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BROADSHEET

NEW ZEALAND'S FEMINIST MAGAZINE

SIXTEENTH YEAR

OF PUBLICATION

JULY/AUGUST 1988

ISSUE 160

\$3.80

CLEANING UP

THE
HORRORS OF
HOUSEWORK

GIVING UP
THE TOP JOB
MARY O'REGAN

MOTHERS
EXPERIENCES
EXPOSED

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JULY/AUG ISSUE 160 1988

FEATURES

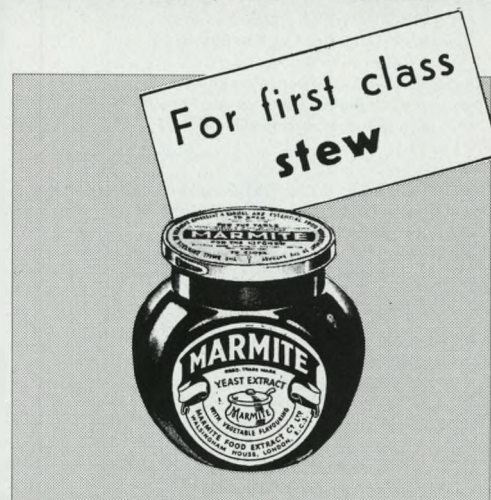
- 17 **It's Your Turn to Clean the Loo**
Feminists clean up
Pat Rosier
- 21 **Festival Films to Watch Out For**
Four from women directors
Mary Rowe
- 24 **The Highest Paid Public Servant**
Mary O'Regan leaves the ministry
Debbie Jones
- 29 **Health Alternatives for Women**
One in Christchurch, one in Canada
Pat Syme/Healthsharing
- 36 **The Motherhood Experience**
From Jenny Phillips' book
Pat Rosier

REGULARS

- 2 **Herspective**
- 3 **Letters and Fronting Up**
- 5 **Broadcast**
A Den of In-equity ♦ Towards Supermarket Education ♦ Talking for Ourselves ♦ Waihopai ♦ Early Childhood Workers ♦ Takaparawha ♦ Malaysia ♦ "They Killed My Brothers" – Kanaky
- 8 **In Brief**
- 34 **On The Shelf**
- 23 **What's New**
- 47 **The Gripes of Roth**
- 48 **Classified**

ARTS

- 41 **Marg. N. L. Persona** – Margaret Dawson ♦ Glasnost Comes to the Movies ♦ Living With The Man ♦ Dry Your Smile ♦ Virago's Birthday ♦ Making A Way



COVER; STEWING ABOUT THE CLEANING UP

17



MARY "COOKING" WITH THE MINISTRY

24



TAKING CARE OF THE SMALL FRY

36

BROADSHEET

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This month's writer, Jenny Rankine, was a
voluntary and paid collective member for four
years, until the end of 1987.

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may not agree with or endorse views expressed in
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lished. 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 We do not publish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 particu-
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HERSPECTIVE

By the time you read this, Telethon
'88 will have been and gone. This
time incest, sexual abuse and domestic
violence were the target of all that
hearty competitive fundraising. And
the widely quoted guesstimates of the
amount of family violence were femi-
nist ones. Eight years ago, as one of
many struggling rape crisis workers, I
would have found that hard to imagine.

Another feminist achievement
crossed my desk at work the other week
– a Radio New Zealand guideline of
non-sexist language. Work hours in-
stead of man-hours, control rather than
master – the kind of thing *Broadsheet's*
been printing for more than a decade. It
was rubbished by some guardians of
male dogma. But my editor circulated
it to other suburban newspapers be-
cause he thought it was good stuff.

These recent milestones have been
very welcome. Since I stopped being a
paid worker at *Broadsheet*, I've been
reporting development issues, local
body training and the trickle down ef-
fect of Rogernomics in inner city
Auckland – subjects on which feminist
and Maori agendas have had depress-
ingly little impact.

The Market, whether bullish or
sheepish, rules okay in the Queen St
canyons of the country. And under
Labour's More Market policies, devel-
opers have become impatient with
even minor restrictions on what they
can do. Local bodies *can* influence the
kind of development that happens, if
enough councillors want to. But Auck-
land City Council, like many others, is
dominated by businessmen.

It has a history of being easy on
developers, a tiny staff to enforce plan-
ning conditions and under the law can
extract only ridiculously small penal-
ties if it does catch developers out.

One of its recent decisions reflects
feminist concerns. Fay, Richwhite
Corporation and NZI were told they
had to build the creche they'd promised
in the Queen St joint venture tower
instead of weaseling out of it once
they'd discovered the cost of running

one. They may still appeal the decision,
but it was a victory for childcare groups
and women councillors aware of the
need for inner city creches.

Most Auckland area councils still
have done very little about their part-
nership obligations under the Treaty of
Waitangi.

The Town and Country Planning
Act, which controls all local body plan-
ning, doesn't mention the treaty. But in
its preliminary waffle it requires coun-
cil district schemes to deal with marae,
urupa (burial ground) reserves and tra-
ditional and cultural Maori uses.

Auckland community worker Mari-
lyn Grey found in a 1986 survey only
15 of 26 Auckland area local bodies
had made any provision for marae.
They were mainly rural or South Auck-
land councils, where the Maori popula-
tion is proportionately higher.

Excuses for doing nothing included:
not knowing they were meant to; too
much work; no submissions from local
Maori asking them to do something;
and existing marae in a local body next
door. In areas short of vacant land,
tennis and bowling clubs often have
more chance of using council reserve
land than marae komiti.

Many Pakeha voters seem to think a
tiny minority of Maori is enough in
local bodies or government. We need a
different election system to get part-
nership numbers of Maori women making
policy. We also need some organised
feminist resistance to this govern-
ment's More Market policies. One
thing I do know – only bullshit trickles
down. Since they're keen on flogging
off state assets, why don't they sell
Treasury. And pirate Roger.

Jenny
Rankine

LETTERS

WHO ARE THE ADMIRABLE WOMEN?

Dear Broadsheet,
Thanks for an exciting May issue. It contained some views that roused me into responding.

I felt quite troubled with some of the comments made by Alix Dobkin. *Boys* are a problem at her concerts, she says. They either fall asleep before she comes on stage or they "play up". They do not sit quietly at these adult events, appreciating her music. Although she then goes on to say that *child-free* concerts are desirable, she returns back to the idea of *boy-free*, this time because she believes little boys have to learn at an early age that women need their own space to expore/express their special energy.

The problems I have with these statements are:

a) I was under the impression that the argument for women-only space centred *not* on the idea that women have some inherent special energy that required preservation *but* was due to the silencing/inhibiting effect of mens' presence and the power imbalance that invariably occurs.

b) There is too much gender division when it comes to child-rearing. Dobkin says she is an educator, yet it is differential treatment that she is advocating. Little boys and little girls Dobkin views as born inherently different and this difference should be fostered. This is the first time that I have encountered the idea of different child-rearing based on gender proposed as a desirable possibility by feminists. In her scheme of things it is girls/women who have special, superior qualities. I do not accept this (dare I say it, cultural feminist) view. We

make little boys and little girls the way they are and if we see ourselves as educators we should use every opportunity to counteract the effects of a misogynist society upon little boys.

c) Any child would fall asleep or "act up" at an adult event regardless of gender and bored children will indulge in anti-social behaviour. A sexist culture encourages boys to be more vocal and physical. Girls tend to withdraw into themselves when they are bored. However, feminist children, I hope, are not passive and would make their presence felt at an adult event. I would find the situation of little girls sitting quietly, being "good" while mother enjoyed the music, rather odd.

d) Dobkin falls into the trap of blaming the child rather than society. Little boys are irritating, a nuisance. The questions we should ask are: why were boys (I would prefer to say children) at an adult event? Should children be taken to adult functions which make little effort to include them? Aren't we imposing upon children by expecting them to enjoy adult entertainment? Shouldn't creches/child spaces be *mandatory* at any women's event to cater for the many women who are the only parent in the household, or who have partners who shirk or are unable to undertake their responsibilities?

My two daughters can behave in just as revolting a manner as little boys when they get dragged along to adult events. Their "protests" are memorable and their tantrums are not due to the fact that they are "bad". It is due to the lack of control they have over their lives, which makes them restless and angry. Surely we can

relate to that. Children are an oppressed group, and we should be careful about seeing *them* as the problem.

The other area that I would like to take issue with Alix Dobkin (and other feminists) on is her statement of "putting yourself first". I can appreciate what underlies this view, that women have been encouraged to be self-denying, not important enough to have their needs met, but constantly seeing to others' needs. However, I don't like the language and the connotations with words like "first". Why should we think in terms of first, second or third? It is a very individualistic way of looking at things and is more compatible with the hierarchical structure we reject.

Surely it would be more useful to speak in terms of "rights". All human beings have "rights" which have been consistently denied to women, and we have to ensure that our rights are not ignored any longer. In order to do this we have to begin valuing ourselves as people whose needs are just as important as anyone else's. And although we have rights as individuals, we also have *responsibilities* to our particular communities too. We have a responsibility to other women who have boy children to not make insensitive remarks or to exclude them. We have a responsibility to children, who also have rights.

I found the interview with Dale Spender very "interesting". I am pleased that there are some women who can exclude most things from their lives, devoting themselves to a single task, and that they have the necessary income and support system to do so. This is Spender's choice and she

is entitled to it and obviously is in a position to exercise her choice. However, that man-made concept of "class" that Spender prefers to ignore, makes it difficult (impossible) for the majority of women to exercise a choice over how they would like to spend their lives. Refusing to acknowledge class does nothing to lessen this reality or to address the problem caused by this economic division.

I am glad that Alison Jones questioned Spender's views. But I must say that I save my admiration *not* for individual women (like myself) who are in a position to lead their lives in a comfortable fashion doing the sort of work that gives them pleasure, but for the countless women who still manage to salvage some dignity in the face of poverty, violence and hatred. They are the admirable ones.

ATHINA TSOULIS
London

PORN ILLUSTRATIONS

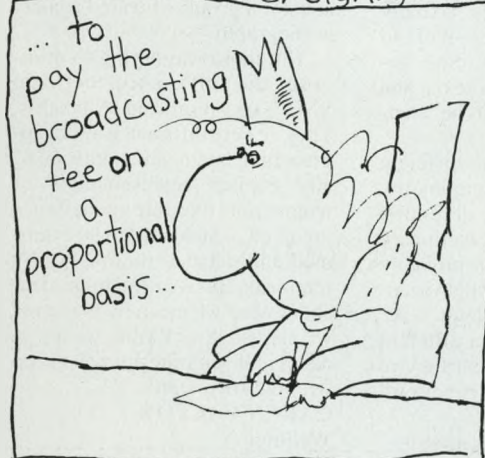
Dear Broadsheet,
Thank you for the full and stimulating May issue.

Concerning Allanah Ryan's article "Policing Pornography," we really enjoyed discussing it, even though we didn't agree with it all. It raised some important points.

However, oh yuk, did we really have to see those pictures? One of the things we like about *Broadsheet* is not having to see offensive images of women. They didn't help clarify the issues because we nearly didn't read the article because we didn't want to look at the pictures.

LOUISA HOPWOOD
KARI HUNTER
Christchurch

Consumer sovereignty.



FRONTING UP

DEADLINES

For the September issue 24 July, for October 24 August.

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A sub is \$40 per year - you get your magazine posted to you. Add a donation for a sustaining sub of \$60 or consider a two-year (\$75 or \$105 sustaining) or three-year (\$110 or \$150 sustaining) subscription. Overseas rates (these plus the horrendous costs of overseas postage) on page 2.

VOLUNTEERS

There's always heaps of work to be done around *Broadsheet*, and it's a good opportunity to experience working in a feminist environment. It helps us most if you can come in regularly for an hour or two (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and do a specific task. Some of the tasks that need doing are: renewal reminder and sub-drive mailouts; organising the library and back copies; filing newspaper cuttings etc; sending out account statements; being the sales person in the bookshop; making up packs of particular articles for school resources; entering subscription information on the computer. If you would like to help with any of these, please ring Carol on 608-535.

CORRECTIONS

There was no credit on the drawing on page 19 of the June issue, which was done by Linda Sabbage. Our apologies for leaving your name off, Linda. The cartoon on page 17 was wrongly credited. It is from the pen of Alison Bechdel.

The Box No. for Life After Rape questionnaire is 36-336, Auckland.

MORE ON MIDWIVES

Dear Broadsheet,
In the April 88 issue *Broadsheet* published an article on midwifery education entitled "A Lolly Scramble" by Joan Donley. This article, contains a number of inaccuracies and misleading statements, about which we would like to comment.

Ms Donley refers to "the inadequate midwifery option" available in a number of Advanced Diploma in Nursing Courses (ADN). The Department of Education publication, "An Evaluation of Advanced Diploma in Nursing Courses", published in 1987, found that 21% of students who undertook the midwifery option were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied compared with 48% who were satisfied or very satisfied (p143).

Midwifery became an option of the ADN in 1980. Graduates meet the requirements of the Nursing Council of New Zealand for registration as a midwife. The ADN also prepares nurses to practise at an advanced level. Midwifery in New Zealand is seen as advanced nursing, meeting the needs of women and families who experience all the health problems of the population at large, and who are entitled to as wide a range of skills as possible. Midwifery now follows a comprehensive nursing course, which has a health focus and a holistic family centred approach to care.

The working party to which Ms Donley refers was set up to look into a reallocation of some existing places in the polytechnics now offering bridging courses for registered general/obstetric and psychiatric nurses. The opportunity has been taken to establish some separate midwifery courses, while some polytechnics will retain the midwifery option within the ADN. These courses will be evaluated over three years and future policy determined on the outcome. The brief of the working party did not include evaluation of the content of courses, which as far as midwifery registration is concerned, is the responsibility of the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

Members of the working party were chosen to provide a balance between nursing service, nursing management, nursing education and employee organisations. The working party was not only concerned with midwifery.

Ms Donley made the claim that "four senior nurse advisors from the Departments of Health and Education" were on the committee and that none were midwives. This is incorrect. Two of us (the undersigned) are both registered midwives, have practised as registered midwives and have also experienced the services of midwives, as patients ourselves. In

OBITUARY

YVONNE JOY HUGHES 1940 - 1988



IN memory of Yvonne who was an inspiration to women with her never ending enthusiasm and drive for everything she believed in and thought possible. She denied the existence of the word "can't" and worked on the philosophy that there was

nothing women could not do.

Yvonne held many positions working for women and children, in the Department of Maori Affairs Taupo, Vocational Guidance Mangakino, as Community Advisor to the Auckland City Council and as Equal Opportunities Officer for the Northern Regional Office of the Department of Social Welfare.

Before her death Yvonne attended to all the details of her fu-

neral arrangements, ensuring a strong women energy and participatory element. Services were held in the chapel and at the graveside - an emotional and sometime humorous dedication to a woman who will be sadly missed by her loved ones.

friends and colleagues, both in the community and at the Department of Social Welfare.

Yvonne battled bravely with a terminal illness for four years and is now at rest, free from the pain and frustration she suffered. She died on the morning of 7 May 1988, at home.

Yvonne, thank you for your presence in our lives ... you encouraged us to go beyond ourselves.

Jan Cowan

addition, we have post-basic qualifications and experience in education and feel well qualified to work in this area.

We hope this clarifies some of the misunderstandings in the article.

ROSLYN PENNA
KATHRYN KERSHAW
Department of Health
Wellington

PORN MEANINGS

Dear Broadsheet,
In all this discussion about pornography, I think there's a semantic problem that needs to be addressed, and isn't being. Women Against Pornography (WAP) describe pornography as sexually explicit material which degrades women; sexually explicit stuff which is non-exploitative, on the other hand, is called "erotica". The definition of pornography used by Allanah Ryan (and a number of other anti-censorship feminists) is that it is sexually explicit material designed to arouse its consumers. She believes that some of it is sexist and that this sexism must be challenged and removed.

These are two quite different uses of the term "pornography" by feminists. Allanah's definition comes closest to the dictionary definition and to what is probably the most widely accepted meaning. Which isn't to put down WAP for using the word in a different way: I think the concept they're attempting to describe is a useful one.

But there are dangers in assign-

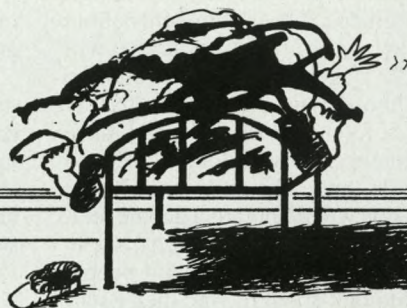
ing new meanings to an existing word. Anyone talking about "pornography" has to be careful to specify exactly what they mean by the term. Otherwise there's a danger of the very name Women Against Pornography evoking images of puritanism and anti-sex crusades - which is liable, no doubt, to both attract the wrong people and deter the right ones. Similarly, for feminists accustomed to the WAP definition of porn it's easy to throw up your hands in horror at Allanah's assertion that "we need more pornography, not less".

There are real difficulties when a word comes to have different (but related) meanings. I think in this case it has tended to obscure the possibility of any meeting point or even useful debate between the two groups - after all, if Allanah is in favour of "more pornography", how can she have anything in common with the aims of a group who are "against pornography".

I'm in no way trying to minimise the difference between WAP's position and Allanah's. They're very different ways of approaching and dealing with sexually explicit representations of women, and there are major issues involved, which need to be examined and debated thoroughly by feminists. But we need to be clear about what we mean by the terms we are using, or I think we are in danger of tripping ourselves up with our own words.

CAREN WILTON
Wellington

STAFF TRAINING.



COURTNEY ©

A DEN OF IN-EQUITY

While massive media attention has been focused on events at the Whare Paia, women staff in other parts of Carrington hospital have been dealing with the (apparently less newsworthy) effects of rape and sexual harassment. Pat Rosier reports.

It will not be news to many *Broadsheet* readers that women who have been raped or sexually harassed in other ways find it difficult to talk about or report because of the reactions they get: you must have asked for it; what sort of woman are you, then?; Who? But he's such a nice guy; and there are the looks of disbelief as well.

Events of the last few months at Auckland's Carrington Hospital reinforce the

I GET
THE FEELING
THAT THERE'S
SOMETHING
PRETTY SEEDY
GOING ON,
WITHIN THE
HOSPITAL,
BUT PEOPLE ARE
AFRAID TO
TALK ABOUT IT

idea that it's not safe to report rape. Two female staff members have reported being raped.

Both have been subject to open hostility at work and the women's support group have received a threatening letter (signed "The gang of ten"). One of the women has moved to work in another hospital, not because she wanted to, but to get away from the hostility. Another case of the abused having to leave.

Sexual harassment procedures are being put into place at Carrington, in accordance with Auckland Hospital Board policy, and an initial training day has been held. This means that there are now contact people to whom staff can make an initial complaint. However, the biggest problem seems to be the attitudes to women of some staff members. Mandatory training, for *all* staff, on sexual harassment, using material available from the Human Rights Commission (see "Hands Off" in *Broadsheet* 153, November 1987) would be a good place to start.

A chap who was fired because of a rape allegation has been reinstated, through the efforts of the PSA, his union. The woman he is alleged to have raped is a member of the same union, and they haven't done as well at protecting her interests. The reinstatement is common knowledge, but at the time of writing no-one seems to find out when or where he will actually return to work. There are plenty of rumours. So she comes to work each day not knowing whether or not he will be there. (My attempts to contact the hospital's principal

nurse for information about this have never got beyond his secretary.) And because she spoke out, she has to work in a hostile environment.

No complaint of rape was lodged with the police, because of lack of evidence, but the Human Rights Commission has been approached.

There seems to be a significant number of Carrington staff with really sexist anti-woman attitudes. I hear comments about the "Oakley mafia" (but then no-one will explain, so I assume it's a reference to some of those who worked at Oakley Hospital before it closed). And I have heard references to a "sauna club" and blue movies and "the rec centre", but again, no-one will elaborate. I get the feeling that there's something pretty seedy going on, within the hospital, but people are afraid to talk about it. And then I start to wonder what they're frightened of, is there some sort of bullying going on? Well, there was that threatening letter to the women's resource centre.

In my prodding around seeking information I start to hear about the sexual harassment of patients by patients. (Nothing to do with the Whare Paia but an outcome of mixed wards.) Although one worker explains that female patients were sexually harassed by some male patients in the grounds before the wards were mixed, so it's not a new problem. And patients have

so little power. Often they are unaware of what little power they do have (like approaching the hospital's District Inspector), or find the process too daunting.

Carrington's District Inspector, Paul Treadwell, is aware of the problem. I spoke to the Assistant District Inspector for Carrington, Sandy Barry, who has just been appointed to that position. She says that now there are two of them they can do more than just react to calls, they can start going and talking to patients.

At a recent meeting of hospital residents organised by Psychiatric Survivors patient to patient sexual harassment came up as a big issue. The feeling was strong that women patients must be better protected from patients – and staff – who sexually harass. All women patients should have the choice of a mixed or women-only ward, (there is no such choice at present), and sexually harassed women should be moved immediately to a safe and supportive part of the hospital.

Recently an 18-year-old woman patient had to wait several days to leave her ward after an attempted rape from another patient in the same ward. After much pressure from the District Inspector and her family the young woman was moved to Auckland Hospital. There was no safe place in Carrington for her.

I wish I could believe that hospital management was as much concerned about the

sexual harassment of women patients and staff as they are about the threat to their collective ego and power that the Whare Paia seems to represent. There isn't really a "gang of ten" running some sort of den of sexist vice in there is there?

The PSA is a worry in this instance, too. There's been some good work done for women by the PSA, but this time they seem to have supported one member (the alleged rapist) at the expense of another (the woman).

Why won't anyone say what his "reinstatement" really mean? Three weeks after it was announced no-one knows. Both hospital management and the union have a responsibility here, surely.

I guess I never expected that anything in particular would come of the manager of the mental health programme within the Health Department, Basil James, being made a consultant to the Auckland Hospital Board to sort out the mess of Auckland's psychiatric services. He's been in Auckland consulting with board and hospital managements and the buzz is that he's recommending the appointment of about a dozen more psychiatrists. Super.

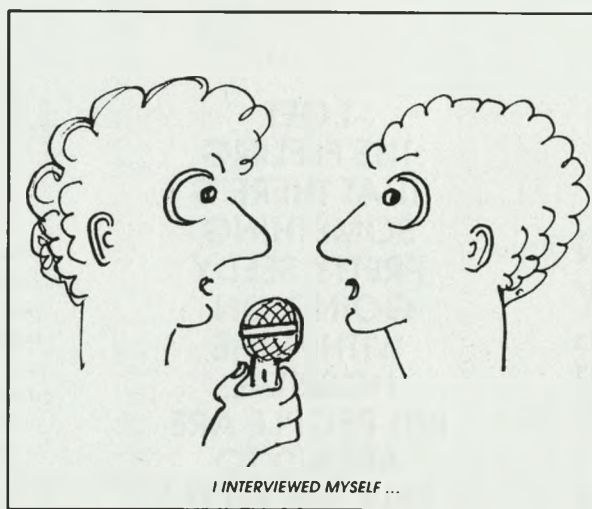
I wonder if he dug deep enough to uncover this particular cess pit. Or does the persistent (the incidents I have written of are a sample only) sexual harassment of women patients and staff not constitute a sufficient crisis?

TOWARDS SUPERMARKET EDUCATION

Jill Brame, an Auckland Secondary School teacher, writes about *Administering For Excellence*, more commonly known as the Picot Report.

I was fortunate enough to be in Wellington when the Picot Report came out. In the hush that followed each radio broadcast, you could, from the Terrace, hear the soggy splash of civil servants falling onto their ball point pens, wondering what they were going to do about their mortgages. Lucky old civil servants. They should worry, what with my cuddies in Gisborne losing a farm and winning a hundred-acre swimming pool after Cyclone Bola.

I'm not unsympathetic; however, after Cyclone Picot, there is every chance that the advisory and support services people may well be re-employed under some



CARTOON: JILL BRAME

other title because they are ever so slightly indispensable, according to some teachers; who realise that they personally cannot do, or know, everything. Woe unto the National Film Service, however. It is going to have to support itself, just like the video agency down the road – they may have to stock some best seller titles other than Johnny Visits Lower Perugia (1949), black and white, subtitles.

Whilst in Wellington I had no idea that I was an Investigative Freelance Journalist Writing an Article on the Post Picot Blues Period, so I sat back, eaves-dropping on

demented advisory service members whose long hot summer is over. It became apparent that many areas of primary service – art, drama, music – would be hit hard, obviously because someone thinks they don't matter very much. That night we raced back from dinner to catch the Minister of Education giving a forthright, frank and honest interview to a journalist who didn't seem used to it. The *Listener* gave up several pages, and the major newspapers gave about an eighth of a square metre of coverage each – slightly less than they do for racing. I raced down to the Gummint Printer and bought two of the last five remaining copies of the morning's best seller; interest was running high and the Public had been Informed – just as they have been informed of other swooping great changes in education wrought by Fairy Godmother in Wellington – such as Curriculum Review and School Certificate Grading System.

Have you been informed, then? How much more do you know about the Picot report other than (a) the printer got it out on time (b) it's very expensive (c) it may well be remaindered because although there's been a big build up, there seems to be not much difference between it and kissing a

week old flounder (d) we are the only country in which Acadaemia is analysed by Foodtown specialists. (Brian Picot, chairperson of the task force that produced the report, is a Foodtown director.)

