

41205
ME PAY, SICK LEAVE, TEABREAKS - UNDER THREAT

BROADSHEET

NEW ZEALAND'S FEMINIST MAGAZINE

SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

JUNE 1989

ISSUE 169

\$3.90

TECHNOLOGICAL FRANKENSTEINS

Are Microwaves
and
computers
safe?

THE
SOCIAL
WORKER
Short Story

SCHOOL DAZE
Will
Tomorrow's
'schools'
work for kids?

THE QUIET
REVOLUTION
*Feminists
raising sons*

BROADSHEET EXCLUSIVE
Singer/Songwriter

TANITA TIKARAM



CINDY SHERMAN

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Wellington
June 17 - August 13

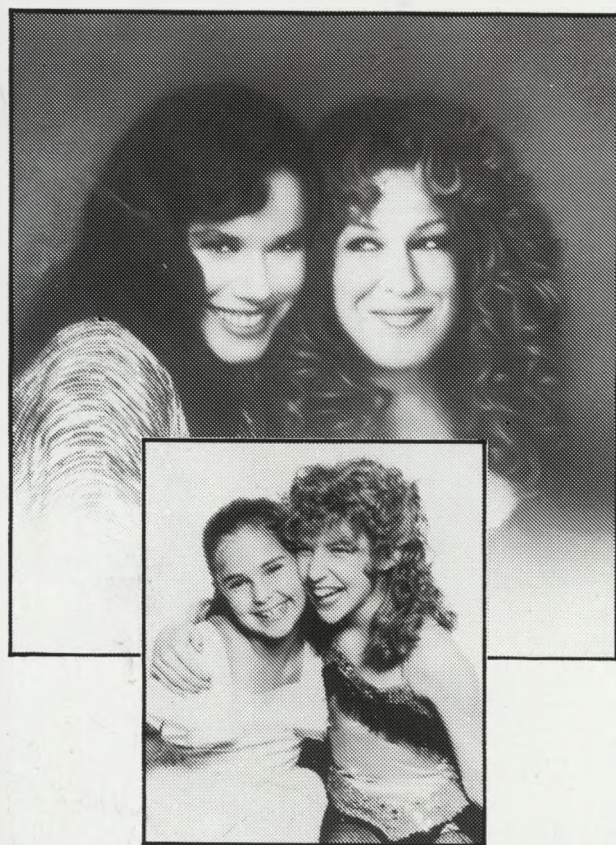
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Cindy Sherman
Untitled film still (#21) 1978



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and memories of pain, but the
best are memories of friendship."

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MIDLER

BARBARA
HERSHEY

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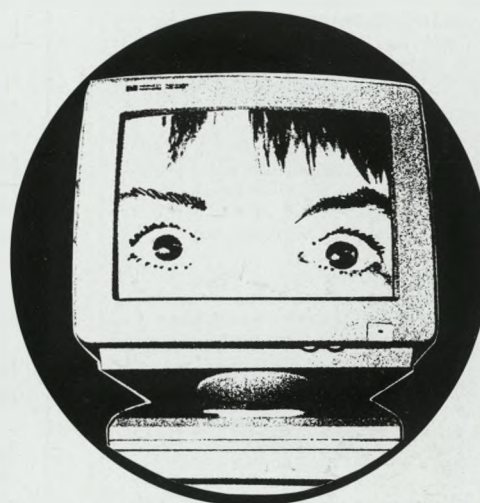
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BROADSHEET

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HERSPECTIVE

I became an unafraid feminist about three years ago. (previously I was a closet feminist, a sort of secret sympathiser.) Various turning points in my life led me to it, not the least of which was my age and the feeling, once I reached forty, of 'oh well, what have I got to lose'.

A mother of two school-age children, divorced, and a survivor of custody struggles, I became stronger and very aware of the way in which the system was stacked against me – and women in general.

All the disparities of conditioning with which I had lived and, often against my better judgement adhered to, assumed a stark new clarity. The rationalisations I had made so that I would not be seen as biased – or heaven-forbid anti-men – now slotted together in my new-found consciousness to produce the clearly emerging pattern of our society; the systematic put-down of women, sometimes subtle, sometimes sledgehammerish.

One of the most disturbing aspects of New Zealand society is the media portrayal of women, which in many cases fosters and perpetuates some of the worst myths and male fantasies. The delicate, glamorous, slim, perfectly proportioned, tanned, impractical, deodorised, sanitised, characterless, hairless, child-women that flit across our screens are there merely for the delectation of the male and bear no relation to real-life. Unfortunately, impressionable young women, conditioned to please, try desperately to live up to these unreal images which often cause great personal anguish at real or imagined physical imperfections.

Finally after 40 years of all this conditioning, I revolted. To hell with the media and the ideal image. I would put my money where my mouth is and make a personal protest. I would stop shaving my legs! So take that, all you depilatory, razor, wax, and other forms of female torture manufacturers.

A momentous decision. I had shaved my legs since I was 14 years old – peer pressure, you understand. At the onset my legs were not over-endowed with hair, so not shaving seemed perhaps a token protest, but nonetheless sincere. Also, think of the advantages – time saved not shaving, no more prickly stubble, plus untold money saved on the spiralling cost of blades. With

all this fixed firmly in my mind, I stopped shaving.

