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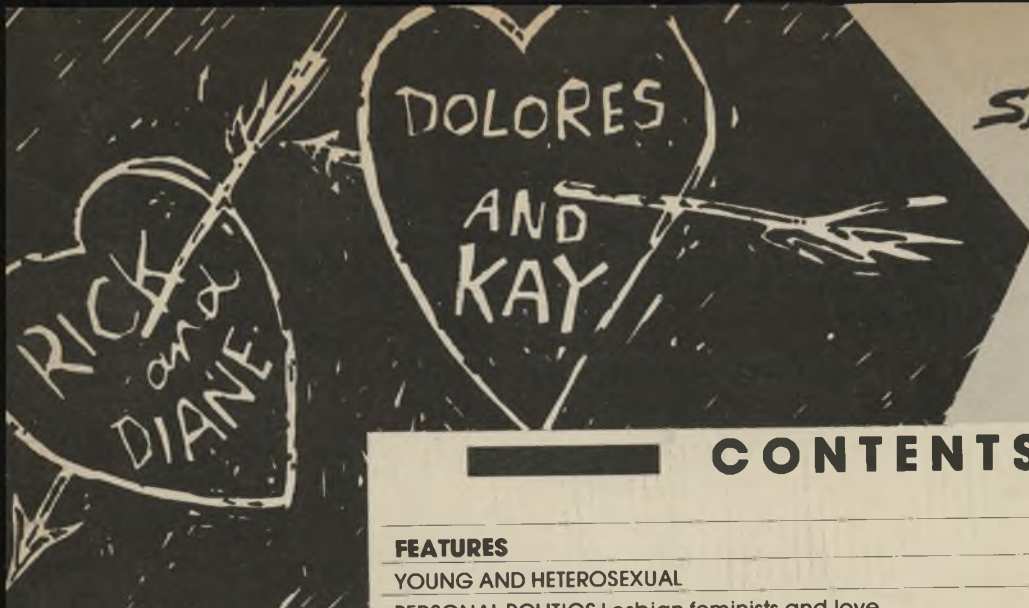
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SEX AND LOVE
PAGE 18...

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THESE WOMEN HELPED AROUND BROADSHEET THIS MONTH: Hazel Sargeant, Margaret Fitzgibbon, Susan and Alison Grimsdell, Jess Hawk Oakenstar and the enveloping women.

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LETTERS



MINISTRY REPLIES

Dear Broadsheet

I am writing to respond to Gillian Marie's letter in the July issue regarding the apparent omission of lesbians on the Ministry of Women's Affairs staff.

As the *Broadsheet* editors are aware, the original article on the Ministry was drafted well before all the Ministry staff were selected. The Ministry does have lesbians on its staff but at the time the article went to print, those women had either not been appointed or were not yet working at the Ministry and hence were not available for consultation about what personal information would be supplied about them.

We believe that the public disclosure of any lesbian's sexuality is a matter for her alone. While we hope that the lesbian women on the Ministry staff feel that their immediate working environment is a safe one, we are also aware that their work will sometimes involve their operating in settings which are at best non-accepting and at worst positively hostile.

Mary O'Regan

Secretary for Women's Affairs.

MAN IN CHARGE

Dear Broadsheet,

I enclose a copy of an open letter I have sent to the Chancellor of Otago University. I hope you will publish it and so encourage more women to express their outrage at this appointment.

Dear Madam/Sir,

As a graduate of the Home Science School, I wish to register my strong protest at the appointment of a man as head of the School. There can be no argument that the best possible person should be appointed but that person *cannot* be a man for the following reasons:

(a) It is an obviously poor example for a predominantly female student body to have a man in charge. It reinforces the stereotypical role model of men in controlling positions.

(b) There is a very clear mes-

sage to the students, staff and public that there is not a woman good enough for the top position. This is grossly insulting and plain nonsense since there are thousands of female Home Science graduates, both in New Zealand and abroad.

(c) A man cannot by definition have the female perspective and experience necessary when dealing with female students in a subject area which is still predominantly the concern of women. The Home Science School was one of the few institutions which treated seriously traditional female skills and encouraged the systematic development, investigation and management of those skills to be shared with the wider community.

(d) A university should be seen to keep pace with changing social attitudes. Affirmative action for women has been widely accepted and successfully applied. This appointment is an example of regressive action and has been greeted with widespread disapproval. I call on the University Council to give a public explanation of this incomprehensible decision.

Maria I Radić

Auckland.

FEMINIST NURSES

Dear Broadsheet,

The idea of a feminist nurses group has been floated. It is hoped to have a workshop on this at the next Womens Studies Association conference in New Plymouth in August.

Nurses who are interested or would like to make enquiries write to Jo Kemp, Staff Residence, North Shore Hospital, Shakespeare Rd, Milford, Auckland 9.

Jo Kemp.

Auckland

CLEANING UP

Dear Broadsheet,

Some women are saying rather loudly, lately, that they don't feel guilty about getting another woman in to clean their house. Is this because each makes sure that the

woman gets paid at an hourly rate equal to that of the adult whose labour she replaces? Or what? One wonders.

Nicky Negrescu

Nelson

MOVING WOMEN

Dear Broadsheet,

We suggest that feminist women set up an alternative "Women on the Move" exhibition (maybe "women who have moved") at a co-ordinated date around NZ. Just tossing the idea in! South Island women write to: Broadsheet South, P.O. Box 884, Christchurch.

Noreen Penny.

Christchurch

MISCARRIAGE

Dear Broadsheet,

I am writing about the miscarriage questionnaire published in April 1985. I am very interested to hear of any progress to date on the book, *Coping with Miscarriage* mentioned in the questionnaire.

I have recently undergone testing for a radical new immunological treatment for miscarriage. (I have had four.) This treatment has been used at St Mary's Hospital, London with a high success rate on women where no cause has been found for miscarriage. Unfortunately the tests showed I was not a candidate for this treatment, but I would encourage other women suffering the same problem to approach your GP or specialist. I researched this problem myself at the Otago Medical Library. The best article to read in more depth is in *The Lancet*, 27 April 1985 (can be interloaned through your public library) pp 941-943.

It took approximately six months from seeing my GP (who was quite helpful) to convince the local specialist that this treatment would be worth a go, if applicable. What I'm saying is, if all other tests have shown nothing, hassle for this treatment. It can be done in New Zealand, the big problem, as always, is lack of money. I offered to pay the costs in-

volved myself — a price of \$500 was mentioned, a small price to pay for the chance of a successful pregnancy.

If copying with miscarriage is still on the drawing board. I can recommend *Miscarriage* by Ann Oakley, Ann McPherson and Helen Roberts, published by Fontana, in the meantime.

Kate Ryan

Dunedin.

COUNSELLING SERVICE THAT ISN'T

Dear Editor,

Recently I was in contact with the Pregnancy Counselling Service. I would like to warn women about this organisation.

I rang up seeking advice about the possibility of being pregnant. I was given the reply "Girls like you must learn when to say no." I took this as an insult and promptly explained that I decide when and who I want to sleep with and do not feel guilty for doing so. I asked about the morning after pill and the woman told me to stay right away from any kind of pill, that they were dangerous and was reluctant to talk about it any further. The woman assured me that the counselling service would support me through my pregnancy, with no mention of abortion.

This is obviously a fundamentalist, conservative organisation who believe in suppressing important information, presenting carrying on with the pregnancy as the only alternative.

I am concerned for women who are perhaps unaware of this options-biased counselling service.

Concerned

Campbells Bay.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITY

Dear Broadsheet,

It was very heartening to see your articles on disabled womyn (*Broadsheet* May issue). Judy Orme is a very tenacious person in many respects. She came to Gisborne in May 1985 to take part in a

LETTERS POLICY

Broadsheet does not necessarily endorse or agree with views expressed in letters. We have printed letters that contain racist and other attitudes that we disagree with because we believe the expression of these ideas should not be subject to our censorship but put out front where they can be challenged. Nearly all the letters we are sent get published. Those that are not published in full are considered by the whole collective and edited in consultation with the writer. We do not publish personal attacks. Letters from men are published only when they correct matters of fact. We particularly welcome letters about the content of the magazine.

riding holiday organised by the Crippled Children Society and Riding for the Disabled. Judy was determined to take part in every aspect of what was a rigorous program. I found her humour and warmth a great help to me throughout that week.

Disabled womyn have a double disadvantage in society, they have the disadvantage of being a womyn, and so become non-sexual beings because of their disablement and community attitudes. An example of this attitude was when a disabled womyn had a child here last year.

The womyn in question, whilst in hospital, was unable to leave her bed without assistance, and was in a room that anyone could walk into at any time. Nothing like being trapped somewhere, unable to get away from the personal insults of those in a position of power.

It has been a battle to get home-help assistance for this womyn, who was originally granted home-help only while breastfeeding. The issue will be reviewed in September and we hope to have her home-help extended.

Most of the decision making on this case was done by men in positions of power. It seems to us that the attitudes of the medical and social support systems leave a lot to be desired, and have no idea of how to deal with disabled mothers.

Simply because if you are disabled and a womyn you don't have children; I guess you're not heterosexual either.

Strong role models are needed for disabled womyn and I congratulate your magazine on its involvement

in this area.

Pat Butler
Social Worker, Crippled
Children Society (Inc).
Auckland.

COMBING UNIONS WON'T HELP WOMEN

Dear Broadsheet,

The report on the FOL conference in the last issue included a couple of assertions about the combining of the Federation of Labour (FOL) and Combined State Unions (CSU) that I find astounding.

Better provisions in awards are not the result of affiliations, but of negotiations. We'll have to work harder than that!

Women aren't a major voice in the FOL, and aren't a major voice in the CSU, and the equation goes that they won't be a major voice in the CTU. And we'll have to work harder at that. P.S. We oppose the combination.

Lana LeQuesne,
Organiser,
Canterbury, Westland, Nelson
and Marlborough Clothing and
Related Trades Industrial
Union of Workers.

NOW CONFERENCE

Dear Broadsheet,
I have just returned to the Great Peace March, which is now in North Platte, Nebraska, after four days spent in Denver, Colorado at the National Organisation of Women's (NOW) 20th national conference.

We went with guest status, to address the conference, run a workshop, have a table in the exhibits area, and with freedom to attend all workshop and plenary sessions (without voting rights).

At our table we maintained a high visibility on New Zealand's anti-nuclear position and received overwhelming support from all we spoke to. Even though this is International Year of Peace, from reading conference material and the programme, you would not have guessed it. No mention, no provision. When we were able to address the final plenary session, we made a strong plea for NOW to make a commitment to working for nuclear disarmament.

The raging issue at conference was pornography. United in their opposition to it but very divided on how to combat it. Two camps were evident. The educate and change people's

attitudes faction, versus the legislate to eradicate faction. Arguments were persuasively mounted from both groups with the legislate group coming out on top.

When I saw Kay Weaver's video *One Fine Day*, which was screened at the final session, tears came to my eyes. Shot after shot of fine strong women, known and unknown, who have created our herstory. So very moving. Weaver sang for us — as did Ronnie Gilbert, soon to do an Australian tour with two days in New Zealand. DON'T MISS. In sisterhood,
Ann MacFarlane
On the peace march.

THE LADY IS A WOMAN

Dear Broadsheet,
In the effort to encourage my daughter to use non-sexist language, I try to avoid the use of the word "girl" except as appropriate with females younger than the usual age of menarche (say about 12 years). Females older than that I call "women" though this can easily be modified "old woman", "young woman."

This can sometimes be dicey e.g. when my three year old child makes a loud comment about an "old woman" on the bus. Nonetheless, I feel its important, and try to ignore the possibility that occasionally someone may be offended. As Miller and Swift point out in their *"Handbook of non-sexist writing."* (Women's Press, 1981) "... woman is the most useful all-round word for adult female people." "Lady" very often has the connotations of a put-down. It is frequently still used in a kind of false politeness to refer to women workers in low-paid service jobs such as tea-makers and shop assistants, or to indicate the speaker thinks the woman is unimportant.

I look to feminist women to support the use of non-sexist language, so it is annoying to find *Broadsheet* using the term "old lady" in the caption to a poem published with Julia Millen's excellent article on "Looking after Mother" (*Broadsheet*, June 1986 p.28). Identifying the author of this poem as an "old lady" was doubly inappropriate as the



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whole thrust of the piece was to strongly assert the dignity and humanity of the woman's spirit.

I hope when *Broadsheet* decides on criteria about when to use "girl" that you throw "lady" out, once and for all.

Marie Russell
Wellington.

(Ed note: See April issue p. 3 for *Broadsheet* policy on "girl".)

MONEY PROBLEMS

Dear *Broadsheet*,
I have been reading *Broadsheet* for just over one year now, cover to cover. I really love reading about the issues facing women and the different views presented. But I have this problem in that I can't afford to buy *Broadsheet* anymore.

I don't buy any other magazines, usually because of the price, so it becomes a big thing letting myself fork out \$3 for this magazine. As your prices have been hiked up due to prices of materials going up, it's all very acceptable. But my dole doesn't allow for this. I'm finding that things around me have skyrocketed to abominable prices. Yet while I'm a good economist when it comes down to making ends meet, I still can't afford to fork out \$3 for my one magazine. So what I do (because I enjoy reading *Broadsheet* and it being my only source of 'up to date' feminist feelings) is I steal my copy. I don't feel good

about it but I don't let it bother me.

There is bound to be other women in the same dilemma. I don't know how they cope. Maybe they only get to skim read the magazine in a busy shop. Something, that I think would be beneficial to people on tight incomes (like benefits) would be to offer the magazine at a lesser price to beneficiaries. Believe it or not, I'm a fairly honest person and I would gladly give what little I could to support this magazine. So how about it? Lauren

(Ed note: Please send us your address, Lauren. We have women who will pay a sub for women who cannot afford to buy the magazine. We do offer a small sub. reduction for some groups, including beneficiaries — see inside front cover.)

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--Marilyn Frye, author of
The Politics of Reality

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FRONTING UP

WHERE WE ARE

The magazine and the bookshop are at 485 Karangahape Rd, Auckland. We are open from 10am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday and Thursdays to 8 o'clock. Saturday morning opening is from 10 to 1. The magazine's phone number is 794-751 and the bookshop's is 398-895. Our box number is 68-026, Newton, Auckland.

DEADLINES

Deadline for the October issue

is 24 August, and for the November issue is 24 September.

ADVERTISING

Our advertising rates are very competitive. Display ads are \$80 a quarter page, \$160 a half page, \$320 a full page, inside covers more, and more for all ads that are not camera ready. Special rates for regular advertisers on request.

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We welcome the opportunity to show what we stock in the bookshop, and of course it also helps us. If you are having a seminar, workshop or meeting, please get in touch with us.

BACK ISSUES

Bundles of back issues up to December 1983 are available in the bookshop for \$30. Complete sets of available back issues are \$60. It's a solid cubic foot of feminist herstory and ideas.

NEW SECTION

We are planning to run an occasional page of positive gains

made by feminists, as an alternative to Hogwash and in response to comments that a lot of what we print is discouraging. Send in your contributions.

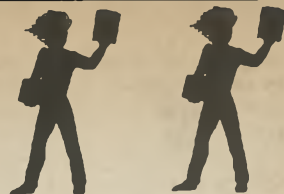
NEW COLLECTIVE MEMBER

We welcome Shirley Tamihana to the collective. Shirley was a stalwart during our last move, (and we're sure she's looking forward to lugging the big table downstairs again). It's good to have you with us, Shirley.

STUFFING

Stuffing of the October issue will be on 27 September. Join us for a shared lunch and good company and help get the magazine ready for posting.

BEHIND THE NEWS



TE HUI ORANGA

Te Hui Oranga O Te Moana Nui A Kiwa — a hui to discuss Pacific concerns was held at Hoani Waititi Marae in West Auckland, from 27-29 June. The first Te Hui Oranga was held in Auckland in 1982, bringing together over 100 people from throughout the country, with five indigenous people from overseas as guests. Two hui were held in 1984, one in Auckland and another in Christchurch. Last year the programme was broadened and seven overseas visitors took part in a six week national exposure programme.

The hui was organised by

the Pacific Peoples Anti-Nuclear Action Committee (PPANAC), Maori organisation based in South Auckland, and supported by some Pakeha organisations and individuals involved with the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement.

Until its office in Hawai'i closed a year ago, the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) was the co-ordinating and communications networking centre for the NFIP movement. A week before Te Hui Oranga, the seven members of the PCRC steering committee, representing different Pacific and Pacific rim

countries, met in Te Kao in Northland. Their decisions were shared at the hui by Hilda Halkyard-Harawira, the representative for the Aotearoa/Australia region.

Speakers at this year's hui included Philippine Sister Aida Vilarquez, a PCRC steering committee member; Filipino activist Joy Belazo, representing the No-Nukes coalition and the anti-bases campaign; and Kanak activist Susanna Ounei. Tame Iti of Tuhoe spoke and showed a video about the occupation of the sacred mountain of Tairarhia in the Bay of Plenty, to stop Tasman Pulp and Paper Com-

pany from planting pines there.

Trade unionist Nick Tangaroa spoke about the Pacific Trade Union Forum and the need for it to support independence movements in the Pacific, as well as for indigenous people to have an equal share in organising and decision making within the forum. Rainbow Warrior crew member Martine Gotje talked about the evacuation of the people of Rongelap from their island home, irradiated in the 1950s by US nuclear testing, to a new home on Mejato in Kwajalein atoll.

With between 30 and 40



Photo: Gil Hanly

Hilda Halkyard-Harawira reporting from the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre steering committee, Hoani Waititi marae.

people involved over the whole weekend there were fewer people at the hui than in other years. Joan MacDonald, who represented Auckland Peace Forum and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and was involved with the planning, says that for many Pakeha NFIP supporters the weekend coincided with other events like the Peace Movement Aotearoa (PMA) meeting and the annual Peace Foundation lecture. The actual date of the hui had needed to be rescheduled a few times, which led to some confusion.

Although energy for support seemed low on the weekend, Joan thinks interest in Pacific issues has grown over the last few years. "If we have specific issues I think the peace movement will respond. The action alerts for Belau, for example, about US attempts to force a Claytons independence on Belau, complete with nuclear bases, in return for aid."

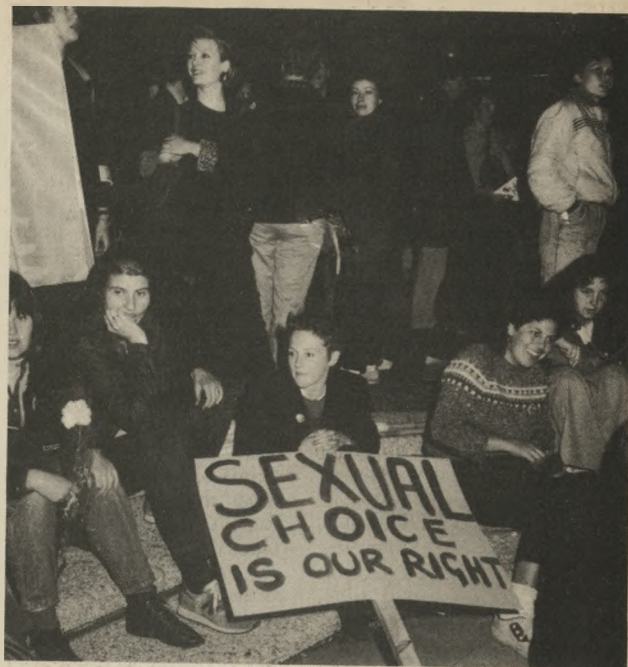
The NFIP perspective is slowly being picked up by PMA and a grant of over \$2,000 has been made by the national International Year of Peace committee to Te Hui Oranga, she added.

Robyne Hamilton, who also actively supports NFIP issues in Auckland, says that issues related to a "nuclear free" Pacific — like the nuclear free legislation in this country, French testing at Moruroa and waste dumping in the Marianas — are being taken on board by Pakeha, but she does not think that the Pakeha peace movement has begun to address issues of independence for indigenous people in the Pacific; particularly the issue of land for Maori people in this country.

Decisions made by the PCRC steering committee will mean closer links for New Zealand and the NFIP movement. The functions of the Hawai'i-based PCRC office are being transferred to different countries, and locations being considered at present are: a general NFIP co-ordinator and a fundraiser in New Zealand; a campaigns co-ordinator in Fiji; the Pacific Bulletin will be produced by Australia or the Philippines and a resource/information distribution centre will remain in Hawai'i or go to Fiji. It's envisaged that these positions will be independent of the local movement. □

Celine Kearney

AT LAST



Women wait before a rally in support of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, this one in Auckland's Aotea square. Thousands of people deserve credit for the decriminalisation of gay male sexuality, a major victory despite the loss of the human rights amendment.

Photo: Gil Hanly

ABORTION INTERFERENCE IN SOUTH ISLAND

Pat Rosier compiled this report on recent events on the West Coast from WONAAC and ALRANZ newsletters.

Women's National Abortion Action Committee (WONAAC) and the Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand (ALRANZ) have both re-formed on the West Coast of the South Island following the West Coast Hospital Board's (WCHB) rescinding of a service they had just approved. It went like this: 28 August '85: In the confidential section of the WCHB meeting the go-ahead was given to Dr Weston (medical superintendent) to arrange to have an abortion service available on the West Coast. 23 April '86: Again in the confidential section, final details of

the service were announced to the board: the service would cost around \$14,000 per year; members of the social work department would provide the counselling; as the two full time obstetricians and gynaecologists employed by the board were not prepared to do the work, arrangements were made for two suitably qualified doctors to travel from Christchurch to provide certification and perform approved abortions at Grey Hospital on one day each fortnight, commencing 23 May. Three board members (Mrs Cowie, Mr Jennings, Mr Nolan) recorded their votes against the service

being provided. Local doctors were advised of the decision and of the procedures to be followed. Then a statement was made to the news media advising the public of the service.

13 May '86: Mr Walton, President of the Greymouth branch of SPUC, wrote to the WCHB requesting it to receive a deputation.

26 May '86: Arrangements were made with the chief executive to receive a deputation of women supporting the WCHB's decision to set up the service.

26 May '86: WCHB's meeting agenda includes 117 letters,

41 for and 76 against an abortion service, and a notice of motion from Westport representative, Mr Benjamin, requesting the board to reverse its 23 April decision. Deputations from both SPUC and ALRANZ spoke to the meeting. The ALRANZ women presented a petition with over 130 signatures.

They argued for a service on the grounds that: it is needed (when Westport women could use the Christchurch service about three a week did); the rich will be able to spend \$1000 and go to Auckland, the poor will have to cheat to use facilities in Christchurch or Wellington as the hospitals there won't take women from outside their hospital board areas; and forcing women to have unwanted children creates social problems. They also pointed out that, as explained by Janet Sceats in her book *Induced Abortion*, the provision of an abortion facility does not increase the abortion rate, and the reduction in the birth rate is because of the reduction in the conception rate.

The question of the \$14,000 cost to run the service became a major discussion point: "When the Board is expected to make cut-backs in all areas, such as closing of maternity services, hospitals and hospital wards, why are we providing a new service?" Dr Weston, in his well-reasoned explanation for the service, pointed out that the money represented only one twentieth of one percent of the board's budget.

The vote to retain the (promised) service was lost seven to four. Two board members who were not present would have voted for it. WONAAC in Wellington went into action at the political level. They wrote to Michael Bassett, Minister of Health, to try to get him to invoke S3 of the Hospitals Act and direct the WCHB to re-establish its abortion service, as the board's action was in breach of its duty under the act. His reply was predictable; he would not intervene, it was not his role to over-rule the board. "I believe that local hospital boards must determine their services — that is why we have hospital boards" he said. He "hoped other hospital boards would take note not to announce plans rashly and raise people's hopes". After various other lobbying, WONAAC organised a protest at parliament buildings.