What we seem to have here is a document which rationalises, along commercial lines, the Gilbert and Sullivan quality that pervades educational services. It offers CHOICE, as do the supermarkets; this word, its synonyms and cognates, proliferates amongst the diagrams and flow-charts. Choice is fine as long as it is used, preferably by informed people. If that doesn't happen, students will be involved in a giant pin-ball game in which they still have no pull on the flippers.

The diagrams and the document, with an emphasis on a tiny ministry and a lot of community feedback, suggest other diagrams to me – the Pyramid of Power has turned into the Plumber's Plunger of Power. There will be, apparently, a much smaller ministry, headed by a Chief Executive, (who probably will bear a much closer resemblance to Rabbit Who is Good at Lists rather than Tiger Who Bounces); somewhere further down, a broad base of community members and interested parties who will be able to participate in writing up school charters, working out what to do with the tuckshop profits, if any, and find out who is accountable for toilet paper.

I'm frankly fascinated by this structure. Not only does it remind me of a plunger, but also of a bottle neck, which has an almost exactly opposite effect to a plunger. Following this amazing insight, I had a look in ten dictionaries for a big word meaning heaps of power exerted by a few people over a lot, which is what this structure also reminds me of. There are several, including "oligarchy", which is the nicest. Granted, there will be fewer salaries, flights, motels and cars to be paid for, but fewer people will be rubber stamping decisions, counting things and checking accountabilities. Somewhere, there is going to be constipation ...

I also think the Picot report is like one of the old kind of mental arithmetic books that is full of problems and doesn't have any answers in the back. It does recognise difficulties within the system. How can you, for example, recognise within your school all the special needs and characteristics of your community? There are no solutions given for the puzzles that have faced us for a long time; only a careful description of who is going to be accountable for figuring it out. A Board of Trustees including Socrates, Mother Nature, Leonardo da Vinci, the Head Prefect of St Trinians, Germaine Greer, Papatuanuku, Athena, Sonja Davies and Demeter may ultimately come up with something after they have passed their Mensa test.

I'm interested in the index. So many important issues are not addressed, or are swept under the carpet. For example, the bilingual issue is covered by a paragraph briefly outlining the historical problem

and the current impasse. Students and classroom teachers are still left with the huge issues of equity, of assessment, resources, class sizes, rural education ... like a hungry family they sit around the table, waiting to be fed, the kits of knowledge unopened, while Papa Picot Report yells out – "Shut up – eat what you can – I'm busy redesigning the kitchen."

There is a charming and idealistic assumption behind the report that people in general are rational, objective, idealistic and committed educators with a wide variety of communication and management skills. It is rather pleasant and naive and gives me the warm fuzzies for all of two minutes.

This is because I conducted a series of interviews.

"So what do you think of the Picot report?" I asked Mother of Five.

"If people pay taxes in order for students to gain an equitable education why the hell am I now being asked to do the job that we, in fact, are hiring qualified people to do? There are whole groups of people who are trained in various areas and skills to deal with schools and their support systems. They are, some of them, facing unemployment – as if that wasn't problem enough – and I'm being asked what I'm going to do to help run the schools? I've done all this PTA work, largely involving fundraising and cake stalls and gala days to try and help get decent equipment for schools plural – I have sons and daughters – and I'm now invited to help run schools as well ..."

There is some other discussion. I am forced to agree. Let's face it, we do not collect all the books we don't want to read any more, lug them to a gala day, buy someone else's books that no-one wants to read, and then administer the funds in the best possible way – for the army. That seems to just get on and be run by people who know how to run armies. And, moreover, they don't seem to have to run cake stalls.

I was inadvertently interviewed by another investigative journalist, aged 15.

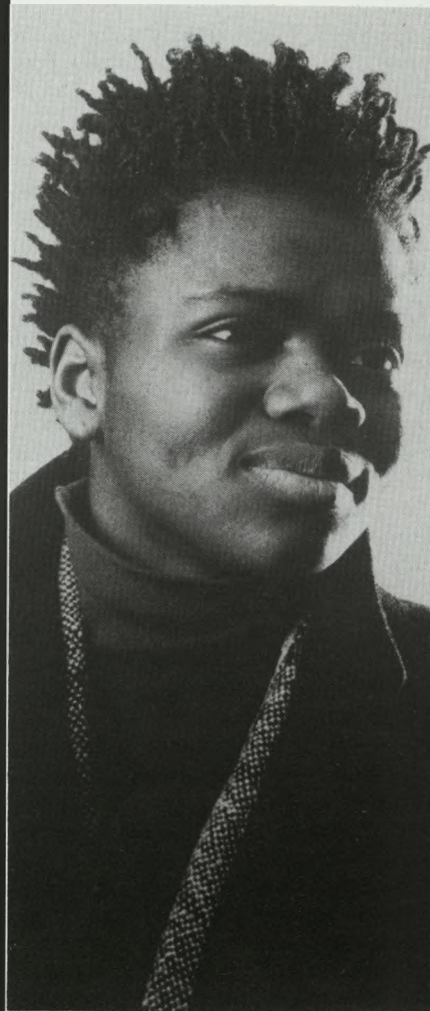
"What difference will the Picot report make to me in form six next year?" inquired N.

I thought, "Interaction in the teaching environment" isn't in the index, and that actually is where all the real stuff about teaching is. It may be fractionally easier to get a new whiteboard into the school, or get mad Mr Fenthwaite out. It may be that your medal for teaching well won't be to be yanked out of the classroom and buried under two tonnes of paper work, thanks to the Teacher of Merit scheme. It may mean that N may be able to vote for a student to represent heron the board, but Miss Rabbit will not get better at teaching science, and Mr Fing will still be grumpy because he didn't have to do playground duty in Scotland.

I replied with slow deliberation: "Bugger all, actually."

► P9

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FURTHER CANCER REPORT DELAY

Judge Silvia Cartwright's report on the Cervical Cancer Inquiry has, again, been delayed. It is now due for release on 29 July.

PERFECT BABIES AND EMBRYO FARMING

"Quality controlled" babies produced through genetic engineering may soon become the norm, according to Sydney molecular biologist, Ditta Bartels.

"She told the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science that a new technique would allow genetically defective embryos or those of the 'wrong' sex to be discarded before even implanted in the uterus.

"It was now one of the hottest topics for overseas researchers, she said. Reproductive technologies, which produced in vitro fertilisation, had moved out of the context of infertility and into genetic engineering. Dr Bartels said genetic engineering became possible when human embryos could be kept alive outside women's bodies. This was achieved in the 1970s with in vitro fertilisation.

"Currently there was a world-wide shortage of embryos for research work and manipulation in the laboratory. Neither in vitro fertilisation or a technique called embryo flushing were producing many eggs. A vital first step to obtaining embryos involved super-ovulation, where women would be given a hormone treatment to generate as many as 20 eggs ripe eggs in a monthly cycle instead of one. Recent evidence, however, indicated that daughters of women so treated might end up with reproductive abnormalities or infertility. Some women treated for super-ovulation had developed cancer of the ovaries.

"Embryo flushing, now commercialised and patented by the US company Fertility and Genetics Research, involved producing embryos inside women's bodies. But before they attach to the uterus they are flushed out. The technique was developed to deal with infertility but it has now permitted access to embryos for the laboratory. Australian health research authorities have recommended the technique not be used for the time being.

"Another technique for ripening eggs outside the body had not yet been perfected. 'If the in vitro method becomes possible than an entire ovary removed from a woman during surgery or at the time of death would become the source of thousands of fertilisable eggs and therefore the source of thousands of research embryos.' Dr Bartels said the technique had so far only been made to work with animals, but once it succeeded with humans she had no doubt there would be an

IN BRIEF

abundance of research embryos.

"It was the absence of an in vitro technique, rather than any legislation, inhibiting the development of genetic engineering of human embryos. The pressure for the use of human embryos came from parents fearing producing a child with a genetic defect and from entrepreneurial biotechnology companies. The development of recombinant DNA gene probes makes it possible to test for a wide range of genetic disorders. These include sickle cell anaemia, cystic fibrosis, huntington's chorea, muscular dystrophy and hemophilia.

"Dr Bartels said proponents of genetic testing still had a problem in that genetic diagnosis was stigmatised by its association with abortion. They believed it would be better if the testing could be shifted closer to the beginning of pregnancy and preferably before pregnancy started. This would involve genetic tests of the embryo itself before it had implanted on the uterus. The technique called embryo biopsy involved the removal of one or two cells from an early embryo. These would be

tested for abnormalities using a genetic test kit. Embryos which passed the test could be inserted back into the uterus, thus avoiding the need for abortions for the prevention of genetic defects.

"The fear of producing a child with a genetic defect was so great that genetic testing was sought in a large number of pregnancies, most of which were not at serious risk."

From The Dominion 18 May 1988

NUCLEAR FREE SEAS FLAG TO FLY AT NAVAL REVIEW WEEK

Greenpeace and the Auckland Peace Squadron, working with the Sydney Peace Squadron, plan to be a presence at Naval Review Week in Sydney in September. At least two boats will definitely be crossing the Tasman and others are possible.

Last week the New Zealand government announced it will be sending three ships to take part in what will be one of the biggest gatherings of warships ever seen in peacetime. Some 50 odd ships are expected, including ships from four of the world's five nuclear navies, including those of the USA, UK and France, none of whom have ratified the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

Greenpeace is disappointed with the attitudes of both the New Zealand and Australian governments. With the increasing nuclearisation of the navies in question, it is highly likely that nuclear armed and/or powered ships will be present in the centre of a densely populated city. A survey published in Australia in February showed the 50 per cent of Australians opposed such ship visits, with only 24 per cent in favour.

From a Greenpeace media release.

SISTERSHIP AFLOAT

The first issue of *Sistership*, a magazine for women who are concerned with nautical issues, was published on 1 April. It is to be produced six times a year.

The editor, Ruth Boydell, writes, "It is a forum for meeting and networking with maritime women." Whether or not they actually get their feet wet. It includes a historical piece about pirate women of the Caribbean, one on sexism at sea, personal stories and more.

A years' subscription is \$A25 within Australia and \$A30 (airmail) from New Zealand. Send to: *Sistership* P O Box 1027, Crows Nest, NSW 2065, Australia.

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Having hit a couple or three responses to, "What do you think of the Picot report?" Like: "Those doctors do a terrific job"; "What report?" and "Friere wouldn't like it, and neither do I." I rapidly moved on to interview myself as an average sort of teacher. I said:

"You see, after all, I'm a teacher. I must be right. That's my job, being right about Things, and if you think that because of the Picot Report I am suddenly going to become a whole bunch more sensitive to my community's needs, then you are wrong. Of course I'll be sensitive where those needs coincide with my prejudices and and pet causes – which are left of centre, women-oriented, minority group affirmative policies – but look out if my community wants to bring up Bible-banging white rich Reebok-wearing Nats. They have got to be wrong – and I, the Teacher, will of course need to squash any nastiness like that. I can do so, because people react to teachers in terms of the power politics of the classrooms in which they were taught. Democracy will rule OK – because I the Teacher say so."

Blech. Even the Picot report is hegdey about all this power to people stuff. Consultation is becoming the magical ingredient, not consensus.

Here is a piece of consultation:
Principal to member of trust board who just joined the PTA last year: Jerry – your little group won't mind awfully if we have a little fundraising thingy in term two, eh?

Jerry: No – well, er, I guess that's okay but what about ...

Principal: Good lad, Jerry; I knew we could rely on you. We need two hundred and fifty grand. When can you chaps start?

Consultation or consensus doesn't dance well with expediency, really; and the Picot Reprt is also about that. After all, 93 million dollars can't be wrong.

By now this article should have addressed the problem of why things won't change much. Old channels of power will remain. Old Pakeha, patriarchal patterns will remain. People may not want to use the power given to them (see Mother of Five, above). People may not know that there is power for grabs. "If, Post-Picot, you want some of the power ... then the first step is to get yourself on the Baord of Trustees." To do that, you and your aunt and your daughter must understand that the school is as much yours as your garden, as sunshine, as beaches. You have every right to the education you and the kids want and need.

If you're a teacher, you may just make

it easier by refusing to play your teacher role outside the classroom. Brain surgeons tend to do brain surgery in the appropriate place, not every time they meet others.

Anyone can make the effort and read the report – like Coke, nothing beats the Real Thing. My question is: is the Picot Report really about education? or is it about saving money, streamlining the assembly line and saving face?

schools, early childhood centres, polytechs and teachers colleges would be run by a Board of Trustees consisting of five elected parents, the principal, a staff rep, and in the case of secondary schools, a pupil rep.

National guidelines will set teacher/pupil ratios and curriculum standards, and the trustees will establish a charter for the school, subject to the approval of the Minister of Education. The intention is that the charter will "be a reflection of the hopes and aspirations the parents and the community in the district have for their children."

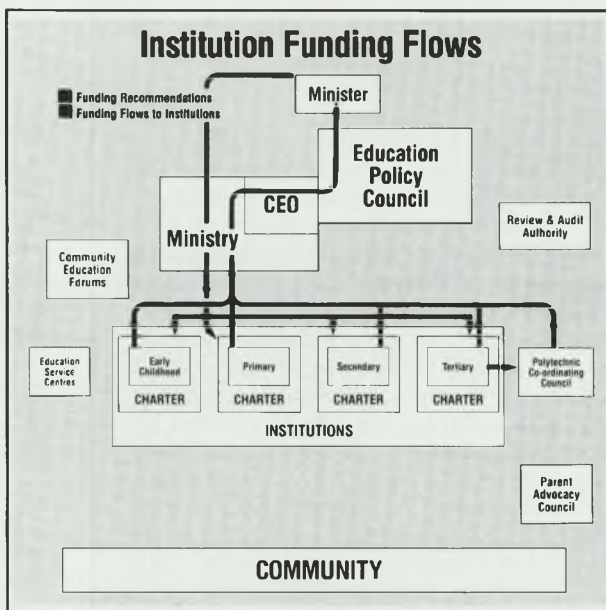
Once the charter is established the Trustees get to administer nearly all the funding, "which will take account of pupil numbers, the condition and types of buildings as well as the wider social and economic factors in the area."

An external audit, "conducted by an independent Review and Audit Authority, would take place every second year. If the school doesn't "perform" it gets a short period to "reform" after which, if the auditors aren't satisfied, the trustees can be dismissed and a manager installed until new elections take place.

Parents will also have a Parent Advocacy Council (without any funding) where they can take disagreements. And the community will have Education Forums (no funding) to "provide a venue for debate on education issues in the district" and "provide a common meeting ground ... where resource sharing could be agreed on ..."

The Education Dept will become "smaller and more specialist".

An Educational Policy Council will filter policy to the Minister of Education. Education Boards will be abolished.



Diagrams about policy flow and lines of accountability and servicing and support relationships have lines and arrows to and from the community. How come there are no funding lines to the community?

WHAT'S IN THE REPORT?

It's complex and not easily summarised. Ask your local school for a copy to read if you want the full report., or buy it from the Government Bookshop for \$9.95.

Essentially, if the report is adopted,

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quires a multi-cultural perspective in developing courses at the graduate and undergraduate level and to take account of the diverse nature of New Zealand society. Competency in the area of women's studies in education would be an advantage.

The Salary for Lecturers is in the range \$35,000 - \$42,100 p.a.

The appointee would commence duties as soon as possible. Further information is available from the Head of Department of Education or Mrs V B Bretherton, Personnel Section with whom applications, including a full curriculum vitae and names of three referees, close on 22 July 1988

B R H Monks
REGISTRAR

"...boards which were responsive to the needs of the schools would have an opportunity to establish education centres." No funding lines, but apparently they would contract their services to schools in areas like accountancy and maintenance.

Teacher appointment procedures will change: the Board of Trustees will appoint teachers; principals will appoint basic grade teachers, and senior teachers with a panel; teachers could get promotion without leaving the classroom. ■

CHILDCARE WORKERS SEEK FAIR PAY AND CONDITIONS

Early childcare workers over most of the country stopped work for three hours on the morning of 31 May.
Pat Rosier reports.

The National Award for early childhood workers covers all of the country except Otago/Southland. Workers here have a separate award with employers that give them better wages and condition than those working under the national award.

The union is as equally concerned for parents as it is for workers. "Quality affordable, accessible childcare is our aim," says Bronwyn Maxwell, Regional Organiser. The union has been lobbying the government since 1982 for government funding for a realistic wage for child-care workers that will not escalate parents' fees. They do not want an elitist service that only the wealthy can afford and feel that the government must accept more responsibility for provision.

At present a worker in Otago/Southland in her first year of service is paid \$6.40 (untrained) to \$7.03 (trained) an hour. At present a *trained* worker in her first year under the national award gets \$6.39 an hour - that's \$255 a week before tax for a 40 hour working week. If the present claim is successful a first-year trained worker would get \$7.35 an hour (\$294 gross per week).

Working conditions are every bit as important as pay in this dispute. Otago/Southland workers currently have an entitlement to 17 sick days a year and four weeks' holiday, increasing to five weeks after three years. The national award at present allows six sick days and three weeks' holidays a year, with no increase to four weeks until after seven years. A working day includes eight hours' contact with children. As a comparison, kindergarten teachers (who in turn are lower-paid than primary, secondary or tertiary teachers) get about \$12 an hour, have less

daily contact hours and school holidays.

"Childcare workers have virtually no break in the year," says Bronwyn Maxwell. "Most have to take their holidays over Christmas and New Year. It's really hard to be a quality child care worker in July. Winter is always the hardest time with young children, with most time having to be spent inside and winter illnesses. Six days sick leave is totally inadequate, and once this is used many can't afford to take unpaid leave because of their low pay, so they come in sick."

"The quality of care is suffering because of the appalling wages and conditions of these workers. They are subsidising the service at a cost to themselves and the quality. In the worst affected parts of Auckland there is an annual staff turnover of up to 200 per cent, and there is a crisis in the recruitment and retention of trained staff. As childcare and kindergarten funding gets more integrated - eventually there will be three years' at teachers college for both - kindergarten, as the better funded service, will siphon off the trained people. Who will do three poverty years' training to work for seven dollars an hour and bad conditions?"

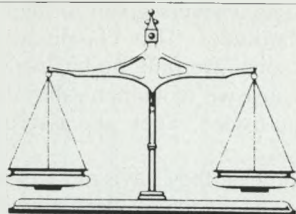
Kohanga Reo and child care are the two growing areas in the pre-school sector. More and more women have an economic need for quality, affordable child care because they can't afford to stay at home. The employers have been unmovable on what are in fact very reasonable demands. The employers' offer of an eight per cent wage increase and no improvement in conditions would put the national award even further behind Otago/Southland. Nor would the employers agree to take the dispute to the Arbitration Commission, where it could be given a fair hearing and decision by an independent arbitrator.

Childcare workers receive the lowest wages and have the worst conditions of all workers in the education services and national award workers get the lowest of all.

Some employers pay wages and offer conditions that are above the award, often what the union is claiming. The Employers Federation should be informed of this (which constitutes agreement to the claim).

A particularly ironic feature of this dispute is that, in general, pay and conditions for childcare workers are worst in Auckland. Otago/Southland employers are treating their workers better, in spite of the extremely depressed economic situation in those areas.

A spokesperson for the Employers' Federation claimed that if wages were "too high" employers would have to raise fees to pay for them, and that would mean some parents not being able to afford childcare. Helen Baxter, of the Early Childhood Workers' Union, disagrees. She says that many employers could afford to pay more, and that childcare was "not an appropriate place to look for profit."



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Peace activists and women protesting against the station are adamant that it will be used to eavesdrop on activists in the Pacific, who unlike the French embassies or US military bases, do not have scrambling or coding devices.

"What's happening in Waihopai is that the government is building a military installation down there, which will basically be a spy station to intercept telecommunications and faxes," explained Louise. She said that the building of the Waihopai station is probably part of a United States-Australian spy-link which includes a base in Geraldton, Western Australia.

"We think there will be five satellite dishes on the site. We suspect that information will go directly to the United States because at the moment New Zealand hasn't got the equipment to decipher a lot of information the dishes will receive. We estimate that the station is going to cost \$200-300 million when fully complete." At a time when cost-cutting of social services, and the user-pays philosophy is penalising those who can least afford it, how can the government justify spending this amount on a scheme which will be of no use to the New Zealand public, and will probably be used against them?

"I think it's an issue for everyone. It's our money that the government is using and it's us that the station will be spying on, so we're paying for something that will be used against us.

"The base will be used against the labour movement, Pacific people, Kanaky, the things happening in Fiji, and it means that getting information to people privately is going to be that much more difficult. It's also another way that the United States is strengthening its hold on the Pacific."

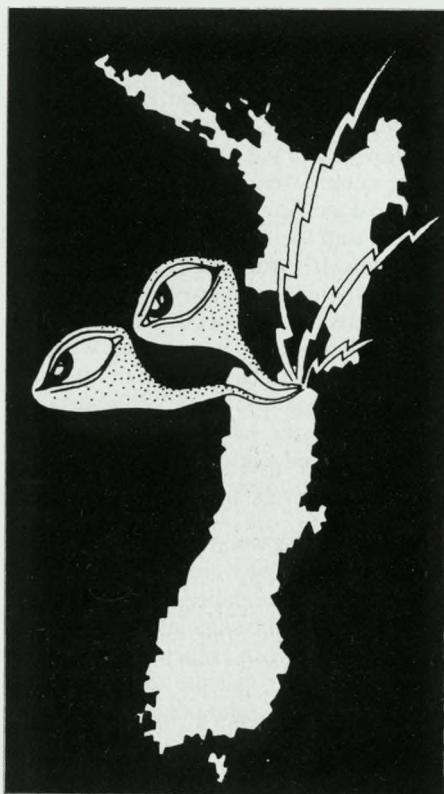
The women's camp is one way of edu-

Which brings us back to the whole issue of government responsibility. Increasingly, business people are looking to service areas as new sources of profit and the government is seeking to reduce its involvement and spending. So the consumer, and in this case the workers (there are interesting parallels with cleaners here), get caught in the middle. If you can afford it you'll get it, if you're poor you'll just have to "manage" better.

At the Early Childcare Workers' Union stopwork meetings in Auckland and Wellington, resolutions were passed to strike for a half or full day if employers did not start addressing the argument for parity with Otago/Southland when they met again on 17 June. ■

CAMPING DOWN

What is the Waihopai satellite tracking station, what will it be used for, and why are women trying to stop it? Lisa Sabbage talked to Louise Rowden who was at the national protest in Waihopai in May, and stayed at the women's camp that is determined to halt construction of the base.



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cating the public about what is happening in Waihopai, and of obtaining national media coverage, said Louise. "While the awareness of people in Wellington and the South Island is quite good, Auckland people don't know what Waihopai is or what it stands for. The women's camp has been quite effective in getting the media's attention. The women camped there for a week before the big protest in May and they continued camping there. Now they're resolved to continue over the weeks and months ahead until the base is stopped.

"The women have got to know each other really well, there is a feeling of solidarity between them and they trust each other which probably wouldn't have happened with men. In that way the women work together really well as a protest group."

One way of showing opposition to the base and making the issue public is by writing letters to the editor of major newspapers throughout the country, said Louise. There will be another national protest at Waihopai during the weekend of August 27-29. Anyone interested in travelling to the protest or wanting more information can contact: Louise Rowden or Jane Harrison, Auckland 765-310; May Bass, Hamilton 56512; Lisa Thomson, Wellington 737-247; Vicky, Blenheim 86879. ■

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TALKING FOR OURSELVES

Lisa Sabbage writes.

Angela and Helen are Maori women from Tai Tokerau who work as Video Aotearoa.

Chance played a big part in the two becoming involved in video. Five years ago they were employed on a Steps programme as drama and video teachers. Then at the Hui Kaitito at Hoani Waititi Marae they took up a request to record it. With Steps trainee Eleanor Black they produced a one hour programme.

Subsequently they made three videos on a six month PEP scheme for the IHC. "From there we decided we wanted to go into video in a lot more depth. It was something that interested us and was a way of earning a living.

"We saw ourselves working in the community, in fields we had worked in in the past to do with creativity, politics and education, something which involved all these things, and that was video. We had learnt the basic skills."

The Video Aotearoa partnership was established out of necessity.

"In Pakeha society, it's organised so that you are required to form a legal entity to be recognised. We established the partnership because there was nothing else.

Aotearoa talk about making videos they mean the whole thing – scripting, writing, filming and editing – skills they have learnt partly from courses they have taken, but mainly through practical experience.

"It's true that the industry tends to keep information and technology very close making it hard for people to learn outside recognised institutions. It can also be very expensive.

"We did a bit of formal training at Whitecliffe Art School, basically to find out how much we already knew and because people were always asking us what we had done. Some people have been very helpful and we've always asked a lot of questions. It's true that as women we are constantly having to prove ourselves."

They recount an anecdote about a video course they did in which they were the only women in a large group of men. The man who was taking the course talked about the basics, handed Angela and Helen an iris and said, "do you girls know what an iris is, you might like to take a look at this."

"We got the worst camera and he ignored us. When we were editing he just left us to it. What we ended up with was the best product in the class and the first completed. There wasn't much they could say against it. After that the tutor came and praised our work and talked to us exclusively for over an hour."

Angela and Helen often have to ring up suppliers to enquire about video equip-

We don't see ourselves as a charitable trust, and we didn't want to incorporate, so we formed a partnership. Legally it was the simplest thing to do."

One of the main things about Angela and Helen's work is that they see themselves as being part of whichever group they are working with, not as two video makers. They don't impose themselves. Some people respect that, some don't.

"Process is an important part of our video making, not just the end product, although a lot of people don't agree."

When Video

ment. The answers given to them reveal telling attitudes. "The classic answer we get is 'sorry, we only do business trade.' It's because we're women – they don't ask 'are you trade?' They just assume we're not."