Life has not been quite the same since. It's been two years next month and not only have I saved on skirts (although I always did prefer jeans and trousers) but I've saved on shorts too, and I like those. The problem has been that over 20 years of razored growth has encouraged, not diminished, the follicles. Instead of being the fine, light-brown hairs I fondly remembered, they were at first a profuse under-growth of thick, black brush, totally undecided as to which direction was down, although I'm relieved to report they've got this right now.

There's also a problem of length. Obviously they're conditioned to grow as rapidly as possible to stay ahead of the razor. Trouble is, they don't realise those days are gone and appear to be heading for an all-time record. "Blowing in the wind" took on a whole new connotation when I was putting out the rubbish bags clad only in a bathrobe one breezy morning.

I keep reminding myself that I am a fully grown adult woman with a mind of her own. Why should I care about what glances I get from startled passersby who've not seen anything quite like it since "Gorillas in the Mist" last showed. Why indeed?

Each anniversary I think, well, I've managed this far and they do look a bit better so I'd give it another 12 months (although the second year I made a sizable bet with a friend that I wouldn't succumb and often it was only the knowledge that I couldn't pay up that held back the hand that wields the blade).

The difficulty of coming to terms with this aspect of my physical appearance has demonstrated to me just how deeply our conditioning goes, even over such a seemingly insignificant thing. If I, as a mature, aware adult have had difficulty coping with this, how on earth will our children cope with the continual bombardment of media images they are subjected to? Frightening, really.

Pat MacKay.

LETTERS

NURSE NUMBERS

Dear Broadsheet

Congratulations to Lisa Sabbage for her article on nursing in the April issue of *Broadsheet*. Lisa managed to portray the frustration and anguish of nurses in New Zealand with sympathy and understanding. It is very important that the broader New Zealand public become aware of the difficulties associated with the public health system.

I would like however to correct one small error. The ballot result was 90 percent supportive vote for industrial action out of 80 percent of our members and not 8,000 of our members as stated.

GAY WILLIAMS

Executive Director

New Zealand Nurses' Association, Wellington

[Ed note: Apologies for the mistake]

NEW AGE RULES

Dear Broadsheet

With reference to Mary During's letter in *Broadsheet*, Jan/Feb on "New Age" philosophies.

I am upset as you are Mary about the increasing numbers of therapists that bandy the "you chose it" theory, (note *theory*) as a rule.

Rules are like labeling, they allow the ignorant a way of being in control of more than they understand. Armed with a rule, an ignorant person does not have to make the effort of responding to each case individually (thus testing its relevancy). A rule means it is unnecessary to think – yet one can feel self-satisfied because there is a tool to fix-shape-label-control the problem. They are very reliable and predictable.

I think Wayne Dyer (*Pulling Your Own Strings*, 1976) started all this by talking about his theories as if they were facts of life. Some of it, in context, was useful as theory, but I never liked his cheezy self congratulatory smile and big deal manner.

What saddened me is that I suspect the "new age" people you are talking about, Mary, are male or male-system women (knowing no better?) and are probably re-

birthers. That covers a very small proportion of the complete "New Age" movement. Despite that small, but growing number, they are in my opinion, the reason why "therapists" are having to identify and to show by male-system certificates and diplomas how reliable they are. Well, I doubt if that will stop theories being turned in to pat little phrases. It simply makes it harder on us "New Age" healers who share our energies in whatever way is appropriate to the occasion and our skill. None of that really fits a prescriptive label or fancy diploma. I sometimes wonder if we'll be able to bloody touch each other in a healing friendly way without having to be certificated.

The other thing that hurt is that for the last twenty years I have been a "New Age" worker. How can I define that? Fifteen or twenty years ago, that meant grouping together, trying cooperation and co-ops, listening to the painful, agonising stories women began to tell; becoming more conscious and aware of hidden motives and alignments, doing the best I know how to struggle through my incest and helping others alongside me, running play and activity areas and sharing new ways to relate to children at alternative festivals, searching tooth and nail for information on allergies, hyperactivity, and hypoglycaemia (that is "old hat" now), creating "alternative" networks, organising com-

munity magazines and healing and sharing energy and healing and sharing energy in the multivarious ways that seemed necessary at the time. I am Pakeha, but Maori women comprehend more, what I do.

Well, "New Age" – a name I felt proud to be associated with five years ago has turned to dust in my mouth. Get rich male forces have cottoned onto a new, growing industry for their exploitation.

Much of the emotionally back breaking voluntary effort to bring forth these new ideas is now besmirched by practitioners who really only joined the path a few years ago. I grieve deeply. I ask you sisters, in the name of the midwifery done years ago to be specific about the types of therapists you refer to in your anger; and to be aware of the 80 percent shadow work done largely by women you'll probably never even hear of.

Blessings to you Mary. I give you all a broad, warm, radiating uncertificated smile. Ho! I have finished.