Since the passing of the Contraception Sterilization and Abortion Act in 1977, local rules have applied to grounds for abortion and services. It's a national scandal from which politicians (especially justice ministers) shield their eyes. If cornered, they

brandish the Abortion Supervisory Committee as the fall guy and latterly, the Minister of Women's Affairs. The central government is responsible for health services; it is misleading to direct all the blame for lack of abortion services at the Abortion Supervisory Committee, although they have failed to either get services or pressure the government into supplying them. Hospital Boards get the money and the guidelines from central government. Labour and National are both committed to equitable health services; Labour also promised publicly funded abortion and counselling services on an equitable basis throughout the country.

Two women on the West Coast received certificates for legal abortions in May. When the WCHB rescinded the services they had promised (without reference to their duties under the hospitals act) no arrangements were made for the two women. WONAAC asked the Minister of Health to intervene. He refused; his press statement referred to the Supervisory Committee as having the responsibility. (But what powers?). A Hospitals Amendment Act, passed on 5 June, coming into effect on 1 August, will allow boards to cease to supply particular services. Does this mean Jane Citizen can no longer look to the government to ensure she gets her appendix out locally? We don't know, but if so, then Labour has got away with scrapping the public health system without a voice of protest.

Following receipt of a letter

from Dr Malpress, medical officer of health for Christchurch, and other new material, the WCHB decided in June to discuss the issue again in three months. Suggestions for women who might seek abortions in the area in the meantime were not reported.

If the West Coast women can get services reinstated, no other hospital board will be keen to buy a fight. Already sufficient protest has been generated to persuade the board to review their decision and complain about it becoming an election issue. Coast women need help. It's a big area and a fairly closed community. They need money for publicity, to assist women to travel and to fight the hospital board elections. Send donations to: Buller ALRANZ/WONAAC group, Box 182 Westport or ALRANZ Greymouth, Box 6, Blackball.

As the Auckland Medical Aid Centre (AMAC) is the only place for West Coast women to go (no other hospital boards will take women from the West Coast area) women in Auckland who can offer accommodation and support are also urgently needed. Contact either group.

Write to the ministers of health and justice, to your local MPs asking if their party supports equitable health and abortion services, make sure that hospital board candidates in your area will support the provision of abortion services. But don't stop there — keep battling for the right to choose — ensuring services is only half the battle. □

The coroner's report concluded that it died from respiratory distress syndrome.

After taking legal advice, McArthur informed the police of the incident, convinced it was a breach of the Crimes Act. This involved laying complaints against all parties involved, including the woman.

Police investigated both the legality of the abortion, and the care of the baby, but found no grounds for prosecution. Later the coroner's inquest also found that the hospital staff had followed correct procedure.

Other senior medical staff at Kew Hospital demanded an apology from McArthur after his complaint to the police, or threatened to resign.

The community's reaction continued in its emotive fashion, irrespective of the new information. Letters flowed into the paper. Twenty-seven supporting letters were published in one night.

A "McArthur Action Committee" was formed to press for his reinstatement. Over \$1300 was raised at one public meeting. Local media were sympathetic in their coverage of the committee's work and the public meetings, counting everyone attending as supporters.

Further meetings were held between McArthur, the Hospital Board, legal representatives and an industrial mediator. In what appeared to be a face saving compromise a joint statement was issued, in which the Hospital Board reinstated McArthur, and McArthur announced that he had accepted a position with the Wellington Hospital Board.

At a later date it was disclosed in the Southland Times that a payment of \$45,000 was made to McArthur as the board "acknowledged that it had erred in the way it dismissed him."

Further to this apparent conclusion a petition has been presented to Parliament by a Dunedin lawyer, Mr J.S. O'Neill, (prominent in the anti-abortion movement) to reopen the case. The petition calls for prosecution of those involved in the termination and care of the baby.

This single and isolated incident has been capitalized on by the pro-life movement for over six months. We can be sure there will be more to follow. □

Sandy Phillips & Judith Duncan write about recent events in Invercargill

On 3 March, Dr John McArthur, paediatrician at Kew Hospital, Invercargill, received notification from the Southland Hospital Board that his employment was to be terminated. He was apparently given no reason for his dismissal.

A huge public outcry was swift and emotional. Demands for his reinstatement were made before the public knew of the reasons for his dismissal, although rumours were rife.

Over the following weeks it was reported that the dismissal was in connection with

McArthur's interference in a pregnancy termination performed last November, and his subsequent official complaint to the police against the doctors involved.

The termination was performed on 28 November. The grounds were "distress to the mother, and an inability to cope mentally with the knowledge of a grossly deformed foetus and of permanent damage to the mother's mental health." (All quotes from *The Southland Times*)

According to the coroner's inquest, the baby, aborted at about 27 weeks, suffered from

a "gross degree" of spina bifida, in addition to a club foot, immature brain development, internal hydrocephalus, and a minor meningoelocoele.

The baby was however born alive. The operating physician advised conservative treatment of the baby, that is, keeping it warm and comfortable.

Dr McArthur then took over responsibility of the baby saying "it was his patient now." He placed it in an incubator and on a ventilator.

There were varying reports on how long the baby lived for, but it died the following day.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AT WORK

There has been very little research into reproductive health in the workplace, especially in New Zealand. The Department of Health's recently released discussion document on the issue is a start, although it is brief and does not deal with some aspects of the problem.

There are many ways in which the work we do can affect reproductive health. We need to be able to identify and reduce the exposures or practices affecting good health.

Reproductive hazards at work include exposure to chemical substances, stress (noise, temperature and general working conditions), video display units, and biological hazards (among hospital workers, laboratory workers and people working with animals or children).

Acting against reproductive hazards also means removing the discrimination surrounding women's employment. Examples show that when industries have become aware of the danger, rather than making sure workplaces are safe, the employers' answer is to remove the women. Women are scapegoated,

when it is the conditions of work which are dangerous for all their workers.

The most famous example was in 1977 with American Cyanamid. The company instituted a "foetus protection policy", which excluded all women of childbearing ability from plant areas where they might be exposed to lead. Fertile women between the ages of 15 and 54 would not be employed. To keep their jobs, five women paid for sterilisation operations. The company was eventually prosecuted, but the following year the conviction was quashed.

Another example was of a woman driver in England, who was transporting a particular chemical. The manufacturers told the employer that there was evidence of harmful effects on the foetuses of exposed animals, and strongly advised against employing women. The driver was dismissed. She was not pregnant, and not planning to have any more children.

It is unacceptable to unions to exclude women from jobs because of reproductive risks. Employers need to be made responsible for providing a

safe and healthy workplace for all workers. Hazards affecting the reproductive systems of women also affect the reproductive systems of men.

The Auckland Working Women's Resource Centre, a Federation of Labour research officer and the Trade Union Health and Safety Centre have recently started action about reproductive health. We would be very interested to talk with women and men who have had reproductive damage occur because of their work. Please write to: Reproductive Health Committee, Working Women's Resource Centre, Private Bag 5, Newton, Auckland 1. □

Kris Bennett

WWRC resources:

Reproductive Hazards of Work, A.C. Fletcher
Women's Work, Women's Ill Health, Elspeth McVeigh
Health and Safety at Work
Employment and Reproductive Health, Department of Health
Women's Work and Health Hazards
The Dan Long Memorial Library, a trade union library at PSA House, Private Bag, Wellington, also holds information.

back is a very high failure rate, between 8.7 and 16.8%, making it difficult to imagine who would risk using it.

Because of its reservations about the sponge, Fertility Action has written to the Director of Clinical Services and the Minister of Health asking that the product not be approved. Our reservations are concerned with the unproven safety of the product.

- The sponge contains a high concentration of nonoxynol-9, a spermicide which some studies have linked to birth deformities. While the results of the major study showing birth deformities linked with nonoxynol-9 ("Vaginal Spermicides and Congenital Disorders", *Jick et al, JAMA*, April 33, 1981 p 1329-1332) have been questioned, further research is needed before anyone can assert that this substance is not teratogenic. There are cases for damages pending in America against the makers of this spermicide and one New Zealand woman has taken a case. In the circumstances, any contraceptive containing nonoxynol-9 should be approached with caution.

Caution is particularly indicated with the Today sponge because the concentration of nonoxynol-9 in the sponge is higher than that contained in Ortho-Creme, Delfen Foam, Rendells Pessaries or any other spermicides currently on the market. For instance, each Rendells pessary contains 0.08 grams of nonoxynol-9, while the sponge contains one gram. To our knowledge no independent studies have been carried out of the teratogenicity of nonoxynol-9 at this concentration.

- The failure rate of the sponge is very high. Mr Vorhauer claims a failure rate of 6-10%. Studies funded by VLI Corporation have shown a failure rate of 6-14%. But independent studies have shown the failure rate to be 8.7-16.8%. In other words, at least one in ten women relying on this method of contraception will have an unplanned pregnancy. This makes the unresolved question of the possible effect of the spermicide on the foetus all the more critical.

Any woman using this product would need to be aware of this potential danger when making a decision about the continuation of a pregnancy

SPONGING APPROVAL

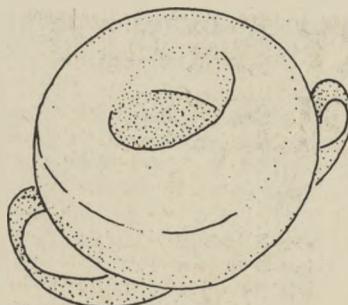
A new contraceptive product might soon appear on the New Zealand market. The chairman of VLI Corporation of California, Dr Bruce Vorhauer, recently visited this country promoting the Today contraceptive sponge and seeking permission to market it in New Zealand. The sponge would be available over the counter in chemist shops. While another alternative barrier method of contraception which doesn't involve a visit to the doctor might seem welcome, there are a number of drawbacks to the product and some questions about safety.

The Today sponge is a round white polyurethane sponge impregnated with spermicide, with a dimple-like

indentation which fits over the cervix. The sponge is moistened and inserted high in the vagina before intercourse. It works in three ways: as a physical barrier to sperm; the spermicide kills sperm; the sponge soaks up sperm. The sponge also provides some protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

It can be inserted up to twenty-four hours before intercourse and must be left in place for six hours after intercourse. Unlike the diaphragm, no further spermicide needs to be inserted for several episodes of intercourse. It is removed by pulling on the removal loop.

There are aesthetic problems with odour and about 2%



of people, male and female, have an allergic reaction to the spermicide. The taste of the spermicide can be a drawback for men and women who like oral sex and some women expel the sponge during a bowel motion.

However, the major draw-

conceived while using the Today sponge. The spermicide could damage the foetus in several ways. The sperm could be damaged by the spermicide resulting in abnormalities; spermicide could be absorbed into the bloodstream and damage the ovum before conception; the embryo could be damaged by the spermicide where it is used after the woman has already conceived. Nonoxynol-9 has been shown to be readily absorbed from the vaginal walls in rats and rabbits.

It is essential that the packaging of this product includes a warning about the unknown risk of continuing a pregnancy conceived while the product was used.

- There is a risk of toxic shock syndrome (TSS) with the Today sponge. The manufacturers report 13 cases of TSS in non-menstruating sponge users ("Use of the Today Contraceptive Sponge in the United States", North and Vorhauer, *Int J Fertil*, 30:1, 1985, p 81-84). Although the manufacturers state "None has been fatal", TSS is a potentially fatal disease which can also cause permanent injury to those who recover. In the US the Associated Pharmacologists and Toxicologists (Washington, D.C.) and the Empire State Consumer Association (Rochester, N.Y.) have petitioned the FDA to withdraw approval for the sponges pending further tests.

- There is also concern about the polyurethane foam from

which the sponge is made. Polyurethane has been shown to cause cancerous lesions in mice.

Fertility Action believes that insufficient independent research has been carried out on the safety of this product to justify approving its use. The experience of the Dalkon Shield should make us wary of any research funded directly or indirectly by the makers of a product. We feel that the Health Department should adopt a cautious approach when approving contraceptives. There is a growing number of contraceptive products, both IUDs and oral contraceptives, which have been used on women and then withdrawn when the dangers have become apparent. This withdrawal is usually made by the manufacturer, not on the insistence of the Health Department. It seems that once approval of a drug or device is made, the withdrawal of that approval is very hard to achieve. In a conversation I had with Dr Phillips in February he said that the Health Department had not withdrawn the copper seven IUD from the New Zealand market after its withdrawal by G.D. Searle from the US market, because the department feared legal repercussions from the company. If safety is not to be the only consideration when contemplating withdrawing a product, it must be the only and imperative consideration when approving it for distribution. □

Sandra Coney

PEACE ACTIONS



Photo Courtesy of The Dominion

Since 1982 Women's International Day of Action for Disarmament, 24 May, has been celebrated by women all over the world concerned with stopping the madness of war and preserving our planet. This year Wellington women demonstrated outside the Freyberg (spyberg) building, where the intelligence data collected at Tangimoana is processed by New Zealand intelligence personnel before being sent overseas. A woman in black on three foot stilts danced and exhorted the "bases" around the Pacific to leave Uncle Sam and join her, a violinist and three large birds of peace.

Tangimoana is the secret electronic spy station hidden away in the sandhills two hours drive north of Wellington. Information gathered there feeds into the American military ocean surveillance system, and is necessary for their war strategies. It operates under the secret UKUSA pact, a legal agreement between the five western powers (USA, England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) which deals with ocean surveillance and other spying. As the smallest

member, it is obvious our independence will be constrained by the global interests of the larger powers.

The Prime Minister won't answer simple questions about the cost of Tangimoana, who works there, and what information is sent to America.

Another women's peace action is the "peace ribbon" project. Decorate some material to show what you would miss most after world War 3, if those military men get their way. The material (old or new) should be 50cm deep and of any length. Hem it firmly for wind and weather, and sew tape ties at the four corners. The ribbons will be joined and used during UN Disarmament Week, 19-25 October.

Send your piece either to a local co-ordinator, or to Peace House, 44 Sydney St East, Wellington. After the action it will be broken into segments and circulated around the country.

Wellington women interested in other peace actions can write to P.O. Box 28029, Kelburn, or phone Janis 843-347 after hours. □
Jenny Easton

MINISTRY STAFF COMPLETE

All of the positions at the Ministry of Women's Affairs have now been filled. When we reported on the forming of the ministry (Broadsheet 139, May 1986) we gave information about staff appointed to that date. The following are the women appointed since then.

Ruth Charters, Advisory Officer, Policy Unit

Ruth is 32 and has been "out" as a lesbian for about ten

years. She is a feminist and has a law degree from Auckland University. Ruth has given a great deal of time and energy to women's groups organising around such issues as abortion rights, lesbian visibility, rape law reform and sexual harassment. For several years she was part of the Wellington Women's Resource Centre Collective, and since January 1983 she has been active in Women Against Pornography

in Wellington.

As a cancer survivor Ruth acknowledges that she faces a continuing personal challenge to be clear about setting personal and political priorities when living in an acutely uncertain time-frame. Her decision to work full-time at the ministry was made in that context.

Celia Lampe, Advisory Officer, Policy Unit

Celia Lampe was born in the United Kingdom in 1949. She left school at 16 and trained as a secretary, travelling and working in Europe for some years. Her interest in the status of women grew out of her experience at that time. She attended Victoria University from 1981 to 1985 as a mature student. Most important to her were women's studies papers and chosen topics on women and education and women and peace for honours. In January 1985 she

was taken on to assist in writing up the women's forum reports, and subsequently worked as a temporary advisory officer for the rest of the year, during the establishment of the ministry. She has been active in the women's peace movement for some time and has developed broadcasting skills as a member of the feminist radio collective, Woman Zone. She is a member of SROW, Media Women, and Women Against Pornography. Her employment at the ministry as a permanent part-time worker gives her time with her eight months old daughter.

Christina Lyndon, Assistant Advisory Officer, Te Ohu Whakatupu

Tena koutou. Taku ingua ko Christina Lyndon. No Pipiwai o te Taitokerau ahau. Taku iwi ko Ngatihine me Te Orewai, i raro o Ngapuhi. Taku tane no Ngati-Paoa me Ngati Mahuta

no te Waikato. E noho ana ia i waenga nui taku whanau i Pipiwai. He tamaiti taku, tona ingua ko Te Rangihaeata, ona tau te kau ma tahi. I nga wa o taku haerenga ki te whare wananga o Tamaki Makaurau i whiwhi hau he Masters me te honore i roto o nga kaupapa mo te psychology. Kia Ora.

Sally Washington, Advisory Officer, Policy Unit

Sally is 23. She has recently completed a Masters degree in political science at the University of Canterbury. Her thesis is entitled "The Patriarchal Control of Women's Reproductive Health", which examines childbirth, contraception and reproductive technologies and how race, class and gender determines our access to health services. She has been involved in several women's groups in Christchurch including a women's support group the members of which she misses greatly. □

Problems of differing levels of tolerance, community attitudes and dealing with grievances are also acknowledged.

The conflict within the refuge movement involving the Christchurch Battered Women's Support Group (BWSG) (see *Broadsheet* 134, November 1985) is commented on and some strategies (basically separate funding) for its resolution are suggested.

There is a lot of detail in the report about the "nuts and bolts" of management and organisation. The section on training includes the very welcome statement that "past experiences of refuge workers should not be under rated but acknowledged and used in training programmes", as well as an emphasis on the need for "cultural appropriateness".

There are a number of recommendations suggesting that DSW take a larger role. In terms of the independence of the refuge movement this should be approached with caution, but it is encouraging that Raewyn Goode (recent ex-president of the national collective) has been appointed as head office advisory officer in DSW responsible for family violence prevention and support services. The report suggests that DSW also appoint staff "with designated responsibility for working with voluntary/community organisations such as rape/sexual abuse, women's refuge, men against violence, Te Kakano, incest survivors." Such appointments in all regions would certainly acknowledge that all these groups are working with the same problem — male violence against women and children.

The review team conclude the summary of their findings with the statement, "... the recent growth of refuge services reflects the increased awareness of the unacceptably high level of violence in society. Until now refuges alone have dealt with abused women and children who are the outcome of violence. We believe that there is now a need and the start of a realistic commitment, to 'spread the burden'. We consider the time has come to utilise the available Government and community support to deal not only with women and children subjected to violence, but also to prevent further violence by

REPORT ON REFUGE

Recommendations on future directions for the refuge movement were made by a ministerial review team.

Pat Rosier comments on the review.

At the request of the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges the Minister of Social Welfare set up an inter-departmental team to do a review and assessment of refuge in New Zealand.

The review team consisted of Joy Baird and Josie Keelan from the department of Social Welfare (DSW), Mary O'Regan from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) and Denise Black from the Justice Department. Many of the 46 refuges around the country were visited by the team and 34 of them made submissions. The team have produced a report, *Review and Assessment of Refuge in New Zealand June 1986*.

I have two disappointments with the report. The first is that it does not acknowledge the work already done in refuges and by the national collective. For instance the national office has been working towards the setting up of a regional structure (something the report recommends) for some time, yet it reads in the review

as though it was the review team's idea. And a recommendation that the national training coordinator initiate discussions to work towards a "comprehensive training programme for refuge workers" is referring to something that is already under way. Yet another example — the review team asks that the national collective raise the matter of compensation for abused women with the Accident Compensation Commission, (ACC) without reference to the submission made to the ACC review committee by the national collective in April 1986.

My second disappointment is to do with the recommendations on funding. The funding policy that is operating between refuges and DSW at present is that all houses get equal funding. (Every refuge house is expected to serve a population of 50-60 thousand). Without reference to this existing arrangement the review report suggests that where one group operates two houses — as could hap-

pen in high population areas — the funding for both houses be 1½ times that for a single house. This would apply to both staffing and operating expenses. It seems like a ludicrous suggestion as the financial gains from having two houses run by one group are minimal. Things like travel mileage are in fact increased, and each house will have to be staffed separately. Its only effect seems likely to be to make groups split into two if they start a second house.

There are good things in the report, too. The stressful nature of refuge work is acknowledged, and the commitment of the workers is noted, as are the pressures of working in an area where social change and public education are priorities. As well as identifying the obvious issues for refuge, like national structure, funding, training and the role of men, the team was aware of the "need to recognise cultural responses to violence and culturally appropriate options for women who are abused."

offering help and alternative behaviour models to the perpetrators of violence, as well as to increase community education programmes to change

attitudes within society to make family violence unacceptable."

Great stuff. Come on DSW, Justice Dept., ACC, do your bit

— but leave the control and decision — making with the women who work in the refuge movement. □

place children until able to support them. One woman pointed out that fostering and adoption programmes are already promoted in Zimbabwe, but many people are reluctant to adopt children because of traditional beliefs suggesting that the ancestral spirits of the adopted child may bring misfortune into the family.

During small group discussions, a change in existing abortion laws was very important to many participants. They felt that whatever is said in public condemnation of abortion, in private it happens frequently. Education was stressed; sex and family education was needed, as the custom of girls being advised by their aunts on sexual matters had broken down, particularly in urban areas where aunts no longer live nearby. There should be more programmes to inform men of modern methods of contraception, particularly in rural areas. Men's legal and moral responsibilities in cases of unwanted pregnancies and abandoned babies were emphasised.

The WAG report of the day — *Unwanted Pregnancies and Baby Dumping: Whose Problem?* — closed with a postscript by the action group: "The workshop was the first time that so many participants from different socioeconomic groups and cultural backgrounds had the opportunity to discuss frankly issues that are often avoided as 'taboo'... It was very apparent that women wished to change social attitudes which make women mere 'breeding machines'... There were marked differences in the attitudes of young and older women on contraception, education about sexuality and degree of parental control."

"In the final session's discussion on abortion law, the women made it clear that they thought men should not decide on this issue."

In December 1985 a bill was approved that allows courts to give suspended sentences to women convicted of baby dumping and killing. At the time of writing, WAG hoped that a proposed unified social security scheme would include provision for single mothers who cannot provide for themselves. □

The report is available from Women's Action Group, P.O. Box 135, Harare for \$3 each.

UNWANTED PREGNANCIES IN ZIMBABWE

Viv Shakespeare summarises a report of a women's forum.

By the end of 1985, public attention had been drawn to the problem of baby dumping in Zimbabwe. Cases of women who had abandoned or killed newly born babies were frequently reported in the local media. The resulting public debate focused on how such women should be treated, and why they would risk long prison sentences rather than keep their babies.

The Women's Action Group (WAG) in Harare organised a one day forum for discussing the issues surrounding baby dumping. The day was organised around a series of panel and small group discussions, with panelists representing both professionals who deal with unwanted pregnancies and abandoned babies in the course of their work, and non-professional people wishing to contribute. Two hundred people came, 140 of whom represented organisations. About one-third were from areas outside Harare. A significant number of men came, many of them from co-operatives.

The day began with welcoming speeches in both Shona and English. This was followed by a performance of *Ndiani Ane Mhosva?* (*Who Is Guilty?*) by Kodzero Ye Vashandi (Workers' Rights Drama Group). In the play an unmarried pregnant schoolgirl is rejected by the child's father and her family, dies from an illegal abortion, and a divorced rural woman who already has several children is deserted by the man she is living with when he discovers she is pregnant.

The first panel discussions showed that the main reasons women dump babies are fear of parental anger and fear of

rejection or violence from the child's father. Pregnant schoolgirls face expulsion and a bleak future trying to support themselves and their children. The panel also felt that in other countries improved social and economic conditions result in fewer cases of abandoned babies or baby killing.