In the past they have run women only video courses because they believe having men around can intimidate women. "Women sometimes step back and men take over especially in areas which are considered male preserves."

Video Aotearoa is currently working on a Rangatahi drug and alcohol abuse video. "It was important that the video was tribally based. We were all from Tai Tokerau and filming was done in Whangarei."

The Labour Department Job Opportunity Scheme which subsidises people like Angela and Helen who are making the transition from unemployment to self-employment, has made life for Video Aotearoa possible. But the scheme finishes in less than twelve months. Survival for another year is Angela and Helen's ambition. "We want to be able to get enough work to survive without any subsidy."

Making videos is one way of empowering people.

"A lot of people are talked about in things like submissions and educational situations. You often hear people talking about people. But video is one way people can talk for themselves. Rather than being taught about something you can see a video of people talking for themselves.

"And that's especially true for Maori people and it's true for women." ■

Video Aotearoa
PO Box 46143, Herne Bay, Auckland.
Phone 784954, Angela or Helen.

"THEY KILLED MY BROTHERS"

Lyn Daws and Dale Pobega interviewed Susanna Ounei, official representative of the Kanak political party FLNKS, in Wellington, about recent events in Kanaky (New Caledonia) involving the taking of gendarmes hostages by Kanaks and the later storming, by French armed forces, of the cave where they were held.

We spent three weeks in Kanaky from before the first round of elections until the day before the second round and have been left with a sense of outrage at the military intimidation of the Kanaks – ordinary people who, unlike the majority of the Caldoche (white settlers), are unarmed. At the same time

we were frustrated at the very successful media blackout over recent events on the east coast of Grande terre and on Ouvea.

We had heard that two of Susanna's brothers had been killed when the cave was stormed by the armed forces. "It's heavy!" she said. "It's really heavy – a big thing for us. How can I explain 'brothers' to you press people? There's the son of my mother's sister, my father's sister's husband's nephew and others. You call them cousins, for us they're brothers, uncles, all my relatives – all the Kanak people are related. We on Ouvea felt it very much that our relatives on the main island suffered so much under the military. They work in the fields. You have to carry a pass to work there and to go to the toilet you have to show your pass and say 'I want to go to the toilet'. And it's not like here, you're crouched down under some bushes or under a coconut palm and there's a helicopter hovering overhead – are you going to finish going to the toilet or are you going to be shot for behaving like a suspicious person?"

"Well, it's hard to live like this and on Ouvea we felt very badly that our brothers had to go through this sort of thing. Can you imagine what it's like on Ouvea? It's only forty kilometres long and not very wide. Everyone knows everyone else, we are all brothers there, and this loss is very heavy for all of us.

"One of the chiefs arranged for the burial of the 19 dead brothers on land where the women's struggle committee are going to make a weaving co-op. They beat him, this chief, my uncle, the French beat him very badly in front of everyone. We won't forget that for a long time. There are only 2700 people on Ouvea so 19 is a very severe loss."

The issue of dead brothers has been very addressed and Susanna is agitated, very emotional, as is expected under the circumstances. During the time the hostages were held Susanna tried to phone home, but for four days the line was "overloaded". The same thing happened, when she tried to get through to Canala, perhaps the main centre of the Kanak eruption. She expects more brothers will be killed there. At the time the hostages were taken, there were more than 700 troops on Ouvea for a population of 1700 – one soldier for every three Kanaks.

Her black plaits are bouncing again as her degree of animation rises to emphasis the point. "Such a small place and it's almost unbearable to live like that, with soldiers all around you. They have their barracks right there where we live and the flag, the tricolour, stuck in the mud where we plant our taro. 'Hey man, move it back a bit' I told them, 'just move your flag back out of there so we can grow our vegetables.

"They couldn't bear it, the people on Ouvea, so they took those hostages. It was agreed and planned by the FLNKS long before, that when the time was right each



PHOTO: GIL HANLY

TAKAPARAWHA – STICK TO THE POINT

Marchers arriving at Takaparawha on 25 May, ten years after the eviction from Bastion Point. (See *Broadsheet* 159, June 1988). It was a day of commemoration which included the unveiling of a carved stone to mark the burial place of Joanne Hawke, who died in a fire during the occupation. The day ended with a concert at Auckland's Gluepot



Moana Maniopoto Jackson (right) and Hinewihi singing up a storm at the Gluepot.

PHOTO: GIL HANLY

region would take the sort of action that the circumstances and aggravation demanded. On Ouvea they couldn't take it any longer and they took the hostages."

"Yes, they were your brothers, but can you tell us any more about the kidnappers?" I ask.

"Who were they? Well, they weren't just kids – sure, there was one aged 18 among those killed, but there was one brother who was 40 and another who was 35, one left 10 children behind, the other 11. They weren't just hasty, they had enough to lose, but they knew they shouldn't live like that, it is impossible

that we will live like that. They can have ten times as many troops – we will never give in."

The conversation turns to one of the kidnappers in particular.

"O la, la ... and Alphonse. I was so surprised that he was there in the cave. Trained in Libya, that's a joke. He was trained in Fiji as a priest for years, he wasn't into violence at all. 'Ask then to pity you' he told a meeting of young people. We argued about it. 'They're not going to pity us dirty Kanaks,' I told him. Alphonse helped to lead the non-violent protests during the referendum on inde-

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pendence last September. And then I heard that he was in that cave. I wondered how he came to be there. What happened to change Alphonse?"

"But isn't it true that two of the kidnapers had been trained in Libya?" I insist.

"Trained in Libya? That's a joke. Fiji is where Alphonse had been. Maybe someone visited Libya as part of a delegation or something, but are you going to believe a story put around by the French military? They're the experts in dirty war, not us. Now we're so angry, we can plan our own campaign of resistance. We don't need the Libyans, we don't need anybody. Alphonse and my brothers wanted to ne-

gotiate, they still thought you can talk with the French, but you can't. The French murdered them in cold blood. And what for? Because the white boss enjoys to have his coffee brought to him by a Kanak woman. Of 63,000 Kanaks only 7000 have jobs. And what jobs – only the lowest – the most menial."

I learn that Susanna had a job in Kanaky as a bank clerk before being sacked for political activity, so the jobs of the 7000 are conditional on their not being involved in the struggle for independence.

"But we are all involved. When I was a kid we all wanted to be the cowboys and not the Indians. But our political con-

sciousness has changed so much, even the kids want to be Indians now. You see the kids in the villages playing out the struggle. None of them want to be the soldiers or the puppets, they all want to play the part of the FLNKS. It's quite funny.

"And it's not just the kids. We Kanaks are a shy lot – people won't come forward to speak their minds. But we want all Kanak people to have a voice, to have opinions, to be able to think and express themselves, so in the villages we organise role-playing sessions to help the people overcome this problem. But even the adults say 'Oh no, I'm not going to play the military.'"

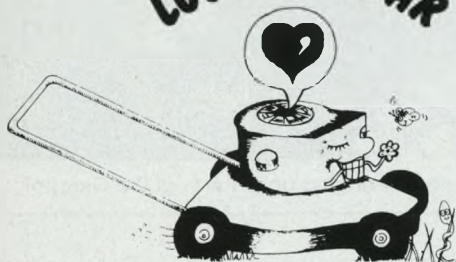
"Isn't it true that the 30 or so kidnappers were taken from Ouvéa to Magenta to Noumea and then to France to be tried within 24 hours of the siege? What do you think about that? Why isn't the trial going to be held in Noumea?" I ask. A simple but suggestive answer.

"Because the French want to avoid trouble. Ironical isn't it?"

"Susanna, considering that the Pons Statute is now in place, what kind of trial will your brothers get in France?"

"Well, we're French now, aren't we? They at least used to call us Melanesian to our faces and 'dirty Kanak' behind our backs. Now they don't even want to say the word 'Kanak'. Over there, in France, Le Pen wants to kick out all the blacks from North Africa because they're not white, and for them white is French and yet they want us to be French, but we're not white. How can we be French? How can we be white? We don't even want to be French or white! It's obvious what sort of trial they'll get, those brothers of mine, it was obvious when they took away the identity of us all with their laws!" ■

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WOMEN ORGANISING IN MALAYSIA

An item put together by Pat Rosier from information from the Malaysian Detainees Support Group in New Zealand and from Malaysian women.

In October 1987 the Malaysian Government arrested and detained 106 people under the Internal Security Act (ISA), which gives wide powers to detain indefinitely without trial. At the same time three major newspapers were closed.

The arrests took place in the context of growing criticism of the government concerning corruption within its ranks, eco-

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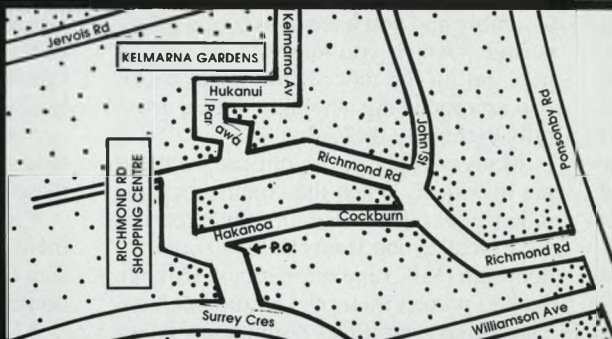
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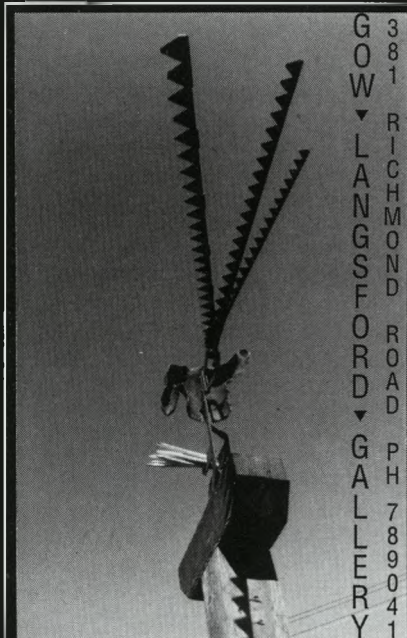
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conomic mismanagement, its lack of accountability to the people and the worsening employment situation. Those arrested are some of the strongest and most consistent critics of government policies.

The arrests, the atmosphere of fear created by them, and the closure of three major newspapers, have severely undermined the ability of public interest/human rights groups, the media and opposition parties to express their legitimate views.

Four Malaysian women activists are amongst those who have been served with these two-year detention orders. The women are being held at the detention centre in Kamanting, Perak. They are broadly charged with being involved with activities aimed at "promoting communist influence and ideology within certain circles" with the intention of "influencing and encouraging them to launch a movement of class struggle in line with the communist struggle".

International church organisations like the Council of Churches Malaysia-Urban Rural Mission, were accused of being infiltrated by communist or pro-communist elements from a non-existent body, namely the International Communist United Front. From the alleged charges it would seem that any social activities undertaken by any Malaysian could be deemed "communist" by the government.

Women are still organising in Malaysia, although the risks have increased. One example of the sort of thing that is happening relates to a voluntary theatre group that was producing theatre about the concerns of the people. It has done two productions, one about squatters' problems and the other about traffic problems. In each case the script had been submitted to the special branch for approval. The group has now been accused of being Marxist in using drama to influence people, and it is doubtful whether it will be able to continue.

The direct quotes that follow are from Malaysian women, who cannot be identified because of the risks to them in Malaysia.

Three of the women activists arrested are from the Women's Development Centre (WDC). They have been accused of using issues like rape and nuclear weapons to incite unrest. "If you take up the interests of less privileged groups in Malaysia you are 'communist' and indefinite detention is justified." The fourth detainee worked with a group called Friends of Women, who do a lot of contact work with working women. The official story is that people organise in Singapore and infiltrate into Malaysia through church, drama, women's and environmental groups to undermine the government. "Some accusations are quite wild. One student leader left the country in the student clamp-down of '75 and he is now 'accused' of being in contact with China and setting up a Malaysian Liberation Army."

There is a national trade union body in Malaysia, which has a women's section, but women are still quite weak within it.

The trade union movement has been very quiet about the mass arrests, although two members were arrested. Many industries operate under "free trade zone" conditions where international companies are promised non-union, cheap labour.

Since the 60's the union movement has become more pro-management than pro-worker. For example, the National Union of Plantation Workers is very rich and the president owns several plantations as well as being the highest paid union official in the country. Conciliation, with union leaders working with management, is always the catch-cry. "The only issues they usually concern themselves with are slightly better working conditions, maybe some health issues. Never pay. There is no minimum wage in Malaysia."

Most of the women who work on plantations get paid below the acknowledged poverty level, usually in bad working conditions. In rubber estates women have to carry heavy loads of latex.

Women in one plantation organised a strike themselves. "The companies try and bring in immigrants, some illegal, to work even more cheaply as contract labourers. The women's strike got them more compensation."

Collective bargaining exists but applies only to unionised workers and many women are not in unions. There is a small secret union formed by women workers in one factory.

Malaysian laws make any sort of action difficult. A strike can become an illegal assembly and you have to ask for a police permit – which you may not get, or you may get on the day of the strike, which makes organising anything like a mass rally extremely difficult.

Many of Malaysia's political problems are historical. When the country became independent from Britain three parties were created, one Malay (UMNO), one Indonesian (MIC) and one Chinese (MCA), each to protect their own ethnic interests. The Malays' political domination is enshrined in the constitution. Such ethnic-based politics has been one of the main contributing factors to ethnic polarisation in Malaysia. Communal issues tend to be exploited by politicians for their own personal gain. Thus the two opposing factions in UMNO try to outdo each other by playing up the alleged "Chinese threat" to the Malays. The Malaysian Government has always conveniently used the excuse of the racial issue to "silence" its political opponents and its vocal critics. Thus the government has alleged that the recent ISA arrests have been necessary to prevent "racial hostilities" from escalating.

Violence against women is a big problem in Malaysia, as in New Zealand and elsewhere. It has been raised as a national issue only in the last two years, with the work of women's groups like the Women's Development Centre. Rape and domestic violence are the main issues. Very few cases of rape get reported, probably as few as one in ten. Neither

police or medical staff are supportive of women who report rape and after a police training session last August a policeman said the women deserve to be raped.

So far it is mainly educated women who are speaking out about violence. Once it had been raised in the media cases began to be heard, and sexual abuse and the rape of children also began to come to light. Child abuse is now recognised as an issue, but it is not easy to document the level of it, although it has been established as existing across all racial and income groups. There are the usual problems of people not wanting to speak out about it for a variety of reasons, including the shame it will bring on the victims and their families. In one case, where a religious teacher had sexually abused and raped a number of children, the parents did not want to bring it up because of his well-known name. In Malaysian culture women are taught to submit and keep quiet, so it is very difficult for them to speak out.

With the general public and activists silenced, top opposition leaders "inside" and a general atmosphere of fear, the government may not find it necessary to make more arrests at present. The arrest that received most publicity in New Zealand was that of Kharpal Singh, lawyer for the New Zealanders being tried on drug charges. His arrest was not related to that trial, but was political.

Because it is so dangerous for people inside Malaysia to act, international support is essential. The four women detainees are: Cecilia Ng Choon Sim; Chee Heng Leng; Lim ChinChin; Patricia Irene Lourdes. Support can be given in the following ways:

- Ask organisations within New Zealand to enquire about the charges levied on these women activists;
- Request your local Member of Parliament to make enquiries with the Malaysian embassy about the charges and try to seek an unconditional and early release;
- Launch a local campaign to bring attention to the issue;
- Write and organise friends etc to write letters or send postcards of support to – The Families of the Detainees, c/- 114 Jalan SS4/10, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. This will give all the detainees moral support and will indicate to the authorities that there is still international support. Detainees are allowed to receive letters from abroad but not allowed to send them. Communications from overseas are opened by the authorities.

It is crucial at this stage to continue to put international pressure on to:

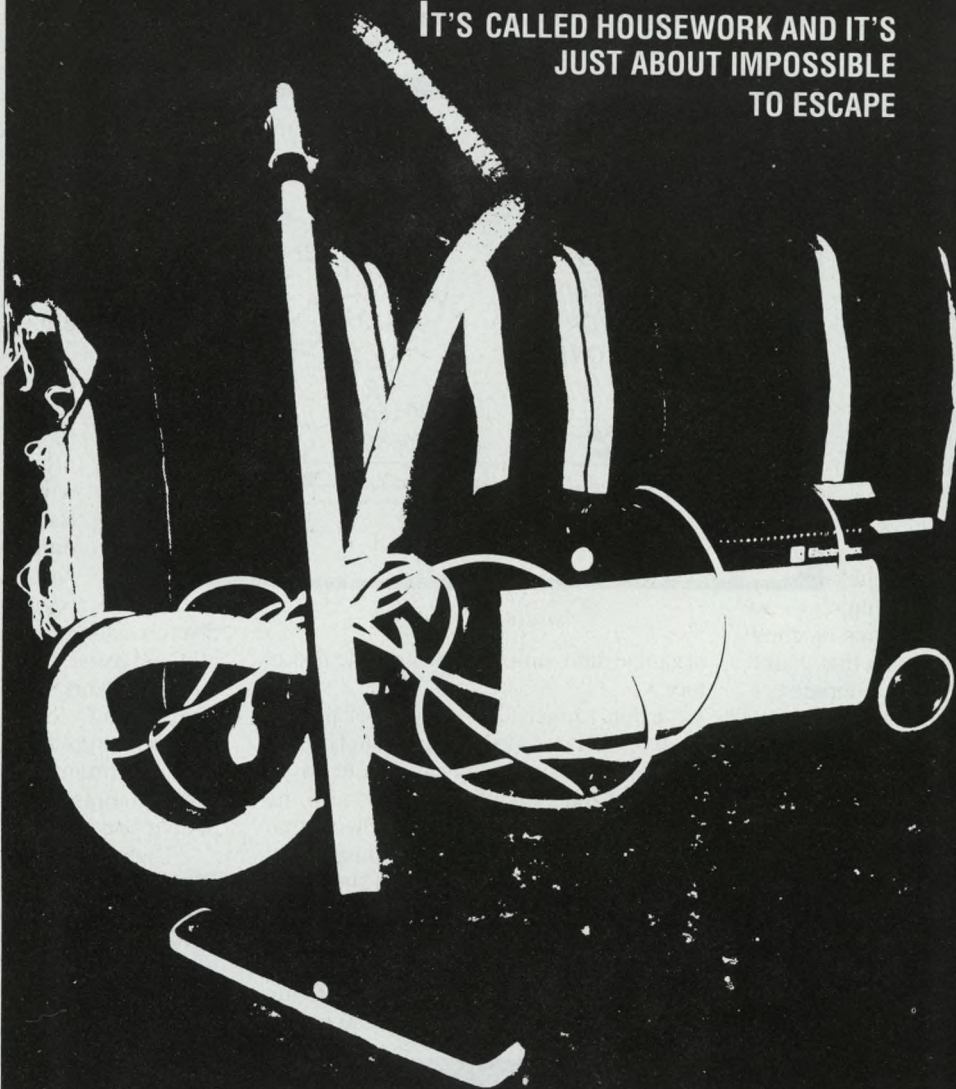
- Demand a fair and open court trial for all the detainees or their immediate and unconditional release, and,
- To seek for the repeal of the repressive ISA.

"We need your continued solidarity support in order that dignity, peace and justice can be restored in our beloved country, Malaysia." ■

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— PAT ROSIER —

DALE SPENDER SAYS SHE AVOIDS IT COMPLETELY (WITH THE HELP OF A NEPHEW), BUT NONE OF US THOUGHT TO ASK HER WHEN SHE WAS IN NEW ZEALAND RECENTLY, WHAT SHE DID ABOUT HER CLOTHES.

BUT AT LEAST FOR SPENDER IT SEEMS TO BE ANGST-FREE. I'VE TALKED TO ABOUT A DOZEN FEMINISTS ABOUT HOW THEY DEAL WITH HOUSEWORK AND WHAT PART IT PLAYS IN THEIR LIVES, IN PREPARATION FOR WRITING THIS, AND MOST OF THEM FELT

THAT THEIR ATTITUDES WERE, SOMEHOW, INADEQUATE REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY ARE.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE WOMAN WHO ENJOYS IT WAS EMBARRASSED AT ADMITTING THAT AND FELT SHE WAS SOMEHOW "LETTING THE SIDE DOWN". THOSE WHO AVOIDED IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FELT THAT MADE THEM "IMPOSSIBLE TO LIVE WITH". AND THE TWO WHO PAID SOMEONE TO DO IT FOR THEM WERE VERY COY ABOUT ADMITTING THAT. THIS IS HOW ONE OF THEM TALKED ABOUT IT:

"I struggled with my conscience. I wouldn't want to clean anyone else's home, why should I expect anyone to clean mine? Would my refusal to employ a cleaner make the world a more equal place? Or would it deny someone who was able to do that job an opportunity to earn? What sort of statement was I making about women that I didn't want to spend my time doing what other women drudged through daily. Should I 'reclaim' drudgery for myself to help me identify?

"No. My time is precious to me so I exercised my choice and employed a cleaner. As it turned out, a man. A new set of dilemmas – am I denying a woman some earnings? Or is it a useful role reversal? On the other hand, housework is something the poor have always done for the well-off. Women clean other people's houses because women on the whole are the poor.

"I agonise over these dilemmas because I feel guilty about all this. After all, it's not very politically correct, is it, for a feminist to employ a house worker."

And the other woman who pays to have her housework done felt she was making the "ultimate confession" when she owned up to it. "It was a decision that was reached this year. And I can assure you that walking in on a Friday after work is paradise. I did have to have a big chat with my conscience. Basically it was the time thing. My (male) partner and I always shared, but we got so grotty that Saturday, our one day off, was always spent hunting and gathering and cleaning.

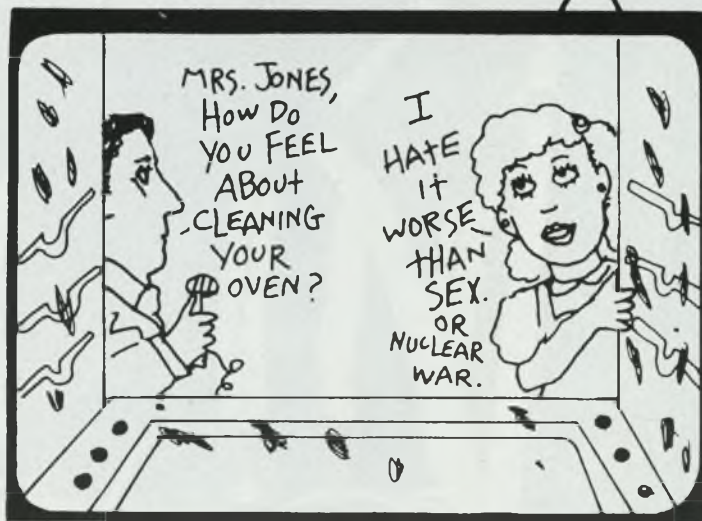
"Mind you, I have worked as a domestic. I worked for an agency called 'Spic and Span' in London. There was one woman that I worked for for four hours non-stop, and I had to dust her walls. I tried to talk to her about the law of gravity."

Some of us feel we would have to clean up for the cleaner. "I'm too dirty to have a housekeeper. It's a terrible imposition, you have to tidy up first."

There's one argument thrown at feminists which says that if you employ someone to do your housework you should pay them the same rate that you earn. In an ideal world, I would agree, but we haven't got that yet and for women who do the work it can be a source of untaxed income that does not affect a benefit like the DPB. There are contradictions and dilemmas for feminists in employing someone to do their domestic "shit work", but adopting a

I'm too dirty to have a housekeeper. It's a terrible imposition, you have to clean up first

"holier than thou" attitude towards those who do does nothing to improve the economic circumstances of cleaners. Given the part-time, isolated and stop/start nature of the work, suggesting that the women who do it



NICOLE HOLLANDER

organise and unionise seems idealistic, too.

"I don't much like the idea of paying someone to do my housework, but I do pay someone to, say, fix my car – quite possibly more than I earn." There is also the theory that the people who do the work that nobody wants to do, like cleaning loos, collecting garbage (childcare?) should be paid the most. Great in theory, but in fact these groups tend to be paid the least. Which says something about where the power is. That sort of change seems to me to be a very long way away. In the mean-

One of the joys of living alone is that I can be as much of a slob as I like

time working class women don't have any choices so they get on and do the housework. And in many working class homes standards are high: "I was polishing door handles and the floor and washing up by the time I was five. Our father was a tyrant about cleanliness. Now, I have to fight against being fanatically clean and tidy while my sister's completely at ease being a slob."

Guilt is rampant around housework – my standards are too high, I'm a slob. my lover hates my kids' mess and I hate nagging them, I *should* do it myself... ... "Housework is never a problem when you live by yourself and always a problem when you live with other people." Said by a woman who lives with her woman lover and two teenagers. "It's terrible having kids and living with other people because you feel guilty about your kids.

It's bad enough with your kids making messes, but when there's some-

body else who minds their messes even more than you do – well – life's hell! Especially if the person that you live with did not contribute to their genetic makeup and has no inbuilt feeling of tolerance for their mess."

And our own mess is different from others' mess.

"Somehow there seems to be a subtle difference between other people's messiness, which annoys me and my own, which I can cope with. Whether living with flatmates or family, I see a division between personal housework – keeping my room tidy, restraining my

dirty washing within the limits of the clothes basket, dusting shelves and so on – and housework shared with the household, like cooking, cleaning the kitchen, lounge, bathroom, mowing the lawn etcetera. It's very important to be seen doing these chores in order to remain popular with the people you live with.