ANA

New Zealand

LEARNING ON LOAN

Dear Broadsheet

Recently the government announced that it intends to introduce a university student loan scheme. The scheme is seen by many people as being a mild and

reasonable way that university students can contribute to the cost of their education. It is also claimed that it will make it easier for people from low income families (and other disadvantaged groups) to gain access to university. However, there are major problems with such a user-pays scheme that will counteract any of its alleged benefits.

The proposed scheme is as follows: every student will have to pay 20 percent of their course costs at the start of every year. To this they can take out a loan at their bank, the loan will be guaranteed by the government. Upon graduating or leaving before having completed a degree, the student must pay back the loan by regular payments as they near the average wage. The extra income raised by the loans will supposedly be used to allow more people to study, but as universities and polytechnics are already chronically overcrowded, this seems impossible.

The loans scheme as it stands will discourage more people, especially those from the disadvantaged groups, from going to university. The prospect of having to pay back a large debt at the end of university study would be sufficiently daunting to deter many from attending university. A loan of 20 percent of a full university course costs the equivalent to a loan of \$1800 per year. This means that a three year basic Bachelor of Arts degree will cost at least \$5400! However, this is not the total cost. Students already pay a considerable amount towards the cost of their education in the form of tuition fees, textbooks, course equipment and a high proportion of their living costs. Because of these expenses many students already leave university in debt.

A Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree is often not a sufficient qualification to obtain employment. Further qualifications are often also required. This means that if the loans scheme is introduced then students will be leaving university with extremely large debts. The prospect of such debts will put off many people, espe-



cially those from low income families, from going to university. It will create an unfair situation where low income families will be contributing to the cost of universities, through their income tax, but at the same time their children will be discouraged by the loan scheme from obtaining the benefit from the university system.

The government says it will not increase the loan requirements of the scheme in later years. However, the record of this government at keeping such promises is not good. (Remember the promise not to increase GST?). In the case of university fees the government made a clear and explicit promise just two years ago that it would not increase the amount that students have to pay for their education. The government is now proposing to substantially increase those costs without the slightest blush of a guilty conscience. There is good reason to fear that the loan requirements of the scheme will be increased substantially in subsequent years. This thought will also help to deter many people from going to university.

There are also practical problems involved in the running of a

Student Loans Scheme. Students will have to obtain loans from banks. This raises the question of who will secure these loans? If this question is left to the discretion of banks then they will in effect be deciding who can go to university. This would be a very unsatisfactory situation. But if government guarantees the loans then the public will have to pay for those students who default on their loans by going overseas. The loan scheme will be expensive to administer and most of the money paid back by students will be used to cover these costs.

Finally the loan scheme reduces university education to the role of being just another commodity to be bought and sold subject to the market vagaries of supply and demand. This is a ludicrously simplistic view of the role of universities in our society. The role of a university is not just to provide trained people to fill job vacancies, but also to be repositories of knowledge and centres of independent research.

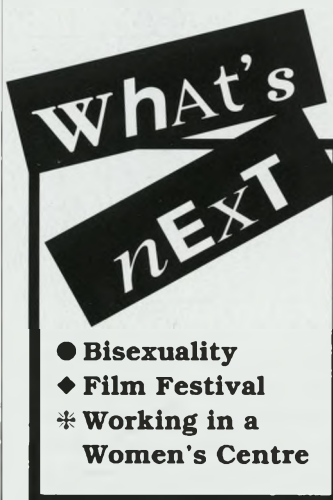
In conclusion, the proposed student loans scheme will effectively discourage people from low income families and other disad-

vantaged groups from obtaining the benefits of a university education. This will be to the detriment of our society as a whole.

NEALE MCGOWAN

BE A BROADSHEET SPY

Please, readers, let us know what shops in your area are stocking *Broadsheet*. We are also seeking suggestions for new retail outlets all over New Zealand, particularly places where feminist women shop - health food stores, women's co-op shops and so on. They can make a profit selling the magazine and we can reach more women. If you know of any such places, please send us the information and we will contact them.



What's next

- Bisexuality
- ◆ Film Festival
- * Working in a Women's Centre

FRONTING UP

DEADLINES

For the July/Aug issue 26 May, for September 26 July.

ADVERTISING

Our advertising rates are very competitive. Basic rates for Black and white advertising inside the magazine (excluding GST) are: full-page \$660; half \$360; quarter \$185; eighth \$120; classified 30c per word prepaid, 40c per word if we bill you; classified display box \$40. Further details on request. Phone Tanya, (09) 608-535

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This year we lose the special postal rate that has meant we could send you your magazine for 40 cents instead of 80. We cannot absorb this increase, so have to increase subscriptions and renewals to \$44 from 1 April. Overseas sub rates are on page 2. Regular readers please note: we get a better return from subs than from bookshop sales.

FRIENDS OF BROADSHEET

If there are women out there keen to form a "Friends of Broadsheet" group - let us know. We like the idea of a group with energy to organise things like dances, exhibitions, maybe even cake stalls, which will put something back into the feminist community at the same time as fundraising for Broadsheet. If there are groups of you around the country, please let us know the name and address of a contact person in your "Friends of Broadsheet" group.

