.N. Ph. 74-643.

PORIRUA

WEL, C/- Raroa Place, Pukerua Bay.

ROTORUA

SOS, Box 4036. Ph. 88-763.
WEL, PO Box 2011, Rotorua.
Women's Resource and Education Collective.
Alyn Thompson, 1/23 Grey St, Rotorua. Ph. 85-407 or KHA 597.

TAUPO

SOS, 8 Taupo View Rd.

TAURANGA

SOS, 20 Oban Rd, Box 368. Ph. 89-698.
WEL, 103 Grange Rd, Tauranga, Ph. 63-260.
Tauranga Women's Centre, PO Box 368, Tauranga; 42 Grey St, (in Govt. Life Bldg). Ph. 83-530.

TE AWAMUTU

Te Awamutu Feminists, 111 Hazelmere Cres, Ph. 4320, C/o Res. 23 Tokanui Hospital, Private Bag, TA. Ph. 7894.

TOKOROA

ALRANZ, PO Box 380, Tokoroa.
WEL, PO Box 699, Tokoroa.

UPPER HUTT

NOW, 18 Cruikshank Rd, Upper Hutt.
Upper Hutt Feminists, 9 Thackerey St, Ph. 84-614.

WANGANUI

WONAAC, 56 Parsons St, Wanganui. Ph. 42-291, 44-939.

WHAKATANE

SOS, Box 3049, Ohope Beach. Ph. 757 or 348 Ohope.
Whakatane Women's Collective, PO Box 3049, Ohope.
Whakatane Women's Health Group, 281 Pohutukawa Ave, Ohope. Ph. Whakatane 7850, Ohope 550.

WHANGAREI

Gay Women's Group, PO Box 5083, Whangarei.
NOW and WEL, PO Box 4294, Kamo, Whangarei.

WELLINGTON

Abortion Rights Committee, PO Box 12-076, WN Nth.
ALRANZ, PO Box 19-052, Wellington, Ph. 758-450.
Circle Magazine, PO Box 427, Wellington.
Hecate Women's Health Collective, 6 Boulcott St (rm 14), PO Box 11-675, Wellington, Ph. 721-804.
Herstory Press, PO Box 3871, Wellington, Ph. 847-583.
Kidsarus 2, PO Box 9600, Wellington.
NZ Working Women's Council, PO Box 27-215, WN.
Rape Crisis Centre, P.O. Box 2059, GPO Wellington, Ph 898-288.
Society for Research on Women in NZ Inc., PO Box 13-078 Johnsonville.
SOS, Box 28-099. Ph. 856-670.
WEL, PO Box 11-285, Wellington, Ph. 739-321.
Wellington Feminist Collective, PO Box 3871, WN.
Wellington Lesbians, PO Box 427, WN, Ph. 851-540.
Wellington Women's Refuge, PO Box 9792 Courtenay Place, Ph. 728-222.
Wellington Women's Resource Centre, 6 Boulcott St (rm 13, 22), Ph. 721-970.
WISE (Women In Schools in Education), PO Box 11-724, Wellington.
WONAAC, PO Box 2669, Ph. 877-703, 848-541.
Working Women's Alliance, PO Box 9012, Wellington.
Working Women's Alliance, North City Branch, 6 Halswell St, Thorndon, Wellington 1.
Working Womens Alliance, South-East Wellington Branch, 62 Waripori St, Berhampore, Wellington 2.
Working Women's Council, C/- Sharon Rogers, 7 Koromiko Rd, Highbury, Ph. 847-424.
Working Women's Council (National Office), PO Box 27-215, Upper Willis St, Wellington.
Values Women's Network, Ph. 797-611.

Women's Action Group, C/- Victoria University.
Women's Gallery, 26 Harris St, Box 9600.

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81 NOV 1980

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