"There is something about being responsible to each other when you live collectively that can be difficult. Hence it's fish and chips for tea sometimes when it's my turn to cook and I just feel like blobbing out

"I tend to live in a kind of organised muddle. When things get too chaotic I fold the washing and finally put it away, arrange my books and bills into nice, neat piles and remind myself that I must sort out an efficient filing system – one day.

"Housework is something I enjoy doing only if I'm playing a favourite record, singing louder than the vacuum cleaner and dancing out the cobwebs. The only other time I enjoy it is when I've finished."

Housework is probably the biggest cause of conflict in flats, and if it's less obviously so in families that's probably because everyone assumes that Mum

takes care of it – what she doesn't do herself she organises others to do. From one flatter: "It's not the idea of transforming the bathroom that gets me, it's having to shift other people's grime. Bristles line the basin and long hairs block the bath. And elsewhere there's old porridge in pots, half full ashtrays and cat shit in the corner. Ah yes, the joys of flattering."

Some women in flats really get into sorting it out. "I used to talk with flatmates about the bits of the house that had to be clean for them to feel that the house was clean. For me, the rest of the house could be an absolute mess but if the kitchen bench is clear of dishes and wiped, then the house is clean. For other people it's the toilet, yet others the handbasin. Floors come very low on my list, they get done maybe four times a year."

"When I'm living with someone else I'm made to do housework when I don't want to," says a long-time flatter, "because I have the lowest level of wanting to do housework of any women I've ever lived with. Men often have lower levels than me."

"One of the joys of living alone is that I can be as much of a slob as I like. I have suffered endless systems whereby people in different flats have tried politely to get me to live up to their standards of housework. In one flat there was a roster, in another a gentlewomen's agreement that we would each keep our end up, and I just felt pressured all the time to do stuff that I didn't want to do and I did it badly or late or reluctantly and always felt hassled."

"And once you've got a gleaming washroom, how do you cope with the first toothpaste stain on the sink? The first shampoo lid left off? The first damp towel on the floor? All that handywork gone to waste in the first round of showers." The actual doing of it is not such a hardship for some:

"It's quite nice to potter about the bathroom once every week or so, shining a tap or two, taking off a stain here and there ('without all that harsh scratching'). It's satisfying to watch that crumb-ridden table and bench become smooth and clean. It's a nice feeling to go to a freshly axed toilet, sparkling in all its toilet duck glory. Or to be able to find my knives again after three days' of dishes are finally put away."

"But then again, sometimes I just feel like a mug. Sucked into using all those new 'super powders' with special smells, textures and colours – things I'd never considered using until I had to choose between them. Of course, I often just go for the cheapest and forget it."

Children make an enormous difference to the amount of housework, but so do individual standards. I can remember during the time I was at home with pre-schoolers trying to work out how it could possibly take all day to clean the house. But then it never occurred to me to wash any floor until it looked fairly disgusting, once a week was quite enough to vacuum, I washed only just often enough to keep us

Guilt is rampant around housework



—says Mrs. Rawlins

"Clean may be clean, but clean's not always white by any manner of means. It's as true today as it was when I was a girl. You can take my word for it, **Reckitt's BLUE** in the final rinse keeps your linen a good colour."

all in clean clothes, was oblivious to greasy walls, and had never heard of vacuuming the mattress.

"Housework to me is a full-time job," says the mother of two small children with a large house and section. "It is a constant and never-ending job. I can sweep and wash a floor, for example, then have to sweep it again an hour later because a certain amount of 'lunch' is crumbled and scattered under the chairs and table where the children sit. On wet days the floor may be covered in dirty footprints just minutes after it has been washed."

"Children don't think and don't understand my outbursts of rage and frustration at times such as this. They are just being kids. I am the 'clean and tidy type' so I probably do more than is 'needed'. Having small children around certainly increases the load, and not having a partner means the entire task is mine. I do resent at times that lack of being able to share the responsibility for keeping my house and property at a standard that pleases me."

Housework is monotonous, repetitive and usually not appreciated

"Housework is monotonous, repetitive and usually not appreciated. I do, however, get a sense of satisfaction when I can cast my eyes around a clean, tidy, fresh-looking house. Even if it does remain so for less than 12 hours." Just after she had made this statement, the woman said to a friend, "I really must get out and get a job next year." To which the friend replied, "I thought you had a full-time job here." "No, I mean a real job, where I'm earning money." She couldn't believe she'd said it! But she had, and it shows how well we learn that what we do at home isn't really "work".

It's clearly easier to be laid-back if you don't have children. "I have a dinner-party every couple of months and that makes me clean up," says a lesbian who lives on her own. A friend who's married and expecting her first child says it's "Boring. It gets done every other week in our house and we share it, very equally. We do it for an hour and a half and then stop. What's not done gets left. With a baby on the way I'm going to contemplate paying someone to do it, because I want to buy some more time. I plan to return to my paid job, and getting someone in to do housework is one way I can do that."

Some thought doing the shopping was part of housework, others didn't. It's harder if you have accompanying children. I hate it. "The supermarket is the ugly face of capitalism," was one dour comment.

"Housework's fucked." "It's just tedious." "I quite enjoy it. There's a certain sense of satisfaction in getting your environment into order. I don't mind it as a physical activity. You can actually see what you've done." So many different opinions, I can't see a feminist consensus developing here.

Even talking about it bothers some of us. "I get very anxious when people want to talk about housework because I imagine that somebody's going to tell me how bad I am at it again. I'm anxious all the time because I think somebody else is judging me. I know that my friends actually couldn't care less, but I still worry in case people come and see what the place is like. I assume that I have worse standards than anybody because it was dinned into me for so many years, when I was married, how filthy and incompetent I was."

We really do seem to care what other people think of our levels of cleanliness. It's really common when you go into someone's house for them to say 'I'm sorry it's such a mess,' no matter how spotless it is."

Housework even follows us to our places of paid employment. We have a roster at *Broadsheet* and generally manage to approach it with a fair level of goodwill. This is not the case in every workplace, however. "For years our staff meetings were dominated by the topic of who should do the dishes, and who wasn't doing the dishes, and whether the dishes should be done on a collective or individ-



ual basis, and basically, after years of hassling and grumbling we all decided to do our own dishes. Except for one (Pakeha) man who walked out of the meeting saying he wasn't going to co-operate with this Pakeha individualism. But since everyone started doing their own it hasn't been a hassle.

"Don't quote me on this, because I'm the worst at work too. Housework hassles can follow you from work to home to work to home. You can have a hassle on Sunday at home and go to work on Monday morn-

ing and have a staff meeting all about dishes!" To which the speaker got the response, "But if you just did them they wouldn't be a hassle," which caused a further outburst. "I can't stand it when people say that sort of thing! People are not sympathetic to deeply ingrained neuroses that prevent you from doing dishes." There's another opinion on that, too. "It's not neuroses, it's perfectly healthy to not want to do housework."

Some workplaces have notices. You can almost hear the pleading voice of the receptionist or secreatry who writes, "My job does not include the dishes, please do your own." And at the place where they used to have staff meetings about it there's a sign that says, "In the event of fire or earthquake, please do your dishes then leave in an orderly manner".

Most of us welcome any authority that validates our practices. From the woman who felt she had the lowest standards at home and at work: "One of the most liberating things I ever read was in an early *Broadsheet*. It was a doctor talking about housework, and she said she only washed sheets once a month, and she only did the bottom sheet. I thought that was really great, because I did that but I wouldn't have said it. Someone actually saying it was really neat."

Are we trail-blazers on the domestic scene or just slob, those of us who don't do housework in any systematic way? There's the "training that women get, to not only take responsibility for our clean-

ing up, but for cleaning up everybody else's messes." Which is "so unremitting and relentless because, basically most of us are slob, and have to be trained to have wonderful standards of cleanliness. Standards have risen, too. Dirt floors are very different from floors that can be kept to a mirror shine. But it's not that simple because my grandmother had higher standards than my mother and hers are totally out of sight of mine.

"There are all these created needs now. Like 'get the germs from under the rim'. You do the work to the limits of the technology - all these by-products of the oil industry have been turned into cleaning things."

Nearly all our cleaning products come from the same detergent base. A whole aisle of many supermarkets is cleaning products, where a few decades ago there would have been one or two shelves. We clean our houses while the business men clean up the profits.

There are some defences, however. "White floor vinyl and white and green lattice wallpaper in the bathroom - very crisp, very clean, very chic. When I first had the vinyl laid I spent time each day wiping off the hairs. I was fascinated at how much of my hair fell out. Now I don't notice. I try not to wear my glasses or lenses in there, so I can't see the indictment of my slovenliness lying on the floor."

None of us was into taking on board the "Mum" role in housework, although some of us have done in the past. At least one was never in any danger: "I think I became a feminist when I realised that my mother expected me to wash the dishes more often than my two brothers. At the age of nine or ten I put a roster up on the kitchen wall and made sure everyone did their own turn."

I think back to my own pre-feminist days when I (grudgingly) ironed my husband's shirts, passively accepted that he would not do dishes and (usually) waited until he had got up on a Saturday morning before I vacuumed the bedroom, and I feel progress. Most of the women I spoke with about housework are younger than me, and none of them are cleaning up for anyone old enough to do their own.

Progress, but not social change. These women have insisted on domestic sharing and fought for the equality they have. (The problems of housework don't disappear, though, even with equality; as in women living together, either as lovers or flatmates. One woman's comfort can be another's awful mess.) There are still heaps of women cleaning up after adult men, some happy to be doing so, others resentful. But all accepting, more or less, that that is the way it is: women take the major responsibility for housework, and what they don't actually do they organise. He "helps", and she is often grateful.

If survival depends on food and shelter, then housework is survival. Big, important stuff. You're missing out if you don't get into it, chaps. ■



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▼ **Festival Films** **TO** **Watch Out For**

Mary Rowe provided this information about films by women showing in the festivals in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin that are likely to be of particular interest to *Broadsheet* readers.

There are four films by women directors, one of them Merata Mita's *Mauri* and four others, directed by men, that have strong well-developed woman characters.

Lizzie Borden's earlier film *Born in Flames* was shown at the film festival four years ago. Her new film, *Working Girls*, is about prostitutes. But not the stereotypical prostitutes, the "fallen women," "street-smart hookers," or even "whores with hearts of gold" that one is presented with so often. These prostitutes are working girls in the true sense. This is their choice of career, a choice each has made for reasons of her own.

The film follows a day in the working life of Molly, who is a Yale graduate, lives with her woman lover and works at the brothel part-time. It details Molly's day, showing her interaction with clients and the relationships she has with the three other women who work in the brothel. There's Dawn, a part-time student, Gina who is saving up so she can open her own business and April who has been working in a brothel for many years. The establishment where Molly works is run by Lucy, a businesswoman, just another corporate executive.

Lizzie Borden did not see the old stereotypes as relevant to the image she wanted to portray. The film carries a feminist imprint and ranges widely in its sympathies, which convey a quality of honesty. There is a straightforward presentation of the characters that argues that prostitution is perhaps not the chamber of horrors that is usually presented, but just another boring job. It is work, not a

moral or psychological problem and these women choose this work over and above other options. There is, however a tacit protest against prostitution. And there is humour.

Gillian Armstrong's earlier film *My Brilliant Career* won much critical acclaim. Her new film *High Tide* is a simple story of three independent women, told with a combination of wonderful acting and mesmerizing imagery. It is also a tale of not belonging, rootlessness and ultimately a renewal of commitment. It is about wanting to get things done, the urge to draw near and the opposing will to resist.

In this film Gillian Armstrong has once again shown that she can convey tender, conflicted feeling. She is aided in no small measure by a literate screenplay by Laura Jones. The film focuses on Lili, played by Julie Davis, who is stranded at a summer resort town in the middle of winter after being fired from her job as back-up singer for a bad Elvis Presley impersonator. Another theme is her growing friendship with a young girl and her grandmother, who live in the caravan park where Lili is staying until her car is fixed.

Judy Davis gives the character of Lili enormous complexity. She has a wonderfully ravaged face, which she enhances by wearing blackish-red lipstick. Judy Davis said of Lili in an interview, "She is a strong complex woman, a very strong role...". Each of the women characters in this film has a vast reserve of well-suppressed longing and each shows this in a different way: the young girl as a dreamer with an aura of mystery and wild permissiveness; the grandmother, a survivor, with a rough and ready exterior which covers a deep emotional uncertainty; and Lili, who drinks too much.

The film's setting has a tacky atmosphere – winter in a beach resort where all entertainment is in imitation form, where life is under the control of nature. To show the rootlessness of her characters Gillian Armstrong has used a fluid camera which can be seen as a metaphor

Judi Davis gives the character of Lili enormous complexity



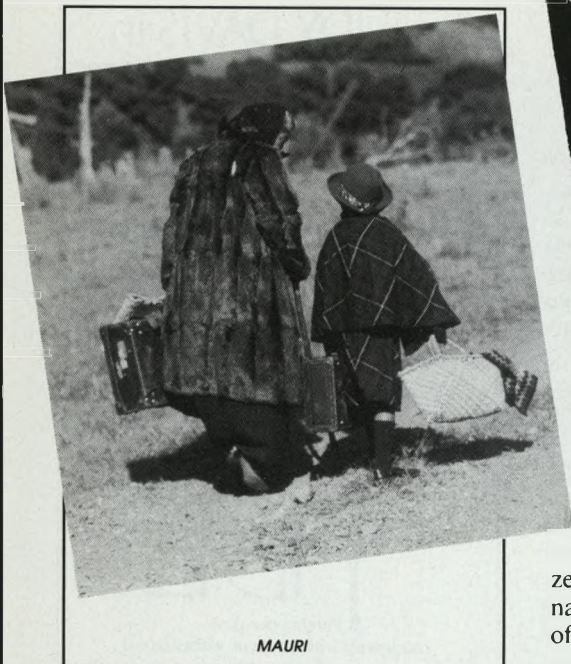
for the ebb and flow of the characters' lives.

I've Heard the Mermaids Singing is the first feature film from Canadian director, Patricia Rozema. It has won wide critical acclaim, including a Prix de la Jeunesse at Cannes in 1987. The film uses "the innocent abroad" theme as a strategy for social criticism.

It focuses on Polly, a rather innocent and gauche temporary secretary who works in a trendy art gallery. She is totally tongue-tied in front of the obviously cultured well-educated French-speaking gallery owner, Gabrielle, but alone in her flat she lives a fantasy life in which she walks on water and discusses philosophical problems with her friend. Polly innocently loves Gabrielle, who is unaware of her.

The film explores the nature of female love in an unfussy and economical manner, but is primarily an allegory about trusting oneself. Patricia Rozema said the film evolved from three simple ideas, a character, a tone and a point. The character is a "little" person, an innocent and a holder of a vast and vivid internal universe. The tone was to be quietly whimsical, compassionate and absurd, with enough reality for the emotions to be recognised, and balanced by enough fairy tale to let the mind fly. The point is "trust yourself".

Mauri is Merata Mita's first fiction feature. She says, "In the film when Kara's nephew, Willie, comes home on holiday, she knows he is going to die. This is not premonition, it is certain knowledge. And when he meets his end some two hundred miles away, she responds at the exact moment of his death. These are not exceptional powers when seen in the context of her culture. Kara is part of the tapestry of life woven by those who can still read omens in nature and the landscape, whose insights, inherited from the past, give them second sight into the future."



Mauri is the most interesting feature made this year and an imposing statement of elemental female power

Mauri's central theme of birthright is most thoroughly expressed through Rewi, a character whose claim on it is insecure. The true nature of his spiritual transgression is the mystery that is held in suspense until the end and gives the film its peculiar edginess. Rewi, as played by Zac Wallace, is a force-field of jumpy, bottled-up energy. The other young Maori man in the film, Willie, leader of a city gang who visits the marae, is also spooked, under threat.

Female power in the film is not so impeded. Eva Rickard as Kara represents the ideals of Maori woman's courage, wisdom and harmony with the natural world to perfection: her performance is richly informed by her personal mana. She calmly dominates the film as she imparts a sense of their Maori, their life-force, to the troubled younger characters – and, it may be hoped, to the viewer as well. Women in this film embody nothing less than destiny. This is strikingly true of Kara's niece Ramari, whose actions absorb conflicting forces in her world and restore harmony to the land and the people.

There are passages in *Mauri* that are more passionate in their feeling than anything else in New Zealand cinema. The emotion is so raw at times that it doesn't seem ready for public consumption. It is embarrassing, and the actors tackle it breathtakingly. Graeme Cowley's cinematography not only captures the wild and intense beauty of the coast around Te Kaha, but also evokes the sense of a land inhabited by tribal history. *Mauri* is a rich brew, not a smooth one. Even at its most frenzied, it is easily the most interesting feature made in New Zealand this year and an imposing statement of elemental female power.

The first of the films of interest by male directors is David Leland's *Wish You Were Here*, a film that looks at the constraints of growing up in a small, conformist seaside town on the 1950s. The main character,

Lynda, is a rebel. She outrages the town with her brazen physicality and profanity. She is fascinated by sex, strong-willed and the despair of her straight-laced, widowed father.

Lynda, however, is lonely, and more affected by her mother's death and her father's coldness than she fully understands. She is seemingly bent on self-destruction, but also struggling for survival in an uncaring world. Jenni Moore, reviewing the film in *Spare Rib*, (December 1985) said of it, "Lynda is not a victim. Wish You Were Here is not a film depicting the life of a fallen woman, it blends pathos and bathos, wit and wisdom and is one of the funniest films I have ever seen. If feminism is about striking back, Lynda, bless her, is an icon. I loved this film."

Stepfather is an American thriller that casts a long and detailed look at the family unit. Mr Family Man of this film, who is a real estate agent, says of himself, "What I sell is the American dream." The family is a sacred thing, in which he believes totally.



I'VE HEARD THE MERMAIDS SINGING

This family man is boyishly handsome but bland. He is a TV sitcom father where every crisis is solved within 28 minutes and whose motto is "every father knows best". He sees his own fulfillment as complete, in this vision of the perfect family unit, but when it doesn't work out he goes off the deep end. To keep the

vision of the perfect family he resorts to slaughter. This is the All American Dad as a mass murderer. Perhaps this is the revenge of the American film-makers who have had to watch just too much goopy sentiment on the box.

It may be true that the American family is now the monster and the elements repressed in American life – sexuality, and in particular female and child sexuality – have all returned to haunt us. There are a number of important themes in *Stepfather*: the "terrible house"; women as the ultimate object; the release of sexuality presented as perverted, monstrous and excessive; ambivalence towards the family; and the theme of the double.

Rita, Sue and Bob Too is a comedy about two completely amoral teenage girls from the rough side of a Bradford estate who set up a threesome with a nouveau riche sleazeball from the better part of the estate. Behind the obviousness of this not-too-secret menage a trois is a comment on contemporary Britain. In particular Thatcher's north – victim of endemic unemployment and social disruption. Grimness, misery, decay, both physical and mental, schools whose teachers have given up the battle against ignorance – all lurk in the background if this film.

But in full view throughout is energetic hedonistic fun. Is this the only antidote to Thatcher's Britain, a dance at the edge of the volcano? These girls, like others from the depressed northern areas, have no advantages other than their high spirits. They are hungry for what men offer, which can put their friendship at risk, but never jeopardises their individuality or their knowledge that women are smarter than any man.

Finally, there is *Half of Heaven* (*La Mitad del Cielo*) from Spain, directed by Manuel Gutierrez Aragon. It won a Gran Premio at San Sebastian in 1986. It tells the story of three women in postwar (Franco's) Spain, as a celebration of female resourcefulness in a repressive, infantile, male culture.

Rosa is a peasant woman whose rise to be a wealthy restauranter to the rich and famous is the central theme of the film. She is all things to all men – mother, daughter, lover – but for all this apparent softness she never submits to a man's will, she has an ambition. She succeeds in her ambition, due not only to her ability to use male influence, but according to Aragon, more importantly to the kindness of womanly spirits. These women – Rosa, her grandmother and her daughter – are in sync with the forces of nature. The grandmother and daughter share special powers. The film unfolds like a novel and one is drawn into its mystery. Women in movies are often portrayed as making added decisions requiring men to come along and put them straight by teaching them their own minds. Aragon believes that this is not so. He sees what is often perjoratively termed "women's intuition" as a primal adaptive part of the life force. ■

WHAT'S NEW

AUCKLAND

Non-Alcoholic Lesbian Space every Wednesday night, 7.30 pm onwards. Music, games, food, drinks and various entertainment on selected nights at Just Desserts Cafe. Contact Linda, 893-352 for information.

Takaparawha poster marking the tenth anniversary of the eviction of Ngati Whaatua from Takaparawha (Bastion Point). Available from *Broadsheet* Bookshop for \$5.50 or by sending \$5.90 to Action For an Independent Aotearoa, Box 453, Christchurch.

Access Radio Auckland will be on air again in August. The first AGM of Access Radio Auck Inc was held in June. For more information call Francine on 788-251.

Gay Lesbian Welfare in Auckland is aiming to get more lesbians involved in their telephone counselling, with a view to beginning a Lesbian Line service. A new training course is starting in August. Any interested lesbians contact Jeannette at 393-268 (office) or 600554 (ah)

HAMILTON

Waikato University Continuing Education Term Two courses: *Practical Management Skills For Women*, four days, 25 -27 July and 11 August 9.00 - 4.00, \$70, enrol by 18 July; *Taking Heart: A Revitalisation Workshop* 22 July (evg), 23, 24 July (day), \$30/\$25, enrol by 15 July. *Readings by Michelle Cliff* 15 September 7.30 \$5. *Sexual Abuse Education Training Day for teachers and Early Childhood Educators* 6 August. For more information phone Ham 62-889 Extn 8195 or 8197 or write University of Waikato, Private Bag, Hamilton.

NATIONAL

Women's Mental Health Gathering to be held in Auckland 25-27 November at Nga Tapuwae College in Mangere. Creche, wide range of food, marae, good access and facilities for disabled women. More information from Women's Mental Health Gathering, c/- Mental Health Foundation, P O box 37-438, Parnell, Auckland.

An A-Z of Activities for Voluntary Groups includes advice for organisational activities and promoting voluntary groups, particularly at the branch level. It suggests ways to attract new people, run effective meetings, and keep the activities of the group in touch with the wider community. Available for \$5 from ROW < P O Box 12270, Wellington

Cyclone Bola Women's Fund is a special fund that will be used exclusively for women's individual and group needs. Those involved in distribution decision-making will be: Judy Hamilton, Anne Robinson, Heni Sutherland, Sue Trafford, Josie Keelan, Jean Lloyd and Caroline Cave. Send donations to Women's Fund, Cyclone Bola Relief, P O Box 640, Gisborne.

Women's Health Group Gathering Palmerston North, 29-31 July at Flock House, Bulls. Organised by Dannevirke Women's Health Centre and Palmerston North Women's Health Collective, who are keen to attract groups that are working in isolation. They want to create a chance for groups to share skills and experiences, and to develop and strengthen the New Zealand women's health network. Registration: \$100, including meals and accommodation. (Contact organisers urgently if help needed with travel or registration costs.) Contacts: Anne McSherry, P N Women's Health Collective P O Box 4253, Ph Palm Nth 70314; Lauren Askey, Dannevirke Women's Health Centre, P O Box 203, Ph Dannevirke 48811.

Third Annual One Sky, One World Kitefly for Peace Sunday 9 October. In Auckland at the Domain from 11am to 4pm. There will be kite flies organised at other centres also. Come and watch or make and bring kites to be included in the world-wide tally. For more information contact Kites That Fly, 22 Wilton St Auckland 2, Ph (09) 765-172

INTERNATIONAL

Adelaide Lesbian Feminist Conference and Celebration 13-25 January 1989. Information from Pam Price, Adelaide Women's health Centre, 64 Pennington Tce, North Adelaide 5006, Australia.

Nemesis is seeking written work and photographs from separatists, lesbians and radical feminists which tell our tales of heteropatriarchal disruption and womyn-positive reality-building. For more information send SASE to: Nemesis, c/- Amber L Katherine, P O Box 417042, Chicago, IL 60641-7042, United States. Deadline 1 December.

The Lesbian Wedding Ceremonies of commitment, rituals of relationship. A call for stories. Send a description of your own ceremony, or a more polished story covering any of the following: Why did you decide to have a ceremony? What was yours like? What traditions did you draw on? Did you exchange vows? who witnessed? How do you feel if differs from the heterosexual tradition? What problems did you encounter and how did you solve them?

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“ I think the Irish in me has probably got quite a lot to do with what eventually led me to

feminism ... what always got me was the feeling of a burning sense of injustice. ”

MARY O'REGAN, THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, LEFT THE MINISTRY IN JUNE AFTER THREE YEARS ON THE JOB. SHORTLY BEFORE HER DEPARTURE SHE TALKED TO DEBBIE JONES ABOUT HERSELF, HER LIFE AND HER EXPERIENCE AT WOMEN'S AFFAIRS.

I was raised as a Catholic and my foremothers and fathers on both sides of my family are Irish Catholics. I didn't know either of my grandmothers but from what I have heard they were quite strong women. In my immediate family, there are my four brothers and me. I come second. My mother was a traditional stay-at-home mother, but she had matriculated from Erskine (as I did), a Catholic girls' boarding school in Wellington, which was quite unusual in those days.

She went on to university to do accountancy but she never actually finished. I've always thought this was because she got married, but she says she didn't finish because of some administrative requirement she didn't meet. So she was a trail blazer, but I don't think she saw herself as one. She says she was mostly in classes with only men and had some very sexist lecturers.