21ST AUCKLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL — July 14 — 29

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Free Festival brochures available from cinemas and selected retail outlets from mid-June in both centres

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EIGHTEENTH WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL EMBASSY THEATRE, JULY 7 — 22

CLERICAL WORKERS' FIGHT

This is the cry to workers, because the Clerical Workers Award is under threat. Phyllis Comerford of the Clerical Workers Union talked with Pat Rosier.

The Clerical Workers Union (CWU) has been trying to settle their award since December 1988. They had been promised 4%, in line with most other occupational awards, but only on the condition that they give up Clause 13 of their award.

Clerical workers working more than 30 hours a week are paid a full weekly wage. If Clause 13 is dropped, they will lose their automatic entitlement to a full week's wage for more than 30 hours work. What is now full-time work for a full-time wage could then be considered part-time work and paid a part-time wage. The right to part-time work is important, but most clerical workers want or need full-time employment. Clause 13 of the award protects the availability of full-time work and prevents the exploitation of part-time workers.

Eighty percent of clerical workers are full-time and 90% are women. For most the award rate is \$319.25 a week, or \$16,601 a year. (This is not the lowest rate, this is at Grade 3). A full-time worker, already low paid and having her hours cut by two and a half a week could lose \$20 to \$40 a week, which would be hardly compensated for by a 4% wage rise of less than \$13. The award is not restrictive and does not prevent one worker from carrying out a multitude of tasks, like filing, typing and answering the phone. It does ensure certain basic rights such as sick pay, annual leave and a minimum rate for the job. The award is the bottom line for clerical workers and their

*She won it.
Don't lose it!*



*Protect
your award.
It protects you.*

Produced by The Clerical Workers Union Illustration from Turnbull Library Photographic Collection

**Eighty percent
of clerical workers
are full time and
90% are women**

only protection.

A very real fear is casualisation of workers, as has happened in the retail area – several years ago retail workers lost a similar clause. The proportion of full-time workers has dropped from 75% to less than 30%. Casual workers are cheaper for employers, as they don't have benefits like paid sick leave.

The union is refusing to give up Clause 13, the employers are refusing to settle

until they do, so five months into the year the workers have had no increase. After three years of non-settlement an award can lapse: if this happens the largest group of women workers in New Zealand will have no protection. It looks like the beginnings of de-unionisation, picking off a non-militant union. Phyllis explains that as most clerical workers are in small work-places, with less than five employees, and working alongside the boss every day, it is more difficult to organise them than it would be in a smaller number of large workplaces.

The CWU has been in the forefront of work towards pay equity legislation. If the national awards system is destroyed then legislating effectively for pay equity becomes unachievable, so the stakes are even larger than this group of workers. The head of the employers' Federation Steve Marshall has said they want to do away with national awards and two of the major employers refusing

to settle – Nathans and Fletchers – are headed by Round Table members. A CWU delegate at one workplace was told by her boss, "It's not just Clause 13, it's the award, we're not settling it." It is noteworthy that while one national award is under threat, airline pilots are taking industrial action to fight for one – there must be something going for them.

The campaign mounted by the CWU is directed at asking what market flexibility really means. The government is playing a "hands off" role and won't interfere. Part of the campaign is directed at members of parliament, part at educating members. Union workers feel that workers do not realise the fragility of sick leave, tea breaks, bereavement leave and so on. These are covered in awards but not otherwise legislated for, so if the award is lost they are at employers' discretion.

Award wages control the bottom levels of pay. Some workers may get paid above

the award, but if that bottom level was not there everything would go down. Angela Ffoulkes, vice president of the council of trade unions spoke in support of the CWU campaign at its launch: This is an important occasion to review the national award system." She said, "Very few of the New Zealand public realise how key the awards are to protecting working conditions for all workers and particularly women. The awards protect those who are least able to protect themselves. Those with protections in their awards (such as bank officers) should wonder how safe they are if the clerical workers lose. This is a campaign for the whole union movement.

Rosslyn Noonan, at the same event, linked the attack on the Clerical Workers' Award to attempts by big business, the Employers Federation and the Business Round Table to lower wage rates in New Zealand. She said that employers claimed lower wages would reduce unemployment but this was untrue. In the United States, she said, where employers had had success in the last decade in bringing into force requests for "labour market flexibility", the number of people living below the poverty line had increased from three million in 1979 to 17 million in 1986.

TAKE A LETTER

Susan Grimsdell proves that the pen really is mightier than the sword.

In a letter printed in the December issue of *Broadsheet*, I invited women to join a group I was forming to write letters of protest about issues and events that denigrated women. Seventeen women responded.

Since the beginning of this year we have written several letters. Among them: to Radio New Zealand about announcers' sexist language; to TVNZ about its screening of SPUC ads; to Auckland Intermediate Schools Principals' Association protesting appallingly sexist items printed in the Christmas newsletter. Letters were also sent to the Education Board about this; to Warren Cooper concerning remarks he made in Parliament about "screeching" women; and most recently to the Health Department protesting the failure to appoint an independent director for the cervical screening programme.