In Zimbabwe it is traditional that a married woman bear as many children as her husband wishes because he has "paid" for her with the lobola (marriage price). It is difficult for a woman to refuse sex once she has been promised marriage, yet such promises are often unfulfilled when the woman becomes pregnant.

The reasons men desert pregnant women range from blatant irresponsibility to the impossibly high demands by the girl's parents for "damages" and lobola payment. Some panelists saw lobola as a great obstacle to responsible relationships between men and women, reinforcing the feeling that a married man has bought his wife, and is therefore entitled to "use" her.

Some people discussing contraception felt that too much emphasis has been placed on contraceptive pills, some of which have severe side effects, and too little emphasis on the use of condoms. Rural areas are undersupplied with contraceptives. Panelists felt that many women, whether or not they are married, are not free to use contraception. Men working in towns are worried that contraception would encourage their rural wives to be unfaithful. At the same time, many men refuse to use condoms. It was clear from the floor discussion that many women resent having all the burden for

contraception placed on them.

A high number of unsafe illegal abortions are performed in Zimbabwe. Liberalising the law to allow safe hospital abortions would mean that women did not risk their health or face being labelled as criminals. The law justifies an abortion on the grounds of rape (reported to the police), reported incest, the strong likelihood that the mother's health would be endangered by a continuing pregnancy, or that the child would be born with a severe mental or physical handicap. But strong opposition from some religious groups to abortion is a major obstacle to changing the law. Some overseas agencies are unwilling to support family planning programmes which include abortion.

Women who abandon their babies often face harsh sentences, because if the baby dies the woman is charged with murder. The maximum penalty is death. In Zimbabwe courts there is little support for the defendant in the form of social worker, psychiatric or medical reports. If the defence could produce these, judges could consider shorter sentences.

Some people suggested that more women assessors would result in more balanced settlements. At present only the guilt of the other is recognised. The responsibility of others involved in her final act of baby dumping is ignored. More legal centres should be established to give advice to women.

Panelists discussing social responsibility felt that more children's homes should be set up where women could

"A MUST-SEE FILM."

—Jack Curry, USA TODAY

"ONE OF THE YEAR'S TEN BEST."

—CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

"BRILLIANT. SEE THIS FILM."

—Chuck Kraemer, WCVB-TV Boston

"WITTY AND POWERFUL."

Excellent performances. This movie might make you cry but it will definitely make you laugh.

—Kendall Baldwin, CNN

"UPBEAT, OFF-BEAT, AND REFRESHINGLY HONEST."

Patricia Charbonneau is a captivating new screen presence. With dark, welcoming eyes, she paints a brave and unforgettable portrait. Helen Shaver is perfect.

—Rex Reed, NEW YORK POST



DARING AND ACCOMPLISHED—EMOTIONALLY EXPLOSIVE.

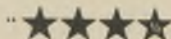
Friskily entertaining as well as deeply touching—alive with humor. Colorful characters, bright dialogue, excellent acting. The sensation of the Telluride, Deauville and Toronto film festivals—people are sure to be talking about 'Desert Hearts'.

A SIZZLER!" —William Wolf, GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

"EROTICALLY CHARGED."

Beautifully crafted with stunning performances by Helen Shaver and Patricia Charbonneau.

—Michael Medved, SNEAK PREVIEW



'DESERT HEARTS' IS IN THE GREAT TRADITION OF CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD LOVE STORIES."

—Gene Siskel, CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"A FUNNY, ENJOYABLE, INTELLIGENT FILM."

—David Brooks, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

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AUCKLAND**

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RP16



SURVIVING CRISES

Jenny Rankine interviewed Kris Bennett, paid worker with the Auckland Working Women's Resource Centre (WWRC) since its opening on May Day 1984.

"In the two years I've been in the job, unions have lurched from crisis to crisis — voluntary unionism, labour market flexibility, the minimum wage, tripartite talks, the award round, state sector reorganisation, massive redundancies in many industries, roger-nomics . . . It's hard just keeping your head above water, let alone working on other issues. The centre's lack of resources and money means there's huge amounts of stuff in my head, but no resources to bring people together about it.

"But because of the centre, many many women have started organising together who would never have met without it. We've done a lot of networking groups, like the Repetition Strain Injury Support Group. We've been trying to help them, telling unions what they're doing, and putting a lot of different groups in touch with each other.

"The centre has supported a lot of women's disputes. That's been like an affirmation for women. It's not much fun standing on a picket line day after day after day. It's really hard when the money's dried up and you're still on the picket line, and the boss isn't changing his mind. Just having another woman saying that what you want is justified — not being fired because you're pregnant, wanting better pay, stopping work because of sexual harassment — is important.

"It's good to see so many groups of women taking industrial action, especially in parts of the workforce where traditionally workers don't take action. Like the North Shore rest home workers employed by Methodist Social Services,

who said it was the first time they'd ever done anything like that. They said 'We're ordinary middle-aged women, and we're on strike because it's the only way things will change and we care about the old people we look after.' There were only one or two workers on duty at night, and they'd been broken into several times, and didn't want the workers or the residents to be in that vulnerable position anymore.

"We've been picking up issues that face women in the workforce — like equal pay for work of equal value and reproductive health — and encouraging unions to look at them. The resource centre has often had to act as an educational place for unions. It makes me feel really good to see unions getting active on issues like childcare, sexual harassment, and equal pay for work of equal value.

"We got together with a group of disabled women workers, and they talked about access to buildings, difficulty getting jobs, occupations they couldn't move into, and needing to have some control over their work environment, so if they had a weak heart, for example, they could have regular breaks. They talked about the need to have interpreters for deaf people at stop work meetings, delegate training and union meetings.

"I wrote a report to Trades Council from the discussions, and we printed three pages in the newspaper of those women's stories. I don't think it's created change in union structures. But individuals have said things like 'It was really important for my son to read that because he has cere-



Kris Bennett

Photo: Gil Hanly

bral palsy and it's the first thing he's been able to read about what it'll be like when he starts work."

"People have really related to *Working Women*, the newspaper we put out, because it's about real people talking about real things. Sometimes union journals are very academic and very theoretical. Half the time people know the issues we've written about, because they're in their lives, but they don't have the words for it. Time after time, people have said 'I read about that in the newspaper and that's what it's like on our job too.'

"The newspaper has taken a huge amount of time. Each edition takes six weeks of work to write, typeset and lay out. We just got \$1,000 from the McKenzie Foundation for another issue, but they each

cost \$2,800, and we don't know where we'll get the rest of the money. I really enjoyed producing the papers. It meant going onto jobs and talking with women about what they were concerned about and writing down their words. It was neat being with them when they saw their photographs and read what they'd said actually in print.

"We've also run three rounds of film evenings in pubs, using films from the Trade Union Training Board's catalogue. We leafleted in pubs, shopping centres on the late night and next to workplaces beforehand. Last year the centre ran about eight sexual harassment seminars. Out of 150 people who came, 148 had experienced it or seen it in their workplaces. Of those, 27 went to their unions, and one woman got it dealt with in a way she was happy with. The others didn't have anything else happen, or weren't happy with how it was resolved. The resource centre has a lot of information about sexual harassment from overseas unions and the Dan Long Memorial Library in Wellington.

"We've also done a lot of specialist sections in delegate training on things like sexual harassment, repetition strain injury, maternity leave, part time work, and health, as well as complete training sessions for unions too small to run their own. We've participated in seminars for women and delegates at workplaces in different areas. They've talked about how they're finding it, where they can find out what they need, getting support in the workplace and the union, how changes can happen. It's

really neat seeing women come in low and leave two hours later really confident and strong, feeling there's something they can all do together.

"We've run seminars on issues the unions are involved in, like labour market flexibility. We've tried to analyse what they mean for women, the special ways women are affected, and put the women's perspective into what the men are talking about. We realised that labour market flexibility is a reality for many women's jobs, which are becoming more casualised. Foodtown and other companies base their workplace organisation on those concepts. (See *Broadsheet* No. 141, July/Au-

gust 1986). It's because it's beginning to hit male jobs that the men start talking about it.

"We also try to link what's happening to women in different industries, like the way technology is changing the work women do. In woollen factories, lens manufacturers and white collar jobs, machines are replacing many women's jobs.

"Last year at a seminar on women and low pay at the Trades Hall, women talked about why so many women are on low pay, why women's skills are underpaid, how ages are negotiated. We talked about how women's jobs are often an extension of what they do in the home — caring for people but not necessarily

producing anything. As one woman said, women who care for people get paid less than people who look after machines. That led on to the whole equal pay campaign for me; a lot of energy in the last few months has gone into building that campaign in Auckland.

"The last two years have been bloody hard work. The money situation is still absolutely grim. The centre is two years down the track and still hasn't got proper funding. Many unions put in money regularly, but it's not enough. Every month we have a shortfall, which places huge stress on the worker, because she and the committee have to raise the money to keep the

centre going. Both the centre and parts of the union movement have to sort out our priorities. If women matter, we have to fund the centre and other similar committees around the country, and use affirmative action policies within the union structures to give equal power to women.

"There's a hell of a lot of strong union women around the country, but they're not often involved in decision making. I look forward to the day when every part of the union structure reflects the makeup of the workforce, so women, Maori and Pacific people, migrant workers and gay workers are represented in union hierarchies." □

REMAKING A REFUGE

Jenny van der Schoot writes about a group of Pakeha women learning to work with Maori women.

HERSTORY:

In this article I would like to present my personal perspective about the growth of a bi-cultural system in a small community. Naturally this is a continuing process which is not now static nor stagnant either. The potential for change is, I feel, most exhilarating.

Seven years ago this process began when a group of about twelve of us women set up a refuge network in an area where there is a high proportion of Maori people and a move towards Maoritanga. As middle class Pakehas we saw a need for assistance to be made available to battered women. We hoped that some Maori women would join our group. We offered our homes to Maoris as well as Pakehas. However, no Maori women did join us and for about four years we functioned as a Pakeha group, assisting women of all cultures and assuming we were the only group in our area providing such support.

Then, almost three years ago, our group heard that there was a Maori woman working with Maori victims of abuse. We felt that it would be helpful to make contact and so a meeting was arranged.

At this point, as a member

of the white middle class group, I was surprised to learn that a different group of women had been doing similar work in the community for quite some time and none of us had had any knowledge of it. I was just as surprised to hear that they, apparently, were similarly unaware of our existence.

CHALLENGE:

So we met with the "Maori worker", in one of our middle class houses and I think now, how incredibly insensitive and naive and assuming we were — as a group. We assumed this woman would come to us. We were naive to the cultural differences that would prohibit us from joining together, such as the protocol of a meeting. We were ignorant about appropriate introductions. We were so uncomfortable ourselves that we did very little to make her feel welcome. We were insensitive in that we didn't consider how uncomfortable she might feel in such an environment and in such conditions. I feel I can fairly say, that our group anticipated that we would join together (of course!) and therefore work more effectively (of course!) but the Maori worker was clear that she and her group were

not interested in doing this.

She challenged us in many ways, questioned what level of commitment we each held — for the victims; Maori and Pakeha and for each other. She challenged the appropriateness of us working with Maori women, challenged our time commitment and challenged us to give up some of our comfort and privileges as well as to reach for the resources we had access to — gave us food for some in-depth thought — and then she gave us the ultimate challenge — get a house! You can do it — and then give it to us. The seeds had been sown.

We wanted to meet with her again — at her insistence we agreed to do this on her terms and her territory — but it didn't happen. This woman was already putting all her energy into working with her own people and there was no benefit for her continuing to meet with us, as we had little to offer. We, on the other hand, felt that we would benefit by meeting with her, and that she had vast experience in this area and we were not able to offer Maori women enough.

In terms of the challenge — I feel that at that time, we rationalised it out of existence by thinking we couldn't get a

house anyway. Too many barriers, too small a town, not enough of us to organise a house, no money and why should we get one and then give it away? So our group continued, just as it had — except for the seeds, we pushed away the slight feelings of resentment and thought about why this woman and her group — doing the same work as us — were not prepared to pool their resources with ours. This didn't become clear entirely to us for over two years.

TRANSITION:

After that encounter, we began to correspond with the National Refuge Collective. We learnt more and more through their newsletters and information — and found answers to some of our questions. The town was not too small, other refuges functioned with less womenpower and some money was available for a coordinator and probably a house. We began to liaise with the nearest women's refuge and learnt of VOTP schemes providing paid workers. So we started to feel encouraged and stronger — our group had changed over this time and there were only about one third of us who had been to that challenging meeting two years

ago. So in early 1985, we decided to go ahead. Our safe house network had worked for 6 years, and we'd developed a relationship with most of the agencies in our central town. We saw this as a plus. (Mainly, our referrals came from the central town and one outside area).

We held two special new member's meetings and out of about 20 women who attended still none were Maori. Over the nine month period while we went through the many processes of organising this "house", we developed a much greater public profile. We could now do this because there was less need to keep ourselves unknown. The threat to our families, once we were able to put victims in a central house rather than our own homes, was greatly decreased.

The community support was tremendous at this time. Then we ran a 13-session training course at the community college. All women were welcome and didn't need to make a commitment to become volunteers. Here, finally, some Maori women attended. In the middle of this programme, we were arranging interviews for a VOTP worker and the Labour Department informed us that there were three women interested.

ACTION:

It was when we met with the second applicant — a Maori woman — (an attendant at the training programme) that we were again challenged. Our interviewing process and system were queried. We had already decided to choose a Maori woman for the job — as

we believed in affirmative action. But then we were told that it was presumptuous and inappropriate of us to decide which Maori woman was most qualified for the job. Then we had to stop and think and question. Yes, it was another power structure. As women we've experienced forms of intimidation and manipulation. So I feel we were able to understand where they were coming from. The option given to us was to let the Maori women's collective decide who could best do the job. It was impossible for us, the interviewing group of four, to make a group decision over this, so we decided to have a special meeting of our collective and to work through this issue and hopefully, reach group consensus, as to where to go.

At this collective meeting, many feelings were aired —

RIGHTEOUSNESS — "We don't want to lose it. Don't want them to take over".

ANGER AND INDIGNATION — "What right have they to suddenly appear on the scene and expect us to just give it to them? Why don't they apply for a house themselves?"

MISTRUST — "Who are these women? How can we be sure that they'll manage or do it right?"

But in the end we looked at our power — we had it all. So we looked at why we had it and why they — the Maori collective — didn't. We knew it had a lot to do with our middle-classness and our Pakehanness and maybe, just maybe, most probably years before the

Maori collective knew three things:

- (1) That we *could* get a house because we were non-threatening and socially acceptable to the system.
- (2) That if they joined us — it would reduce our effectiveness as middle class Pakehas, in working through a patriarchal power system; and
- (3) It was better to leave our group intact with its strengths, and hope that we might use our power and work towards a house — in other words — as a group with Maori members — we'd have had less chance of getting a house. We decided to share our power and most important of all, to trust; to trust that the Maori women wouldn't take over and would choose an appropriate VOTP worker. We knew it wouldn't be easy and we knew that there would be a lot to learn — as members of two cultures, with different attitudes, expectations and behaviour patterns. It was an exciting and frightening decision.

So as a group we decided to give the only two paid positions — the VOTP and the part-time co-ordinator's job to the Maori collective to fill. That collective assumed responsibility for the workers, their support and their accountability being to that collective.

TODAY — We have been functioning in the house for five months and we have evolved a workable bi-cultural system of support and interaction. There are times when we work together and times when

we are separate. The two collectives are mutually involved in the decision-making, the business and the day-to-day running of the house. But we respect the need to operate support groups independently. As time goes on, there is an increasing overlap of support and interaction. I cannot over-emphasize the importance we place on the necessity for regular support meetings during which time we are able to air our feelings and continue to challenge ourselves on the issue of racism. Naturally we are all learning and open to new ideas.

Our basic understanding is that if a Maori woman (victim) comes into the house — then we contact the Maori women's collective and apart from us (the Pakehas) dealing with practical needs — the Maori women's collective does any work/counselling and assistance with that woman.

We acknowledge the need for some separation between the two cultures, and respect that.

As Pakehas, we all try to be sensitive to the other cultural group when we are together and to use a process which gives room for both groups to function in their way; educating ourselves as to cultural practices.

We try not to impose our white standards, and we know that in the areas where we do touch and we do work together that our lives are enriched. By continuing fine tuning, our structure and our process will hopefully evolve a less institutionalised, a more empowering and a more sensitive system for change. □

Broadsheet welcomes feedback, and articles from feminist groups on the processes and challenges in working in a multi-racial society.

FEATURING WOMEN

In mainstream news media it's rare to find material written by women with a really critical analysis of how women are involved or affected in a given situation.

But an idea which developed from the UN Decade for Women is now providing an opportunity for women around the world to write in-depth features about women

of their own culture or country, which can be used by print media and broadcasting networks.

The Women's Feature Service (WFS) a project of Inter Press Service Third World news agency (IPS), which is based in Rome and committed to increasing the flow of information among countries, in Asia, Africa, Central and South

America, and between these countries and industrialised countries. Women journalists from Latin America and Africa have written news and features for the service since 1978.

Centrally managed from Rome and following a policy of positive discrimination, accepting material only from women journalists, WFS has regional centres in Latin

America, operating from San Jose, Costa Rica; South Asia, from New Delhi in India; and Africa from Harare in Zimbabwe, where material is both edited for regional distribution and sent to Rome over the IPS wire service for wider distribution.

The Women's Feature Service is expanding and this year is looking for writers from

Pacific countries including New Caledonia/Kanaky, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands. Maori and Polynesian women from Aotearoa may be interested in writing for the service. Pakeha women could also write, supporting the indigenous women's struggle in this country. Writers will receive \$40 if the story is used and WFS retains the copyrights.

Plans for this year also include setting up a South-East Asia WFS, based probably in the Philippines, including Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia; a People's Republic of China correspondent, via the New Delhi regional centre; and an Arab feature service, covering several Arab nations.

Currently the WFS is used by IPS subscribers — news agencies, print media, broadcasting networks, United Nations agencies, governmental and non-governmental organisations, with plans to make it widely available to women's organisations.

The service has received funding from some United Nations agencies and development organisations, while there are hopes for the future that it will develop into a self-sufficient, autonomous agency.

Clear guidelines are set out for women intending to write for WFS, giving priority to material about women's involvement and the effect on them of: development — a social, political and economic process of change; economics

— across the spectrum from a family income to national budget priorities or transnational corporation; political issues — including women's involvement in national and local politics; social issues such as the role of norms and traditions in promoting or hindering change or development; and the effect upon women of developments in science and technology.

Another focus is women's involvement in consumer, environmental, peace, labour and national liberation movements and women's movements.

Several criteria for stories are suggested to ensure the service is effective, including that a reader should not be left with a sense of despair. While pre-

sending reality the writer should highlight the hopeful aspects of a situation.

To get access to WFS material individuals or groups can subscribe to the whole service or to a bi-monthly bulletin of selected information.

There are plans for regional networks developed through WFS to share information about events before they happen by sending information over the IPS wire services.

If you are interested write to: Anita Anand, Co-ordinator, Women, Communication and Development Project, Interpress Service, Via Panisperna 207, 00184 Rome, Italy. ☐

Celine Kearney.

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WHAT'S NEW

AUCKLAND

THE Y.W.C.A. offers the following activities for women (prices negotiable). For details phone 778-763, or call in at 10 Carlton Gore Rd., Grafton.

Skills:

Self-defence for women over 50, a one-day workshop, 27 Sept. Self defence, a two-day course, 4-5 Oct. Car mechanics, theory and practical, 27-28 Sept. Lawn mower repairs, a practical workshop, 4 Oct. Carpentry, an instruction, 11 — 12 Oct.

Exercise:

Tramping for beginners, Waitakere Cascade Park area, 27 Sept. Tramping, a one-day excursion, 19 Oct. Cycling around the waterfront and other scenic parts, 28 Sept.

Self:

Meditation, 18 Oct. Reflexology and bach flowers, 18 Oct.

ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA SUPPORT GROUP now has an office at Outreach, 1 Ponsonby Road. A regular drop-in afternoon is held Mondays, 1 — 3 p.m., for information, support or just a chat. Phone 678-493.

WELLINGTON

WOMEN AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY have moved to Kennedy House, 1st floor, 33 Cuba St., P.O. Box 475, Wellington. Phone 733-998. Office hours 10-3 weekdays.

MANAWATU

LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP meets once a fortnight in Palmerston North for a meal and a social evening. The group would love to hear from more lesbians in the area, or from anyone who's passing through. Contact: P.O. Box 509, Palmerston North.

HAMILTON

PALESTINE HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE,

With Jewish and Arab speakers is to be held 5 — 7 September, University of Waikato. Contact: P.O. Box 68-367, Auckland. Ph. 568-574.

ROTORUA

BECAUSE WE'RE WOMEN is a gathering for women on community and continuing education. Women are the main consumers of community education, yet we have little say in the education we get. Join a group of women to discuss visions for the future, and the promotion of women's view of learning. Keswick Camp, Rotorua, from noon 25th to p.m. 27th September. Contact N.Z.A.C.C., P.O. Box 13-072, University of Waikato P.O., Hamilton. Or phone Gillian Marie, Ham 62-889 extn 4706 or Libby Clements 63-743.

WEST COAST

BULLER WOMEN'S REFUGE, a 24-hour answering service. P.O. Box 319, Westport. Ph. 8025.

BLenheim

N.O.W., MARLBOROUGH, is holding a Women's Day on Sept. 20; workshops and high profile women speakers. All women most welcome. Contact the convenor: Joan Walters, 15 Hale Street, Blenheim. Ph. 86-786.

CHRISTCHURCH

WOMENS DANCE on the first Saturday of every month, 8.30 p.m. in the Upper Common Room, Students Union Building, Otautahi, Canterbury University.

NATIONAL

LIMBS DANCE COMPANY, having just returned from performing in Los Angeles, is preparing for a national tour. The programme of all-new works includes "Tarawera — Beneath the Mountain", "Drum Sing" and a jazz dance piece. Dunedin, 12-13 Sept., Regent Theatre.

Christchurch, 17-18 Sept., Theatre Royal.

Nelson, 21-22 Sept., Theatre

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Royal.
Wellington, 25-27 Sept., State Opera House.

INTERNATIONAL

SAGEWOMAN is an American magazine dedicated to strengthening women's inner visions, to transform our world. Contributions are welcomed. Subscription: \$13.00. Single issue: \$4.50. Contact Sagewoman, P.O. Box 1478, Hillsboro, Auckland. Phone 97-123.

WAIKANI SEMINAR on the ethics of development at the University of Papua New Guinea, 7-12 September will have a special section on women and development. Contact Bruce Yeates, UPNG, Box 320, University PO, National Capital District, PNG.

MERE AN SAVE FO DEVELOPMEN, a women's technology fair, runs from 15-20 September, in Honiara, Solomon Islands. Nine days on agriculture, food preservation, fuels, family health care

and peace. Write to Gloria Sibisopere, Box 494, Honiara, Solomon Islands for more information. Visitors will need to arrange their own accommodation and travel.

WOMEN AND HEALTH: the 5th international meeting will be held in San Jose, 23 — 28 May, 1987. Main themes: population policies, community health, drugs, health care systems, and environmental health hazards. One of the aims is to relate health issues of international concern with grassroots work by women at the local level. Contact: Apso, 5355, San Jose 1000, Costa Rica. Ph. 27.15.68. Anticipated cost to participants: US\$40.00 per day.

POETRY CONTESTS with over \$5000.00 in prizes are sponsored each year by the American Poetry Association to encourage the writing of poetry. Entry is free. Also free on request is "The Poet's Guide to Getting Published". For guidelines on submissions to the contests write to APA, P.O. Box 2279, Santa Cruz, California. 95063 — 2279. Ph. (408) 429-1122.