My parents lived in Miramar when I was born and when I was two we moved to Island Bay, also in Wellington, to my grandfather's house. My grandmother had died. That was the house my mother had literally been born in. I went to the local parish school, St Madeline Sophie's, until I was eight, when I moved to Erskine College (then called Sacré Coeur) where I stayed until I finished school nine or ten years later. I was a boarder in secondary school.

My father was a lawyer and actually ended up being a High Court judge, but my parents weren't very well off when I was small, they got better off as I grew up. My father grew up on the West Coast and his parents were farmers and weren't well off at all. During the depression I suppose they always had plenty of food because people on farms tended to. He won a scholarship to boarding school in Auckland and then a scholarship to university.

There was a strong emphasis on education in my family and when I went to university my parents supported me. I lived at home, and they paid for all my books. I never had to work except in the summer holidays, but that was less to do with my parents' finances than what they thought was important.

At school I was in a class with some daughters of very wealthy people, so I didn't actually feel very privileged. I remember saying to my mother once, "Why don't we go skiing in the August holidays?" because *everybody* else seemed to be going, and she said something like "Because we can't afford it". At that time I would much rather she had said "Because we don't know how to ski". It seemed terrible to me to live in a family that couldn't "afford" to go skiing.

When I went to university I mixed mainly with people who had been to private schools and with hindsight I regret that. I think I did it from lack of confidence rather than because I wanted to stick with a certain group: I just didn't quite know how to break out of it.

I wasn't a good student. I had been spoon-fed at school and I didn't cope very well when I went to university. I don't remember my university years very happily at all and don't look back on them as being very important in terms of my development or finding out

PHOTOS TOP TO BOTTOM:

Mary on her first day at school

Mary, age 17

Mary, age 24

Mary O'Regan, April 1988

who I was. Those things happened a lot later. I had quite a few failures, which I think was to do with my lack of confidence. I was ready to abandon it at one stage, but my mother encouraged me to stay on, so I did. I ended up taking four years to get my BA degree and as soon as I'd finished it I went overseas on a working holiday.

I went to England and did the classic OE (overseas experience) thing. I was one of the last of the group of people who went to England by sea. I went with four other women, all nurses. One of them was a friend of mine and the others were friends of hers. It took five weeks to get there and I ended up staying six years. I started off waitressing in a restaurant attached to the Cordon Bleu Cookery School and then I did a whole range of different jobs. I had an English boyfriend who had been to Essex University, which was one of the new quite left-wing universities, and through him met other people who were more political than anyone I had ever mixed with before. The anti-apartheid movement was quite strong in England at that time and then the whole Irish question was looming again.

I think the Irish in me has probably got quite a lot to do with what eventually led me to feminism, and in many respects my Catholic background has been important too. I don't know what it is. It might be the clear distinction made between good and evil, in Irish Catholicism particularly. It can be quite oppressive in that you feel guilty about the things you have, which isn't always productive, but it does make you see what



PHOTO: THE DOMINION

other people don't have. I think that I have always had a really strong feeling against injustice, even being wrongly accused of something at school. It wasn't because the punishment troubled me: what always got me was the feeling of a burning sense of injustice.

It was in England that it started to be focused. Towards the end of my stay in England I got involved in a neighbourhood group which was trying to get some play space for children. There was a piece of British Rail land that was lying vacant and so we formed a pressure group called "Playspace". The whole process was new and interesting to me in terms of seeing something through from an idea into political action. We got our playground but suddenly British Rail decided that they wanted to sell the land to the council for council flats. So no sooner had we secured our goal than it was threatened and we were fighting to save it. I remember thinking then that I was interested in working for change and that I would actually rather be putting that energy into my own country. I never saw myself as settling into a career in England.

My mother would have liked me to have been married by then and to have started having children, and I still hadn't really started to develop a career. My brothers had taken career-oriented degrees and I hadn't. So I suppose I had done neither one thing nor the other. When I got back to New Zealand I started looking for a job, thinking that I wanted it to be something "interesting". I got one at the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO. I remember thinking then that here I was, nearly 30, and that I could very possibly be on my own for the rest of my life, so I'd better start doing some planning about how I was going to support myself and so on. I had never consciously thought about it, but obviously I had seen myself move into a role like my mother and just about everybody else I knew. I realised that all my old school friends were married and having children and I wasn't. I don't remember being scared or shocked by it, but I do remember thinking, right, I'd better start doing a bit of planning. Not that I actually did, really, but I did do some rethinking.

At that stage I don't think I identified as a feminist. I suppose if anything my concern was much more about the right of people to be free and I didn't clearly identify that women were oppressed as a group. One of the things that I have found quite hard in being interviewed in respect of this job has been being asked "Do you feel you have ever been discriminated against because you are a woman?" I can never actually identify an instance and hence I don't feel as

“ It hasn't actually been harder for me to do it differently from men because I don't think the way they do it is right ”

though I have ever personally suffered. My feminism developed more on an intellectual level, which then moved into my heart.

I suppose the next job move I made was the most significant in terms of where I am now. I went to work with the Vocational Training Council as their Women's Advisory Officer. The job had no real definition. I had some sort of bland job description like, "to advise the council on the training needs of women," and it led me in some interesting directions.

For example, I received a request from a group of women in Golden Bay to go down and run a workshop on training at a women's weekend they were holding. I responded that I didn't know anything about the training needs of rural women, and I didn't know what I could contribute, but that if they were happy for me to come on that basis – that I might learn something as well as give something – I'd be pleased to do it. So I went, and in the process of these workshops we came up with suggestions and I said I could possibly help by following up some of these. That was the beginning of what is now the Golden Bay Work Centre Trust, which started off as an entirely women's group. I think the role I played in the development of that group was quite important, although I didn't actually *do* that much. I believe what was significant about it was there was "someone in Wellington" who had access to people who could make decisions, who was actually supporting what these women were doing.

At the community level a lot of women find that their initiatives flounder because they don't know how to work the system. They have the skills, the knowledge, and even the confidence, but they lack the contacts in the system. So I suppose that's when I started becoming more focused. I can't identify any strong sort of turning points or blinding flashes, but I began to realise the real focus of my interest lay in sup-

porting the things that happen in communities, where people gain confidence by actually doing things. I also had a growing awareness of the needs of women in terms of employment and access to economic independence, and of the difficulties for them once they have children and are busy just coping day-to-day.

While I was still working at the Vocational Training Council I went to live in Nelson. I had met the person that I am now married to and I went to Nelson to live with him. I was about 34 when I got married. I think I got married so I could, in my parents' eyes, become someone's wife and stop being their daughter. I *think* that's why. I definitely wanted some form of commitment in the relationship, that was very important to me. A lot of people in close personal relationships want some form of commitment and we haven't found a lot of alternatives yet.

When I went to Nelson I actually managed to persuade the Vocational Training Council to let me work from there. My job had a national responsibility. I had contact with the Community Education Service there and they had an old house in Nelson so I negotiated with them to rent a room. The Nelson Community Education Service is now part of the polytech, but it was established in 1975 as a pilot for non-formal learning, community education "without walls". Also in the house was the Nelson Hospital Board's family counselling service, the Nelson City Council's recreation advisor and the Nelson Community Arts Council, so it was a real community house. In 1980 the woman who had been assistant director of the Nelson Community Education Service resigned, so I applied for the job and got it. That was the job I was doing before I came to the ministry.

In Nelson I had clearly identified that the focus of my energy and work was women. I enjoyed working with them and I could see there was a hell of a lot that needed to be done. So when I moved into the community education job I quite unashamedly said the focus of my part of the job should be on women. I worked with a lot of groups; work groups, women trying to get play groups off the ground, that sort of thing, and I also set up a women's studies programme when I was at polytech. I set it up *and* ran it because, like most women's studies programmes, it only happened because someone in the system was prepared to put the energy into it.

Because my job brought me into contact with so many women and I was

identified as a woman who was committed to and believed in women's initiatives, when this job came up at the ministry a lot of local women told me I should apply. In the end I applied because I wanted to show my support. I saw that the ministry was there because of the years of work of lots of women. It seemed important that there was support for that, and that one of the ways of indicating that support was to get lots of applications for the job to show that women were really interested.

I didn't actually want the job. I had no expectations of getting it, it just didn't enter my head. I applied in March, and in May I received a phone call inviting me to an interview. For a moment I didn't actually know what the person on the phone was talking about. At that stage I hadn't even told my husband that I had applied, so when I said I was going to this interview and he suggested we should discuss what we would do if I got the job, I said there was no point in putting any energy into that discussion.

So I went off to the interview and was very relaxed about it. They rang me that night to offer me the job and I must say at that stage I wasn't entirely surprised. I had a feeling when I came out of the interview. When the phone rang at nine o'clock that night my heart actually leapt in a panic. I was standing in the hall in my mother's house. There was a mirror there and I remember looking at my face and seeing the colour visibly drain from it. The next x number of years flashed before me. I was thinking, "What does this mean? To start from scratch and to have to meet all these women's expectations. What will *they* think, and will I be considered good enough?"

I was quite petrified, I stayed awake all night. I was completely overawed by the feeling of responsibility. I had high expectations of the ministry, and while I would have been supportive of whoever got the job, I knew I would probably have been tough on them. I just didn't want to be the one that everyone was going to be tough on. At that point I wanted it to go away because I had actually been thinking of going part-time at the tech, having a bit of a break and possibly having a baby.

Not having children is something that is a source of sadness to me, and I can't quite work out why I never did it earlier. I haven't exactly abandoned the idea even now. I think this is an ongoing issue for women: how to combine the various facets of who they are. It would have been quite impossible for me to do this job if I had had family responsibilities.

I've found it interesting the number of people who have said to me I must have a wonderful husband. I use it now

“ I have given the job every single bit of energy I could ”

to point out the double standard implicit in that view. Whether I have actually felt supported by him or not is not the issue. The issue is that they are saying he's wonderful because he "let me go" and yet if he had come to Wellington to a job as important as mine, and I had stayed in Nelson, I would not only not have been considered "wonderful" I would have actually been considered very selfish. To do a job like this without daily domestic support is bloody hard. It is definitely much harder for women than it is for men.

In terms of what the job has been I have always felt that there was a huge conflict between what we wanted to model as a work place and what we were actually doing, which was working those ridiculous hours. It seemed crazy. But at the time we just didn't have any choice. All that would have happened if we had worked half as long is that it would have taken twice as long to get where we are today. Often, while women were telling us we shouldn't work such long hours they were at the same time pushing us to do more and more. When I took the job I think one of the things that filled me with panic was the thought that it would engulf my whole life. That's really what it has done. What has been nice is that I have worked in an environment where I have formed some close personal friendships with women on the staff and we have worked well together. It has been a lovely supportive working environment in one way and a bloody tough one in another. Working out the internal process in the ministry has been the most stressful part of the job for me, personally, by far, because it seemed important to get that right.

It's partly a result of my personality, but I feel incredibly responsible for this place. I don't actually have to carry that responsibility alone, because of the way we work. In that respect I'm not a good person for this sort of job. I'm one of those people who takes responsibility for things. For example, if I am in a social setting and there is a gap in the conversation I'll feel responsible to fill it, or if there are no table napkins and someone is looking for one I'll take responsibility to go and ask where they are.

There's also a lot of my ego tied up in my job. I actually care what people think of me and my performance. It's really important to me, and the people I care about are the people I respect – the feminists. I'm not motivated just by high principles and it hasn't been hard for me to do it differently from the way men do it because I don't think the way they do it is right. I don't really care whether they approve of what I have done, but I do care what women think. I was always anxious every time I met women who I had read about or heard of – anxious about whether or not they thought I was a good choice, and whether they approved of the way things were going.

I think my thinking is quite radical. But I look at the older women and the more conservative groups and I have never wanted to dismiss them, because I can see that they had to work in a certain way in their time and we can't expect them to change radically because times have changed. This has been affirmed for me in a way by Maori women – we need to respect the older women and affirm what they have done, and acknowledge that that has helped create the context in which we can be more radical. So I wouldn't want to dissociate myself from those older, more established groups by a label, but I think that what I want to achieve is quite radical, because I want to see the achievement not only of equality for women but a society which *values* women, and that's radical social change. I think we all have different reasons for deciding what comes first for us, but gender for me is a key thing because that's what I can identify with. I'm not black and I'm not working class, but I am a woman. I think the important thing is to be clear who you are and where you're coming from and what stand you are taking and to support the struggle of other oppressed groups, not compete with them.

I've found dealing with the challenge of bi-culturalism personally really hard, but I think when I leave the ministry it will be what I regard as the most valuable part of the whole experience. It has been an enormous learning experience for me and it has actually changed the way I think, the way I view the world, and that will never go. I am so much more aware of racism and what it means now. I have learned a lot from working with the Maori women in the ministry. I think I have still got a lot to learn.

There are conflicts sometimes: "Am I operating from guilt? Or is this actually a constructive thing to do? Am I being pressured, bullied?" A lot of these things aren't easily resolved, but there have been times when I've felt bullied, and that demands have been unfair, and

then we've acted – or not acted – on those demands, and I've looked back and understood why it was so important.

The other thing I think I've learned to do well in this job is to separate out personal relationships with someone from the structural struggle. You can have good personal relationships with someone with whom you may have a battle on an issue, but only if you separate out the two.

I have tried to always remember that I am one of the few women with a lot of potential power. For women who are working for change, I may be the most powerful person they have direct access to, so I am the one they push. So if I separate out Mary the person from the Secretary of Women's Affairs it makes it all a lot less painful, and I think I have a real responsibility to do that.

I am usually the only woman, for example at most meetings of heads of government. If I just sink into the position of being an agreeable permanent head who they all feel comfortable with, then I am actually counter-productive to women. I had an interesting experience recently over the State Sector Bill. I went to a permanent heads' meeting where they were talking about the proposed strike. There was an assumption that not only would permanent heads not be striking, but that none of their senior staff would either.

I had every intention of going on strike at that point so I thought I had better declare this. My right to do that was questioned because permanent heads traditionally don't go on strike. I explained that the reality for me was that this group wasn't my reference group, that I felt in a very different and difficult position, because the reason that I was in that room was that women had fought for my right to be there; as the highest paid woman in the public service women would be looking to see where my solidarity lay. I explained that I was of no use at all to those women if I just did what's "always been done" because that's exactly what has kept women out in the past. At that stage the Bill was not looking at all good for women, and I had to decide whether I was there as an advocate for women or just another permanent head. I had to decide which of these was the most important. As it happened it wasn't an issue in the end because a lot of the changes happened in between my making that statement and the strike. They were some of the changes we had been pushing for, and the work of a lot of other women as well. I felt that I should acknowledge that and I didn't go on strike.

There is absolutely no doubt that one of the things that's made it easier for me to do this job is my background: my class, the way I look, the way I dress, the

“ I actually believe that most people are not inherently malicious or evil ”

fact that I am married, all those things that helped to make me more acceptable. They break down some of the barriers so that things I say are more palatable. I may be saying exactly the same things as people who look different, who make their statement in other ways, who dress differently or refuse to be nice and polite or whatever.

I think the front person in an organisation which is working for change needs to be able to present the things they are working for in a way that doesn't actually scare people off. If you scare people off, especially the people who actually have more power than you, then in fact they can actually prevent anything happening. I've always worked on that basis and I think my community work helped me here. I actually believe that *most* people are not inherently malicious or evil. Often they are threatened, they are holding onto power for some reason, their egos are very tied up in what they are doing. Often they are just perpetuating structural discrimination because of a reluctance or an inability to change. I try to apply the principles that I applied as an adult educator, which is to start from where people are at, because if you don't they are not going to hear what you are saying. If you start off by telling people they are absolutely wrong then you are likely to cut off the communication at that point.

I'm very close to Pauline O'Regan.* She's my aunt, my father's sister. We get on very well. We think very much the same way and I think we've learned a lot from each other. I've learnt a lot from her about faith in people and that empathy that I was talking about before. She is totally intolerant of bigotry, prejudice, malice and injustice, but she is very good at finding good in people and actually building on that. And sometimes in this job when I've really

* Pauline O'Regan was interviewed in *Broadsheet* issue 143, October 1986, where she is described as a "nun with a strong feminist analysis". She is the author of *A Changing Order*, published by Allen and Unwin.

been torn about something, about what is actually the right thing to do, I've discussed it with her in confidence. She is a very spiritual woman and she believes very strongly in the power of prayer. If I was troubled or under stress she would pray about it and it always felt very supportive for me to have her and her community concerned about me.

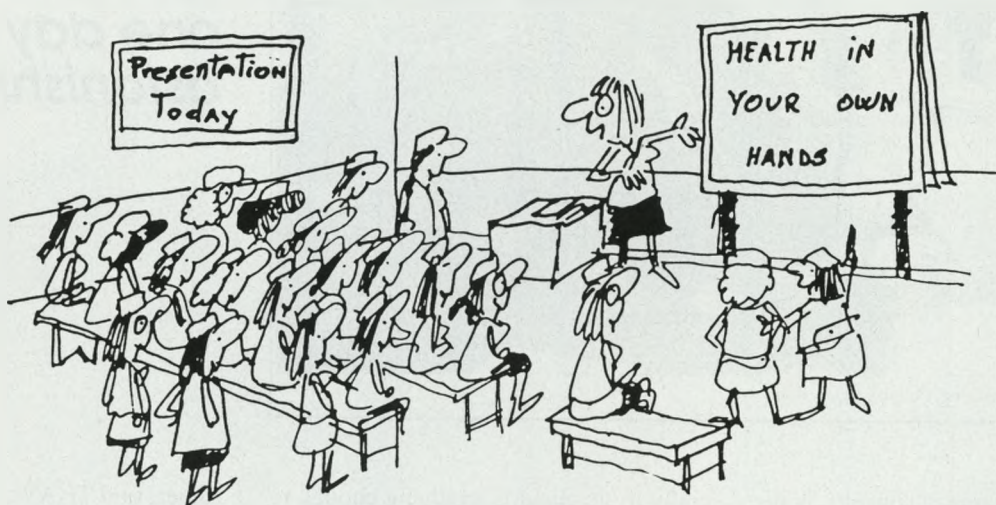
My mother has been really important to me, mainly because she has always been really supportive. She's a wonderful role model of a mother. She has obviously made sacrifices because she has devoted her life to her family. She is a very intelligent woman, but I don't think she credits herself with that, because she hasn't got the bits of paper or "a career" to prove it. She says she feels very proud of me but I think she feels a certain ambivalence because she actually can see that it's hard for me. She's seen me under a lot of stress. You tend to be more vulnerable with those you are closer to, and she's seen me close to burn-out, unhappy and not coping, and because she cares about me that's been really hard for her. She has said to me on more than one occasion, "I wish you would give it up, I don't like seeing what it is doing to you." But she is very proud.

Another really important woman for me has been Dorothy Stafford. She was the Chairwoman of the Vocational Training Council when I was the Women's Advisory Officer, and so we worked closely together. We really liked each other and worked well together and were able to laugh at some of the terrible things that happened in terms of our work. She's been really supportive of me. She wrote me one of the references which I think might have helped me get this job. It brought tears to my eyes because it was so affirming. She is a wonderful model of a woman who comes from a working class background and has achieved so much. She began her battling for women when feminism was a very dirty word indeed and I think she's incredibly brave and lovely.

I have given this job every single bit of energy I could. I have put everything into it and I have done the very best that I could do. If that's not the best that could have been done, then I wasn't the right person for the job, but I can honestly say I have given it my all. I think I have taken some risks, it hasn't always been easy, and I have had to make some hard decisions and fight some hard battles. But because of the way we work in the ministry I have never felt alone. None of us could have done it without the support and cooperation of the others. We should never have to, because we are working towards a common goal, we must always be able to share the hard bits and the triumphs. ■

HEALTH ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN

IN CHRISTCHURCH T·H·A·W



“CAN you give me the name of a sympathetic woman doctor in my area?” “I think I might have thrush. Can you tell me anything about it?” “Do you have the results of my pregnancy test?” “Who should I see about natural family planning?” “I went to see the midwife you told me about and I was very happy with her.” “I’m terrified I might be pregnant. What can I do about it?”

These are some of the calls that come in every day to THAW. The women in the THAW collective have had considerable experience now at handling all types of calls. They are especially concerned to give the woman at the other end of the phone plenty of time to speak of her problem or inquiry. There is never any feeling of being rushed. Unlike many doctors, these THAW women make the caller feel she is of prime importance at this moment.

THAW grew out of Sisters Overseas Service (SOS) at a time (1980) when fewer women needed to go to Australia for abortions. There were by then counsellors at Christchurch Women’s Hospital and although some abortion counselling was still being done by SOS they now had the opportunity to extend their services. Women’s health issues needed to be discussed by someone other than doctors. There was a need to call on the experiences

**Pat Syme
has been looking
at The Health
Alternatives For
Women (THAW) in
Christchurch, a
year after
they received
Health
Department
Funding, on a
trial basis, as a
well-women’s
centre. THAW
is now located
in new rooms
at the old
Christchurch
Girls’ High
School**

of women themselves.

The range of enquiries that THAW handles in one day is quite astonishing. They also offer free pregnancy testing. Either they can give an authority to have a blood or urine test at the laboratory (sympathetic doctors have provided THAW with the forms) or they offer the kit which a woman can use herself and get a result in a couple of minutes. A drop of urine, a drop of two different liquids and the result is either cloudy (positive) or clear (negative). Togetherness took on a new meaning when two couples came in recently to do the test together. One couple hoped for a positive result and one for a negative. They each got the results they wanted and went away happy.

For women who are not happy about being pregnant, THAW can refer them to one of the doctors from their hot and cold file. Now that the Lyndhurst Clinic is providing a service, including a good counselling service, one of the earlier functions of THAW – abortion counselling – is no longer needed. However, the smooth operation of the abortion service is of concern to THAW and when it threatened to break down because of a shortage of doctors more than a year ago, THAW met with other groups to work out a solution. And THAW was one of the co-ordinators of the counter-picketing outside the clinic when SPUC picketers were particularly objectionable.

While it would be marvellous if the abortion service worked well and THAW could move on to other matters, the fact is

HEALTH ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN



PHOTO: PAT SYME

A collective meeting. From left, Corinne, Helen, Ruth, Ann.

The range of inquiries that THAW handles in one day is quite astonishing

that it is a constant area of concern. Waiting lists are still too long in Christchurch (currently three weeks) and abortions are still unavailable in many other South Island centres. THAW gets a large number of calls from Southland and the West Coast in particular.

THAW's interest in women's health is much wider than abortion. Many of the calls and letters they get show that women are not happy with the present behaviour of doctors. "When I asked my doctor about it, I didn't get an answer." "I told my doctor the medication was having awful side effects but s/he didn't want to know." "I didn't get a chance to ask anything. S/he just left the room."

It was because of the widespread dissatisfaction of women with the medical treatment they were getting that THAW was set up seven and a half years ago. Women are greater consumers of health services than men. Some of the imbalance between the sexes is due to obstetrics and gynaecology, but there is a disproportionate number of women with psychological and musculoskeletal conditions. Women also encounter the health services when taking their children for treatment.

What emerged from the Auckland cervical cancer inquiry was a recognition that women are far from happy with the way they are treated by doctors. But it didn't need this inquiry to tell women what they already knew, that doctors play god with women. The state has given them this role with abortion decisions, whereby the doctor has the power to grant or withhold permissions for a termination, a role that sits easily with most doctors, who believe they know what's best for their clients, espe-

cially if the client is annoying enough to ask questions or to presume to offer some possible explanations.

Another course of dissatisfaction with the medical system lies with the doctor-patient relationship. Many women complain that doctors are too busy to listen properly; doctors give the impression that their time is precious and must not be wasted by "unnecessary" questions. Many have no idea of how to talk to a woman as an equal; they don't even make eye contact. They dismiss any theories she might have, as if to say "How presumptuous! I am the one with all the training, and what would you know about it?" If a likely explanation for an ailment does not present itself, then the implication is that the woman is neurotic. They don't accord a woman the dignity she deserves when it comes to undressing or removing her underpants, pointing out the interesting cervix to their colleagues whilst ignoring the woman who is the owner. Some doctors don't know how to end a consultation, they just leave the room abruptly. It is good to see that there are now books on doctor-patient relationships and it is hoped that medical students will read them.

THAW women took part in a training session with GPs a few years ago to teach them how to do a sensitive vaginal examination. They allowed themselves to be used for internal examinations, commenting each time on whether it hurt or not. They've also been involved in a listening skills series with doctors, trying to emphasise the importance of taking time to listen to what the patient wants to say.

It is time doctors listened to the con-

sumer, said THAW, and especially when that consumer has a vastly different background from most doctors. Doctors are trained in an elitist way, with very little understanding of what it is like to be poor. THAW told the story of a woman who rang her doctor because her child was choking. "Take her to accident and emergency," she was told, not "Do you have a car? Do you have money to get a taxi?" The woman had no means of getting to hospital and no money.

Economics has a strong bearing on one's access to health. To start with, if you are constantly short of money, your nutrition and housing are likely to be poor, and your anxiety level high. You can't afford a family holiday at the beach to wind down at the end of the year. And when you are sick you put off going to the doctor because you don't have the money. Many doctors now charge in excess of \$20 for a consultation. The new emergency medical centre in Christchurch, open at weekends and evenings, has priced itself right out of the market for the poor, at \$33 a consultation or \$55 for a home visit.

THAW believes that we must build up the public health system. (See "To Market To Market To Milk The Health System" In *Broadsheet* 156, March 1988 for more on this.) It is not good enough to have one system for the rich and one for the poor, because inevitably this means the public system gets run down. Those who have the money can afford to pay for a private hospital and specialists, or have medical insurance, whilst those who are too ground down learn to thank the system for the crumbs they are offered. One improvement THAW would like to see is special-

HEALTH ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN

ists being fully employed by hospital boards instead of splitting their time between public and private practice. The present system can create a conflict of interests: it is not uncommon for a doctor at the public hospital to tell a woman there is an 18 months waiting list for her operation, but if she dropped round to his rooms he could get her into a private hospital next week. There's no financial advantage to doctors to reduce the waiting list at the public hospital.