Replies are usually highly defensive and convey outrage at being unjustly accused. A good example is Warren Cooper's reply:

"... A couple of (women MPs) do screech and they whine and I thank God they are not my companions. My wife and indeed most of the women that I know talk in quite an elegant fashion... If you suggest that I am abusing women then I will react

simply because you are wrong... I can claim that I never differentiate between the sexes in regard to both opportunity and equality."

In one case, however, our letters brought about an official reprimand for the offending males: the Education Board took note of our objections to the Intermediate Schools Principals' newsletter and advised us that "The executive of this principals' group has been clearly notified that sexist or racist attitudes are not acceptable and cannot be tolerated." It was certainly gratifying to see our letters produce such a satisfactory outcome.

Whatever the tone of the replies, however, to my mind there is no denying that any individual or organisation that receives seventeen angry letters is bound to be taken aback. They will surely experience a flash of doubt about their attitudes even if only for a brief moment until their defenses close tightly shut again.

Anyone wishing to join this group should write to Susan Grimsdell, 17/14 Lovelock Ave, Mt Eden, Auckland 3, enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope to receive the next issue of the newsletter *Women's Action Memo*.

Writing letters is something we can all do. A concerted effort must have an impact and help to bring about change.

SCAPEGOATS JAILED

In April, Titewhai Harawira was sentenced to nine months jail, and her Whare Paia co-workers to six months. Lisa Sabbage looks at the whys and wherefores.



Ostensibly Titewhai and her co-workers were convicted for the assault of one of their Whare Paia patients. But if you scrape the surface of their treatment by Carrington management, the media, and the justice system, what you find is a large dose of institutional racism.

It is common knowledge that psychiat-

ric patients have long been mistreated. Almost everyone has a story of abuse from someone they know who works at Carrington. Women at the hospital and in local feminist communities know that there are male nurses with a reputation of brutality toward patients, and sexual harassment of female staff.

In 1982, Michael Watene, a 25 year old, died in the Male 3 ward of Oakley, having received unmodified massive electric shock treatment and excessive drug doses. He had been transferred to Oakley while serving a seven day prison sentence. Michael Watene's death was never investigated outside the hospital, no charges were ever brought. An internal investigation did not include the police, and did not even discipline those responsible for his death.

In 1988, a male nurse raped a woman nurse while on camp with patients in the Hunua ranges. No action was taken, and he was not brought to trial.

Ironically, it was the report into Watene's death that recommended that appropriate Maori health services should be set up at Carrington.

Since the Whare Hui and the Whare Paia were established, their operation has been hindered by bureaucratic obstruction, racism and professional jealousy within Carrington. This, despite the fact that the 17 severely disturbed male patients had shown a marked improvement since joining the Whare Paia as a result of improved diet, providing a buddy system and encouraging family to visit and share in patient care.

Then in April last year, a Whare Paia patient sexually assaulted a female nurse. Staff and the resident psychiatrist had repeatedly asked for assistance from Carrington management for this difficult patient who was a self-confessed multiple rapist. Because of his behaviour in the Whare Paia staff made several attempts to have him removed from the unit. Their requests went unheeded.

The man complained of being beaten by the five staff and acting Medical Superintendent Peter McGeorge called in the police, ignoring normal hospital procedure and without consulting Whare Paia staff or the Maori Advisory Committee responsible for the Maori units.

Doesn't this seem strange considering that hospital management has found it convenient to ignore the abuse of its patients when the abusers were Pakeha men? Why weren't earlier requests from Whare Paia staff concerning the patient followed up by management? Why was a man who never had to stand trial for rape because he wasn't considered sane enough, judged competent to testify against the Whare Paia staff, yet recommitted to Tokanui Hospital once the trial was over?

What is really behind toppling the Whare

Postcards to send to Ministers of Health and Justice can be obtained from Project Waiangi, P O box 5510, Wellesley St, Auckland.

Paia and its workers? Were they a convenient scapegoat for criticism Carrington Hospital and the Auckland Hospital Board had received in last year's Mason Report into psychiatric services?

There are other major questions that need to be answered.

The Whare Paia and the Whare Hui were set up in a framework of Maori control of Maori health, following the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi. Yet the hospital's actions do not demonstrate any commitment to Maori sovereignty at all, in fact all the Maori health units at Carrington now face possible closure.

A lesbian group involved in campaigning for the release of Titewhai Harawira, Hinewhara Harawira, Otere Halkyard, Tui Pere and Arthur Harawira, make the point most clearly. "Do we support Maori self-determination only until the first fist flies, then go running back to a white justice system?"

The court system was also blatantly monocultural. A Pakeha judge and jurors who were 90 percent Pakeha, denied the right of a woman to breast-feed her baby in court, and ignored the impact of imprisonment on the 13 children separated from

their parents.

In the context of what has happened at Carrington Hospital, and the dismantling of the Whare Paia, many believe that the conviction and jailing of Titewhai and her co-workers is a political act and as such they are political prisoners.