YOUNG AND HETERO SEXUAL

An article on heterosexuality, a positive article on heterosexuality, what a tall order! At last I thought I had my opportunity to get them all back, but no it's gotta be positive. What can I say? I glance through my writings for ideas but my words are just measures of heartache and angst, all pain 'n not much passion. I just can't do it — set aside years of hard earned cynicism. I've got to tell it like it is: no hearts and flowers. Its cutthroat baby in this meat market and only the strong survive.

Oh God, I'm Straight!

Heterosexuality means having sexual desire for the opposite sex. It's the most accepted form of human sexual behaviour — the one society promotes as being "normal". So wow, I'm normal! Sometimes I just think I'm stupid. But where did I go wrong? I think the fact that heterosexuality is assumed, ie it's something you're supposed to be born with, complicates the problem. It's not something you examine and decide about — you don't "come out" as a heterosexual. Society is big on the production of romance, fairytale romances that no one can live up to. Advertising produces a desire for the impossible — between the image and the reality falls the shadow. Men are expecting women to be passive, beautiful,



stacked, bionic, submissive . . . but women aren't conditioned to be so choosy. Any man will do — a woman on her own, what's the matter with her? We may not believe that a deodorant will have a man accosting us with stolen flowers and have us looking back with a limpid smile, but it's hard to completely reject all that crap when it's so prevalent. How does one get an objective view through the malaise of TV passion? (I think at this stage I should point out that I don't have any answers, these questions are purely rhetorical — I'm as screwed up as the next girl.)

First Romance

So one assumes heterosexuality and has a first romance. I can remember fiercely refusing submission as boys grappled for something that I thought I should protect. Even if it was daggy to still be a virgin at sixteen — these boys had no idea who I was or what I thought (listening to girls isn't big on adolescent boys priority lists), so I certainly wasn't going to give them what they wanted. I soon came to realise that acceptance meant a boyfriend, and that getting a boyfriend meant lowering one's intelligence greatly. It meant shutting up while boys told you things that you already knew, smiling

wide eyed while they explained things to you that you'd already worked out for yourself or worse still listening intently to things that you had not the slightest flicker of interest in. In short, lots of compromising, but it just seemed like the thing to do at the time — who was I to reason why?

The Ones To Avoid

Everyone was always asking, "Have you got yourself a boyfriend yet?", particularly relatives (they are big offenders in these stakes). Of course, the candidates one's mother chooses have to be avoided at all costs. These "nice boys" who will stimulate you with their stamp collection, maybe let you watch them in a squash tournament or else ask you ballroom dancing. The thing that really got me was the way even the mild mannered ones turned base animal if left alone with them for too long. Helpful cousins/brothers who try to palm their hubcap mates off on to you also have to be discouraged. I remember diving underneath my bed pleading with my mother to say I wasn't home when cous' would bring his friends over with names like Jumbo, Perv and Foodworm . . . no way was I getting into their V-8s. Yuk! I'll wait thanks all the same.

People organising one's life for you can inspire all sorts of rebellious action, mine was to develop a defiant attraction for weirdos. I sent my mother grey with a stream of flamboyant punk rockers, ex crims, divorcees, fathers, used car sales people, musicians .. "no hopers" in general. Heh heh heh anything not expected. She soon stopped pushing me into coupledness.

The Big One

And then it happened — fireworks, after all those double bangers. A boy who was okay. One who actually listened to me, didn't think he was God and who didn't want to jump on top of me straight away. So we had a power struggle, I mean relationship, for a while. It meant submission and denial of one's self a lot of the time but it didn't seem to matter as it was a mutual thing. But then the other woman (women) syndrome happened and exit: nice boy, enter: insensitive creep. How could he do it to me? Ciao baby indeed. I hate them all ... well for a few days anyway. It wasn't long till I was back on the horse that threw me (Freud would love that one) with a vengeance.

Swinging

The no strings attached exchange (one night stands) seemed like the answer. I could get physical satisfaction (well I could try) without getting emotionally screwed up. But it never works out like that — I couldn't cope with those empty mornings after and the "see ya" 'round sometime"s. What's the matter with me, why didn't they want to see me again? — I'm too fat aren't I, that's it isn't it??? And then the ones that do want to see you again usually bore you or see you when they're not seeing their girlfriends. It's like a challenge or something ... I worry about my masochistic tendencies, it's a sort of desire to have control by being the one to initiate the sexual act — but ending up feeling bad because you weren't an object of desire. Yikes, I'm scared about the politics of all this — I wish I could get my head together. Social conditioning is hard to fight. How does my feminist consciousness fit in with my heterosexuality? "What feminist consciousness", do I hear you holler?

Who's Left Holding The Baby?

Contraception is a big bone of contention in this heterosexuality business. Having sex with boys means

possible pregnancy. So, precautions must be taken and out of all the contraceptive options, condoms are the only things that boys can use and thereby take an active role in contraception. Being responsible about sex usually ends up being the woman's job and the contraceptive choices available to women aren't exactly good.

How many men have you met who offer to use condoms/carry them around in their wallets/relish the thought of slipping on those little helmets? Most of the time it doesn't even enter boys' heads as a point of consideration — I've only ever encountered one who asked "If I was right?" They have it too easy: we certainly don't get pregnant by ourselves and it's not our fault that we're fertile. So, we've just got to make boys aware that if there is going to be sex, contraception has to be a mutual consideration.

Control

Girls are bombarded with lots of information on how they should act, look, feel and talk in order to nab themselves a man. If one were to read most young women's magazines indeed it would appear to be a girls only really worthy aim in life. Boys aren't represented as having the same questionable preoccupation. If a boy was to announce to the world that all he really wanted was a girl to settle down with him, he'd be labelled wimp of the highest degree. Boys have no handbooks on how to act in respect of girls — they are set up as masters of the situation. Everything is done for his eyes and nothing is expected of him. Boys do not spend their time hankering for acceptance and buying pad-

ded jockettes to make themselves more sexually appealing to women. Oh no, boys are boys in their own right. Hence, when relating to boys, sexually or otherwise, it is sometimes hard fighting their assumptions of innate supremacy and right to control. It takes a lot to knock down brick walls. Sometimes it's better just to go find a gate.

On the other extreme, or perhaps closely linked to this is the objectification of women by men. Boys tell me they really like me, love me, even adore me, but I have these nagging doubts ... yes, you guessed it I don't think they even know me. Sure, they may like what I represent but not me realised. So where am I? They like the way I look, what I do, or the fact that I am their rebellion against their girlfriend or a boost to their ego but they certainly don't hang on every word that I say. On the contrary.

I think I'd better stop here, I'm depressing myself. So many pitfalls! Who's a girl supposed to "do it" with? Until I come to terms with celibacy I'll continue conceding to the chemical attraction (that built in self destructive device) and take the knocks or deal them out ruthlessly to the more submissive suitors. Revenge is sweet. Really, I'm not looking for an OK boy. If you've found a boy who doesn't think he's God, listens to what you say, doesn't objectify you, takes some responsibility for contraception ... congratulations (where does he live?) — you win a free trip to Utopia and all the orgasms you ever asked for. Enjoy! □

Reprinted from Skirt Magazine, 231 Abercrombie St, Chippendall NSW 2008, Australia.

WOMEN'S WORK:
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PERSONAL POLITICS



LESBIAN FEMINISTS AND LOVE

Sexual relationships can be wonderful, and they can be awful. Pat Rosier writes about some of the dilemmas for lesbian feminists.

"Lesbian feminists' relationships don't last because they have such high expectations."

"We're supposed to be non-monogamous, but it's hard to get anyone to talk about jealousy."

"I feel very alone and isolated because I haven't had a relationship for four years."

"We broke up for several months because Mira is a Maori, and it wasn't

'done' for a Pakeha and a Maori to have a relationship."

"The expectations are incredibly high — lesbian relationships must be everything that heterosexual relationships are not!"

"I have had a lot of woman lovers over the years and most of them are still good friends."

**WHAT WE BELIEVE
AND OUR
EMOTIONAL REACTIONS
DO NOT ALWAYS
MESH**

"The excessive attention we pour onto the person we have a sexual relationship with is ultimately destructive."

"I very badly want to believe that it is possible to have a lesbian relationship

that lasts for many years (maybe even forever!) without it becoming stifling and awful."

"Monogamy is just carrying on some of the worst aspects of heterosexual lifestyles."

These are all things that have been said to me by lesbians I have talked with about writing this article. What follows is a personal ramble through some of the ideas about sexual relationships between lesbians that I have been thinking, talking and reading about for some time.

There are many perspectives not represented including those of lesbians who are not feminist. (There is a general belief that non-feminist lesbians have relationships which last, on the whole, longer than those of lesbian feminists.) Most of the women I talked to are Pakeha, coming from a culture that places a huge emphasis on relationships providing all our nur-

I want to thank all the women who have talked with me about this piece, particularly Sharon Alston, Hilary Haines, Peta Joyce, Jenny Rankine and Shirley Tamihana.

turing, unlike some communal/kin-based cultures. (Maori lesbians living traditionally can have whanau support.) The point of view of young lesbians living at "home", or making their own households, may be different in a number of ways from mine. (Look for an article by young lesbians in a later *Broadsheet*.) And many lesbians have children, a circumstance which is profoundly relevant to having relationships — that again is for a later article.

My conscious belief and value system comes from feminism now, but I grew up living in a state house in a New Zealand town, in a nuclear family. For the first 35+ years of my life I lived according to the norms of Pakeha society (school, paid work, marriage, children, paid work...), and I am still trying to deal with the contradictions. We carry into feminism with us the emotional needs and wants that our lives and culture have created, and so we carry them into our lesbian relationships.

In traditional heterosexual relationships the partners (especially the woman) may expect to somehow "find fulfilment" through each other, an attitude that fosters dependence rather than autonomy. Personal identity is submerged, women are taught that they should sacrifice their needs, emotions and ambitions for the man, as well as that there must be something wrong if that one relationship does not fill every need. "... again and again we are bludgeoned with a club equally comprised of chunks of guilt, self-doubt, submissiveness, self-denial and fear." (*Our Right to Love*. Quotes that are not acknowledged are from women I spoke to.)

Equality is important in lesbian feminist relationships, and the patterns described above are actively rejected. As women and as lesbians we are economically disadvantaged, and our oppression as lesbians affects the ways we relate to each other. Charlotte Bunch puts it like this.

"As more lesbians recognised the political significance of lesbianism, we began to see that heterosexism functions in every institution that feminists have shown to be oppressive to women: the work place, schools, the family, the media, organised religion etc. All of society's institutions are based on the assumption that every woman either is or wants to be bonded to a man both

FEMINIST LESBIANS WANT RELATIONSHIPS WHERE THERE IS NO POWER OVER

economically and emotionally and they depend on the idea that heterosexuality is both the only natural and the superior form of sexuality. These assumptions — the ideology of heterosexism — help to maintain the institutional oppression of all women..." (*Our Right to Love*).

This is the context in which lesbians relate to each other. Young women, women with low incomes, women with children, will have their choices limited by these circumstances. Also,

"We need to acknowledge that there are lesbians who are not feminists, who have role-playing relationships, that many of these relationships tend to be long term. I personally know a couple who have been lovers for longer than 25 years. One of them knows my mother and is about the same age as my mother."

Beginning a relationship is (yet another) whole article in itself. Romance, falling in love, lust, becoming intimate in many ways, making decisions about where and how to live, coming out (particularly if it is a first lesbian relationship) could all be talked about at length.

"Lesbian sex is just wonderful. After only one experience I knew that it touched me far more deeply than heterosexual sex ever had done, even though I felt very guilty. In the sexual experience I could retain my identity, yet still let go. The sex was a kind of touchstone as our relationship developed. Could I form a relationship and still be me? Forming a good relationship is much harder than having good sex, but the whole thing was totally compelling for me. Why else would I want to leave the safer world of heterosexuality and run the risk of becoming a social outcast?"

Who celebrates a new lesbian relationship? The women's families? co-workers? friends? Mostly it's other lesbians. We may totally reject the idea of a "royal wedding", but it would be reinforcing to get some of that ap-

proval!

"I have always had an uneasy feeling about lesbian relationships. Everybody else seems to break up and I know very few relationships that have lasted longer than, say, five years. Clearly, there's much debate about whether or not relationships are supposed to last. It seems that I have acquired a sense that we're not meant to have relationships, that they're politically incorrect, they don't last and I'm not supposed to even want them to last. Lesbians just aren't meant to make lasting intimate connections and commitments to other lesbians. But I'm not sure if that's reality or just reaction to my rather vague sense that lesbian relationships are lacking something fundamental and undefined. Clearly, obviously, what these relationships lack is societal approval and any kind of patriarchal power on the part of either woman involved. I'm not sure whether this sense of a void is going to leave as my relationship develops and grows stronger... There is a happiness I have about this relationship that makes me want other people to understand my happiness, appreciate it and be happy for me." (Denise Kulp in *off our backs*)

It is different for those who see themselves as basically on their own, fairly self sufficient, not necessarily seeing sexual relationships as involving "having a partner", choosing on the whole to live separately from lovers.

"I think that we should not compare our ways of relating to each other to a heterosexual, patriarchal model. I'm into us redefining lust, loving and leaving! Deciding on new ways to be. I'd like to see more encouragement given to our individuality. The freedom to be what we are."

The phrase "lesbian relationship" does imply (maybe we could try and change that — or we need new words) a couple with the major areas of their lives — except perhaps work — shared to some extent. A lot of lesbians describe themselves as in or having a relationship, and it is what a lot of lesbians want (particularly as they get older?). Feminist lesbians want relationships where there is no

"power over". If they are seeking a long-term, committed relationship they will try and work out its boundaries for themselves.

But what we believe and our emotional reactions do not always mesh. A particularly difficult issue is that of monogamy — or not. Sue Cartledge writes:

"What happens when one partner is keen to have other relationships and the other is keen to be monogamous? Whose wishes should be given greater weight? Is all the onus on the would-be monogamous partner to swallow her feelings or even try and change them? What responsibility does the other have to take account of those feelings? Is there indeed any negotiable ground upon which compromises could be worked out between monogamy and non-monogamy? The process of negotiation is itself problematic. How do you discuss with your lover your wish to have another lover without putting her in the position of being asked to give or refuse her permission? A position in which she loses either way — for if she agrees she loses her exclusive rights to your affections, while if she refuses she bears the burden of denying your freedom and your desire." (*sex and love*)

Trying to establish what each of you wants and needs at the beginning of a relationship, going into it with honesty, expressed as clearly as you can is a great idea. But as one woman said,

"At the beginning of all my relationships I tell my lover that I am not monogamous — I might never sleep with another woman while we are lovers, but I always make it clear that I have the right to. When I say this I have been accused of being incapable of love and not able to care about anyone."

I'm not looking for "solutions" to non/monogamy, because I don't think there are any. I think that it's an issue for feminists, whatever their sexual orientation, because we reject many of the ideas of "possessing" another person in the ways that marriage implies. And if we don't "own" our partners and lovers we accept their right to relationships with others.



I'M INTO US REDEFINING LUSTING, LOVING AND LEAVING

But it's one thing to have a set of ideas about this, and quite another to deal with the emotions that come up, often with a power and force that make you feel slightly crazy.

Jealousy is identified in psychological terms as a reaction to threats to one's self-esteem, often tied in to threats to the quality or existence of a romantic/sexual relationship. It involves fear of loss (of a lover's attention, of love, of being "first" or "only" in someone's affections, of the relationship), and can undermine any feelings of being sexually attractive, lovable, and worth loving, even though your lover continues to act lovingly towards you, and you have the support and love of friends. Behind jealousy may be a lack of trust in love and the strength of the jealous feelings are likely to be related to a woman's degree of security — her belief in herself. Feminists don't much like to talk about jealousy.

"I was absolutely overwhelmed by jealous feelings, and didn't want to be having them — I didn't think I 'should' be having them, but they were taking over all my thoughts and making me behave in ways I hated. I was crying so much and wanting my lover to stop seeing the other woman, and so panicky when she did. I never asked her to stop seeing the other woman and I'm pleased about that. But she certainly knew how I felt

about it! I have felt incredible hostility towards the other woman. I tried talking to friends about it, and although I got a lot of support for my distress I always got the feeling that I 'shouldn't' be so jealous. There was certainly an element of paranoia about it, because they never slept together, and my lover was completely consistent about her feelings for me. But I had these feelings that were possessing me and there didn't seem to be anywhere to take them. From nearly everyone (and most particularly myself) I got some feeling of disapproval."

The problem is getting our emotions to fall in line with our politics — perhaps we just have to accept that they won't. We need to somehow find ways to have the feelings that we disapprove of, be cared for (lovers can do some of this caring, but we need it from friends too), and try not to behave too badly while our emotions are in turmoil. Because I do believe that regardless of our emotional state we have to take responsibility for our behaviour. The strength of our emotions is not, to me, a justification for behaving manipulatively (eg telling different versions of events to different people in order to control the outcome), dishonestly (like starting a new relationship in order to show you "don't care"), or spectacularly (although this makes for some good stories). We have to respect our own anger/hurt and yet try to behave in ways we will not feel ashamed of later.

Maybe we have to decide for ourselves from time to time what we value most and be prepared to forgo what is in conflict with that. If we value monogamy we give up relating sexually to others (but we don't necessarily give up being sexually attracted to other women). And if freedom to be sexual in any of our relationships is important then we try to learn ways to deal with the conflict that this can bring. What are the other possibilities? We can agree on anything, but emotions being what they are we may be fooling ourselves in what we are agreeing to — we agree to something because we believe our partner has the right to her own choices, and don't know how to deal with the pain when she exercises that right.

Personal honesty is very important in all this: a woman may start a sexual relationship with another woman in

order to try and change something in a current relationship. For instance, she may be angry about a lover taking on more political/voluntary work, and begin a new sexual relationship to get her lover's attention, rather than dealing directly with what she is angry about. And there can be a whole complex set of things going on. For instance:

"When I was heterosexual I believed in non-monogamy. I thought jealousy was bourgeois and should be eradicated. Monogamous relationships seemed stifling. Now, looking back, I think that the period when I was non-monogamous was one of very incomplete relationships, most of which were quite flat.

The first few years of my lesbian relationship I didn't have any serious interest in anyone else. Jealousy was a theme, though. Just thinking about my lover with someone else was very painful. And I didn't mind at all her being jealous if she imagined me with anyone else.

The issue came up when I started getting sexually attracted to another woman. I immediately dragged up all my old ideas about non-monogamy in self defence. My lover was not convinced. She was just jealous. And how! So I really had to think through the whole issue. I decided not to have sex with the other woman (a decision helped by her saying no!). Later she might have said yes but then I was thinking more sensibly. What did I really want from her? I thought I just wanted a fuck, but really I wanted to make a statement to my lover about feeling unhappy about some aspects of our sex life. Also, I realised that when I want to be close to someone, the only way I know is through sex. It breaks down barriers — but it breaks down things I value too.

I haven't got it all sorted out, but the experience has made me realise that I hadn't ever made a real commitment to a lifelong relationship with my lover. That's what I want. Maybe things will go bad between us and we won't be able to live together. But I will always have a

WE'RE BREAKING NEW GROUND, ESTABLISHING NEW RELATION- SHIPS, NEW WAYS OF LIVING

relationship with her. After all, I will always have a relationship with my children, no matter what. I always have had a relationship with my parents, even though my mother has been dead a long time. I realise now that I will always have a relationship with my ex-husband even if I don't see him for long periods and even if I can't be close to him. So, my lover, too, is one of my family. She's not an object that I can trade in on another one if things get stale or full of conflict. If we ever split up there will always be a painful scar.

So, my old ideas about non-monogamy involved treating people like commodities. I do think people can have casual or short term relationships and that's okay, but you can't just ignore problems like jealousy."

It can all get really messy if we are fooling ourselves and others because we don't really know what we want, and if our behaviour is confusing. And as women we have been really well socialised into behaving indirectly, as well as not having wants and needs of our own and often not feeling that we have a right to them.

Anger is a particularly difficult emotion for women. We are not encouraged to express anger in a direct way (and I'm not talking about violence, but about knowing that we are angry, what about, and who with) and it takes consciousness and practice to learn to do so. So when we get angry with a lover our emotions may be being fueled by stored up anger from past relationships. Often, though, anger is an appropriate reaction to how we have been treated — what we need are ways of expressing it, and ways of dealing with it being expressed to us, that get beyond accusation and counter-accusation. It can be very difficult to say to someone that you are angry with them and tell them why, but it can often lead to much clearer communication — particularly if you are prepared to listen to what they say

back, and you both manage a reasonable level of honesty.

Psychologists and therapists writing about lesbian relationships (and they often do not distinguish between lesbians who are feminist and those who are not) see a major area of conflict for lesbians in what some refer to as "dyadic fusion" (yes, really!). This idea is rather more clearly expressed as,

"Simply being two people of the same sex who live as a minority in a heterosexual society has special interactional implications for the couple, especially in the area of attempting to achieve a balance between closeness and separateness." (Barbara Decker)

A similar idea is expressed as "fear of intimacy", that is, the fear you experience when you get close to someone and start to feel vulnerable because you are letting her get under your layers of protection against the world. So you back off. And your lover feels rejected. Or you don't back off and begin to feel that your identity is dissolving, that what you are is part of this other entity, a "couple", that you don't exist in your own right. You go everywhere, do everything together. There is security and comfort in this, but it is common for sex to happen less and less frequently as this "fusion" occurs.

In an *off our backs* article, "Lovers Who Don't Make Love", Tricia Lootens asks,

"... if you aren't going to have sex with your lover, why not simply stop being lovers?"

And she goes on to say,

"... being lovers involves all kinds of intimacy — other than sex. You cuddle; you play silly, games; you rub each others' aches, pull each others' hair; bathe each other; you sleep together. You share meals, chores, maybe laundry — maybe a home. You may be each others' first allies, sounding boards and critics. You may be best friends."

She also talks about how lesbians don't want to know about lesbian lovers who don't make love because,

"We created a fantasy of the ideal lesbian couple: stable, independent women who are each others' best lovers and best friends. We want to be this couple. Failing that, we want to

know them. If two women seem happy together, the last thing in the world we want to hear is that they don't have sex."

Obviously it is possible to have sex without intimacy and intimacy without sex. The two together have a particularly powerful emotional impact. But lesbians are making their own definitions:

"I think we are still affected by heterosexual conditioning in our lesbian relationships — for example, when I first met Alice, everyone assumed that we were lovers, and therefore a 'couple'. If she went to a party on her own she was met with, 'Where's Susan?' If either of us started another relationship the other would be asked in tones of great solicitude how we felt about that. I felt almost as trapped as being in a heterosexual marriage! We are not lovers and never have been, but we share a home and a commitment to an ongoing intimate friendship. Ideally, we don't limit each other's relationships with other women, but in practice we have both felt insecure when this has happened. For me, it's an important lesbian relationship, but because it cannot be put in a category (lovers, friends, partners) it has little recognition in the heterosexual or lesbian worlds."

What I have not read or heard anything much about is long-term, committed lesbian relationships where one or both partners has a sexual relationship with another woman sometimes, or now and then. Maybe relationships don't often survive these events. Maybe those who manage it don't talk about it. (Fear of being seen to brag? Hiding the pain? Need to maintain privacy?) In this sort of triangle equal power at all "corners" seems barely achievable.