THAW have met with doctors. Recently they were invited to speak to GPs who specialise in obstetrics and gynaecology, but most doctors defend themselves from criticism. "You'll always get the complainers," they point out. "What, hundreds of them?" say THAW, because hundreds of women contact them in a year.

This contact has shown that women are the victims of poorly researched contraceptives. This is another area where THAW have played the woman's advocate after gathering together the experiences of many women. Some who have suffered infections from an IUD lack the confidence to complain on their own behalf, or they fear repercussions, or they may think their own case is an isolated one – just bad luck – but when THAW have seen patterns emerging, affecting numbers of women, they have made it their business to speak out.

We all know of the Dalkon Shield, through the publicity it has had, but other IUDs have caused infections and possibly permanent damage. THAW have made submissions to the Health Department, made press statements and helped to raise the general awareness of the public to inherent dangers. In many respects they have been the trail-blazer, not afraid to rock the boat and challenge the status quo, whereas other health agencies might agree in private but feel they have to keep a low profile. Gradually, as public perception changes, these other agencies have been able to speak out, too.

Part of the role of THAW is in fact political activity. They have made submissions on the privatisation of the health system and, more recently, to the cancer inquiry. Two members went to Auckland to present the submission.

The continued use of Depo Provera has been another ongoing concern for THAW. They are suspicious of the stated independence of Upjohn, the manufacturers of Depo and the source of funding for the research being undertaken. THAW called for evidence of side effects from women taking Depo and have received enough to make them critical of its continued use.

But the trouble with such evidence is that it is "anecdotal" and therefore "unreliable", say the authorities, whether they be the Health Department, a hospital board

Women are far from happy at the way they are treated by doctors

or a select committee. How is it that it's a "case study" when reported by a doctor but an "anecdote" when reported by a patient? The word "anecdote" trivialises it, turns it into a slight occurrence or a funny story.

Sometimes these "anecdotes" have a common thread running through them and by ignoring such a source of information, doctors are wasting an opportunity. One woman who had just had a cancerous lump on the breast removed asked the doctor whether there might be a link between the cancer she had now and the hormones she was treated with for infertility some years ago. He replied that it was time to look forwards, not backwards. True, but she was offering the information in the hope that it might be of some significance in helping other women.

Now, ironically, THAW is often a source for research. They often get requests from health professionals, like an airline medical unit, for information. Or THAW will initiate the information. A local medical centre, for instance, put out a newsletter on the frequency of Pap smears which THAW felt was inaccurate. THAW wrote to correct the misinformation.

Not all of THAW's information comes from the women who ring, visit or write. A lot of their time is spent on research. They read medical journals, publications on women's health, minutes of health committees and medical conference reports, and attend many meetings of medical "experts". Their office is brimming with files on such subjects as ME and allergies, hysterectomy, yeast infections, the pill, barrier contraceptives, pregnancy. They also have information leaflets on other topics ranging from osteoporosis to natural sea sponges and a large range of books for women to read.

What about "fringe" alternative medicine like aromatherapy, iridology, colour therapy? THAW is reassuring on this. "We don't promote any one health method," they say. "We have no vested interest in the health system, alternative or conventional. We offer information such as, 'One woman found this useful for this particular ailment' and then we leave it up to others to decide whether they want to try it for themselves." They believe knowl-

edge should be shared and want to empower women with the knowledge to understand their own health problems.

Whilst the THAW women do enjoy their work (when they are not too stressed by the multitude of things happening at once) and are pleased they are becoming more well known, they are aware of the dangers of being used by the health system as unpaid consultants. The fact that hundreds of women contact them every year means that they do fill a need that is not provided for by our public health system. Groups also call on them to give workshops or talks. Access programmes frequently include a workshop on contraception or women's health and these are an important means of introducing the young to the idea of taking responsibility for their own health. THAW has also given a number of workshops on the West Coast where women have travelled up to 100km to attend. Rural women, who have few health choices, have been keen to find out about alternatives to the present system.

Then there are the women's groups like La Leche, women students and the political and professional groups such as occupational therapists. Recently THAW gave a talk to dieticians entitled, "How do you stay well in spite of the system?"

Although THAW asks for a donation for the services they provide, funding is a continual problem. A little money is provided by pledges from supporters, more comes from various talks THAW women give, but most is from various grants. The grant of \$50,000 to run as a well woman centre was only for one year, but they are hoping for more from the Health Department. They would like to set up a Pap smear pilot scheme as part of a coalition with other women's groups and have applied for a \$30,000 grant to do this. Much of their time, in fact, is spent making funding applications to various bodies like local councils, Golden Kiwi, benevolent trusts and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Grants, however, are minimal and only stop-gap. Their operating budget for wages, books, files, phone rental, room rental and equipment is \$67,000. Equipment is laughable – one Xerox machine, a small fridge (for the pregnancy test kit), some old furniture and not much else. They would like to be able to attract an older woman worker, but are aware that applicants would need an additional source of income since the collective share the wages, each working only three days.

Because things get so hectic at times, they rely on a number of volunteers who come in to help with tasks like answering the phone and keeping pace with the filing system. At the moment they and the collective are working to find a way for the volunteers to have a greater role in the

HEALTH ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN

running of THAW as a recognition of their value.

The move to the old Girls' High School site adds another \$100 a month to the budget but brings with it many improvements. The best feature is that here THAW is part of a women's house coalition, with the Otautahi Women's Labour Pool and the Canterbury Women's Employment Trust in adjoining rooms. There is also a meeting room to be let to other women's groups as needed. Another very important feature is that now THAW has street level access, enabling women in wheelchairs or with pushchairs to visit. It's a much more attractive set-up too, the renovations hav-

ing been designed by a (woman) architect.

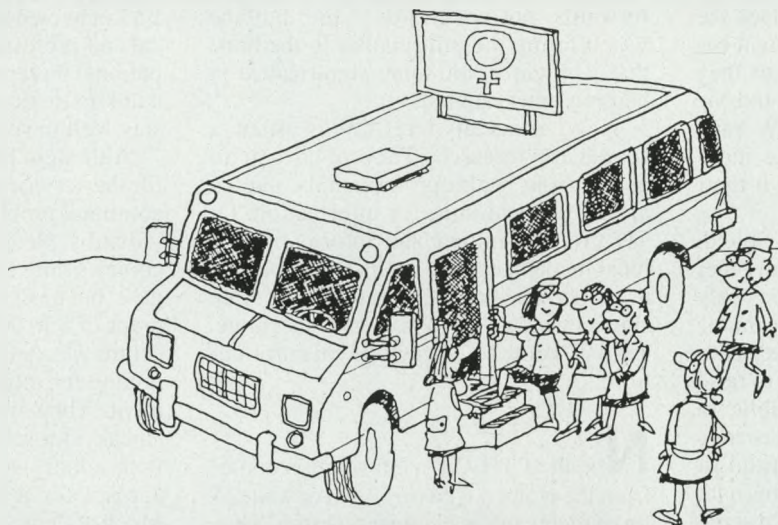
As part of a much larger women's coalition THAW hopes that they will become better known by the women they most want to reach – working class women. Very little money is used for advertising: there are a few pamphlets in women's toilets and the library, a small ad in the personal column, but mostly they rely on word of mouth. The trouble with this is that many women still don't know of their existence and often these are the ones that could most do with the services THAW offers.

Where to in the future? Apart from adding a Pap smear facility, they would

like to be more accessible to women in the suburbs. If money was available they could foresee a future with branches in several areas in Christchurch and in rural districts, because the need is there.

Meanwhile, the struggle to improve the health system goes on. While there is some progress with doctors' attitudes, the medical profession at large is conservative and reluctant to change. The time to influence doctors is during their training, says THAW. They start with an open mind, but after several years of belonging to this male-dominated, elitist, capitalist and racist club, they become deaf to the needs of those who don't belong.

IN CANADA HEALTH • ON • WHEELS



“WE try to show the women that information about health isn't the exclusive property of doctors. We want women to take their health into their own hands.”

The mobile Health Unit Project began in January 1984. The idea for the project arose out of the necessity to provide health services to high risk, hard to reach immigrant women of Toronto. Many of these women, the majority of whom are factory, laundry and cafeteria workers, tend to work long hours, are poorly paid and have little time to perform their daily household tasks. As a result, they don't have time to worry about care for their health. Because the type of work they perform, whether skilled or unskilled, often involves heavy, tiring labour, these women are considered a high risk group in terms of their gynaecological and general health.

This programme is being carried out by the Immigrant women's Centre of Toronto, Canada through its “Mobile Health Unit Project”. The project provides primary health care for women immigrants in an original and useful way, and can be put into practice in any country of the world. The Canadian project is funded by the City of Toronto Department of Public Health and other Canadian institutions

Further, language differences impede their access to information about preventative health measures, as well as their access to medical personnel, whom they often consult only in cases of emergency. For all of these reasons – language barriers, long work hours, and inaccessibility to health services – these women were targeted as a priority group by the Immigrant Women's Centre.

The centre staff decided that the only way to reach these women was by going directly to their workplaces, during hours which were convenient and which didn't require them to leave the factory. Thus, the idea of a mobile health unit was born.

“TAKE A RIDE WITH US ...” HEALTH, SALURE, SALUD, SAUDE

The Mobile Health Unit is a small but well-equipped mobile home, which includes:

1. An examining room in which breast

HEALTH ALTERNATIVES FOR WOMEN

examinations, Pap tests, blood tests, vision, hearing and reflex exams and blood pressure tests are performed;

2. A waiting or reception area;
3. A kitchen;
4. A counselling area;
5. A washroom.

Here, in this simple but effective clinic, a female doctor and nurse work together with six multilingual counsellors from the Immigrant Women's Centre. The counsellors have had training in community health and provide information about family planning and other matters, serving at the same time as interpreters or intermediaries between the women who come to the clinic and medical personnel.

The counsellors who staff the mobile unit are part of the particular communities which the centre serves. This is important in all aspects of their work and enables them to serve as a bridge between women from diverse cultures and their new country. Because each new immigrant woman comes from a district community and culture, the counsellors work on an individual level with each of them. They also work on a broader, social level, developing educational material, audiovisuals etc in the different languages.

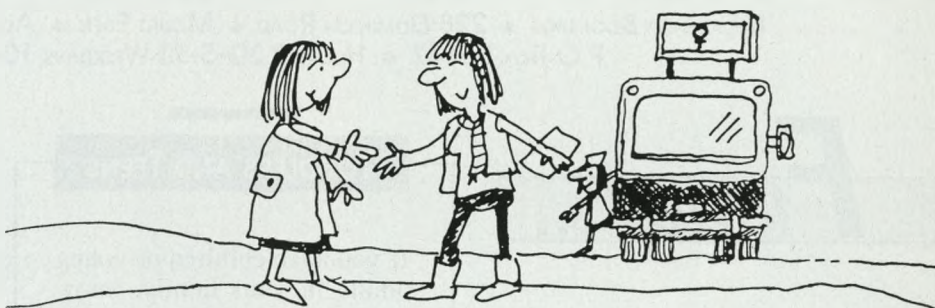
The counsellors also provide information and/or references on such health matters as family planning methods, pregnancy and childbirth, breastfeeding, detection of breast and cervical cancers, gynaecological infections and sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition, stress management and patients' rights.

"MAKING CONTACTS"

The Mobile Unit group has developed a strategy to have greater access to workplaces where the greatest number of immigrant women are concentrated. The Unit team not only has to allay the fears of factory administrators or businessmen about the loss of work hours; at the same time the team must seek their cooperation on providing a place where counsellors can conduct talks with the workers. The strategy that has developed usually requires the Health Unit staff to contact the employer, sometimes with the help of a sympathetic union representative, to provide management with informational materials and to meet with them in person. The staff then prepares a workplace summary describing the number of women employed, their ages, nationalities and languages and the type of work they do. All of this preparatory work is carried out approximately one year before the Mobile Unit actually visits the workplace.

FACTORY PRESENTATIONS

Once this groundwork is laid, the Mobile Unit holds a series of talks with workers in the workplace on a variety of subjects. The



talks have certain characteristics in common: they are simple and understandable, they don't use complicated medical terminology and they are accessible to every woman whether she speaks Chinese, English, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish or Vietnamese. Through the talks the counsellors inform the women about the clinic – how it functions and what services it offers – and try to determine the interests and most common problems of the group. The health presentations usually consist of six presentations which take place during the lunch hour and take three weeks to complete.

For the Mobile Unit this method of introducing itself to the women, of getting to know them and overcoming their fears, is not only a part of the strategy, it is a fundamental aspect of the Unit's work. Perhaps the most important aspect of the presentation is that the women know they can ask any question and that they will be understood in their own language. This also makes it more likely that the women will come to the clinic. As one of the counsellors said:

"The fact that I speak the language makes them comfortable coming to the clinic. They know I'll be there. I think most of the women trust me after the presentations. We know each other. They trust me and then they'll come."

THE MOBILE CLINIC AT THE WORKSITE

After the presentations, clinic visits are scheduled for four to five days, five hours a day. A clinic visit involves a gynaecological and general physical examination, including vision, hearing, reflex and blood pressure tests. If any illness or health problem is detected, the Mobile Unit doctor sends a letter to a specialist or to the client's family doctor outlining the problem.

In general the Mobile Unit staff tries to encourage the women to be in direct contact with their family doctor, especially concerning reproductive health problems. Through talking with the women staff discovered the total lack of communication between the women and their doctors. This is particularly true when the doctors

are male. Other impediments to communication include the language barrier and the attitude of medical personnel in general, who often decide to do what is most convenient for them without explaining to or consulting their patients, thereby denying them information about their own health. Thus, many of the women who visit the Mobile Unit have little understanding of the importance of regular exams, Pap smears or other matters related to the care of their own body.

The Mobile Health Unit Project proposes a new way of understanding medicine and the role interpersonal communication plays in the practice of medicine. The Unit promotes the education of women and encourages them to develop a consciousness about their own capacity to care for themselves and to know about their own bodies.

However, this process can only take place in a horizontal relationship in which doctor and patient have something to say, where they can talk in everyday language, without creating distance or artificial hierarchy. As another counsellor has said:

"The women have knowledge and information about their own health and their own bodies. We don't act as if we were the source of all information."

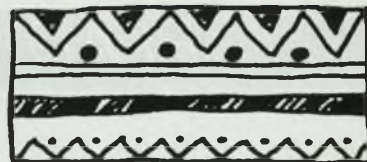
"This is a big city with huge institutions. The bigness of the city veils things ... we can talk to people in a way that breaks down the distance created by the city; we make it more of a village. We share the women's standpoint and speak in ordinary language. This makes what the women have to say important ... We always have time for questions."

In one year the counsellors talked with 1500 women at their workplaces and provided medical attention to 430 clinic clients. During the course of the examinations a case of cervical cancer was discovered and a high percentage of Pap tests required new exams. Of the 251 women who had blood pressure tests, 23 suffered from high blood pressure. ■

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ON THE SHELF



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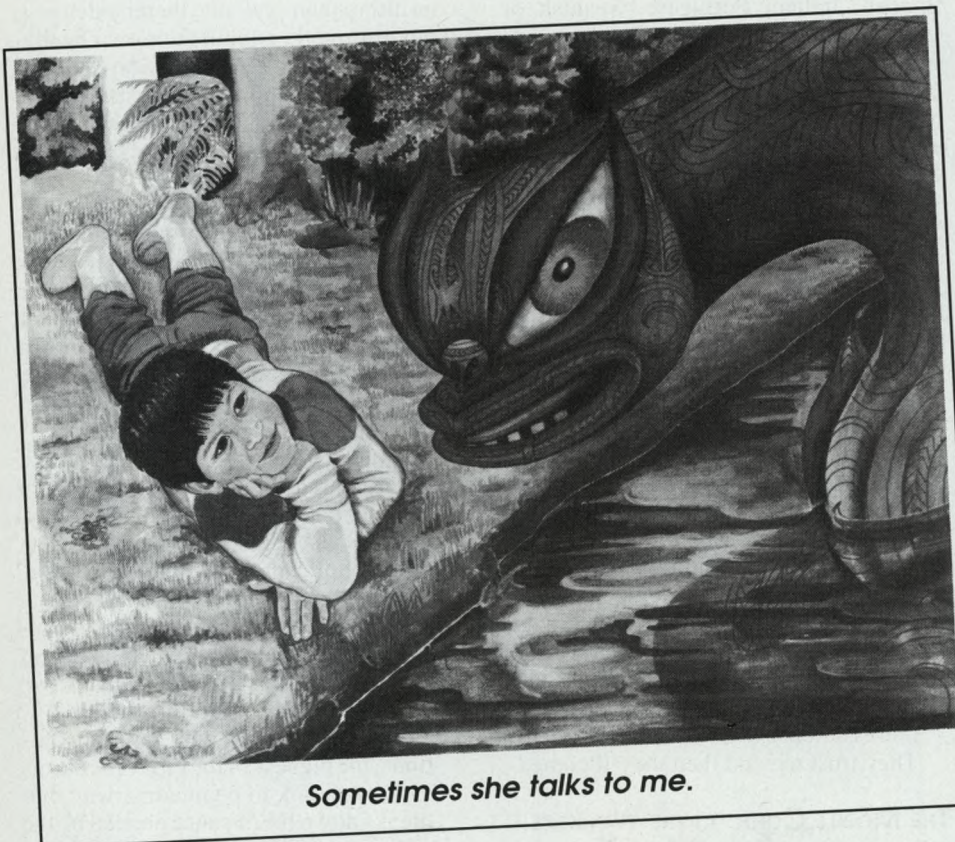
F ICTION ...

TANIWAHA

Robyn Kahukiwa
Puffin Books \$7.99

TODDLERS AND TEENS

If you have children or young adults in your family, know them, look after them and teach them, some of the books we have this month on the shelf will be of interest to you.



Sometimes she talks to me.

A boy is guided by the taniwha he sees in his river to understand the three creative elements of Tangaroa, God of the Ocean; Ranginui, Skyfather; and Papatuanuku, Earthmother. The taniwha carries him down into the sea, up into the sky, and through the earth, giving him a gift each time. Laughed at by a friend who does not comprehend the meaning of the gifts, a stone, a feather and red earth, the boy is comforted by his grandfather who knows very well how rich the knowledge makes the boy. This is a beautiful picture book with text that could be handled by six year olds and up. The illustrations and text are evocative of many emotions. Available in Maori or English.

MOMMY AND DADDY ARE FIGHTING

Susan Paris and Gail Labinski
Seal Press \$17.95

A story which deals with fighting between parents and how children feel about arguments and family violence. The pictures are in gentle greys, browns and pinks and illustrate the fear, anger, confusion, and ideas which often grow in the minds of children. This is an excellent book to use for discussion and includes a list of questions to use after reading and information to share, such as reassuring children that it is not their fault when adults fight, that there are lots of different kinds of families, and that grown-ups and children both need to learn to solve problems without hitting each other. The book also includes a useful bibliography of adult books and picture books for kids on the issue of domestic violence.

THE DOWNHILL CROCODILE WHIZZ

And Other Stories
Margaret Mahy
Puffin Books \$5.99

Full of unusual and non-conforming characters, this collection of short stories is fun reading for children aged seven years and over. The stories include characters like Weedy Deedee, the orphan with the biggest feet in the world; Ethelred, the boy who is ready for absolutely anything; Minnie, the girl with the magical green ear who can understand the language of plants; and of course, the unstoppable roller-skating crocodile. Pen and ink illustrations by Jon Riley accompany the stories.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FAMILY

Maureen Pople
University of Queensland Press \$14.50

Forced by World War II to stay in the Australian township of Parson's Creek, fifteen year old Kate Tucker finds herself living with her unknown grandmother. After arriving in Parson's Creek with prejudices and false expectations, Kate discovers everything is not as she had assumed it to be. The other side of the family is full of mysteries and riddles, and in solving them Kate learns a number of startling facts about her grandmother, her father, and most of all herself. Good reading for boys and girls from eight or nine.

A FREE MAN ON SUNDAY

Fay Sampson

Gollancz \$27.95

This book is an adventure set against the 1932 Mass Tresspass on Kinder Scout in Derbyshire. Fired by her growing sense of social injustice, Edie follows her father and the other rambles, (banned by English landowners from walking across their property), on the morning of the protest even though she has been forbidden to accompany them. Readers of 10 to 13 will be stirred by Edie's determination as her eyes are opened to the issues at stake, and they will recognise parallels in what is happening here in Aotearoa today.

NON FICTION ...

GIRLS ARE POWERFUL

Young Women's Writings from

Spare Rib

Edited by Susan Hemmings

Sheba \$19.95

A collection of writing from British women of different classes, cultures and religions between the ages of seven to 22. The ideas they raise, how being a girl or young woman affects the way people treat you, the way young women are allowed to look and dress, friendship, racism and sexuality, opens up discussion for women of all ages. A great gift for a younger sister.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Anne Smith

Allen and Unwin \$29.95

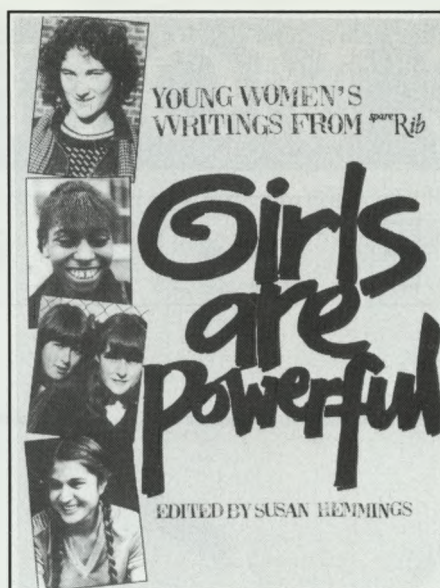
The second edition of a New Zealand book which concentrates on the years from birth to adolescence. Anne Smith brings to the book a deep knowledge of the theory, literature and principles of child development. This is a book which preschool and junior teachers, childcare workers, parents, students of education, nurses and social workers, will find particularly useful, as it is written in an academic context. Chapters include an interesting and feminist look at the development of sex roles in children, social development, language development, and a chapter on mainstreaming in preschool classrooms.

FIVE TO EIGHT

Dorothy Butler

Bodley Head \$15.95

Butler, another New Zealand writer, stresses the importance of sharing books with young children from five to eight



years old. She suggests that parents continue to read aloud to their children, since she believes that learning to listen plays a vital part in the learning-to-read process. In order to catch the interest of children, the first step toward enjoyment of books, Butler provides a list of titles and descriptions of books she has found successful with this age group. The descriptions are genuinely useful, but they don't consciously indicate whether the books are written from a feminist or anti-racist perspective, but it is easy enough to glean whether the books are positive or not.

THE DRAMA OF BEING A CHILD

Dr Alice Miller

Virago Press \$14.95

A psychoanalyst of 20 years experience, Dr Miller writes in this book of her conviction that violence and cruelty in society have their roots in conventional childrearing and in education. She shows how many children, now and throughout history, have adapted from birth to the needs and ambitions of their parents, losing both the ability to express their true feelings,

and their own creativity and integrity. Miller asks searching questions about the bringing up of children, but the language (translated from German to English) is often academic, although interesting throughout.

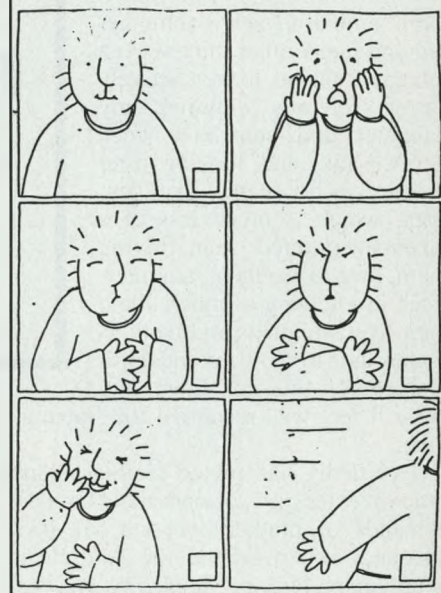
THE PLAYBOOK FOR KIDS ABOUT SEX

Joani Blank

Sheba Feminist Publishers \$11.95

A clear, easy-to-read book designed for pre-puberty boys and girls, which deals frankly about sex, nudity, masturbation, lesbianism and homosexuality, and the body. The child reader is asked to write and draw in response to questions about how they feel about all these different things, and most of all to ask questions. This is a really great book with funny line-drawings that kids and grown-ups will find entertaining. Inspires thought in a way that is not intimidating or associated with "homework".

When I talk to my parents or other grown-ups about sex, they usually look like this:



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Credit card number

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★ THE MOTHER ★

E · X · P · E · R · I · E · N · C · E

A BOOK BY THIS NAME, WRITTEN BY JENNY PHILLIPS, HAS JUST BEEN PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN. PAT ROSIER DISCUSSES THE BOOK AND SOME ISSUES AROUND MOTHERHOOD.

I still think of myself as a mother (among many other things) even though I am no longer actively caring for any children: my daughter and son have been "grown up" and looking after themselves for years. I like them both, which is much less of a taken-for-granted than loving them, love to see them, am interested in knowing as much about their lives, thoughts and feelings as they care to show me and don't feel responsible for them any more. I feel well rewarded for "raising" them.