These are some of the suggestions of things to do if you believe that Titewhai and her co-workers should be released: write to the Minister of Justice, Geoffrey Palmer or the Minister of Maori Affairs, Koro Wetere at Parliament Buildings, Private Bag, Wellington; petition the Governor General, Government House, Wellington; support the injunction lodged by the Whare Paia staff to keep the Maori Health units at Carrington open; visit the Whare Paia and see it for yourself, staff welcome visitors; write to the Minister of Health, Helen Clark, asking her what the government intends to do about the Maori Health units within the context of the Treaty of Waitangi and Te Urupare Rangapu; offer direct support for the prisoners by writing to them or making a donation to help with the campaign to the treasurer, Tautine, PO Box 71113, Rosebank Rd, Auckland.

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EL SALVADOR

Jenny Rankine

Ruth de Jesus Amaya carries an innocuous manila envelope with her on her international travels. It contains photographs of bodies recovered in El Salvador by Comadres, her women's organisation.

They are horribly mutilated, with strips of skin ripped off them, no fingernails, acid burns. She speaks of the bodies and the continued civilian "disappearances" matter-of-factly. It is part of the state terrorism she deals with every day back in San Salvador, the country's capital. Political suspects are normally seized at gun point by unidentified men and taken away in unmarked cars. It is often weeks before their families know whether they have been officially arrested or abducted by a death squad. In the last 10 years the El Salvadorean military and its unofficial death squads have killed an estimated 70,000 civilians. Tenthousand have "disappeared", and more than a million made into refugees by their government's army.

Ruth has been a member of Comadres since 1983 when her student son was captured by the National Police. She has not seen him since. Some women in the



RUTH DE JESUS AMAYA

group have lost nine family members. Comadres - The Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, the Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador - was formed by nine mothers in 1977. They met each other day after day in their often fruitless visits to morgues,

churches, courts and security forces offices in search of their kidnapped children and relatives. They were encouraged to start a committee by Archbishop Oscar Romero. They aim to free political prisoners, investigate all disappearances and bring the murderers to justice. Their first project was a television programme denouncing the detentions and disappearances. They also toured Europe, building strong international support.

Many members are poor illiterate women from the shanty towns. They constantly organise demonstrations in the streets, in front of government departments and prisons, wearing black dresses for mourning and white head scarves for peace. Members have been on many hunger strikes at Red Cross offices and other public places. They distribute food from international donations to hundreds of refugees from their cramped office. In a city where relatives are too scared of the military to even recover the bodies of their dead, their voices ring very loud. By 1979 the group had helped free seven political prisoners and released another seven kidnapped people. Their membership was up to 200.

But the assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1980 heralded an increase in state violence. Comadres' office was

bombed twice that year. In 1982 two members of the group were lost. One woman disappeared with her 13-year-old daughter and another was assassinated with her husband. The murder was never investigated. That year Comadres opened a Mexican office to co-ordinate campaigns in North America.

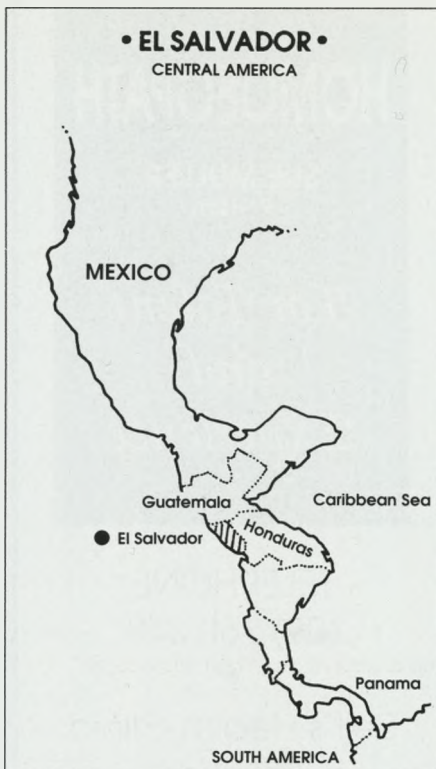
Four people were injured during another bomb attack in 1987 which demolished the office. When Comadres was looking for new premises, "a lot of people wouldn't rent to us for fear of reprisals", says Ruth. The group now numbers more than 700, with 25 full time workers. Members operate under continual threats from groups like ARDE - the anti-communist extermination squad. "They say we are wolves in sheep's clothing and must be eliminated and they will put bombs in our homes," says Ruth. Recently the feared Hacienda (Treasury) Police raided Comadres' office again, photographing all the members there.

In 1986 one member was imprisoned and tortured for four months. She was only released due to international pressure. Ruth was captured and released five days later, also because of international protest. Whenever Comadres hears of a capture the group telexes Amnesty International. AI tells the government it knows of the capture, and demands the person's release if there are no charges.

Ruth spoke with women MPs, and officials in the Ministries of Women's and External Affairs during her recent visit to Aotearoa. Her constant request is that people and governments put pressure on the United States to stop its military aid to El Salvador. Nearly half the country's budget is met by American aid money, and three-quarters of the budget supports the military and the death squads. No US aid goes to the internal refugees.