"Breaking up is so very hard to do", goes the old (heterosexual) pop song. It sure is. Staying together often isn't that easy, either, but can have more rewards. The pattern of serial monogamy — moving from one relationship to another, each lasting from months to years — is very common (and quite distinct from living as a single woman and having a number of sexual relationships), but no-one seems to feel very good about it. It means going through a lot of break-

ups and makes it hard to make or believe in long-term plans.

Ending relationships is something I don't like to think about a lot, maybe because I keep seeing it happening. I've seen the pain — and the strength — that can come from it. I've seen women put a huge amount of effort into making a relationship work and then have it end. I join in jolly conversations about tacky ways of finishing ("Leave in her car", "Send her a singing telegram at work.") but they always make me feel uncomfortable.

"Because we cease to believe in marriage for ourselves does this mean we have a completely different set of expectations of our relationships? Or does this mean we have the same expectations but find it hard to apply them successfully since we are not in fact getting married to each other? Perhaps the reason we have 'five year relationships' is because we are more free to move out, and that in fact most lover relationships wouldn't last much longer than that, anyway."

Lesbian relationships are *all* outside the rules of society. As feminists we reject the rules that society, and often our own heterosexual experiences, teach us so hard. We have to work out ways of doing things that allow for the differences among us (difference of culture, class, experiences, personality), that are consistent with our feminist beliefs and that allow us to treat each other as honestly and as kindly as possible.

So we're breaking new ground, establishing new relationships, new ways of living alone or with flatmates, new ways of having lovers and friends. And there are a lot of forces, inside ourselves and from "out there" telling us we can't, we shouldn't, it's wrong, immoral, evil. So of course we botch it quite often. Sometimes we're so kind we can't bear to be honest ("Of course I still love you"), sometimes we mistake cruelty ("Actually, I never did like skinny women") for honesty.

And we must *not* make a new set of rules to beat ourselves with, like we should masturbate, have orgasms, be non-monogamous (or monogamous, depending on who makes the list), *not* be jealous, *not* be dependent, *not* be "couply", *be* out, and so on. May the idea of political correctness in personal relationships die

forever!

"The personal is political (meaning what happens in our personal lives has political causes) has become the political is personal, meaning our political beliefs must be reflected in our personal behaviour and that every personal act has a political effect or is a political act. Therefore our personal lives must be judged by the same criteria as our political actions."

There is a constant tension between our practice and our feminist beliefs, but heavy judgements and guilt do not resolve it.

There are some questions that seem to me to be very important if we are going to create our own ways of relating to each other. I don't have answers for them, and maybe it's not "answers" we need but a (and this sounds very stuffy) set of principles to base our behaviour on. Some of my questions are: If we value what we want for ourselves (eg monogamy), do we then devalue what others want that is different (like non-monogamy)? If we choose to live as a single woman are we making a judgement about others who choose to live with a partner? How much responsibility do we take for the effects of our behaviour on our lovers (see the Sue Cartledge quote earlier)? How do we deal with our feelings of jealousy/pain/anger? How do we respect a lover's choices when they cause us pain?

"Retaining a strong personal sense of autonomy within a relationship does not mean acting without regard to one's lover. It does mean respecting oneself, one's needs and emotions. It does mean considering one's own feelings and needs as at least as important as those of the other person. Women together in relationships owe it to ourselves, at least, to understand that there may be times when differences in personal needs, ambitions, goals, can no longer be accommodated within a relationship. We owe it to ourselves to realize that our personal meaning must not be defined in terms of whom we are with, but in terms of who we, ourselves, are. We must accord our lovers the same respect in terms of autonomy." (*Our*

Right to Love).

When it comes to considering principles of behaviour I can come up with only two — those of respect and honesty. Neither of these is easy to achieve, and I don't see them as something to give ourselves points for when we get them "right". That would be making more bats to beat ourselves with ("Was I truly showing her respect then?", "I'm not sure I was being *completely* honest when I said I didn't mind"). I see them rather as ideas to be kept in mind, touchstones to keep in contact with as we stumble our way towards creating relationships that both satisfy us and leave us free to be what we are. □

BOOKS

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Lesbian Sex by JoAnn Loulan, Spinsters Ink

Our Right To Love Ginny Vida (ed), Prentice-Hall

Pleasure and Danger Carol Vance (ed) RKP

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OCTOBER
PENGUINS



What is the price of success?

How does a woman become successful in
New Zealand today?
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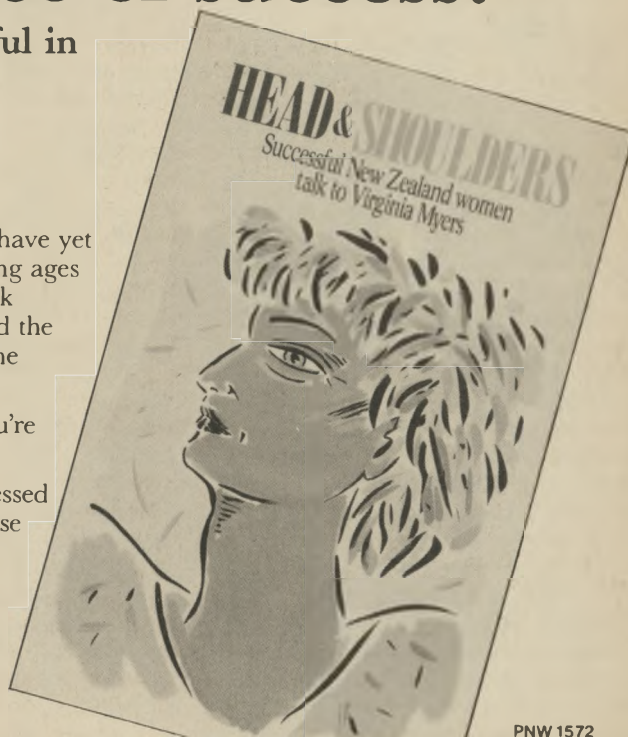
Women are on the move in New Zealand, but few have yet gained positions of power. Nine women from varying ages and backgrounds, and with different aspirations, talk frankly about their professional and private lives and the pitfalls, conflicts and prejudices they had to overcome on their way to success.

"They would say to me, He mou mou koe hoki, you're being wasted as a woman" — Mira Szaszy

"I always knew I had organising ability but I suppressed it because I felt I was being bossy." — Helen Melrose

Virginia Myers talks to;

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| ★ Fiona Kidman | ★ Elspeth Kennedy |
| ★ Merata Mita | ★ Anne Audain |
| ★ Helen Melrose | ★ Mira Szaszy |
| ★ Wendy Pye | ★ Miriam Saphira |
| ★ Helen Clark | |



PNW 1572

PULLING THE PUBLIC SERVICE APART

In this, the second of three articles, Mary Slater looks at the massive changes proposed in New Zealand's public services, and how they will affect women. Mary is a member of the Wellington Social Wage group.



Labour's proposed public sector reforms will mean a completely different face to government. The government no longer has a commitment to fund, plan and deliver services to all New Zealanders. Instead it's likely to provide services to people and organisations if they are prepared and able to pay for them.

EXAMPLE 1: THE POST OFFICE

The Post Office offers a huge variety of services from a comprehensive network of post office, large and small, throughout New Zealand. Some of the services make money (telephone/telecommunications), some break even (postal), and some lose money (banking). Because the services are run as an integrated whole, they can subsidise each other to provide standard low cost services. Whether you live in the country, the suburbs, or the centre of the city, the cost of the letters you post, the phone you use and most importantly your access to these services is the same.

The commercial approach which the post office is being asked to adopt directly challenges this concept of service. Already a report commissioned by government has recommended that, in the interests of efficiency, up to half of post offices should close.

The post office is an integral part of the people's lives — it is the place you post letters, register your car, license your TV, pay bills, collect Family and other Social Welfare Benefits, collect superannuation, collect mail, and because of this large variety of services, post offices form a social centre, a meeting place in the community. They are also a major source of employment.

Women particularly stand to lose. Local rural or suburban post offices serve the interests of those who spend

their day mainly at home, those who work near home in the suburbs and small towns, or in city centres in unsocial hours when city post offices are closed.

PRIVATISATION

What's the background to this massive reorganisation? Public services are being reorganised overseas too — most notoriously under the Thatcher administration in England, where profitable public services have been sold. This is known as privatisation — public assets which provide essential services, like the British telecommunications system, are being sold to private owners who will make private profit out of them. The New Zealand government says privatisation is not on the agenda. So what exactly are they doing?

THE SEARCH FOR EFFICIENCY

In December 1985, the government defined efficiency in its "Set of Principles for State Owned Enterprises for the Produce of Goods and Services on a Commercial Basis". Efficiency is equivalent to the administration of state-owned enterprises as "successful businesses", using "commercial criteria" as the index of success. Such enterprises will be administered by "Boards comprising, generally, members appointed from the private sector". Non-commercial functions will be separated from those enterprises. So far, the services directly affected appear to be,

- the Forest Service
- the Lands and Survey Department
- the Electricity division of the Ministry of Energy
- the State Coal division of the Ministry of Energy
- the Civil Aviation division of the Ministry of Transport
- the Post Office.

In March 1986, the government published "Principles Guiding the 1986 Expenditure Review", which applied to every government department (with the possible exception of Health, Education and Social Welfare) and obliged public trading enterprises to

- fund additional spending from private sector loans,
- pay tax and dividends
- recover the cost of supplying goods and services from the users, instead of supplying them free or below cost at the taxpayers' expense.

In May, the Minister of Finance issued an extensive statement on how it was going to do this. The equation of efficiency, commercialisation and the search for profit was complete, and the user is to pay. Three further elements of reform appeared —

- the rights of government departments to alter worker levels from +1% down to -5% of current levels
- departments had to cut expenditure
- departments could obtain services from outside contractors rather than from other government departments.

EXAMPLE 2: THE CLEANING SERVICE OF THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

The State Services Commission, the employer for public servants, employs its own cleaners who clean almost all government departments. They are mainly women.

The government's expenditure reform statement (see

later) allows each government department to seek cleaning services where they will. By implication the statement invites commercial cleaning contract companies to clean government departments. The same statement says the Internal Affairs Cleaning Service has to reform in the image of a private company, seeking profitability and being prepared to tender at the lowest possible price for cleaning contracts in government departments. Over 90 percent of the cost of cleaning is labour, so labour costs are the only source of profit, and the only thing that can be cut in the competition for contracts. So women cleaners in the public service will be expected to provide a service and a profit. Their working conditions and their numbers can only deteriorate, in the name of efficiency.

In fact, any group of workers in the public service who have an equivalent group in the private sector — like typists, cafeteria workers, computer operators, lawyers, security guards and so on — can feel those same chill winds of contracting out.

WAGE "FLEXIBILITY"

The government has also instituted a Review of State Pay Fixing, which according to the Minister of Labour is to introduce "flexibility". Where government departments provide services already provided in the private sector (like insurance services), the government wants them to start from the same labour cost as the private sector services.

"Flexibility" in the public sector has the same nasty ring as in the private sector. Destabilising wage fixing and hence wage levels, is disguised as the desire to have flexibility to pay more to those skilled workers and managers whose skills are in short supply.

The major business employers do not appear to have

succeeded in their flexibility push in the private sector. However, almost one quarter of private sector workers (many of whom are women) have wage rates linked to the public sector. The push for flexibility in the public service looks like a back door attempt to achieve "flexibility" in both public and private sector wages. If this sounds overly suspicious, bear in mind that the new state owned enterprises and corporations have mostly private business people on their boards!

The government intends to intervene as little as possible in the economy, believing that the market is the best supplier of goods and services — the best indicator of where workers and materials will find their most valuable use. Even where the government plans to retain ownership of New Zealand resources, it wants these resources to be used as though they were privately owned — hence corporatisation.

The trouble is, businesses do not have a proud record of social responsibility when given free rein in the marketplace. Their goal is profit, and they will shift investment within the country, and overseas, to get profit in a "deregulated" environment.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVATISATION?

Secondly, some public assets — so far the BNZ, the Shipping Corporation and Petrocorp — are seen as needing more capital. While the government's policy is that extra money should be found by loans from the private sector, the Prime Minister has decided to issue shares in the BNZ to private owners as a method of raising money. The government will retain a 67% interest, and this is somehow being described as better than the Thatcher sell-offs, not real privatisation!

WHY THE PUBLIC SERVICE GOT SO BIG

Since the introduction of a capitalist economy with the British takeover in the 1840s, investment by the State (government and the public service bureaucracy) has been built up gradually. When the first New Zealand government was formed, it had to give handouts to European immigrants to stop them from starving, because there was no European labour market in which they could make a living. Soon, handouts were obviously not enough.

Julius Vogel, then treasurer and later Premier, borrowed money in the 1870s to build railway lines, roads, bridges and telegraph lines, to modernise the economy and provide useful paid work for unemployed workers.

New Zealand was one of the first countries in which the State was the sole supplier of railways, roads, a postal system, a minimum health system, and a universal compulsory education system. It also made sure that every worker was entitled to minimum wages and access to union membership.

The State is so pervasive in New Zealand because:

- business doesn't want to invest in huge, long-term, unprofitable projects like general hospitals, railways, a universal education system, hydroelectricity, and so on
- our sparse population and difficult terrain add to

the cost of supplying essential services like electricity, and radio and television broadcasts

- there was a general feeling that nobody should be too poor, and that poor people shouldn't have to beg for a survival income.

So by the 1940s, the economy had its basic, necessary structures provided by the State, funded by taxation, within which both businesses and workers made their money, and went about their daily lives with their families. The breadth of State services is startling — just have a look in the front pages of your telephone directory where the government departments are listed.

So the State creates the environment in which "the market" operates. The State is central to the whole economy. Sometimes the State's role has favoured workers over business (although not often!). Sometimes it favours business over workers. For example, the Muldoon National government underwrote private investment in the Think Big projects, and legally prohibited wage increases for working people for two years with the wage freeze. By 1984, the way the Muldoon government ran down public services which benefited working people and their families, and instead intervened in the interests of business, had helped to discredit government intervention in the economy. The scene was set for reform of the public service. And reform of the public sector was exactly what the new Labour government set out to do.

BEAT GST HERSTORY 1987



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IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Health, Education and Social Welfare are seen as the "true" social services, and have been temporarily re-prieved from the impact of the reforms. (Despite the obvious impact of changes in electricity, housing, postal, and other prices on the quality of life of all New Zealanders — on our social wage.)

Health, education and social welfare are to be the subject of a royal commission which will sit for approximately two years from September 1986. Clearly the outcome is very important for women, as workers in the service and as consumers.

The proposals for public reform can be applied to social services. These could be provided by local government, voluntary and charitable agencies, families at home, and privately owned profit — seeking providers of services, with a minimal role for central government. A market approach to health, for example, would mean services would be provided mostly by fee-for-service doctors and specialists, private hospitals, voluntary and charitable agencies, and medical insurance companies. The government would provide only a minimal safety net of services, and an income top-up for the low paid and beneficiaries, who are unable to pay for services.

EXAMPLE 3: CHILDCARE

Childcare well illustrates the dilemma we face. A market approach to centre-based care already exists. Government provides assistance with salaries, and very limited assistance with the capital costs of child care, but this does

not discriminate between, or favour, one form of ownership over another, nor does it favour state ownership. The system relies on the users — parents — to pay, and funds parents through tax rebates on fees paid, and through fee subsidies for low income families. So childcare services are extremely uneven in quantity and quality, and better off families have far higher access to quality centre-based care than do working class families.

The transfer of childcare from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education on 1 July opened the door for the change towards *funding the service* (like the Kindergarten Service) rather than *funding the user*. This change flies in the face of the rest of the public service reforms.

WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING?

Many people and groups think the public services should be reformed. There is real opposition to blanket government subsidies for business, like export incentives, or protecting farm incomes through SMPs. We need to debate whether the government should raise money through *taxes*, or though *user pays*, what the priorities are for spending and how services can be most effective. However, that debate has not occurred, and the government has just gone ahead and deregulated both the private and public sectors.

Workers in the public service, and users of the services need to make the government stop and listen. We need to work together to show other ways of improving the kinds of services that are provided, the way they are delivered, and the ways wages and conditions are set for workers in those services.

Business must contribute to that debate, and, more importantly, contribute to the funding of public services, by taxation or by paying for the services which it uses to help make a profit.

And we need to enable users and workers to have a say in the control and development of public services.

It is a huge challenge, and a timely one, which we need to respond to as individuals, as members of communities, and as union members. Time to put the thinking caps on.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Clearly the reorganisation of the public sector is over. Public and private sector unions have been working as hard as possible at protecting jobs, wages and conditions and protecting services. If you're a union member, you can get actively involved with this.

Wide discussion is happening within the Labour Party. By the time you read this, the issue will have been hotly debated at the Labour Party Conference.

If you're part of an organisation outside the union movement, and you'd like it to debate these issues, you may find it useful to invite a speaker from one of the most affected unions, like the Public Service Association, or the Post Office Union.

The government caucus committed itself to assessing the social impact of its state sector reforms. This promise keeps "falling off the back" and needs to be kept alive. What is the impact of commercialisation of forestry on small towns and provincial New Zealand, particularly in the South Islands? How will the commercialisation of the Housing Corporation rental and mortgage services affect the availability of housing to families? Talk about this to your local MP. Otherwise we are going to find out the social impact of these changes the hard way — too late. □

AGAINST ALL ODDS

GAY SEX LEGAL TOO

After 16 months of rallies, marches, delegations to MPs, letter campaigns, pickets, petitions, speeches and mounting homophobia, the first section of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill finally passed its third reading in Parliament on 9 July by 49 votes to 44. For the first time since immigrating Europeans introduced the law to Aotearoa last century, consenting homosexual sex between men is not a criminal act. The age of consent for gays and lesbians is 16, the same as for heterosexuals. The passing of the act has meant it is much less likely that laws criminalising lesbian sexuality will be introduced.

After its passing, opponents of the bill threatened another anti petition, and a campaign against MPs who voted for the bill at the next elections. Petitions, shmetitions — what's wrong with opinion polls? Probably that they show more than 60% of the country in favour of law reform.

The second section of the bill, which would have outlawed discrimination against lesbians and gay men, was thrown out of Parliament by 49 votes to 31 in April this year. Once we've caught out our breath from the campaign this time, we'll go for our full human rights.

Jenny Rankine

NO SWEET MOVIE

A Tauranga group co-ordinated by the Women's Centre formed to take action against *Sweet Movie* being shown in a film festival, which starts on suffrage day, 19 September. Groups in Auckland acted against this pornographic imported film and sent us information about it.

We met with the local theatre manager and also wrote to Mr RW Broad, exhibitions manager of Kerridge Odeon Corporation Limited, expressing our concerns and asking if *Sweet Movie* was going to be shown in Tauranga. "We believe the public of New Zealand should have the oppor-

tunity of viewing what could be considered artistic type productions that would not ordinarily become available for screening," he said.

We tried to contact Mr Broad again, with considerable difficulty. Initial attempts were made to fob us off.

Eventually we got a reply from his office that *Sweet Movie* would not be shown at Tauranga or Whakatane because it was not "economically viable". Nothing to do with our action, of course, according to Kerridge Odeon.

We had strategies planned and a strong group ready to fight. We had prepared a list of questions and statements that we were working out answers to, so that we were united in whatever we said. We had the press clamouring for a real radical Tauranga press story.

Ongoing action now focuses on Peter Tapsell, requesting him to review the censor's decision that has allowed *Sweet Movie* to be shown at all.

Ann Letheren and
Tauranga Women's Centre

REFUSING PATRIARCHAL DIPLOMACY

Zimbabwe's government supported its women members recently in the face of an insult by a visiting Iranian delegation. The President of Iran refused to shake hands with the Natural Resources and Tourism Minister, Victoria Chitepo, and the Deputy Education Minister, Maomi Nhwatiwa, insisted that female journalists attending news conferences wear veils, and refused to attend a state banquet in his honour because women sat at the head of the table and wine was served.

A Zimbabwe government statement said that the roles played by women in Zimbabwe's struggle for majority rule and the current development of the country "entitle them to an equal status and standing in every respect with their male counterparts",

and that this was a "principle on which the government would not compromise". The dinner went ahead without the Iranian guests and without the customary speeches.

Kinesis April '86

ARCHAIC LAW REPEALED

The Travancore-Cochin Christian Succession Act governs India's Syrian Christian community and dates back to 1916. It clearly discriminates against women in the inheritance of property. It states that if the head of the household dies intestate, his widow can only claim a maintenance allowance terminable at death or upon remarriage, and his daughters are eligible to receive only a quarter of the share due to each son, or 5,000 rupees, whichever is less. The law is based on the assumption that every woman would get married and stay married. The gift of streedhan, and equivalent of dowry payable on marriage, was seen to be sufficient provision for a woman, and apparently justified her exclusion from inheriting any portion of the family wealth.

In late February this year, the law became past history. A Supreme Court repealed it, providing a ray of hope to the hundreds of abandoned, deserted and destitute women who have been victimised by it. The tenacity and courage of Mary Roy, a 70-year-old school principal who was determined to challenge the law, was largely responsible.

Mary filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court challenging the act for its violation of sections of the Indian constitution, and the way it discriminated on the basis of sex, religion and place of birth. She was boycotted by her community and pitched in battle against her family, but her campaign attracted considerable support from women's groups around the country.

Outwrite May '86

We welcome short contributions for this page about gains or good news from women in Aotearoa and the Pacific.

GETTING AWAY FROM RACIST GUILT



Camille Guy gives her thoughts about new directions for feminist anti-racism.

Illustration Helen Courtney

Sometimes I perceive *Broadsheet* as one big splutter of outrage and righteous indignation. This is especially apparent over the issue of racism; liberal platitudes, guilt tripping, confession and atonement seem too often to constitute white feminist anti-racist practice. I think the limitations of radical feminist analysis make this situation inevitable. Radical feminist theory has failed the women's liberation movement and now threatens to have the same effect on the anti-racist movement. My arguments are about analysis and theory and no disrespect is intended towards those committed and hardworking people in the feminist and anti-racist movements. If I express myself bluntly and my criticisms are severe, it is because I believe the radical movement is in such doldrums there is little to lose. In writing this I have drawn on my own personal feminist history, hoping that it will make my arguments less abstract and more accessible.

I went to my first women's liberation meeting in Glebe, Sydney in 1969. I'd grown up in the fifties and sixties when few women questioned their subordination. Feminist ideas that now seem glaringly obvious and inescapable, weren't then. Like most of the women in that Glebe group my only previous political involvement had been in left wing student politics. We were conscious that the marxist model of society was inadequate on the "oppression of women" (as our subordination was beginning to be described). So throughout those intense and prolific early years of the Australian women's liberation movement, we struggled to reconcile marxism and feminism.

Despite our most tortuous efforts we did not succeed. They were, it turned out, two fundamentally different and

incompatible systems of thought. Feminism offered powerful insights into women's position in the family and society. It pointed out that relative to men we were subordinate, poor and powerless. That we had internalised our own subordination and it affected all aspects of our lives. Then, feminism took these insights and made a social model out of them. By making a conceptual shift from "women are subordinate", to "men oppress women", to "male oppression of women is the underlying and fundamental structure of our society", the notion of patriarchy was advanced.

But what Marx claimed was that Western capitalist societies could no longer be understood in terms of the oppression of one group by another. Though appropriate for feudalism, personal oppression wouldn't work as a basic explanatory principle, whether of rich over poor, of white over black, or of men over women. Instead Marx described a society based on the impersonal economic mechanism of capital, driven by its own momentum and out of our control. He took an amoral view of it, arguing that exploitation wasn't the result of injustice or wickedness, but was what the system required.