I certainly had mixed feelings many times over the past 25 years about both the demands of motherhood and my own adequacy to perform the role. And this is what Jenny Phillips' book, *The Motherhood Experience* is about: the ambiguities around being a mother at different ages and stages of one's own life and of the children's, as well as in different contexts, where race, class, disability, political or sexual orientation and so on, help to define the experience.

"The idea has got around," she writes, "that there are only two ways to go about being a mother – the 'traditional', 'old' or 'real' way, and the new way with 'the new woman', – the 'working mother'. Both sides feel insecure and take pot shots at one another. The game is called 'who is right', and both sides are the losers." Mothers have much in common *and* many differences, she says, and goes on to challenge the ideal of motherhood being "natural" – if it was wouldn't all women do it the same way? The differences are not just across class and cultures today, they are also historical. "...the idea of children did not



ILLUSTRATIONS: SHONA MCLEAN

★ **Mothers have much in common and many differences**

exist in medieval times." (In Europe.) In fact if we are using the word "traditional" in New Zealand we should be looking at Maori culture, where "motherhood" is a "new invention" also. Phillips quotes Mira Szazy,

"The life of the Maori woman was not based on the concepts of 'motherhood' and 'homemaker' ... a specific term for 'mother' is comparatively recent. The woman who bore a child was a lover, or a means of procreation ensuring tribal continuity, but never quite the 'mother

of children' as seen though the eyes of a child today."

It was after the second world war that the ideal of "motherhood and apple pie" spread across the Western world. Policy-makers seem to believe it is both natural and true, even in 1988. Look at the history, suggests Phillips, and it is clear that "there is no 'real' motherhood, no 'traditional' motherhood, just different responses to different

times and situations."

Bringing up children, though, is more than providing a situation where they can grow physically. It's also to do with emotions, values and attitudes and we usually want our children to have values that we like and approve of and behaviour that we can stand. I would have liked *The Motherhood Experience* to give more attention to this.

The bulk of the book is quotes from questionnaires filled out by mothers. (Phillips mentions several times that it's not a book dealing with numbers.) The responses are organised around five questions:

- *What is good about your category? (New mother etc)*
- *What are the special problems you have?*
- *What helps you survive?*
- *Do you have any advice for other women in this situation?*
- *Have you anything to say to other women and men about how women in your situation would like to be treated?*

So the book is very pragmatic, it tells how women cope with motherhood. Most of the responses outside the special cate-

gories (minority cultures, feminists, lesbians, differently abled, "alternative mothers") are from women with husbands (and quite a few of these have god on their side, too), and the husbands, on the whole, come out as "very supportive". I can't help feeling cynical about that. It's not that I disbelieve the women, rather that I feel certain groups were much more likely to respond to the questionnaire.

Being a mother can be very absorbing while you are doing it, but it is a part of life, not the entire reason for our existence, for most women – particularly feminists? So let's value it in practical, emotional and spiritual ways, without romanticising. On the whole, *The Mother Experience* achieves this, I just get a little bit twitchy when a pregnant woman makes a statement about "the insignificance of other concerns which used to preoccupy me". But as the same woman also says, "Most people seem to think pregnancy is wonderful: they don't realise about the very unpleasant side effects whereby my mind and body is invaded by sickness and weariness and bulk", maybe I'm making too much of it.

Mothers with new babies responded with tiredness. For this group the support of other mothers was important. One example:

"What helped me survive was the incredible support of the Mt Victoria community. Women I didn't know very well took my children to give me a break. There was no condemnation just loving concern. I was not coping and they helped me until I was able to again. ... my problems are that I feel suffocated by the needs of very small children and the support of other mothers is what has helped me survive."

The isolation of full-time care-givers affected most women. Many expressed a wish to be treated as an equal, as someone intelligent and for positive feedback. One saw it in wider terms:

"Until we as a society accept that children are not some kind of lepers needing to be kept in a completely separate world from the 'important' adult world of work, power, money, business, then women with children will never be given adult status except by leaving their children with day-care centres and joining this world of (male) adult values."

Many of the women speak of the rewards of the growing years, the being there and "watching the children's growing independence". The unrelenting demands, "No breaks and no breaks in sight", was hard for most. Recognition of the work is important. "It's jolly hard work and I would like to be treated as a working adult (just happens that I don't earn anything)."

The attitudes of other people are incredibly important. Unhappy and difficult times for many are related to conflicts between expectations and reality and to feeling that others (partners, family, friends) impose their values.



Being a mother is absorbing while you are doing it, but it is a part of life, not the entire reason for your existence

"By the time the baby arrived I was already feeling disillusioned. Our marriage, which had up till then always seemed a model of equal sharing, already had symptoms of inequality creeping into it; mainly because I was the one who was pregnant. The thing that really annoyed me was that *everyone* said to me, 'When are you going to stop work?' I never heard anyone ask my husband that question."

The way our society is organised meant, for this woman, that she "fitted" nowhere, "... as a mother who was trying to be both a career person and a mother, I did not fit happily into either category. I scorned the traditional mother and babies groups because I did not want to sit around talking about babies. Because I worked part-time (most of the time) I was also just not available to belong to a mothers/babies supportive network. At the same time I was not able to socialise or fit in with the lifestyle of a full-time working woman

without children. Essentially it was a very lonely role: a foot in both worlds but not at home in either."

It seems to work best for those who make choices and have the good fortune to put them into practice.

"We had our first son after six years of marriage. During those six years we laid foundations in our life which I am convinced are now paying off. As well as continuing to grow as individuals we developed a strong husband-wife relationship. We set ourselves up in our own home and became financially secure. We lived those six years to the fullest and while we look back on the freedom and carefree lifestyle we had then we don't feel we have missed out on anything. ... Even with all these positive aspects on our side, life in the suburbs with two pre-schoolers can have its low points."

Which raises some interesting issues. Maybe there is something inherently unsatisfying about the way western society is organised for the raising of children. Or maybe it's largely a matter of expectations. The same woman, a mother of teenagers, who described her life as "hectic" and older children as "just as demanding as younger ones", said, "I enjoy the family and am very content with my life." The four mothers of teenagers quoted were pretty content. Two described themselves as christian.

Three mothers were quoted from the group whose children have grown up. For one this was great ("The years when my children were small were wearying and when they were teenagers appalling!"), but another wrote, "... now they are gone the best part of my life has gone". For the Maori woman continuing to be consulted by adult children is important, and the "fiercely Maori" attitudes of her mokopuna.

Menopausal mothers, in this book, include those caring for elderly dependants, and those feeling "empty nestish", along with grandmothers.

At this point the organisation of the book changes from chronological (according to the age of the children) to categories.

Birth mothers (now apparently often referred to as "relinquishing mothers"), adoptive and foster mothers get a (joint) chapter. There's "absolutely nothing" good about being a birth mother, "except that I have tracked down my child and her family have sent word to me and a lovely photo and I know my child is happy." Following this with a couple of stories of happy adoptive mothers seemed a mite tactless. Others' expectations can be a burden here, too: "Everyone expects you to be as fresh as a daisy, and so happy over the joyous event that you feel you can't open up about the 'blue days' and anti-baby feelings that come up." One foster mother is quoted, and she seemed unusual in that her experience was with the one child and her statement suggested that she

is a lesbian. The wider issues of fostering do not get looked at.

Mothers who have never been married speak of loneliness, being expected to justify their position and coping emotionally and financially without regular support. Friends, sometimes family and other single mothers, are given as sources of support. One wrote of the prejudices that single mothers meet: if they look poor they're feckless, if they dress themselves and their children well etc, they are "living too well", they "waste" taxpayers' money being on the DPB, adoptive parents would be better parents and so on. Her advice to single mother is,

"Meet other single mothers. Be up to date with the legal rights you have and also learn exactly what rights the Department of Social Welfare has and does not have where you are concerned. This is imperative or the DSW will simply make life a misery for you. Also, be true to yourself. It is better not to marry just anybody rather than nobody."

Two women speak of being mothers and in a de facto relationship. For one, "Being in a de facto relationship is good.... It feels quite comfortable and preferable to marriage." But, "The ongoing problem has been the relationship between my partner and my son from my first marriage. Over ten years this has never been resolved – at best, a bare tolerance of each other, at worst, physical fighting between the two." The other moved to the Chatham Islands with her partner and the children from her marriage "to get away from family pressure and start afresh". She has now married.

Jenny Phillips writes,

"'Married' is not a category many of my correspondents applied to themselves. But most were, and 'my supportive husband' was, after 'God', the most frequently used reply to the question: 'What helps you survive.'"

Although Phillips was determined not to include figures and percentages it would be useful to have some information about the sample of women who replied to the questionnaire – income-group, for example, to get some idea of how the respondents as a group relate to women in New Zealand, as a group.

While "a good marriage" or "a good stable relationship of any kind – does wonders for a woman's mental health and helps minimise the difficulties which come with the joys of child-rearing. ... a husband who doesn't seem to understand, care or be willing to share can have a devastating effect," says Phillips. I like her cynicism in "It's becoming fashionable these days for men to say they would like to be at home with their children ('having a rest') but, aside from a small and stalwart band of house husbands who are mainly solo fathers, those who do go home don't seem to last very long. So, while waiting for the rest of the



It's jolly hard work and I would like to be treated as a working adult

revolution, most women will still be wanting their men to share the household tasks..."

Mothers who are separated and divorced are also categories. The "We seem to be the last married couple left!" joke is exposed as superiority. One recently divorced woman wrote, "Single parents are not freaks or moral degenerates. Nor are they 'bludgers' on society." Friends are an important source of support for this group, too. Joint parenting, being a non-custodial mother and being a step-mother are further categories and a chapter is devoted to "Family Shapes and Sizes". Mothers with larger families, (five or six children), feel misunderstood. One said that her only problems have been "the attitudes of other people". Another said, "because you have six children, people should not treat you as someone who has no brains – why else would you have six. Some people *want* a large family." Women with largish gaps between children see themselves as unusual these days, and all of those quoted found they had to juggle the differing needs of teenagers and pre-schoolers. One wrote,

"I would like to be treated as a *working mother*. I feel very bitter that women are classed as 'working mothers' (meaning those who work for wages and away from the home) and 'non-working mothers' (those who work only at home). I work very hard, constantly, and I would like my job to be recognised and acknowledged as **WORK**."

The one mother of twins (and another pre-schooler) quoted felt herself to be a "handicapped mother", with "two hands but three children demanding cuddles, care and attention."

The more a woman deviates from the media "norm" of a mother, (white, middle class, smiling and young) "the more disapproval she has to deal with," says Phillips.

"It is also part of the 'norm' to be heterosexual. It is regarded as 'normal' to accept the type of schooling our society offers – abnormal to offer your children alternative schooling at home. Working class mothers say they get less preferential treatment from doctors and other services."

If the middle-class mother isn't coping, (and indeed, providing many social serv-

ices for children and husband), that must be her weakness. "After all, isn't her environment perfect?" One says,

"I would like to be treated with more respect for what I do. No matter what we do (stay at home, work) we feel guilty because we feel we are not doing the right thing. I think that we get pressured into doing things we really don't want to but feel we ought to"

For another, having the "education and skills to adjust and adapt to differing circumstances," is an asset. A woman who described herself as "working class and uneducated" described her problems as,

"Being unable to protect myself against put-downs from people like public servants, doctors. Being regarded as useless in women's groups because you are middle aged, working class and uneducated. They only want young, talented, educated, middle-class women."

The things that help her survive are,

"Fighting in my own way for a more caring world, my grandchildren and children, husband, reading, yoga, looking after plants, walking the dog. The hundreds of things that make life worth living, enjoying the trees, sun, sea, all these make the world beautiful."

Three lesbian mothers are quoted, one of whom is also a grandmother. One who described herself as "an older, lesbian, divorced, lower-class mother of teenagers," wrote,

"I enjoy being 'older', because the agonies of youth are passed and I am established. I enjoy being a lesbian because it's really me and I'm happy with it and because (among other things) it means I can (and do) have an *equal* relationship with my female partner."

Among her special problems she included, "As a lesbian mother I receive contemptuous treatment from some homophobic people such as doctors and government officials." For the grandmother, identity gets split: "People seem to relate to me *either* as a grandmother *or* a lesbian, but I am one person to whom these two facets are very important, along with some other things."

For the "alternative mother" quoted, "The main problem is coping with the disapproval of others." Her alternative-ness relates to methods of child-rearing. She writes,

"Firstly, I think there are very special problems associated with *any* category of motherhood. New Zealand society generally pays a lot of lip service to the value of family life and the loveliness of children, but the reality, I feel, is that we live in a savagely *anti*-child culture. Children are expected to fit into adult society, when ... it must be harder for them to adapt to us than for us to adapt to them."

A number of correspondents described themselves as "feminist mothers" Phillips says, but she quotes only one within the category. She writes,

"I have found at times because of my feminist beliefs I have been isolated from other women – especially in the early years of my children's life in areas such as kindergartens, playgroups, and clubs for sports activities – as other women have found my beliefs and ideas a threat to themselves. I still find today that women outside my support circle find feminism a threat to their role as mothers."

She finds friends a source of support and, "knowing that I'm okay is enough to help me survive."

The experiences of Maori women are scattered (lightly) throughout the book. Responses in the section on Maori women were obtained during a meeting with "an Auckland Branch of the Maori Women's Welfare League". Here is a selection of what they said:

"I was brought up to speak English so I don't think in Maori... I suppose a lot of the things I did with my babies my father taught me and they were Maori things."

"I really feel Maori and do Maori things... I've got French in me too and people say, 'Why do you call yourself a Maori?' I say, 'Because it's the warmest side of what I feel. It's the best part of me.'"

"We have lost a generation. To me, my generation is the lost one – the ones that were, through our parents, forced to kowtow to the system. We could not speak Maori in school. Now the kids have to choose their heritage or the European one and they will get flack whichever way they go."

"Maori children today will never miss out on an English education – you can't avoid it – so my emphasis is on making the kids really aware of the Maori thing and they feel good about it."

"My eldest boy lives with my mother at the moment. ... We had a big family talk and he wanted to go. She would have them all if she could."

"You always look for a brown face like yourself. We have heaps in common."

"You line up behind a Pakeha woman ... and see how she is treated and then how you are treated. I can say things back because I will never let anyone put me in an inferior position. I'm tough. I look tough. The system has created this."

A similar group interview approach was used to get information from Pacific Island women. Perhaps their most telling comment is, "We want to be treated as though Pacific Island women have qualities and traits useful to society."

The mother in a multi-racial (European Indian) marriage wrote of learning about and dealing with the cultural differences. She had this to say to outsiders:

"Accept a multi-racial couple as the people they are. They will have there differences and they might seem odd,



We get pressured into doing things we really don't want to but feel we ought to

or one person might seem to be compromising all the time. That's their business. *Don't* make it yours! Don't put people down for giving up something you wouldn't. You are not them! Most couples will happily explain a cultural or religious practice that they have decided to adopt, eg shaving a babies' hair when born. And even if you think it's nuts – butt out. It's not your child or relationship."

Breaking the isolation is the greatest problem for immigrant mothers. "It's easy for the husband – he walks straight into his place in his work organisation."

"Another aspect of motherhood must be considered when either the mother or her child has a health problem or handicap," says Phillips. Women talk of their experience of post-natal depression. "It included not eating, not sleeping, diarrhoea, trembling, palpitations, suicidal fears, crying and interference with breastfeeding ..." writes one. It does pass, was the message from this group, but you need all the help and support you can get while it is happening.

The woman with disabilities was proud of her successful mothering, and had overcome fears about getting involved with playcentre. Mothers of children with ill-

health or disabilities were "fed up with being treated like idiots by health professionals". A woman in poor health with a child with a disability said, "I don't want to be picked but I do want people to realise and understand that there are special problems involved."

And from another, "There is concern that as a mother I will *never* be free." Her advice to mothers of children with handicaps is,

"Accept yourself as a specialist woman, with more than average ability to cope, because of the fact that you have coped up till now and the odds have been against you."

Phillips tells us not to judge mothers who make different choices from us. When we do this, she says, "... we see full-time homemakers ... defining themselves as 'real' mothers (what are the others?) and mothers who are out in the workforce describing the homemaker job as 'degrading.'"

Mothers who work full time at home resent being "regarded as mentally retarded because we wish to give to our children in this way," as one put it. Another would like to be treated as "an intelligent, competent adult who happened to also be a mother as well as many other things." She also regretted "A lack of stimulation and time for myself." One woman was pleased to be "available to spend time rather than money with my children," and another has, "*chosen* mothering as my career ... because I enjoy being with my children, watching them grow."

Common themes for mothers in the paid workforce were tiredness and lack of time for themselves, guilt and social pressures against working mothers. Gains are independence, identity, stimulation and contributing to the family income. For one, resentment was a problem: "I work all day and come home to cook, clean, do washing." Some described a strict routine that enabled them to manage. From the most extreme: "... plan ahead and organise time and family affairs. Strict discipline is essential.... I make enough meals (main) each Saturday to last all week so that each night a hot dinner can be on the table with minimum time and effort."

"Part-time work," Phillips points out, "is of course full-time work – part-time paid, part-time working at home. Some feel it is the ideal way of life for a mother – combining the stimulation and independence of paid work while retaining availability for the children. Others feel it is the worst of both worlds; one is never doing either job as well as one would like."

For the women concerned the "break from the children" aspect was important. "A tremendous lift to my normal routine life, mixing with a different circle of people," "an outlet from home". One woman was the breadwinner, with a financially dependant partner. Her greatest problem is "Trying to find a reasonable balance of responsibilities for housework

(still struggling with this after five and a half years!).” And her advice is, ““Get a firm grip from the outset on who is to be generally responsible for what and *don't* get sucked into his area by default!” Another sole income earner (with a great partner) sees it as “a wonderful chance to experience how men benefit from having partners at home!”

Mothers who do voluntary work want their contributions to be valued, and for some it provided the stimulation and independence that others found in paid work.

The final group considered in *The Motherhood Experience* is rural mothers. One feels important, for another physical isolation, without transport, was a real problem. She wrote,

“Television has changed life in rural communities far more than any single factor I can think of. Through it we see men who are unafraid (sometimes) to treat women as equals. Rural men have long been supportive of their wives when they are working with them in the paddocks etc, but totally unsupportive when it comes to sharing the mothering of their children.”

And the following applies to all the rural women I have met over the past few years. They are, it says,

“...Knowledgeable, intelligent people and appreciate being treated as such! Many are fully participating partners on the farm, many now own and operate independent units. We are not tweedy, scone-baking anachronisms.”

While categorising is, I guess, necessary to give a book such as this order, Phillips has pulled out so many categories as to make the book a bit of a muddle. (She points out that many of us fit in to many of the categories at different times of our lives.) Creating a category, for example, called “feminist mothers” and having only one woman quoted in it, seems unnecessary. My other quibble is that it doesn't discuss at all some of the issues that are very real for many mothers, issues like violence and incest for example. I would have liked, too, a look at the failure of many fathers to accept financial responsibility for children after a separation from the mother.

The value of *The Mother Experience* lies in the opportunity it gives for the words of the mothers themselves to be heard. It's the third and last in a series on mothers by Jenny Phillips. The earlier two are *Mothers Matter Too* and *The Mother Manual*, both of which have been important and validating for many New Zealand mothers. ■

We would like to publish more in *Broadsheet* about the experience of being a mother. Write yours and send it in to P O Box 56-147 Auckland.

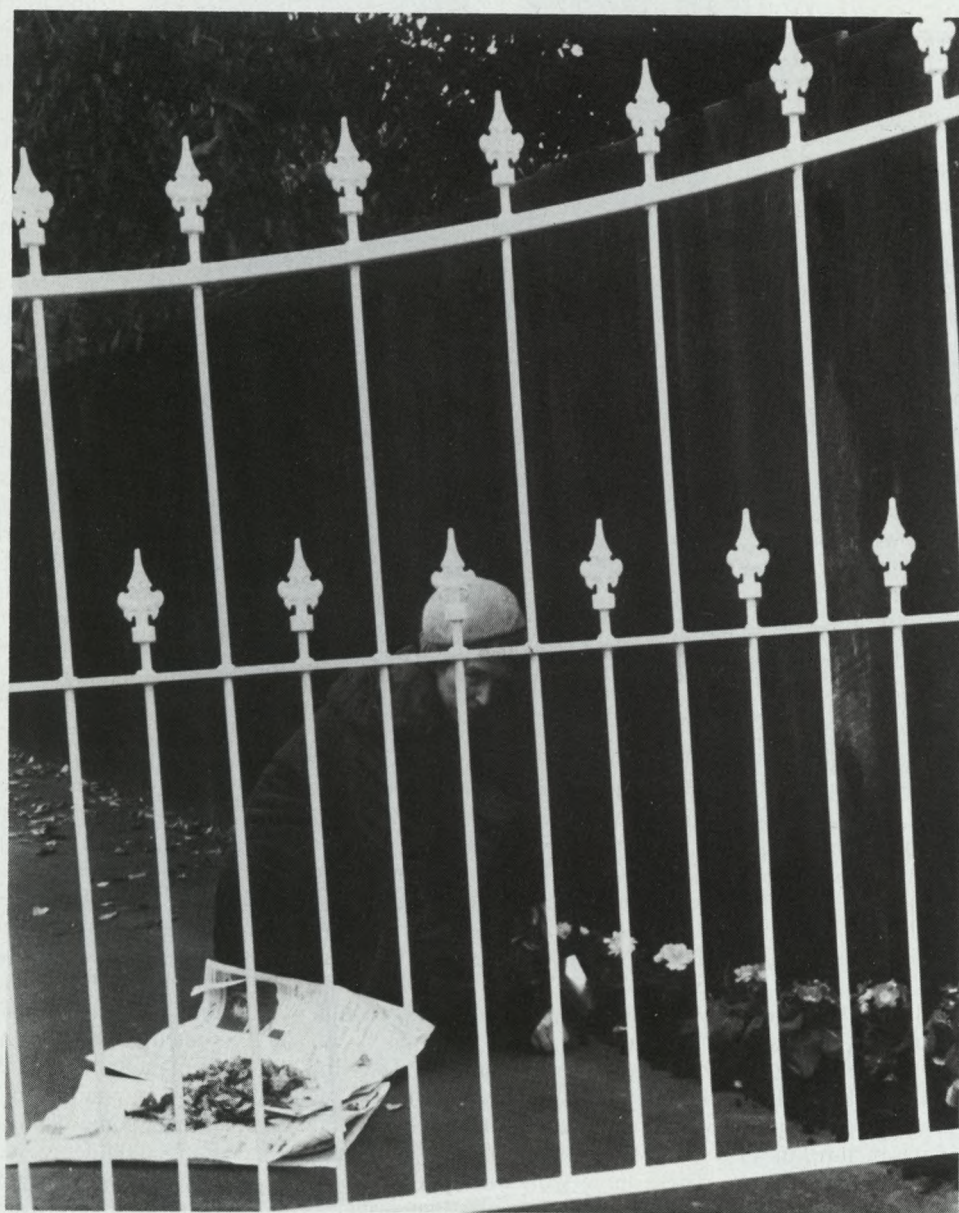
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STROKES AND ART ATTACKS



"The Personal Price Is Too Great" 1987. Colour photographic print.

MARG N L PERSONA

Colour photographics

by Margaret Dawson

George Fraser Gallery, Auckland,

May/June, Review/interview

These are big, big colour prints, some a metre and more high, others poster size, one oval. The photographer is in most of them, variously dressed and in many different roles; all assumed personas asking different questions. She often has someone else actually take the shot after she has set it up, preferably someone who is quite detached, who doesn't get involved with what's happening, just presses the button. Son Jeremy has been very good at it, friends help too.

All the work is making statements about image and subject and image-maker: Margaret Dawson gives herself to the viewer as all three. It is most explicitly shown in "Consuming the Veneer" with its photographic background, peeling at the top, and the face of the artist with a mouth full of cabled shutter release. "There are problems with putting representations of women in the picture," the artist says, "one of the reasons for this being the mass production of images of women for advertising, so we as viewers looking at such frequently produced images become flippant or casual in our consideration."

There's nothing casual about these images, though. Most of them are serious, even grave. "A Grave Moment" is, literally. There are two works with this title. In

the larger one the woman/artist is lying limp, eyes rolled, in the mud, with chooks around. There's a bare bush, a wire fence, a generally creepy feel ... it's to do with death. "The woman appears dead, oblivious to our stare. Physical death is often represented, in a variety of art forms (literary, sculptural...), but even more in the photographic medium, where death refers to the passed moment in time when the photograph was taken," she says. "Colour prints fade; there is nothing immortal about an art object or a physical death. It all decomposes. The idea of a spiritual continuance after death has been broken down by theories, as has the notion of 'the self' as a unique personality."

The smaller work of the same name, the image of a woman at home, feeding the chooks is, "An antithesis or opposite. It

consists of yellow leaves, pretty red hens, a rosy view, but it is a re-production of an historical watercolour by Frances Hodgkins (another *past thought*)."

In "Trophies" are "a slowly decaying stag's head, an old wedding dress and dried flowers, against aged, stained wooden panelling" – masses of metaphors here, emphasised by the dark wood panelling, the overall gloominess. No woman in this photograph. "A photograph is also like a trophy. Hers and His, plus these objects."

The title piece "Marg N L Persona" has a haunting quality. The title signals a periphery, being on the outside. "Is it real, or assumed? Are we able to change, move in and out of roles and situations? Are we constructs? Why?" The woman/artist is on a very ordinary porch (at the artist's home – most of the photographs are taken at her home) on an ordinary weatherboard house with a round, opaque overhead light. She's in the doorway, holding a cat, feeding a couple of others in a desultory way. She's wearing a fake fur coat and black tights. Nobody much, doing nothing much, without much enthusiasm. The very large print emphasises the stageyness, contrasts with the almost-snapshot style, giving the feel of a suburban ache-type.