Since 1985 the government has intensely bombed the countryside, using napalm and white phosphorous as well as conventional explosives. The technique is similar to the US strategy in Vietnam. The airforce bombs the civilian population, then the army moves in and destroys whole villages. During the rule of recently ousted Christian Democrat president Napoleon Duarte, US money enabled the airforce to double in size. Since 1984, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front guerillas have concentrated on economic sabotage - knocking out the country's electricity grid, for example - and minor fights with the army.

For more than 160 years a small group of landowners - called La Catorce (the 14 families) and backed by the military - has held political power and controlled 90% of El Salvador's wealth. Their fertile land is planted in coffee, sugar cane and cotton for export. Peasants are left the land too steep for farming.



The election of Alfredo Christiani of the ultra right wing Arena Party to the presidency in March means more repression, says Ruth. "Arena includes the big landowners and the rich, the enemies of agrarian reform," she says.

In 1980, The US ambassador to the country described Arena leader Roberto d'Aubuisson as a "pathological killer" and

Arena as a "fascist party". Since Arena's rise to power official American criticism of D'Aubuisson has lessened. Sworn testimony that D'Aubuisson organised the killing of Archbishop Romero was rejected as too old and inconsistent by the Salvadorian Supreme Court, but is believed by human rights activists in the country. AI also links Arena to the death squads.

Christiani's election comes after the collapse of the Christian Democrats, a centrist political group created to a foreign model by the US. Only one million people voted in March, out of three million eligible voters, says Ruth. Many voted for fear of reprisals if they couldn't prove they had voted. In the last few years, we've had five elections," says Ruth. "The candidates the people elected were never put in power. The majority of people don't believe in elections," Advertisements for the last elections threw around words like freedom and democracy, while most people are too afraid to say these words in public.

The US is the key player in El Salvadorean politics. Comadres members have constantly been denied US visas. The group received the Robert F Kennedy Memorial Award in 1984 and four members were invited to receive it. The US ambassador told them they were undesirable people and denied them visas, says Ruth.

Comadres wants a peaceful negotiated settlement to the civil war, as does the church. The latest election left out most of the country's opposition parties, despite a dramatic peace proposal from the FMLN on behalf of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, the major opposition grouping. The DRF is largely made up of parties and people who were once part of the political mainstream, but who have had to work under cover or in exile due to the violent repression.

The FMLN, which had previously boycotted elections, proposed to give up the fighting, and put up candidates if the elections were deferred until September. Arena and the military said that was against the constitution. But the US has to approve any government and it is very unlikely to tolerate another left wing government in central America.

In the meantime, Comadres members visit more than 50 political prisoners. Those who can write document every person who has disappeared or been tortured, and put out a monthly newspaper. Those who can't write visit mothers who support them, find new homes for children orphaned by the death squads, and help people in the refugee camps. They take the documented disappearances and killings to the embassies, the church, the courts and the unions. And some members continue their trips to create international solidarity, carrying innocuous envelopes full of photographs of their tortured people.

ADDRESSES FOR PROTEST:

Presidente Alfredo Christiani
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador
El Salvador

Edwin G. Corr
U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador
Embajada Americana
25 Avenida Norte
Colonia Duenas
San Salvador
El Salvador

ADDRESSES FOR SUPPORT AND DONATIONS

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17 Calle Oriente y2a
Avenida Norte 1003
San Salvador
El Salvador

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Avenida San Jeronimo 137
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CP 01000
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"APPROACHES TO EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS"

Judith Aitken, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, made a speech recently to a group of senior public servants called the Senior Executive Service. Its title was that of this article. Pat Rosier comments.

The speech was based on two experiences: "Reform of the Electricity Division of Ministry of Energy and reform of the Ministry of Women's Affairs".

Putting down previous management and mocking feminism and anti-racism are more illuminating of the attitudes of the speaker than anything else. For example, some of the characteristics she identified as "barriers to efficiency and effectiveness" within MWA, presumably when she was appointed as Chief Executive Officer in July 1988, are: "insular and introverted; captured by specific interest groups; highly risk averse; emphasis on organisation-wide leadership; technical performance appraisal and evaluative methodologies feminist; constant pre-occupation with lack of funds; distinctive Maori component plus extremely "guilty" stance on daily basis; and almost total absorption with self analysis: paralysis by self-flagellation." This is not the



Judith Aitken

complete list. One chap who was there says the speech as delivered was even more negative than these notes indicate, with "funny" anecdotes which, whatever their intention, put down the previous Ministry management.

"Solutions" to this lack of efficiency and effectiveness were suggested:

1. Assume that attitudinal change will occur effectively *only* where significant structural change takes place so: change structure significantly and visibly and be confident that attitudes will follow.
2. Avoid direct and explicit assault on "attitudinal change".
3. Relocate: take risk of temporary "confusion and milling about".
4. Create atmosphere of risk.
5. Produce (and reinforce persistently) awareness of competition.
6. Change leaders on basis of proven competence, not ideological/technical purity - ie, managers not "cause"

leaders.