This was a remarkable advance, a rejection of anarchism and utopian socialism and of Marx's own earlier thinking (the rhetoric of *The Communist Manifesto*) . . . but well over 100 years later the radical movement continues to repeat mistakes that *Das Capital* ought to have put an end to.

Of course to many feminists this conflict of models didn't matter. While they vaguely opposed capitalism as a subsidiary of patriarchy, they weren't really interested in the way women's oppression related to the economic system. And what Marx had to say about capitalism could be readily dismissed as intellectual, and the work of a nineteenth century white middle class male.

This article came out of discussions and reading by members of *Women for Aotearoa*. My authorship was incidental and reliant on generous support from Alison Jones.

While feminist practice remained at the level of cries of oppression and assertion of rights, this worked well enough. But as the feminist movement widened its scope to include issues of class and race (seen as inextricably bound up with women's position in society), those shelved theoretical difficulties began to dislodge.

Back in New Zealand in the mid-seventies I had got caught up in various feminist activities: *Broadsheet*, the abortion issue, women's centres and refuges, and so on.

We were busy, but every so often there were pauses to discuss theory. Or ostensibly to do that, perhaps really to make social contact with each other. Whichever it was, it was usually a disaster on both counts, the 1978 Piha conference being one memorable such occasion. Theoretical differences between marxist feminists and radical feminists were as unbridgeable as ever, and with the advent of political lesbianism hostilities seemed to have sharpened. But we rarely got to discuss theory anyway. While some left wing feminists sought dispassionate analysis of our situation in New Zealand, other women wanted anything but that. Abstraction and analysis were shunned. Every issue was personal. Anger was popular. Moralism prevailed. The high level of emotional arousal that ensued left few Pakeha women capable of or interested in political debate.

By the early 1980s I saw the New Zealand Pakeha feminist movement as having degenerated into navel gazing. So far as I was concerned it had ceased to be political and I withdrew from most feminist activity.

But in 1982 *Broadsheet* published Donna Awatere's articles on Maori sovereignty. She and other Maori women who spoke through *Broadsheet* were offering a new direction for New Zealand feminism, and for the wider radical movement. This was no simple anti-racist moral stance, no "you oppress me and I have rights", but a comprehensive and detailed analysis of New Zealand as a colonised and capitalist society. Donna saw "Pakeha society as marked by political division and paralysis" and argued that only the Maori people had the "emotional and cultural affinity for an independent Aotearoa". She advocated Maori leadership of a decolonisation programme. It was gripping stuff for disillusioned feminist dropouts like myself, and quickly drew me back into political activity.

Old habits die hard (or is it old comrades?); together with some other women, I helped set up a Pakeha women's group, Women for Aotearoa, to discuss Donna's articles. Our discussions drew us into activity, and we formed links with the anti-racist movement, taking part in actions at Waitangi and during Royal tours. Inevitably we came into contact with other feminists involved in these activities. We were optimistic: if the Maori sovereignty articles had been taken to heart, feminist theory and practice must have improved.

And certainly at the People Opposed to Waitangi (POW) coalition meetings there was much talk of Maori sovereignty. It was feminists who asserted that Maori sovereignty "must be our baseline". But it soon emerged that what was expected was not, after all, acceptance of the political analysis Donna offered, but some kind of moral commitment. Instead of relating the concepts of Maori sovereignty to feminist theory, all Donna's careful analysis was distorted and forced into the depressingly familiar radical feminist orthodoxy.

Racism, it seemed, was just another oppression, to be slotted into the feminist model of interlocking oppressions. All was personal, consciences must be examined and attitudes scrutinized. Since Pakeha were the oppres-

THE OLD-TIME MAORI

by Makereti (Maggie Papakura)



This book, the first published work by a Maori woman, has been out of print for almost fifty years and offers 'a woman's sighting of the Maori world' (Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, in her introduction).

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sors it was more a question of guilt than outrage, though self-righteous attacks on the racism, sexism and homophobia of others were still the order of the day. Confession and atonement weren't just confined to Christian activists. Maori, sometimes irrespective of their class or values, were invited to monitor Pakeha political activity. A mindless celebration of "blackness" substituted for white feminist anti-racist practice (see Jenny Bourne 'Towards an anti-racist feminism', *Race and Class* Vol 25, 1, 1983).

The anti-racist movement enjoyed a groundswell of support for a while following the 1981 Springbok tour. But those who came to POW meetings were exhorted to commitment to some absolute but ill-defined line on racism. A climate of moralism and a high level of hostility were not conducive to discussion. So most of the talk focussed on action, who would do what. Most people concentrated hard on not speaking out of line, avoiding denunciation. Those meetings were some of the worst I have ever attended, and inevitably they led to political paralysis and drop out.

Meanwhile back on the women's front, radical feminism was itself in crisis. Oppressions had proliferated and the patriarchal model was becoming overloaded. Able-bodiedism, fatism, adultism... even to the committed, the "isms" were a standing joke. Then there was the question of how to rank oppressions: were they cumulative, or did some clearly outrank others? And as feminist organisations became more committed to anti-racist work, what of the notion that women's oppression was fundamental, and the model for all other forms of oppression? Even worse, if the argument that all men are sexist and hold power over women makes separatism necessary, what of the analogous situation of whites and blacks?

ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT FALLACIES

Racism is a white problem.

Racism is a concrete problem for blacks.

All whites are racist.

Racism is ingrained in our society. The emphasis should be on our social systems, not the individual.

All whites have power over non-whites.

Skin colour is no guarantee of power. Power derives from a complex of factors, including class, race and gender. White working class people may have more overt racist attitudes than middle class people; they are more powerless and are competing for scarce resources.

Racism is a disease, a problem of the white psyche.

Racism is a social reality, manifest in material ways.

Racism distorts our concept of reality, setting up an internal conflict (discrepancy between racist self and ideal self). This manifests in pain, guilt and fear.

This argument derives from Carl Rogers. It shifts focus from society to the individual. Whites with race, gender or class power deal *better* with reality because they control it. The "oppressed" have less control of reality, not because their minds are distorted, but because they are denied access to necessary resources.

To combat racism, individual attitude change is necessary.

Blacks may be a long time waiting for whites to "change attitudes". Racism needs to be addressed politically; attitude change *may* follow.

The personal is political.

A dangerously ambiguous slogan . . . it can be taken to mean that making personal change is a political act, or that by changing ourselves we will change the world. This is a delusion at odds with a marxist and materialist view of society.

Racism can best be fought by making individuals personally aware of their racism. They will then be motivated to do anti-racist work (monitored by blacks).

This approach only works on those who see racism as a moral issue, a matter of human "rights". It takes advantage of the guilt that some liberal whites feel about the social system they live under and may benefit from. By feeling guilt they needn't judge themselves as callous. They offer their guilt as compensation for the wrongs of a racist society.

Anti-racist training is best kept at the level of feeling.

Racism is entrenched in our social/political/economic system. It is best understood and opposed in those terms. Adopting an accusatory, high minded, moralistic and personal tone will alienate some, and extract guilt and confession of personal responsibility from susceptible whites (eg liberals, social workers, christians). But this is unlikely to lead to effective action against the racist structures that envelope us all. Emotional manipulation is an inadequate basis for long term, effective political action; this should be grounded in sound understanding and analysis.

Personal confrontation is a good way to challenge racism.

Our goal is not self righteousness or personal liberation, but political change.

We must value other cultures' ethnic practices.

Just as we select the cultural practices that we personally support, so does the State. We need to be aware of which ethnic practices the State supports and why. State handouts can force "tribalism": the need to define yourselves as an ethnic group for the purpose of receiving funding. This can divide blacks by undermining what black unity already exists. Support for multiculturalism can leave racism untouched, or merely provide more jobs for the middle class/educated.

"Black" designates skin colour, culture or race.

These differentiations are products of racism. Blacks are united not by colour or culture, but by their common oppression. "Black" culture is the culture of resistance and rebellion.

Should women accept black male leadership? Should Pakeha women compromise their feminist principles in deference to the customs of non-white cultures? These were questions that few dared ask and most avoided answering.

Precious wonder that many Pakeha women chose to retreat into mindless activism, seeking black direction and monitoring, and exhorting others to do likewise.

But frankly, I don't believe that such political self-effacement will make Pakeha feminists strong allies in the anti-racist movement. On the contrary, radical feminist input is likely to further weaken the movement by contributing its own liberal analysis. Attempts at coalition in recent years have brought out major theoretical differences between the groups involved. But just as in the feminist movement, these differences have not been usefully acknowledged or discussed. Instead, liberal orthodoxy has co-opted the terms of the debate.

I don't think I am alone in feeling increasing political isolation, and disappointment in the anti-racist movement. If it is to be salvaged I believe there have to be profound changes in the ground rules: no one group can claim dominance or moral or political superiority over the others; nothing can be assumed; for political decisions to be binding on all, open and uninhibited discussion must precede them; disagreement cannot be construed as evidence of faintheartedness; our measure of political commitment shouldn't be our level of righteous indignation.

Since we all stand to benefit from a non-racist Aotearoa, if only through reduced social breakdown, then there is no need to try to motivate Pakehas to anti-racist work through guilt and atonement. Admitting that we all act out of self interest might provide a sounder starting point.

As already indicated I believe that feminists have contributed much to the decline of the radical movement. And when I read that "Uma, an Indian woman from Aotearoa" charged that *Broadsheet* was accountable to her and to the Brixton Black Women's Health Group and should not dare question her politics (*Broadsheet*, May 1986), then I realised that we are continuing to do so. While it wasn't clear just what *Broadsheet's* editorial stance was over this correspondence, in light of previously published articles on racism it seems possible that the collective accepted Uma's charges. But to me the correspondence broke all my desired ground rules, and was further evidence of the feminist movement's failure to pick up Donna Awatere's challenge. Of our bypassing her analysis and continuing in old habits of moralism and liberal outrage. The oppression model simply will not do, neither for feminism nor for black struggles, and it's time we faced up to this. □

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A PAIN IN THE HANDS



Kris: How did the RSI Support Group start?

Sue: When I came back from Australia last year, RSI was just hitting the news in New Zealand. Margaret Gilbert in Wellington was the main person behind that. I went to a meeting in Auckland in June last year at the Local Government Officers Union rooms, and the place was packed. Margaret Gilbert spoke and really knocked a lot of people out because her story was so powerful and she was powerful with it. She wasn't afraid to step on anyone's toes. She really laid into the medical system and the lack of information. From that meeting, we got a list of people's names and addresses, and invited people

They're not getting rid of the massive specialisation in jobs that has occurred.

One major newspaper has had a big problem with RSI in keyboard staff, who are typing advertisements directly onto the computer. The newspaper has acted very responsibly in getting the right adjustable furniture. They've ordered separate keyboard and screen arrangements. They've had physios in, staff are all doing hand exercises, they're having 10 minute breaks and all the rest of it, but they are still working flat out eight hours a day. So the incidence of RSI hasn't dropped at all.

With the huge capital investment in the equipment, employers do want to get the absolute most they can out of their work-

Tessa Farnsworth and Sue McVeigh, of the Auckland Repetition Strain Injury (RSI) Support Group, spoke with Kris Bennett.

to what was to be the first meeting of the Auckland RSI Support Group. Thirty came.

Kris: What kind of jobs did the women have who came?

Sue: A lot of people weren't injured, but were keen to get information because they were in the target jobs, they thought they might be in line. They were doing keyboard work, some were in factory process jobs and others in secretarial and clerical work.

Kris: You were involved in WRIST (the Women's Repetition Injury Support Team) in Australia. Were they the key occupations there?

Sue: Yes. But we had a great deal of success in Australia getting people from a broad range of jobs in contact with the group. That was because from the very start, we operated in all the different community languages and used community radio stations, so we had a huge amount of publicity in 10 or so languages. We'd do workplace visits with union organisers, and use interpreters, so we reached out to a wider range of workers — process, building trades, electrical trades, data entry operators, TAB workers, food process workers. Many of these occupational groups were churning out hundreds of RSI victims.

Sue: Keyboard operators are very, very susceptible to RSI, and it's a subtle part of secretarial training that union activity is really an act of disloyalty against the boss. It means that the info on occupational health is there, but people are not neces-

sarily going to get stropky about demanding their rights. In factory situations, the power base of the workers is even less, and therefore having the info is not enough.

Tessa: It's unfortunate from a union point of view that the Clerical Workers Union, the one most affected by RSI, was most badly hit by the voluntary unionism provisions. A lot of the people who ring me up wanting help to deal with their employers or ACC aren't union members, and it's significant that people with RSI who are union members get better treated by their employers than people who aren't.

Kris: What is the impact of new technology — what role has it played in the growing incidence of RSI?

Tessa: I think it's got a massive impact, but it's only half the picture. The technology allows workers to churn out a lot more work than they used to be able to do. The employers love that. When you talk to sensitive employers who are concerned about RSI, they are inclined to see new technology as the be all and end all of the problem. In trying to prevent RSI, they might get chairs that are of the right level, or call in ergonomists and physios and get their workers doing hand exercises before they start work each day. They might even go to the extent of giving 10 minute breaks every hour, but what they don't do is recognise the fact that their workers are still working twice as hard every hour as they were before. They're not reorganising the actual work schedules to accommodate that fact.

ers. Where once a secretary/clerical worker had a really varied day — typing, mailing, photocopying, filing, reception, (probably making tea and coffee) — each task has been fragmented to the stage where there is now a copy typist, a print room photocopy operator, and so on. The crucial thing is to insist on retaining that variation in duties. It sounds an unproductive way to operate a work schedule, but ask people about their job and which aspects they enjoy, and most people will say they like a job with variety in it.

Sue: A lot of people ask me why it is that people have been typing for over 100 years, and RSI is now suddenly the disease of the 80s. They think it's much less stressful on a body to tap away at an electric typewriter than pound away at a manual one. But on manual machines and even some of the early electric ones, you were able to actually rest your hands on the home keys. Now the super duper ones are so sensitive that to rest your hands on the home keys means you get this flurry of hieroglyphics. You are having to suspend your hands over the keyboard, which places so much stress on the shoulder muscles, apart from the speed at which you find yourself working.

Tessa: There's none of those little breaks for pushing the carriage across and putting the paper in.

Sue: It's really just working at typing the whole time. I've had women say to me as trained typists they used to at least make decisions about their work. If they wanted to produce a page with columns, they had

to work out where to set them, how to centre the headings and so on. Now a lot of these decisions are removed from them because the machines are so wonderful, that really the only challenge in their work rests with speed, with churning out more than the last half hour. So apart from the expectation of speed in production being imposed on them, it's frequently something they may choose to do for their own self esteem or sanity.

Tessa: One of the worst things with new technology is that inbuilt counter syndrome. You find it in some electronic keyboards and the new systems used in supermarkets nowadays. Instead of punching the keys of a till as she pushes each item across to where the packer is packing, the checkout operator runs the tin across the bar code reader set under the bench at which she is working, and the reader takes note of how many items there are in each order and how long each order takes to go across the reader, and that produces a total. A tally is kept of how many items each checkout operator is handling a week. They're told if they're doing a desirable number of items or not, and it means their job is measured only in terms of speed. Value is not given to accuracy, or talking to the customer, making the customers feel welcome and happy and dealing with them in a relaxed manner. So there is an invisible silent pressure to get them working faster and faster.

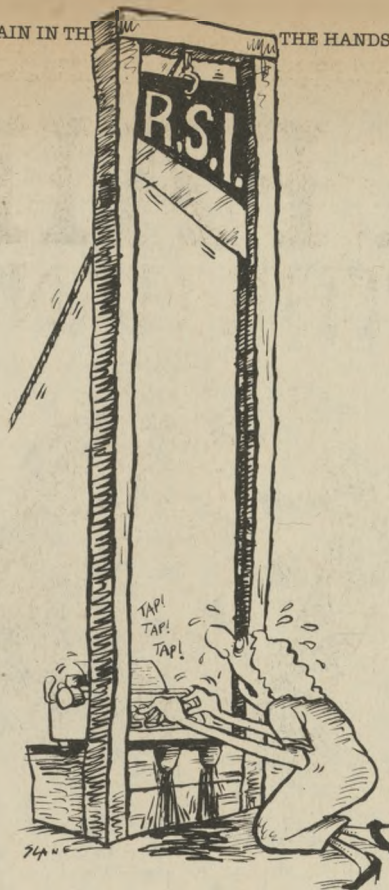
The same is true of electronic keyboards. They know how many characters an hour a good typesetter can do, and the machines keep a tally of that. So a "better" typesetter will do an even higher number, and there's always the silent pressure to do it faster and faster.

Sue: A huge number of the keyboard operators who were in touch with WRIST in Melbourne worked under a quota system of so many keyboard strokes an hour, and they felt their keyboard injuries had a speed factor.

Tessa: The same thing is happening on meat processing lines in meat companies. They have a bonus system on the number of carcasses they can process in a given time. The lines are speeded up to accommodate workers working faster and faster, and the amount of RSI in the meat processing industry is increasing all the time. The workers are also realising that they are paying with their health for big money bonuses. The ones who benefit in the end are the employers.

Sue: We hear of many people who go to their doctors about RSI. Some doctors say they don't know enough about the injuries and they should go somewhere else, and I guess that's better than prescribing medication which doesn't cure RSI. However, there are still many doctors ignorant about RSI and other occupational injuries.

Tessa: I think that ignorance is scandalous. One woman in our group has a very severe case of RSI, probably because she went off to her old family doctor. He gave her a prescription for painkillers and told her to go back to work. She kept on doing the same job at the same speed and the only difference was that the painkillers



masked her symptoms. Three months later, she can't work at all and has both arms in splints.

Sue: That's what happened to me in 1980. That was before a lot of info was available, when perhaps it was forgivable, but it's not now.

Tessa: I seems to me doctors and employers both treat the problem in a similar way. It is occurring most commonly at the moment in women, usually women of low status in the workforce. There is a strong tendency with employers to say to women who are complaining of pain in their hands "Oh, it's rheumatism" or "You're not up to the job, perhaps you'd better start looking for a new job," rather than admitting their own responsibility to the woman in question.

If the woman has to stop working and take time off to rest her hands, then employers have a strong feeling that RSI is a fashionable complaint. They say "If one woman in our office gets it, you'll find the whole office goes down with it sooner or later". Whereas if you talk with the workers concerned, what actually happens is that if one woman gets it and she has to stop working, she is not replaced. Her work load is divided up amongst the others, who are doing more, so others will go off with RSI.

So nothing is done to improve the situation which produced RSI in the first worker; things just get worse. In the office itself, employers are very often male, and they don't listen to their female workers. I think as women we have a responsibility in that ourselves. I keep saying to people that if you think you've got something wrong with your health in the workplace, you've got to bring it to the employer's at-

tention. It's no good thinking "Oh well, I'll keep on working and perhaps the pain will go away". We've got to be more direct and strident about making complaints and making our voices heard. If we don't say anything, nothing will get done.

What the Health Department recommends is *ineffective*, even though it's the preferred method of treatment. It doesn't take long before the doctor is saying if it doesn't respond to their ineffective treatment, you'd better have psychological treatment. They'll say it's a problem of the mind, or the stress of the job; you're finding it too much, so your mind is inventing a physical symptom so you can walk away from the job and not have to deal with the stress.

I think in the wider sense, it's a problem for women. If RSI was happening to men, there would be a national outcry about it. If it was happening at this level to male workers, the government would be up in arms, and unions would be roaring their heads off. I think they think women with secretarial and clerical jobs who get RSI will be better off at home looking after the children anyway. But what they don't realise is that women with severe RSI are just as incapable of looking after their children as they are of working.

Tessa: We decided we needed to do a survey to find out how many people there were in Auckland with RSI, because we are very keen to get the government to do something concrete about preventing it. We realised they wouldn't do anything about prevention until they accepted the size and seriousness of the problem, so we needed a number that we could beat them over the head with. So we tried to figure out how to reach RSI people. Being a voluntary organisation with no resources at all, we couldn't place advertisements in the newspapers. We decided the one gate which a lot of people with RSI go through is physiotherapists.

Members of the group rang up all physiotherapists in the Auckland area and asked them how many RSI patients they had treated in the last 12 months. There was some difficulty over the replies physios gave us because RSI is a blanket term, and nobody in the medical profession likes those. But 90 percent of the physios we rang were very eager to help us and very aware of the problem because they'd seen their books just swell and swell with RSI people.

We came up with a figure of over 1000 people who had been treated by physios over the past 12 months. That really gave us a shock, because we expected it to be half that. We felt they'd have to sit up and take notice of that.

We released it to the press first of all, and it was reported in both the Auckland daily papers and several of the radio stations. We also sent the press releases with covering letters to various government people — the Minister of Health, the director of Occupational Health of the Health Department, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Fran Wilde (because she has shown considerable concern about the level of RSI among parliamen-

PREVENTING RSI

- Before starting work, slowly warm up your muscles with gentle general movements, then with the movements you do in your job.
- Take a 10 minute break every hour, by doing something different or by resting. It's important to get the blood flowing into parts of the body you've held in one position for a while.
- If you start using a different machine, move into it gradually so your muscles get used to it before you build up speed.
- Your work station should be set up ergonomically, so that your working surface, machine or chair is at a comfortable distance. If you have to share a work station, it should be fully adjustable to suit everyone who uses it.
- If you are often under pressure to get through your work, ask your supervisor to adjust your work load. People working under pressure get RSI easily. Variation in your work is also important, so that some muscles are used while others have a chance to rest and refuel.
- If you start to feel tiredness, aches or pain during or after work, listen to your body's warning. Tell your supervisor and make sure your work situation is checked for things that might cause RSI. If the physical signs continue, see a doctor. It is very important that the early signs of RSI are recognised and treated. Otherwise, recovery can take months of pain and time off work. People can be permanently disabled by RSI.

RESOURCES

SUPPORT GROUPS

AUCKLAND: c/- Tessa Farnsworth, 30 Pentland Ave, Mt Eden, ph 604-112

HAMILTON: c/- Sue Withers, 1190 Victoria St, Hamilton
WELLINGTON: c/- P.O. Box 27355, Wellington.

CHRISTCHURCH: c/- Lynn Campbell, P.O. Box 2553,
Christchurch, ph (03) 883-595

DUNEDIN: c/- Leslie Nixon, 18 Eskdale St, Dunedin.

INFORMATION

Trade Union Health and Safety Centre, 8-12 St Martins Lane, Auckland 1, or ask your own union. Working Women's Resource Centre, 159 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn or write to Private Bag 5, Newton, ph 762-156.

A Guide to The Preventing And Management Of Repetition Strain Injuries In Electronic Keyboard Operators available from the Occupational Health and Toxicology branch of the Department of Health.

Visual Display Units: Ergonomic Checklist For Their Selection And Installation (1985) from Health Department offices. Other booklets and a poster available.

Code Of Practice For Visual Display Units (1984) from the Labour Department

Do You Know No 60 leaflet about physical exercises to prevent RSI, from Accident Compensation Corporation offices.

TREATMENT

TREATMENT
Try your doctor, an occupational health nurse, physiotherapist, homeopath, naturopath, osteopath or acupuncturist. Acupuncture can be effective in the treatment of RSI.

tary secretarial staff), and the opposition spokesperson on health, George Gair. In the letters we called on them to initiate urgent action to prevent RSI, because if 1000 people have got it in 12 months, then the problem is exploding.

However, far from creating a great groundswell of indignation, the information almost disappeared without trace. The Minister of Health replied that the Health Department had produced two booklets and a poster, had given its own staff inservice training about RSI, and all of these things were available on request from Health Department offices. According to their information, it seemed the incidence of RSI was lessening, which is rubbish, absolute rubbish. I don't see how they can say that because they haven't made any effort to find out what the incidence of RSI is.