Ordinary but chilling. Like "And After, a Walk On Part with Dog", where the house and trees in the background are in sharp focus, the woman and dog walking on the grass slightly out of focus. They're walking out of the picture, in a moment they'll be gone. "A Walk On Part" refers to the theatrical expression for a part with nothing to say and 'with dog' refers to the male."

The suburban theme continues in "The Personal Price is too Great". The white cast-iron fence like a prison wall, the woman crouched, with autumn leaves behind the fence, planting the bright flowers in the border garden. The same bleak feeling of the previous two works. "This title comes from a newspaper headline when Ann Hercus retired from parliament. Can we set our horizons? Can we be as effective at grass roots level? So we might plant a few flowers near the gate to brighten things for passers-by. As long as it's a conscious choice."

At first glance "A September Blossom Queen" is a pleasant relief. Tree in full, pinkish blossom, smiling woman in among it. But wait, she has her tongue between her teeth, the smile is more of a grimace, does the "September" refer to her age, or is this a typical calendar image? We're being jolted into a re-vision of the



"Marg. N.L. Persona" 1987. Colour photographic print.

blossom queen. "Women and flowers are often put together. The flowers are on show, available for the bee to fertilise. Another reference is woman as a collection of signs. I'm looking for the reasons for these connections or juxtapositions of women and animals, women and flowers. They've all got negative and positive aspects."

The smaller "A Grave Moment", "Confirmation" and "Colonial Vision" all have a solemn, sombre feel. They're very still. The colour tones set a mood "white/cream or rose-coloured or serious greys. With reference to historical paintings." These three works and a few others are framed in what looks like ornate, gilt-painted moulded plaster but is actually moulded polystyrene from a place called "Trendy Mirrors".

"Victor's Delusion" was a work I found difficult until Margaret explained that the impetus for it came from a work by Louis John Steele called "The Spoils of the Victor". In it a Maori-looking woman is painted, as a willing captive. It's not about Maori women, it's about how white colonists depicted Maori women. There are other women in the background and a disintegrating pa-type fence. "It's a white colonial male fantasy," says Margaret. "To show home/England the 'noble savages' and hence build up the colonists' own egos as the conquerors." So she sent it up. Put herself in the picture, made photo-copies ("mass-produced images, referring to the way we learn history from books written by colonists with a similar attitude") of poles and stuck them to a fence for the background, made a skirt out of Italian macaroni, a bizarre idea ("How

to make a native skirt") from a European book. "The macaroni epitomises the hollow, introduced commodity."

"Mary, Margaret and Julia in Timeless Waves" is a happy piece. Three women jumping in the waves, a sandcastle being nibbled away by the water, golden tones reminiscent of winter sun, a gentle sea behind. But wait. Each woman wears a striped garment reminiscent of 1920s swimming costumes. Timeless. Having fun. "Using old ways (chorus type dance) to celebrate. The continuance of something, group energy." The image is oval in an oval version of those fancy frames.

Margaret Dawson lives and works in Christchurch. She is a graduate of the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts and now studies film, feminism and literature as well as working as an artist.

"I work intuitively as a feminist, seeking out woman photographers like Diane Arbus, Margaret Bourke-White

and Julia Margaret Cameron to study their vision. Calling myself an artist validates my work for funding and to receive exhibition space. And a feminist artist, as that combines political beliefs.

"My work has changed from observing with a camera (recording) to examining behaviour, acts for life. Like once watching children at a kindy imitating their parents, becoming what was expected of them without question. So we have more control if we acknowledge that we can change to become something. Hence, some of my work shows women trapped or depressed, a real feeling, but one you can get out of once you recognise it and examine why.

"Because the work became personal I changed from an observer/documentary viewpoint to a more personal, home-like, snapshot style, exaggerating the size to indicate the manipulation that was going on with photographic conventions. Snapshots are universal, personal, familiar things and they are of us, growing up, changing, assuming roles. So it seemed natural to use myself as actor, showing up the illusoriness and also how one can move into a role *and out* - I discuss the feminine as a construct, discuss the personal, the artist, in the work.

"My work is often described as 'naive', which snapshots are. They are made with mistakes, blurriness, central positioning of figure, and also me as woman artist being naive. Well, I guess I am as I've been fairly sheltered, going from school to nursing in a hospital and living in, having rules imposed on me, and then "raising a child", living at home. I haven't travelled, and now I'm studying,

in yet another institution, which is stimulating but still follows the same old patriarchal structure. However you can get out of it knowledge, a qualification and an opportunity to explore on another level. So my photographic work is very important, as it's something of myself and my (limited) experiences."

Margaret talks of the Feminist Studies paper at Canterbury University as "the course that has most influenced my life. Some of it was quite devastating. In education, for example, school children are taught unconsciously that history, for instance, mostly consists of males. This happens from the primers to the seventh form, whether at private schools or state. I couldn't believe that the education system was so biased, so I asked a sixth former about his history course on WW II. It included *one brief* mention of a woman – Rosa Luxembourg – and no mention of the occupations women changed to, or their extra duties and hardships. In fact, women's role in WW II was not mentioned.

"Now I realise that whatever subject you study, you should always look for the absences, and ask why. I want to learn about my mother's and grandmother's lives as well as Hitler's rise and fall ... both subjects have made an impact on our lives today."

She gathers ideas from all around her and saves pictures and articles from newspapers. "I look at old snapshots, both those of my family and in secondhand shops. I'm looking for archetypes, an image we've inherited, absorbed."

She plans to stay with photographic techniques, although as any snapshot-taker knows, it's expensive. A grant from the Arts Council helped a lot to get this exhibition mounted. Enough work sells to almost cover direct costs, but not living expenses, books, library fines, travel, food, labour

Margaret agonises over working as an artist and wonders whether it isn't better to focus on "food for stomachs, not food for thoughts". To which I respond, and I hope she will forgive me the cliché, "Woman does not live by bread alone."

There's exciting work being done by women artists at present. Work that is technically accomplished, rich and dense in imagery and associations, often beautiful and that challenges the viewer. Art that has ideas. It's great.

Pat Rosier

GLASNOST COMES TO THE MOVIES

Eight Russian films

Academy Cinema, Auckland

April/May

Do these sound to you like matches made in heaven?

- a semi-alcoholic tool die maker with a factory director

- an alcoholic, unemployed circus per-

former with a fashion executive – a gravedigger with a poet and museum guide.

They are what we find in workers' paradise, if we judge from the recent Soviet film festival. Showcased in three separate films, each of the above couples matches a lower-class man, who is a failure in the eyes of society, with an intelligent, independent and strong-willed woman who is madly in love with him.

I came away from this festival gravely disappointed. The women characters were ultimately age-old masculine stereotypes. The Soviets can even boast of

their own specialty: the female leads all fell into one mould: the-shrew-who-needs-to-be-tamed. What the Soviets have made is a 20th century, communist version of Shakespeare's "comedy", *The Taming of the Shrew*. These films romanticise the subjection of wonderfully independent and successful women, who are desperately lonely until a man comes in to run their lives.

In the opening film, *A Single Woman is Looking For a Life Companion* (changed to *A Lonely Woman* ... outside the Soviet Union, interestingly), a well-to-do fashion designer is initially disgusted

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by a pushy, unemployed drunkard who answers her personal ad. By the end she has fallen in love with him and regrets that she threw him out for being a lazy bum, instead of "saving" him as his friend implored her to do. Granted, the hero makes some poignant remarks to the effect of, "I'm a human being, too". Nonetheless, the film is really rehashing the old masochistic stereotype of the angel who, by her infinite love, understanding and patience, saves the vastly-talented-but-unappreciated-by-society wretch.

The shrew-who-needs-to-be-tamed is elaborated most clearly in the lengthy and widely-acclaimed *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*. In the beginning our unmarried protagonist is impregnated by a jerk who abandons her, and we are so proud of her as she heroically raises the baby alone on three hours of sleep a night while rising from factory line worker to director of the whole factory, on the basis of talent and diligence.

But, ah, she is stoically lonely and cries into her pillow until a tall, handsome, mysterious stranger meets her on a train. Although she is pointedly shown as confidently giving orders to males at work, she is instantly put into her "place" by the Hero. He interferes with life-or-death matters regarding her child, and uses violence, directly opposing her decision, behind her back. When she scolds him he issues his dictate: "I am the man of the house and I will make the decisions around here." She instantly defers to him, apologises, promises never to raise her voice at him again and is under his thumb thereafter. At this turning point she still does not know his last name, where he lives or what he does for a profession. He did not want to tell her because he insists that a husband must make more than his wife and his position as a tool die maker is socially much lower than hers as a factory director.

Moscow Does Not... and *A Lonely Woman...* have been appreciated at one level as sweet love stories of how how a successful woman is still open-minded enough to see the loveliness of a social failure. This is fundamentally a male fantasy – no matter how far you sink, some marvellous, intelligent, accomplished angel will still see all your wonderful charming qualities and fall madly in love with you.

This message in itself leads to unrealistic and masochistic expectations for women, but I can forgive and understand the desire to love and be appreciated, even when presented in this form. What I find intolerable is the message that these extremely independent and successful women will joyfully submit to these drunkards and let them take over and run their lives.

The Confucian proverb, "One hundred women are not worth a single testicle" expresses a similar world view to that behind these films. There also is a



The Confucian proverb, "One hundred women are not worth a single testicle" expresses a similar world view to that behind these films

saying "Behind every great man is a great woman". These films proclaim, "Every great woman will submit to some idiot of a man". In Chinese we call this "big-manism". In the west it is called Christianity: husbands should be the lords of their wives, whose duty is to obey. Internationally, in capitalist or communist countries it is called an award-winning film.

In the highly-acclaimed closing film *Theme*, we meet an enchanting, self-assured woman poet – the shrew again. The hero, a famous alcoholic poet, dreams of her saving him from his hidden failure as a poet with her love, wisdom and inspiration. He is rudely surprised when she does not fall at his feet. The mystery is solved when he realises that the angel/shrew has already been tamed by a gravedigger, whom she begs, screaming and crying on her knees, not to leave her. This is the only concept many men seem capable of comprehending in explaining a woman's rejection – territoriality. Oh! that's why she doesn't like me, she is already taken.

Aside from these shrews-who-

need-to-be-tamed, practically all other women are cardboard figures with no more personality than plastic dolls. The most popular movie at the festival, *Come and See*, shows the array of plastic dolls most obviously. Every female character in this war film, cinematizing Hitler's invasion of Russia, can be reduced to one of three misogynist stereotypes: the hysterical mother; the nymphomaniac; or the helpless hole-between-two-legs.

Our cardboard lead enters as a beautiful, lascivious sex object. On her first encounter with the Hero, she instantly and correctly identifies him as an imbecile, and dismisses him with the exclamation "Idiot!" But as with our other Soviet heroines, she finds fools irresistibly attractive and tells him in their first conversation she would "like to make babies" with him. But of course, when our nymphomaniac leaps on him with a kiss, he doesn't swoon and relish the sexual assault as female stars do, but flings her off with the contempt that men reserve for "sluts" – women who are assertive and dare to appropriate control in courtship.

As the film progresses, she regresses. When they were both crossing a muddy river, I made a bet to myself that he would get across first, and adopted a "wait and see" attitude when she climbed up first without his help. Sure enough, at this climactic moment she tells him that his family has been massacred, and in a murderous rage he chokes her and throws her back into the water. This time she is carried ashore in his arms, as befits a lump of clay or a china doll.

By the end our shrew has been entirely tamed – by gang rape. The film directors reveal their quintessential image of a woman, the hole-between-two-legs. They cut her face off the film to emphasize her genitals, the blood flowing down her widely-spread legs. Gang rape is certainly a brutal fact of war, but the film directors portray this horror from a viewpoint drenched with patriarchy. Our Hero shows zero concern for her welfare, but turns away from the monster: a raped woman is a dirty woman and a gang-raped woman is contemptible filth. And never do we see women resisting the Germans, other than crying futilely. In this film a woman is ultimately a hysterical mother or a helpless hole, to be abused and discarded.

Thankfully, women are virtually absent in *Dead Man's Letters*, the Soviet post-nuclear movie. To see the patriarchy survive after the earth has been destroyed would make the unbearable even worse. Nevertheless, the movie is permeated with machismo: a woman iconoclastically walking around half-naked, a doctor who talks to boys but manhandles girls, all important positions held by men ... etc.

There were two movies I missed, one about youth vandalism and the other about a woman being terrorised by her ex-husband – billed, in the hallowed tradition

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of American slasher films, as a "top-notch thriller".

We see that liberation for women under Soviet communism is gravely limited. It is a Marxist conception of equality, in which a woman is integrated into the paid workforce and achieves economic independence. But she is still emotionally dependent on a man, who she looks up to. Our protagonists are not freed from ideas of heterosexuality, the nuclear family or feminine submission.

Marxism focuses on the economy and that which can be measured in terms of money, such as equal wages, maternity leave and government subsidised health care. Marxism is concerned with what happens in the workplace and marketplace, and much less with the home fireplace. Indeed, it seems that in many communist countries women's liberation has meant the privilege of working at two fulltime jobs instead of one. Gender divisions remain in the home. A woman may be boss to many men at work, but at home she will be desperately lonely or the docile servant and loving helpmate to some man, any man.

Joy Sun

LIVING WITH THE MAN

Created and performed by

Helen Watson White

Living With the Man is a solo show originally devised for the ninth German Conference on Commonwealth Literature, "Gender and Power" in Laufen in 1986. It includes mime, poetry and songs, all focused round the notion of "daughter of the patriarchy".

The opening sequence is a series of images called "Him and me", where the patriarchal stereotypes that are "worn" by men and "put upon" women are displayed and parodied by Helen's clowning-mime, in loose trousers, sleek jacket and white-face mask: super-man, judge, father, lord, priest, as well as drunkards old and young.

The show was performed at the Women's Studies Association Conference in Dunedin last year, and in September there was a five-night season downstairs at the Fortune Theatre in Dunedin. This year she performed it for three nights in Wellington (in the new National Library Auditorium, following Ellie Smith's similarly one-woman show *Lillian*) at the beginning of the Readers' and Writers' segment of the International Festival of the Arts.

The second half of the show includes poems and self-accompanied songs, all based on personal experiences and influences in Helen's life, celebrating and lamenting the pleasures and pains of her own and her mother's generation growing up as women in "a man's country". A reviewer in the *Otago Daily Times* said, "the images are there like old photographs in an album".

One prose piece, "Daughter of Privilege", literalises the portrait and its

expression. "I have seen it captured in photographs that were long in the sitting, the facial muscles set in a near-to-death mask: great-grandmother Matilda Philippa with her corset of whalebone, ramrod straight like a puppet on a stick, her face unserene, wearing what is usually called a *stern countenance*, but looks to me like a mixture of fury and pain ... She made her grandson my father quake with childish fear ... But I know that like all white women, whatever their class, she was no less than I am a child-wife, victim, daughter of patriarchy, and that the only power she had was personal power: the power of voice, presence, capability, intellect, the look of authority in the set of the eyebrows."

As the title of the show makes clear, these poems, songs and prose-pieces, despite the edge of satire in many of them, are nonetheless committed to "living with the man".

One poem, coming after a song called "Heterosexual Blues" presents this with rich ambiguity:

Woman oh woman
love has drowned your frail
ketch, swamped and smothered
all details in a welter
of waves

... here is
your gulping
throated fortune:
that what you thought
so poor was your
protection
was freedom
from gain



Helen Watson White

Living
with the
Man

But the prospect is not entirely gloomy for daughters of the patriarchy. *Living With the Man* also contains the affirmation of children, laughter, songs and wit.

Judith Dale

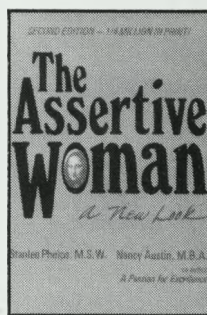
DRY YOUR SMILE

Robin Morgan

The Women's Press \$27.95

I was angry with Robin Morgan when this book arrived in the office, because she had refused (indirectly, through the book's distributor) to speak to *Broadsheet* during her recent trip to New Zealand. "If sisterhood is not powerful or global enough for

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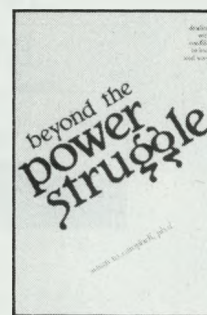
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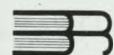
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"baddy", we're going to be shown her point of view, too.

And Julian, in 1986 a "performer" for the women's movement, and an extremely good one, is struggling with problems of identity, direction, purpose. She has an urge to write about herself, to set herself apart from her self, to find out who you to speak the the women in New Zealand who read *Broadsheet* and have sup-

ported your work (*Sisterhood is Powerful*, *Monsters*, *The Anatomy of Freedom*, *Going Too Far*, *Sisterhood is Global*) for years ... these were the thoughts I was having.

But a few pages into the book I was hooked. It's a very good novel, and extremely well written. The structure is of a novel within a novel, and the end part of the outer novel is problematic, but the whole book is a compelling read. The shifts in time (the novel spans 45 years, 1941 - 1986) and voice (the protagonist, the mother, the husband, the author, the lesbian) work - and in many novels they don't.

Dry Your Smile is a great title, one that rises from the story, and has a tantalising array of ambiguity and associations. The book opens with Julian at the funeral of her television "mother" - (Julian was a child star, like Robin Morgan) - playing a role to fit the occasion. The year is 1980. The scene moves to her real-life mother's apartment to introduce the anguish in the relationship between mother (named, ironically, Hope) and daughter. Then to the birth experience they shared. A very harrowing few pages. The mother's perspective now, we're not going to be allowed to dismiss this woman as a she is. "But how could Julian write about herself? Julian is only a figment of her own imagination - or of mine - she thought, reclining in an armchair forty thousand feet above land. Julian is only a character, an illusion."

And so we come to the novel within the novel. "A Mask of One's Own" (Need For Disguises) it's called. It begins with the paradox, "All Cretans are liars," posed by Epinimedes the Cretan. The first part is the diaries of the young girl star, who carries the hopes of her mother and has no privacy. Then the husband, the marriage. From his perspective, we're damned well

going to see every side of this. He is thinking about the marriage while he waits for her return from ... somewhere:

"The petty battles, sulks, grievances, and reconciliations they endured were identical with those of other married couples, including those of the same age, class, even gender. How commonplace. How humiliating.

"Worse: they had been adopted, in the habit of America, as a New Commodity. The revolutionary whose khaki fatigues become chic, the ascetic flocked to by religious pilgrims, the vindicated explorer now safely bemedaled. With their own collaboration they had become fashionable - an "egalitarian couple". Private misery packaged under brand names. And a market for the product."

And a little later on it is the husband who says, "But you - you've still got it, you've got it with other women. The shared anger, the actions, the in-jokes, the shorthand code. A feeling of being effective, of having a community. I hardly even have any friends any more." How many women, I wonder have or could have expressed these feelings? Someone else's identity isn't enough for anyone.

It's her own identity Julian is seeking, because having what Larry misses doesn't give it to her. Hope is the key. A 1959 diary entry:

"Truth is: I hate Hope more than anyone in the world.

"Truth also is: I love Hope more than anyone in the world."

An aspect of *Dry Your Smile* I really enjoyed is that the context for large chunks of it is the women's movement. Which means exchanges like this one between Julian and Charlotte, who runs Athena, a women's publishing house. Charlotte speaks first:

"...one feminist institution should goddam well have the decency to support another. What are they, suffering from terminal purity?"

"Hardly. They're just trying to survive in the so-called mainstream while swimming against the current and treading water. Like Athena."

Julian falls in love with a woman, fights to accept the end of her marriage, to resolve her relationship with her mother, grapples with finances, fairness and identity, always identity. Who is Julian?

There were aspects of the last section of *Dry Your Smile* that I found more irritating than illuminating, but to discuss them in detail would give away too much plot. The overall feeling, though, is of a satisfying book, one that spoke to my concerns and was a pleasure to read.

Pat Rosier

APOLOGY AND CORRECTION.

We left some words out of a quote in Helen Courtney's review of *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World* by Dorothy Dinnerstein in the June issue, and totally reversed the meaning. Our apologies to both women. The quote, in the last paragraph of the review should have read, "... the lesbian alternative, to be viable, must be a matter of felt erotic preference, not of default or of political principle."

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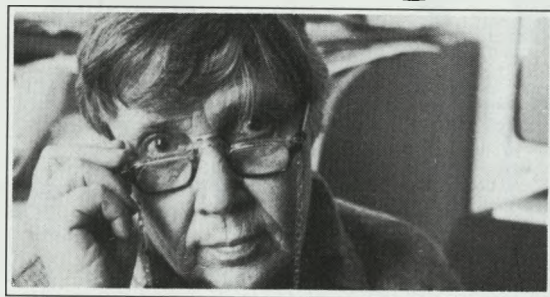


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Increasing numbers of women hold down jobs these days at various levels of the media - BUT the dominating image is still the monotonous uniform and uniformed chap (suit or rugby gear). On the Sunday of Queen's Birthday week-end I listened to an excellent *Insight* radio programme on the persistence of this male perspective. Its damning facts and figures stirred me to consider possible alternatives for, e.g., TV's Network News.

It's 6.30 p.m. and the Southern Cross goes down the tube while the voice over says: "Good evening. Here is the network news with Linda Merrygo and Trudy-Gay Lee. Tonight's headlines: a settlement has been reached in the industrial dispute caused by a group of employers who refused to meet minimum childcare requirements, forcing the nation's childcare workers out on strike." (A brief flash of a couple of men with brief cases trying to struggle through the small children accompanying the workers' negotiators). "Test match fever is sweeping the country." (A shot of women netballers practising while a few of their team-mates sign autographs for a queue of fans). "A recent study shows that a new male contraceptive is safe and effective". (Shot captioned "Library" reveals an authoritative looking woman doctor examining a smiling man. The music and the camera then zoom in on Trudy-Gay and Linda, as pre-school children run everywhere trying to get into the picture. Trudy-Gay has a baby on her lap with baby gunk on the table in front of her - bottle with some milk in it, marmite crust, chewed piece of apple, a few toys etc.)

Linda: "The small band of managers who brought so many workplaces to a grinding halt through lack of childcare have reached agreement with the union over staffing and conditions. Childcare centres will all re-open first thing tomorrow." (Trudy-Gay and baby clap their hands). "Our industrial reporter can't be here with the latest develop-

ments. She and her camera crew had this complex baby-sitting arrangement that depended on their partners' co-operation over school age kids and borrowing Nana's car for the camera crew to take all the little ones to her place, including Trudy-Gay's wee girl." (Trudy-Gay smiles weakly and tries to retrieve her child who is crawling briskly along the table). "It didn't work in time for this bulletin." (Linda grabs baby).

Trudy-Gay: "In place of the planned interviews we will repeat some of the film of the big march in support of the childcare workers." (Picture of huge demo with many union banners of support. There are placards in Maori, English and other languages of the Pacific. Some say things like: Kiwis Care for Childcare; Lesbian Mothers Are Childcare Workers Too, Support Our Sisters; Maggi Mums Aren't Very Much Fun. TV reporter shoves microphone at people asking what they think of workers' withdrawal of labour). Elderly woman: "What choice did they have with bosses like that?" Middle-aged man: "Just a few bullies of employers are holding the country to ransom." Brief-cased, suited male junior executive type with baby in backpack and toddler in pushchair: "Those stupid jokers are totally irresponsible". Female ditto: "They talk about management skills, but they're really the pits."

Linda: "The forced closedown of childcare even affected our national heroes. Over to our sports reporter, Miriama, while she talks to the captain of the netball team at the hotel where they've gathered to prepare for the all-important test on Saturday." (Camera goes to hotel room where a few small children are milling about with the players. We see back view of Miriama with attached baby as team captain speaks). "No, Miriama, to be quite honest we didn't expect to be landed with all these childminding hassles. It does make you wonder what kind of men would put us and our families under this dreadful pressure when the whole country's depending on us." Miriama: "Teams like

the All Blacks often compare their games to real battles. Do you?" Captain: "Absolutely, Miriama! When we go out there on Saturday it'll be Greenham Common all the way for us.!"

Trudy-Gay (now bottle-feeding the baby): "And the best of luck from us all here in the newsroom." (Toddlers wave to the camera). "I'm afraid the male contraceptive story is another casualty of the childcare dispute. Linda, you've been in touch with Dr Bertha Greenery."

Linda: "Yes, Trudy-Gay. Unfortunately every time we began to talk about the success of this exciting medical advance, Dr Greenery had to stop and deal with a domestic crisis. It seems that her husband has been very depressed about his weight problem, and being forced into fulltime care of the children just tipped him over the edge. But Dr Greenery did explain that men could take their pill with complete confidence - a few people might have minor side effects, but all doctors are familiar with the kind of patients who dream up amazing symptoms to get attention. She said her faith in the men's pill was demonstrated by the fact that she had no hesitation in prescribing it for her own husband."

Trudy-Gay (anxiously, as screen flickers): "We seem to be having technical problems here, like tired little kids getting out of hand. Linda, let's have an early close-down unless the news you've got is really riveting."

Linda: "Thank you Trudy-Gay. Only the usual boring garbage about the sharemarket and the Kiwi dollar and those clowns in San Diego messing about with their boats."

Trudy-Gay: "Why don't they get real? It's good-night from us then." (They both smile graciously, start saying good-night but are cut off as the screen blacks out).

Margot Roth



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