Our approach to George Gair produced a slightly better result. He organised a question to be asked in parliament about it. It was answered by the acting Minister of Health in very much the same terms as the letter we received from Michael Bassett. So that's where the survey results are resting at the moment.

Kris: In Australia, publicising the extent and amount of RSI caused quite a different thing to happen.

Sue: State and central governments didn't initially refuse to accept the facts, perhaps because six state governments at the time were Labour governments actively committed to reducing occupational diseases and injuries. The facts were really very, very respectfully treated, and they made a much more concerted

effort to do something about it.

Kris: What's happening with the group?

Tessa: Our monthly group meetings take the form of part support and part action. We're very aware of the need for people



with RSI to be able to talk in an informal setting to other people about it, because they are often desperately lonely with the injuries. Many are receiving no support at work or at home. They're worried about financial commitments. If they are unable to work, they're worried about not being able to take care of children to the extent they want. Houses need cleaning, gardens are getting away from them, they can't do the washing or ironing, so we're very conscious of that. But the group also feels a very strong responsibility to tell other people about RSI. No-one else is doing a good job on that.

People still think RSI is just about a pain in the hand, and forget or don't know you can be permanently disabled by it. People I know have said it's almost worse to be disabled with RSI than in a wheelchair, because if you can't use your hands, there is very little you can do.

We've got someone liaising with ACC, because we find it's a very faceless organisation. People who have problems with RSI really feel they're dealing with big

brother. They can't seem to get a person to talk to, they get anonymous letters, and don't know why they've been denied compensation or why they've been taken off compo.

It seems to us that ACC is trying to get rid of the stayers who've been on ACC a long time with RSI. We want to know why that is, and why they've been eligible for comp for a year, and suddenly are no longer eligible.

We want a resource base from which we can publicise our existence, and work out the needs of people with RSI; morale, help with sustaining claims, legal help, lists of sympathetic doctors and medical people.

We're looking at changing from a volunteer group to an incorporated society so we can apply for funding from the government or charities, and keep up our public education programme. We hope to apply for COGS funding so we can get a full-time salary for the coordinator.

We're working hard on political lobbying, because we feel it's essential that we make ourselves heard in government circles. So we're encouraging a letter writing campaign to newspapers and MPs. We're trying to keep pressure on the Health Department to do something concrete about prevention of RSI. We're also continuing the survey process. We're very eager to get into contact with other RSI support groups in other centres because we feel if we could link up with them and perhaps do some sort of nationwide survey along the lines we did in Auckland, then perhaps the government will listen to us about how serious it is. □

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No. 45 December 1976: Beginning of herstory series, cystitis, clerical workers union, the pros and antis of abortion.

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roadshow.

No. 104 November 1982: Women's Health Conference reports and responses, Norma Swenson, rape and the law, rape symposium, Nga Whaea O Te Moana — Fiona Clark's calendar, Women's Political Party, Sonja Davies' life story part 5.

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subjects.

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- Complete available back issues — \$60
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ON THE SHELF



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A delightful tale about a witch who fancies the cakes David and his mother are baking, but can't outwit them despite all her tricks.

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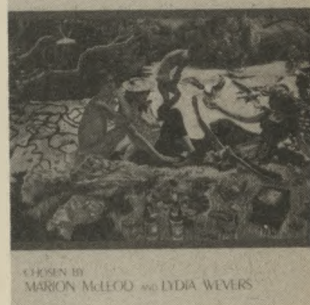
WOMENS WORK Masrion McLeod, Lydia Wevers

Women's Work is a celebration of the excellence of recent short story writing by New Zealand women. It is also an encouragement to those women who are beginning to find what they want to say, and to risk finding their own way of saying it. This anthology collects together the best of recent women's writing. Authors in-

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CONTEMPORARY SHORT STORIES
BY NEW ZEALAND WOMEN



CHOSEN BY
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Omelette is a natural leader with a turbulent emotional life and unusual mystical qualities — like hearing the growing music inside trees and bodies. Omelette meets the brooding giant George, the tree planter, who becomes her lover. Together they fight against evil forces to stop the despoilation of their land by a menacing superpower, using special skills to co-operate with Nature itself. This first novel is an exuberant, often surprising comic work. Penguin, pbk, \$14.95

CHOICES

Paddy Richardson

Paddy Richardson has pro-

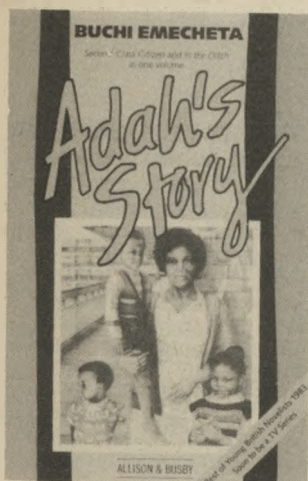
duced a very intense and moving collection in which a variety of startlingly real characters and viewpoints, particularly children, are used to sensitively explore such personal issues as adoption, loneliness and infidelity. Hard Echo Press, pbk, \$12.95

BLACK WOMEN

ADAH'S STORY Buchi Emecheta

Adah, a young Nigerian woman comes to England only to find that the streets are not paved with gold. Proud, ambitious and determined to maintain her independence, she battles on despite a violent husband and broken marriage and in the face of an impenetrable welfare system. On her own against all odds, she manages to bring up her five children without losing sight of her dreams.

Allison & Busby, pbk, \$13.50



A PIECE OF MINE J California Cooper

Told with enormous warmth and humour, the twelve stories in this collection centre on the lives of black women and their men in the small-town southern states of America. Pacey, vivid, exuberant — this is a strong new voice brimming with talent.

The Women's Press, pbk, \$13.99

WOMEN, WORK AND IDEOLOGY IN THE THIRD WORLD

Haleh Afshar

The authors in this book dis-

cuss the "invisibility" of women's work in Malaysia, Sudan, Iran, Bangladesh, Ghana, Tanzania, Java, Brazil, Morocco and India. Although these countries differ politically, socially and economically there is a great similarity in their ideologies which define female labour as the property of men. Contrary to the expectations of many radical and feminist theorists who argue that paid employment paves the way to female emancipation, there are clear signs of a general deterioration in the social position of these countries as a result of the penetration of capital. Tavistock Publications, pbk, \$35.50.

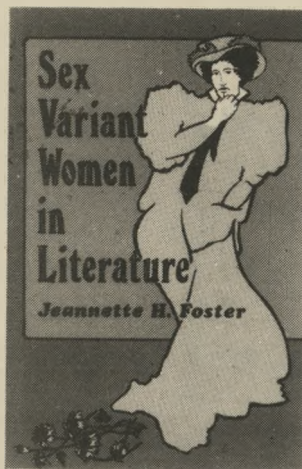
LESBIAN

SEX VARIANT WOMEN IN LITERATURE

Jeanette H. Foster

This fascinating book covers 2,600 years of lesbian herstory. The works, achievements and lives of famous lesbians are analysed, ranging

from the Biblical Ruth and Sappho through creative works in Western Europe. Jeanette analyses poetry, drama and fiction for all references to lesbians and lesbianism. Naiad Press, pbk, \$23.00.

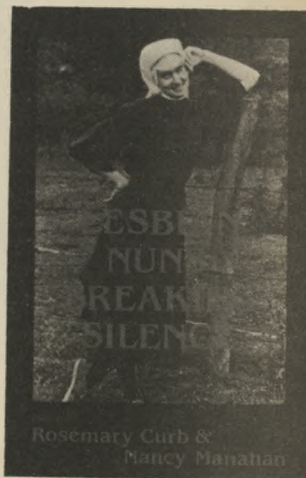


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Katherine V Forrest

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NON FICTION

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Micheline Wandor

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MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

This article was written by Chris Atmore of Wellington Women Against Pornography, on behalf of a national meeting held in Wellington in May of feminists from anti-pornography groups in Auckland, the Waikato, Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch and Dunedin. It answers some common criticisms of the feminist anti-pornography movement.

"Wherever in this city, screens flicker with pornography, with science-fiction vampires, victimized hirelings bending to the lash, we also have to walk..."

Adrienne Rich

PORNOGRAPHY AND THE LINKS TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

OUR active opposition to pornography lies in two main areas: its production and its consumption. The act of making pornography automatically involves the exploitation of women and children, whether this is through direct victimisation (from objectification in pin-ups to more overt abuse in hard-core pornography; physically forcing models to take part) or more indirect oppression (lack of any other economic options, linking in with women's already low self-image and self worth). If we wanted to use a marxist analysis we could say that pornography represents the ultimate form of worker alienation; through the production of an object which is labelled as a representation of herself which men will consume, the woman worker is alienated from her labour, from the product of her labour and ultimately from herself.

Linda Marchiano (pornography name Linda Lovelace) has described in the book, *Ordeal*, (1980, Citadel Press) how in public she was always seen smiling and defending her "choice" to work in pornography; in private she was drugged, beaten, sexually abused and kept in captivity by her husband/manager, Chuck Traynor. We see the involvement of women in pornography as being similar to the participation of women at the milder end of the continuum, beauty contests, and believe that in male-dominated society which reinforces and indoctrinates the ideals of femininity an uninfluenced choice is impossible. This parallels the feminist view that prostitution is a form of exploitation of women, and as with prostitution, we put the responsibility for such oppression on the men who

create the demand for such a "service". The production of pornography involving women and children does violence to them.

The second area involves the reason for producing pornography: male sexual stimulation and the reinforcement of male power. quite simple, pornography is extremely widespread and almost all-pervasive because it sells: itself — in the case of videos, books, magazines, films, live shows and so on; and other products — in the case of pornographic advertising. Main-stream pornography has become increasingly violent and overtly sadistic, and has broken new "taboos" such as the use of child models. This, combined with the evidence of over 3000 media studies goes directly against both the view that pornography acts as an outlet for men's sexual "frustration" or "aggression" (the so-called catharsis model), and the view that it has no effect. It is ironic that in this area more than any other feminists have joined the call for proof of harm or have challenged the research when this is normally the province of the male liberal — and this apart from the fact that common sense tells us from viewing pornography that it is hate propaganda and hate propaganda must be dangerous for the vulnerable target group (something we acknowledge in the Race Relations Act without demands for stringent proof).

We find it insulting that feminists critical of our approach to the issue have made quite simplistic and erroneous statements about our philosophy. They suggest that we think of the slogan "pornography causes rape" in the literal sense that every man who reads pornography is going to immediately translate those attitudes into rape, and that we are barking up the wrong tree because we think if we remove pornography we will get rid of violence against women. In reality (they say) pornography is a symptom, not a cause, of women's oppression. On the contrary, we believe it is both a symptom and a cause, and therefore the enormous and apparently unending task of getting rid of pornography will only be accomplished

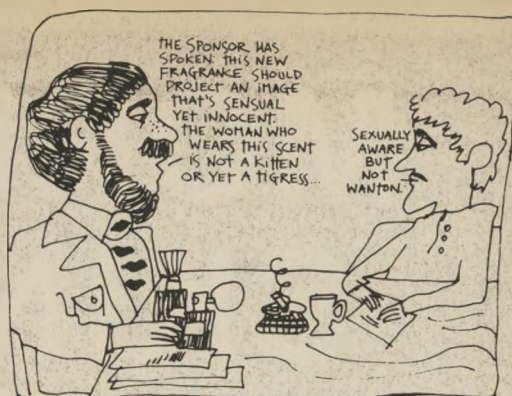
when other attitudes and factors in violence against women are changed. Speaking out against pornography and making these links to other violence against women is therefore important. As a parallel, anti-Jewish propaganda was not solely responsible for the deaths of 6 million Jews, but it made Hitler's plan a lot easier to carry out.

Whatever feminist objections to male-dominated scientific thought, the overwhelming weight of research which cannot be discounted links pornography like Playboy, Penthouse and Electric Blue videos with attitudes which view women as less than human, callousness towards violence against women, and myths about female sexuality. Some of these attitudes can be translated into behaviour, whether it is wolfwhistling at a woman from a building site or actually copying methods of torture from hard-core pornography. In between the two ends of the spectrum are the 1001 ways in which men put us down and abuse us, from the lawyer at a rape trial claiming the survivor "wasn't hurt" to the lack of community support for battered women. Content analyses of pornography show how these attitudes are promoted and reinforced, not only in men but by encouraging a victim mentality in women — we become more frightened when constantly surrounded by images of women as helpless targets or seductive bitches who deserve all they get. Pornography therefore helps to keep us where men want us — afraid to go out at night, alienated in many work environments and limited in our lives in countless ways.

The selective targeting of particular groups of women in pornography, such as lesbians and black women, is also no coincidence, and therefore to oppose the "right" of fascists to speak, whether it is homophobia or racism or classism, and not to actively oppose pornography is a massive contradiction. Or do we end up with a ludicrous situation where for other reasons we oppose in law pornography which targets those particular groups and let less overt material which apparently targets white heterosexual women who aren't obviously in pain or under a certain age go unchallenged? I find it disturbing as a lesbian, and therefore outside the institution of heterosexuality, that so many apparently progressive people, including some feminists, find the distinction between erotica and pornography so hard to draw that to save what they feel are positive representations of their sexuality they prefer not to make a decision on outlawing pornography. A frequent consensus in workshops has been that in any case, in a world where pornography is all-pervasive, even erotica becomes tainted. Identifying general violence on television does not seem to pose the same problem and a large body of public opinion would agree that it does damage, yet extend that concept to women and it becomes "sex."

WHY WE WANT LEGAL CHANGE

WAP has always had a double-threaded strategy with the two parts separate but reinforcing each other. On the one hand, raising public awareness about the nature and prevalence of pornography is important, whether this is done through consciousness-raising groups of women or through the national media. But as we also see the right of women to be free from pornography as a basic human right, just as the freedom of all groups from persecution and discrimination is fundamental, we believe that the law should express this principle. We are not naive enough to think that achieving legal change will automatically remove all pornography, but it is



Cartoon by Nicole Hollander

important to state the concept that pornography is harmful to women and children and its production and consumption should not be condoned in any society which claims to protect human rights. We are aware of the arguments that aiming for law change is a reformist measure, but to single out pornography in this area ignores other similar legislative attempts such as homosexual law reform and the Race Relations Act. There is also no getting around the fact that pornography is a multi-billion dollar capitalist industry, and that waiting for those who profit from its production to be influenced by public education without associated legal and economic pressure being applied would be totally futile.

To call for the outlawing of pornography means to call for a change in the structures which make decisions on what material is pornographic or what action is taken. Thus part of our legal strategy is to call for those directly targeted by pornography, women, to be the ones who make such decisions based on a feminist analysis. It is also important that the laws themselves focus on the damage done to women and the links between pornography and other violence against us; therefore for example, a feminist legal approach seeks to target the producers and consumers, not the women "participants", and includes an avenue of compensation for women claiming damages from the industry.

We do not deny that lobbying for legal change in an area which is commonly confused with erotica and neutral sexually explicit material carries a certain amount of risk. That is where a parallel strategy of public education is important, and that in turn influences attitudes to law change, whether through workshops, sticker campaigns, marches or the activities of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. The danger of misuse is also not confined to anti-pornography laws — for example, the Race Relations Act in the hands of the League of Rights could easily be deliberately misinterpreted against the Maori sovereignty movement; nevertheless, the importance of stating that racist material is unacceptable far outweighs this risk. Indeed, how can we not have laws which condemn pornography for the misogynist propaganda that it is, when finally the government is at least partly funding women's refuges and rape crisis centres? If we, as an anti-pornography movement, do not attempt to infiltrate or influence male power structures to achieve legal change while also organising more radical activities, we run the risk of all anti-pornography groups — eventual burnout and collapse until something resurfaces from the ashes. We simply cannot sustain a purely reactive approach, picketing every live show and targeting every film without setting our opposition in a wider context, because pornography, in its increasing brutality and prevalence, will win.

The major concern expressed by some feminists is that it would be our material which would be censored; Lesbian erotica, debates about s-m, and so on. The reality is that if men in power want to suppress our literature, they will do so regardless of whether their "right" to do so is enshrined in law. Minority literature has always survived largely as an underground movement because it is conveniently suppressed by the authorities in countless disguised ways. Erotica in particular is often produced and distributed on a very personal level rather than being mass-marketed. Many women would argue that commercial distribution of erotica makes it no longer in that category. The lack of coverage of the End of Decade conference for women in Nairobi is just one example of the infor-

mal selection of what is news by and for the boys. More recently! Andrea Dworkin was forced to find a publisher for her new novel outside the USA because no one in her country would print it — not just for reasons of content, but because of her outspoken comments against such groups as the American Booksellers Association (Interview in Women's Review of Books, May 1986). Do we stop speaking out, so we can keep what little we have or do we keep fighting both for the outlawing of pornography and against the censorship of our material? We think the two are not only compatible but an important distinction from the moralist line.

OPPOSING THE MORAL RIGHT

THE ultimate insult to us as feminists fighting pornography is to be labelled as puritan funspoilors by other women who call themselves feminists. The fact is that our definitions of pornography and our analysis of it are poles apart from the moralists.

It is to those who do not see pornography as being produced within a rape culture that we need to address these distinctions. This is where public education is important — publicity and activity which include demands for sex education, lesbian and gay rights, abortion on demand, equal economic opportunities for women. Linking in with other progressive groups and speaking out on other issues here is important: for example, Wellington WAP has recently formed a lesbian caucus and has been active over the Homosexual Law Reform Bill campaign.

We are aware that we must watch the danger of moralist co-option of our arguments, particularly now that the right wing here is getting far less media coverage over pornography than it used to since feminist groups have gained in strength. We are also aware that some of the material we object to is also targeted by moralists; therefore it is important to underline our reasons for opposing it — in the context of widespread violence against women, focussing on the male consumption and male hatred of women that pornography is. We have stated in an earlier article *Broad-sheet March 1985* that we make a distinction between censorship — the suppression of basic minority rights by a powerful authoritarian regime — and the outlawing of hate propaganda.

It is significant that many women who have contacted WAP groups in different parts of the country had no apparent difficulty in perceiving WAP's approach to be quite different from that of the right wing. As the grass roots movement against pornography grows, the issue for feminist anti-pornography groups is, as well as continuing to target pornography through raising public awareness and lobbying for legal change, to stay at the cutting edge of the anti-pornography movement by extending our policies and demands. In the meantime, we feel it is important to celebrate our gains and mourn our losses, and we feel justified in expecting other feminists to join us. □

Wellington Women Against Pornography have just published "Pornography and Violence Against Women and Children: Connections from Research". It is available for \$10 plus \$1 from WAP P.O. Box 475 Wellington.

STROKES AND ART ATTACKS

INTERVIEW WITH JEAN WATSON

Jean Watson grew up on a Northland dairy farm. She has lived in the bush, trapped possums, worked on a Queensland sheep station and in factories. She now lives in central Wellington. Her new novel *Address to a King* has recently been published, along with a reprint of *Stand in the Rain*, which was first published in 1965. She has had five books published ("One for every ten years of my life, that's not bad."), the other three being, *The Balloon Watchers* (1975), *The World is an Orange and the Sun* (1978), and *Flowers From Hap-pyever* (1980).

I first read *Stand in the Rain* about the mid sixties, and because I had had some yen myself to be a hippy, and hadn't quite had the courage to do it, I was envious of Sarah, although when I reread it recently it seemed like a sad story. It is set in the early sixties and is about young people rejecting the values they see around them and going on a search for life, excitement and (particularly) meaning. Sarah, the narrator of *Stand in the Rain*, and Abungus, the man she loves and travels with, and their friends, seemed to me to have rejected the prevailing ideas of what life was about and be looking for something else. They thought they would find it by being free — free of attachment to place and security, unlike the wife that Abungus left. The life had anxieties and problems — money, love — but always hope of something good, great even.

This is what Jean Watson said when I talked with her about *Stand in the Rain*. (All quotations are Jean's words unless they are identified as coming from one of the books.)

"I was in my early twenties in the material for that book — the experiences it is based on are early twenties experiences. It was written when I was 32. I don't detach myself and see myself as part of society. I just write what I feel, or what I feel the characters should be feeling. I don't see myself as outside, or the characters as being outside, because they



Miranda Harcourt was Kaz in theatre corporate's production of Leah Poulter's play, *Kaz: a working girl*. It was a virtuoso: solo performance by Miranda, who played the prostitute and junkie right from the gut.

Photo: Nigel Yates.

say a lot of what is universal.

"I suppose the people in *Stand in the Rain* saw themselves as people who didn't fit in. I suppose they felt different. And I think they always felt they were going to find something better. There was optimism. If you kept moving you would find 'it', and it took them a long time until they found out that freedom is nothing to do with moving around, the real search is in your head. You can be anywhere — live in a little tinpot village for all your life and you can find truth. You can go round the world and not find it, or you can go round the world and find it."

Jean wrote two books that have never been published and then *The Balloon Watchers*, a book about a woman who works in a dull, routine job in a despatch department, the same job for fifteen years, who watches Wellington City

change, and who becomes aware of a group of people, who seem very happy and who gather regularly, some with balloons and some without. She decides she wants to become someone with a balloon. This is what Jean said about it: "I was standing outside the public library, where the book was set, and there was a festival on, and there were some circus people and I remember sitting and watching them and I got the idea of someone watching and wanting to be included. And I think you can apply the balloon and the idea of having one to this situation. For instance my sister said a friend of hers compared having a balloon to her relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous. Another friend thought a balloon was something to do with the communist party when she was young. And for some people it

can mean a meditation group — or even feminism. There's a certain growing stage in a relationship between one person and a group where the person sees themselves as outside the group, then they're one of the group, then they come and go from the group. It's like a relationship with a family, you're always going to get times when you feel like an outcast, and other times when you feel really part".

When I read *The World is an Orange and the Sun* I felt an immediate affinity with the protagonist Irene, as she accepted and performed the role of mother and wife, without ever feeling quite at home in it. Her slight bewilderment, that didn't quite make it to actually trying to challenge or change anything, mirrored my own experience as the mother of very young children. And her watching of the drama going on across the way with her friend (who seemed so much more adventurous than herself) getting "involved" with a much younger man.

"I think the women in *The World is an Orange and the Sun* would have been totally happy if things were a bit different, like if society were nice, so women could have time separate from their children. There's nothing as rewarding as little kids as they grow up, but you've got to have space. Luke, the husband, is something of a stock character (he dominated Irene's day, determined the shape of it, but never actually existed as a person). There are lots of Lukes, but I think they're dying out a bit, thank goodness. I think feminist ideas have helped change that, they've done a lot for the world, for women, and made them think. I believe in rights for everyone — women, men, children, animals, I don't like militance and hatred — like when you get men hating all women or women hating all men or people hating all blacks, Maoris hating all Pakehas. It's very negative.

"There's an important bit in *The World is an Orange and the Sun* where she has this illusion where there is nothing in the world but the orange and the sun and the green grass. Well, what happened to

Irene in that book, she experiences a moment when she is totally in the present, not worrying about the past or future, or thinking madly about what she's going to cook for dinner, but totally in the present. This is why everything seems suddenly brighter to her and she's aware of the orange, the smell of the orange, the bread board and the sun. And this is what being in the moment, in the actual present is about."

Jean Watson's most recent published book, *Address to a King* is about time. Time, its passing and the way the women she writes about are aware of it is a theme in all her books, but in *Address to a King* it becomes central. Naomi is a library assistant, living in Wellington, who has taken eight weeks off work (thanks to an inheritance) because "I wanted time so much, time not to be doing the things I have to do, time of my own. I suppose I could say — time off to think about time," (page 6) Naomi said earlier (page 1), "Minute by minute, second by second, the past is given to us. It becomes an ever-lengthening line behind us as we gather up the future."

"I actually feel like writing another book about time, I haven't quite come to terms with it. I don't think we ever do. I suppose in a way I'd like to reach a state of mind that's beyond time, or to become aware of it and to know that it really exists."

"Naomi in *Address to a King* is a more complex character than Irene, she's had more living, she's read more. Towards the end of the book she realises that the only reality in fact is in the present. She tries to capture the moment quite a lot by describing exactly how things are at the moment. She realises that as she describes it she is changing it. She has a hell of a time doesn't she?"

Jean has felt supported as a writer by other writers, although like most she has not been able to make a living at it.

"When I was very young, way back in the fifties, I lived here in Auckland and there were a few of us who were interested in writing and they were very encouraging. I wrote a couple of short stories when I was in my early twenties and had them published in *Arena* and literary magazines and then I didn't write from about 22 to 32 — I hardly put pen to

paper then — I was tearing all over the country looking for an ideal existence — the great search. When everything was pulled from under me, when that all packed up, I sat down and thought well, there's got to be something to do. Lots of friends were advising me to get a job, and they helped me get a job, but something told me, you've just got to write. I wanted to write a book, and that's where *Stand in the Rain* came from. Sometimes I think what a waste of my life, what a waste of time, tearing around after a man for ten years when I should have been doing my own writing, but it's hard even to say that, because of the experience I gained."

"I had my first child at 32, when *Stand in the Rain* was published, and had no option but to settle down. I really couldn't imagine life not having had children. My son's 21 now and I'm able to rush off to India and leave him minding the house. He's a friend now — he's gone from a child to a friend. I think that there should be a lot more help for mothers with young children. I think maybe that men help more now, you see real two-way relationships where they share care of the children, but that was not so prevalent in my young days. When I wrote *The World is an Orange* and *The Sun* I had a child. In that Irene talks of going off to write some poems and being defeated because the children follow her. But she didn't really mind."

"It seemed to me that Irene didn't mind anything very much. She was in that kind of state that you can get into when you have young children where everything sort of flows past you. You don't have extremes of emotion — you're too tired, your mind is so full of details, there are so many demands to meet. Allen and Unwin are planning to reprint this book next year."

"I think I might write more in the next few years. I'm getting on better with publishers. I wrote a small thing *Flowers from Happyever* that was eventually published by a small place, Voice Press. No-one would publish it because it was too short. Short books has been one of my troubles. I hope that Allen and Unwin and I can stay together now."

"I write very systematically in a notebook, with a ballpoint. I have continuity down one side of the page and notes down

the other. On the notes page I can put anything I want included. I do that very systematically until I'm finished, then I do a skeleton copy. I've only used this method with the last two books. I think that was a turning point, where I started to write in a more confident way. I now have more confidence and a thorough conviction that I was meant to be a writer anyway. I put "novelist" on forms that ask for occupation now. I used to not have the confidence to do that — I'd put factory worker or something. I've done heaps of other work — I used to work in printing presses a lot, in the bindery. I've done just about every sort of unskilled job — waitressing, factories — which I'm glad I did. You can write with authority if you've had the sort of experience."

"I'm going to India because I'm interested in Indian philosophy, especially Vedanta. That's the eternal essence in all religions, the mystical point where they all meet. It's not Hinduism. What Vedanta strives for is something which is beyond culture, is nameless, formless, beyond time. I try and live by it. Life has much more meaning. It's not something I can explain in a sentence. Life can be bright, happy. It gives spark. I use meditation and that gives a spark to life. Vedanta is a search to find out who you really are — and that part of you that is immortal is who you really are. It involves rituals only if you want them. Meditation is part of it. It's best to have a group of people who are interested too, it's hard to do anything like this on your own. I did religious studies at university between 1979 and 1981 and found that fascinating. I discovered Vedanta in 1970, and two years later I took up meditation. I think that was when I discovered myself as a writer — before that I drifted into things. As I go on I get more and more control over my own life. Maybe my next book will be about someone who discovers how to use power, get their own power. You realise yourself as a person and as part of the ultimate reality — not a person in the sky. It is what we are all trying to get because we are after pure happiness."

"I'm going to enjoy the rest of my life. I really think it's something to do with hormones, because I've never felt



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better. I've been told that as the menopause wears off you get very fit and well. Part of it is having lively interesting things to do that really engross you."

"New writers that I discover set me free — I see a new technique and I think Ahh... this person has done this, I can do that. Not necessarily the same thing, but there's a sort of chain going on. In a way it's a bit like having a dialogue. I have been influenced by Camus, his book *The Fall* and short stories. Another one who has been very important is Sadat Heydah, who wrote *The Island Owl*. It's style I'm looking for. I'm very interested in craft. In *Address to a King* I took a great deal of time to weave things in, put in patterns."

"I enjoy life, and enjoy writing. I believe very firmly in discipline and craft. After I have written in the notebook, I cut and paste if necessary then I do the first draft, then the second, and hopefully the next one will be the final one. It's getting little bits in that cause a resonance. Certain phrases I use over and over, with great care. I use images of water and fire in *Address to a King*. I do that very carefully, it's not accidental. It's hard work, but there is something other than cool, calculating arrangement — there's something else there, almost like the ancient concept of the muse, it's almost as though it's something 'given'."

I see Jean Watson as part of a strand in New Zealand writing that includes Katherine Mansfield and Janet Frame. She writes about women ("How could I do anything

else?" and about New Zealand ("Of course!") and she gets underneath the banality of the everyday and shows us something about ourselves. Her writing style is both direct and gentle and carries the reader along on a wave of introspection that I find very illuminating. □

Pat Rosier.

WHEN WOMEN WRITE

IN NORTHLAND

Edited by Phoebe Meikle

and Lesley Marshall

Layout and printing

by Kamo Print

I carried this book around in my bag for several days and found it good reading, especially for places like coffee shops and bus stops. It is a widely varied collection of short stories, articles and poems. Well designed and produced, it was published as part of "Women's Work, a celebration of women's creativity", a festival held in October 1985 to mark the end of the United Nations decade for women and organised by the Whangarei Community Arts Council. Given this context there was a notable absence of an explicit Maori input, which I regretted.

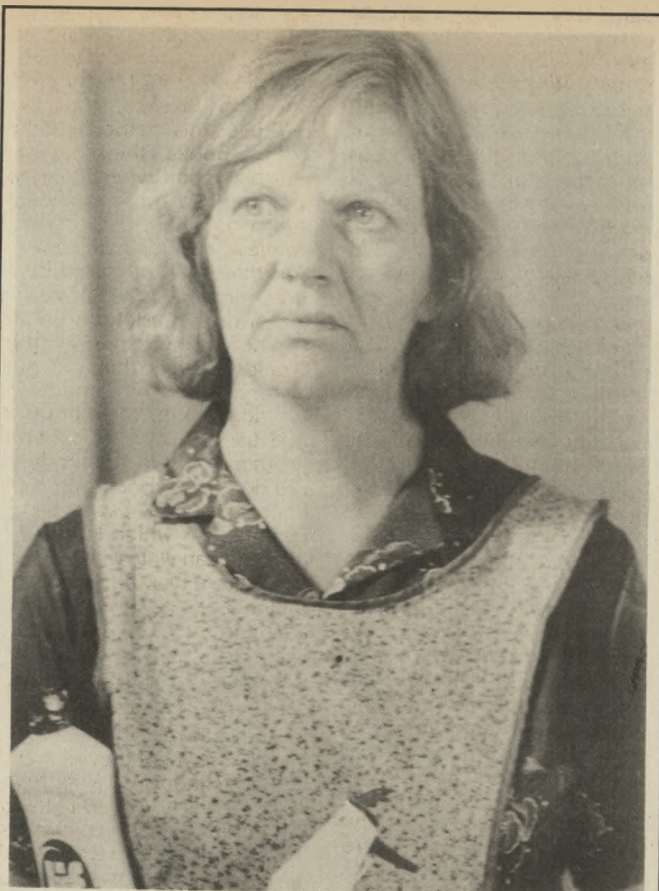
However, some 21 women are represented, and the impression given is of a thriving and diverse community of women who write with considerable confidence, flair and enjoyment.

There are some well known names. Sue McCauley contributes a fine, cool story about a woman caught between child and lover, and Daphne de Jong's poem, about a poet impresses with its sureness and control. I have been haunted by many other pieces in this book, like the lines from Janinka Greenwood's poem about Hinemoa:

"Firstly it's a love story
and then there's an attempt
on the impossible"

Anthologies are often patchy with some gems and a lot of dross. With this one, on the contrary, I found every contribution interesting and most of them written with an assurance that shouldn't have, but did, surprise me. City dwellers take note!

To Phoebe Meikle must go some of the credit, for her selection and fine foreword —



Elizabeth McRae as Emily in *Return Journey*, a TV play written and directed by Shereen Maloney. It will show on TV 1 at 10pm on 7 September as part of a seven week series of TV dramas called *About Face*, beginning on 10 August. Two other plays in the series have women authors: Jewel's Darl (Anne Kennedy) and *Universal Drive* (Debra Daley). Shereen is the only woman director.

but above all I congratulate all those concerned with this publication, especially the women I met in these pages, living and writing in Northland.

□
Felicity Day

COPING WITH

COT DEATH

By Merren Parker

Reed Methuen

pbk, \$12.95

Frequently in the course of my job (nurse, student, midwife) I find myself caring for women who have had to cope with a cot death — the sudden, unexplained death of a previously healthy baby infant from an unknown cause. Many of the women have coped as best they were able, often in the face of only slightly veiled criticism implying guilt, blame and a failure to "mother" cor-

rectly. Cot death is an emotive term, shrouded in mystery. The cause remains unknown in spite of a plethora of theories: babies continue to be found dead in their cots. Although many articles have been written on the subject (mainly in medical journals) little is available for those directly affected.

Merren Parker's book *Coping With Cot Death* is timely and much needed. It is easy to read, written with care and compassion and aimed at a wide range of people involved with cot deaths. She speaks directly to mothers, fathers, friends, doctors and clergy and I found myself drawn into her circle of concern.

However, my positive feelings about the book are overshadowed by sadness and anger. This book is monocultural, despite the fact that Maori babies have the highest risk of dying from a cot death: 5.48 per thousand live births.

This is more than twice the rate for Pacific Island babies (2.01 per thousand live births). For all other races the average is 3.71 per live births.

These are sad and sobering figures. No mention is made of the special difficulties Maori families will have dealing with the monocultural institutions that are involved when a baby suddenly dies. An autopsy must be performed and families will not be allowed access to the dead child until this is done. The tangi must wait while the baby lies alone in the morgue.

Women parenting on their own are at greater risk of losing a baby from cot death. Merren Parker points to the added difficulties of solo parenting, — a generally lower standard of living, a higher portion of their income spent on often low standard accommodation, a reliance on public transport, less money left over for doctors — as high stress factors that may make their baby more at risk from a cot death. However these women rate only a mention at the end of some chapters, once the difficulties of the two parent family have been dealt with.

The death of a beloved baby from a cot death must be a truly devastating event. I find it hard and frightening to imagine the overwhelming feelings of grief and despair that must be experienced on finding your previously healthy smiling baby dead.

Merren Parker's book goes some way to helping a section of the community come to terms with their feelings of grief and loss. □
Raewyn Parke.

TERRI NAAKOSHIE QUAYE ... NOT AN INTERVIEW

Terri Naakoshie Quaye played at the Cotton Club in Auckland's Hyatt Kingsgate on Sunday 6 April. She plays balofon (the original xylophone), sanza (thumb piano from Ghana), African drums, jazz piano and sings really strong and powerful. Some of her songs are original — some jazz standards — accompanied by either her piano or two men on guitar and double bass.

Her contact with the audience was minimal — made harder by the evening dresses, three piece suits and chandeliers of the Hyatt. But she has a nice kind stage manner

with just a bit of teacher type authority. She explained all her instruments and played them alone for the first half, but again I felt that her sanza was wasted on such a shallow white middle class bunch of Cotton Club members. Her balofon was like being in the bush and listening to nature and harmony, and you had to stand up and watch her hands to believe how fast she was playing some of the rhythms on the drums.

After a break during which you could buy \$15 bottles of wine and \$3 glasses of beer, Terri was back to do the Pakeha music which got everyone going — by the last few songs they were standing up and clapping and all excited. She has a knack of making those complicated notes and off beat phrases look as easy to sing as falling off a log — and they're hard as hell.

The fact that Terri plays the instruments of her country sets her apart from musicians like me in this top ten world — and means that she is not just an entertainer but a strong African identity. She seems very self-assured and treats her instruments with a respect never before seen on *Radio with Pictures*. Terri is a vegetarian who doesn't smoke dope or fags and drinks rarely. She is also an ethnomusicologist — a 17 letter word for someone who knows a hell of a lot about music and has established the first Black music Archives in England (where she lives).

The only gripe I've got is the venue Terri chose to play in. This concert was one I could never have afforded, (thanx Broadsheet), and I probably wouldn't have gone to the Hyatt by choice anyway. I think she should have done a gig at the Ponsonby community centre and therefore benefited many more women — black and white.

It would be good to see her here again and more black women like her — not only for her uniqueness but also to remind us that there is more to music than love songs, loud bands and meaningless trivia.

□ Karin Kahurangi Gorter

DRAWING '86

Association of
women artists

Outreach,
Auckland

June 1986

Thirty-five women artists were represented in this exhibition. It was open to all members of the Association of women artists and aimed to provide a forum and feedback, particularly for new women artists. The large airy room provided an uncluttered viewing space for the exhibition, allowing a variety of drawings to be shown together without giving the impression that they ran into or jarred against one another.

Particular works dominated the exhibition for me. The first to "strike" was Jill Carter-Hansen's "Ma, Ma, The Planes Are Falling!" The broken bust (of a woman, I imagined) leans on a squat pedestal towards the torn black paper edge. The bust is ripped with red holes, it's head bandaged in white, the eyes in black. Torn paper plane shapes fall (and disintegrate) towards the bottom of a window of night behind it. The urgency of the title is equalled by the visual image — the bandaged, expressionless face is thrown out of its rectangular paper background towards the viewer.

"The Grand Agitator" by Sylvia Siddell projects a different type of distress. The grand agitator appears to be spinning itself right out of the machine. It might be some manic flaying projectile — a phallus or a plant. Clothes grow aggressively out of the wash basket like sea-weed arms. A woman's face is trapped behind the glass drier door, while a rooster juts out of it before her. The washing machine offers a choice of functions: "Baroque/Phuge, loud/roxy, cheeky/choice, fast/away, vulgar/cute stuff." Thick feather wings grow out of either side of the machine and its cycle promises "shout go go go live dance jump fly first leap final spin. If the washing machine is able to "fly" does this leave the trapped woman (like the rooster) flightless — or is the glass that separates her from the agitator and the clothes/entwining plants her only protection? The detail and care in this drawing create a feeling that the anxiety and pressure cannot be "contained" much longer.

"The Telling Truths" by Carole Shephard depicts the "paper objects and letters and drawings" given by a woman in a dream to a recipient who

becomes "the keeper of her reality". The drawing details fine folds of ribbon around eight scrolls of paper. One page of script is open, telling of the dream.

The largest pastel work "On Being a Pakeha at Ngaruawahia" by Natalie Merle Woodhams shoes on oncoming storm between steep hills. On a lush green riverbank at the point where the river separates is a small blue and white band rotunda. The storm appears to be about to engulf its bright isolation.

Not all the artists addressed directly political themes. (A curated exhibition with the theme "Women Culture and Society" is planned for later this year.) There was the serene beauty of the colour pencil drawing "Japanese Iris" by Ruby Huston, and a vibrant untitled pastel work by Vivian Ward.

I enjoyed spending time with the exhibition and after being "spun out" by Sylvia Siddell I appreciated those lush purple irises. □

Vivienne Shakespeare

LIVES OF MODERN

WOMEN

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It was a good idea, to have contemporary women writers do a biographical portrait of a "grandmother" — a woman of a generation or two back with some notable achievement of a more or less literary nature. But it doesn't come off. The books don't work as biographies: they also do a disservice to the grandmothers.

Rebecca West by Fay Weldon says more about Weldon than about West. The writer takes one part of her subject's life (the birth of her child by H. G. Wells) and writes in the form of letters to her, from this time to that. It's an original technique, but we end up with a picture of Rebecca West that diminishes her.

In the introduction Fay Weldon describes her as "That formidable elder stateswoman of English literature", who was so frightening that she (Weldon) "stayed, when possible, the other side of the room." The "letters" suggest a young woman, very dependent on

her (very absent) famous male lover, not dealing very well with being a mother. This may well be true, but it is only a small part of the woman who was Rebecca West. She did have a very intense relationship with Wells for ten years — but she lived for eighty.

Bessie Smith, by Elaine Feinstein gives the reader plenty of information about Bessie, "Empress of the blues". We read about her tempestuous marriage, her relationships with women, her drinking, her singing. But it ends up being a portrait without soul. Feinstein expresses her admiration for Bessie Smith a lot, but there is no real insight into a complex, passionate woman — it's more of a voyeuristic look from the outside (I suspect by a white woman, but there's no information about that) at the events in the life of a flamboyant Black woman blues singer. I got more of a feeling for the woman from the photographs than from the text.

Jean Rhys by Carole Angier seemed, at first, to be better. But by the end of the book my sympathy for the subject had turned to irritation. Yet I had never had this reaction to the women in her novels (who were all, in a very real sense, herself). Somehow Jean Rhys had become affected, the tragedy of her life turned into a series of rather mean and nasty episodes.

My dissatisfaction with this, and all the other books in the series may in part arise from their shortness, which has forced the writers into either too narrow a focus or massive over-generalisation to get everything in. The idea was to produce small books that would sell for under \$10, and this may have created a fatal shortcoming.

Freya Stark by Caroline Moorehead was the last one I read, so by then I did not have very high expectations. In it "The greatest woman explorer and travel writer of her age" (quote from the cover) is reduced to an ailing woman, who manages to get around a lot.

In all the books there is some womanly (therefore, of course, negative) aspect to the subject, that somehow manages to appear as her fault: it was Jean Rhys's "weakness" that she could not manage to both live and write; Bessie

Smith is "undisciplined", Rebecca West is "too dependent".

We need lots and lots of biographies of the women who are our grandmothers, whose lives demonstrate that women have always been fully human in every way, but we need them to be done a lot better than in this series. □
Pat Rosier

WOMENS CONCERT CHRISTCHURCH, FRIDAY 20TH JUNE 1986

This concert treated us to some very amusing and politically refreshing music, and some strong and powerful poetry. First Pig Latin gave us our favourites *The I.P.D.* and *Those Boots*, but they also woke us up with *Daddy's Little Girl* and the latest in *Are You Politically Correct?*

Then came some poetry from Jill Willcox on peace themes, also an Alice Walker poem and an amusing one from James Thurber. Jacqui Steincamp read a poem about a pregnant serving girl buried a hundred years ago near a crossroads and now still celebrated with flowers. And from Kathleen Gallagher!!! Kathleen took our breath away

with her powerful poems. She is becoming more and more bicultural and develops her themes with intensity and brilliance. Her *My Uncle* was particularly moving, and *Tara* expanded many themes both Pakeha and Maori.

Finally, after an ample supper, we were able to enjoy the music of Nepharius, with many original songs such as *Can't Sink a Rainbow*, *Beautiful Women* and *Only Human*, with the added bonus of the Topp Twins' Radiation.

The concert raised just over \$300 which will pay the rent of the Drop-in Centre for one month. □
Noreen Penny

A FEMINIST DICTIONARY

Cheris Kramarae and

Paula A Treichler

Pandora Press, 1985

\$29.95

In a male-dominated world, the very language we use is both an expression and an instrument of that domination. What Dale Spender terms "man-made language" and Barda One calls "Manglish" excludes us and our experiences as women in its funda-

mental meanings. When we are included the words that speak of us seem inevitably to undergo the process Muriel Schultz names "semaytic derogation", that process of debasement that makes it possible for the word "madam" for example to mean both "a polite form of address to a woman", and "the woman in charge of a brother".

In general, dictionaries are basic to the perpetuation of male supremacy. By claiming (and receiving) authority for their definitions, by using the written word as their sources, by taking their examples from the "best" authors, who are of course male, and by selecting illustrative examples that are derogatory of women, if they include women at all — and only 10% of them do — dictionaries express and perpetuate the low status of women in an anti-woman world. (*The Random House Dictionary* illustrates "nerves" with "women with shrill voices get on his nerves.")

The Feminist Dictionary shares with most dictionaries the alphabetical listing of its entries. And there the similarities stop. *The Feminist Dictionary* makes women central. It lists the words and phrases that are important, useful, relevant and problema-

tic to us. The definitions that are given come out of our experience ("Dinner: an activity that preceded washing the dishes."). And the illustrations of the words and phrases in use come from the work of women, and by being arranged in chronological order convey some sense of our feminist herstory, our woman's past.

As the title suggests, the basic function of this dictionary is to act as a guide to feminist theory and the work of feminists. It is not something to be read straight through, but I did find that whatever I looked up, I was still reading ten pages later, hooked in by the fascinating range of points-of-view given in the examples and delighted by the wit and vitality expressed. I had to drag myself back to the word I was investigating initially so that I could follow the paths suggested by the authors. Many of the definitions and examples are followed by lists of words that will further expand the topic. For example, the meaning of "abuse" is divided into three sections, verbal, physical and psychological. The authors suggest as accompanying reading to "abuse, verbal", the words: dictionary, names, semantic derogation of women, sexual harassment, testosterone poisoning. And from "abuse, physical" we can turn to: marital rape, wife battering and violence against women. "Abuse, psychological" refers us on to feminism, gaslight, personal is political, phrase book for the foreign country of feminism and yellow wallpaper.

The dictionary is not only a journey in itself, it can also be the beginning of a very long journey of exploration of women's creative, vital, challenging use of language as we continue to describe and philosophise and define and theorise about our world. □
Claire-Louise McCurdy.

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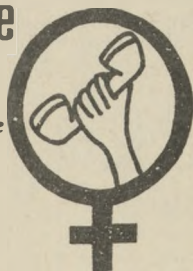
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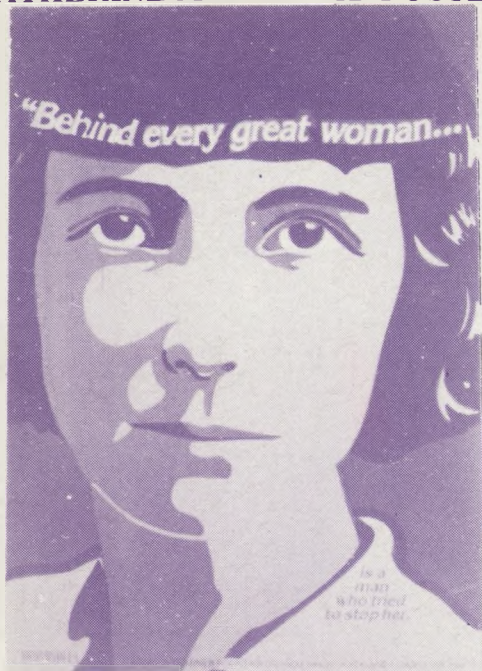
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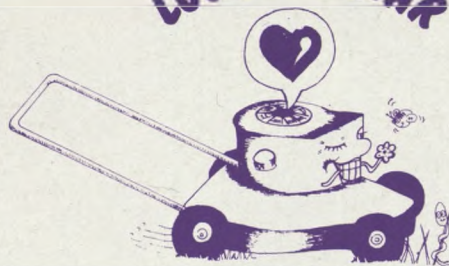


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