7. Introduce new staff.
8. Redefine relationship with "owners" - and educate in identity of "owners" as legal fact.
9. Deliberately encourage outsiders in on controlled basis.
10. Dislocate established linkages and embedded interest groups.
11. Analyse agency problems.
12. Define and evaluate performance costs.
13. Create awareness of notions of (a) worth, (b) value, (c) cost, (d) price, and ensure that belief that (b), (c) and (d) are synonymous with (a) is dispelled.
14. Identify nature of relationship with external regulators and renegotiate that relationship on contractual basis.
15. Require basis of unit/individual/policy promotion to be fully justified and fully transparent.

Maybe it comes as something of a relief to see the above and accept that what we are dealing with now is a MWA that operates completely within "state corporation" values. So we can stop hoping for any attempt at feminist values within the ministry structure and concentrate on supporting individual women working there and trying to maintain feminist integrity. (It is interesting also to compare Judith Aitken's "solutions" with the points Johnella Bird makes in "Challenging Change" later in this issue.) What we have now is a Ministry of Women's Affairs that operates just like any other government department. So be it. We can adjust our expectations accordingly.

NORMA VELASQUEZ

At the bottom of the Peruvian economic pile are its women.

Norma Velasquez spoke to Athina Tsoulis about projects and initiatives in the poor rural area of Puno.

Stricken with an inflation rate of 2000 percent, Peru recently refused to repay its overseas debt. Peruvians expect things to get much worse, but Norma Velasquez plants her faith for the survival of her people in community based initiatives.

Norma works with a marketing organisation called Minka, which was set up in 1981 to foster the production and sale of local agricultural produce and handcrafts. She has many insights into the lives of the Puno people.

Situated high in the Andes mountains, Puno is one of the poorest regions of Peru,



plagued with unpredictable and extreme weather conditions, poor irrigation, infertile soil and land that has been divided into small, virtually useless plots. Farming the land is difficult for these reasons, and life is marked by a basic pattern of subsistence.

Political upheavals also hit the rural

communities hardest. The Sendero Luminoso, Peru's major guerilla movement, is based in Ayacucho in the Andean mountains and enlists support from the rural and urban poor. Its campaign of violent resistance leads to daily incidents in the centre of Lima itself, and in retaliation the army responds with actions that include mass executions, particularly of peasant leaders, community activists and church workers.

"These are the poorest and most marginalised people, not only in Peru, but in the context of the whole of Latin America."

Families organise themselves to do agricultural work during certain times of the year, growing potatoes and cattle. Once the season has finished, men move to the cities - Lima is the major magnet - to find unskilled, badly paid work. While the men remain in the cities for many months, the women and children stay in Puno making handcrafts to survive.

Velasquez stressed the need for people to understand the reality of the situation for rural women. Too often the best intentions will have a detrimental effect on communities because people have assumed their world views are the same.

"For example, for women in the Puna area their existence is a subsistence one. They have to work to eat and to live. The women give birth to approximately 10 to 12 children, but only four or five babies will survive. So if they want to have three children, the women must have six or seven pregnancies. There is no interest in birth control because families need children in order to survive.

"Women know that the first year of the child's life is precarious, but they can do nothing to change the situation. The women themselves do not have enough food to eat, so breastfeeding becomes impossible. As a result babies have to start eating other things before they are weaned, while they are too small and without protection to eat these foods. They are malnourished so normal diseases like diarrhoea kill them very quickly and their mothers are powerless to do anything. Those children who do survive are very strong."

During the ten years she has worked with the Puna people, Norma Velasquez has seen many projects implemented and fail precisely because they have failed to take into account these realities.

"Many projects have tried to record the children's medical history, begin vaccina-

— HARVEST WHOLEFOODS —

Shopping at Harvest Wholefoods – the big yellow shop in Richmond Rd Grey Lynn – is a real treat. It's a buzzy place with a steady flow of like-minded people getting their weekly (or daily) supplies and browsing or just asking questions.

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tion, weighing and measuring programmes. People in the field don't want their children weighed because they only weigh their animals before they sell them because that is what their price depends on. Therefore weighing children has terrible implications. Similarly in Puna the only time people are measured is when they are being prepared for a coffin.

"Another difficulty is that most of the women cannot speak Spanish fluently, so giving information to them is very difficult."

Since Minka was created it has worked to improve the income earning capacity of the campesinos (the Indian peasant farmers) and artisans, to reinforce community organisations amongst campesinos, and to provide training in handcraft production, agricultural production and leadership.

This community based production is the only avenue for improving the future of the campesinos, explains Norma Velasquez. Minka works with about 6,000 producers (this figure includes the family of each producer since they share in the production too), selling their handcrafts for them in the cities and overseas countries, including New Zealand. This defends the producers against exploitation by middlemen and entrepreneurs.

"One of our most successful projects has been to increase the prices of the goods sold at the markets, which has given people a more adequate salary, just enough to slow down the growing poverty cycle. We have also increased the agricultural production by three times through a very specific programme of women's teams growing vegetables, which were a very new product, something the campesinos didn't used to eat. Then we helped the same groups with specific loans in potato

seeds. They use the seeds to grow their own crops, if the year was a good one, they can return the seeds.

"The participants of Minka are now leading in their own communities. Women and men have gained more political power because they are being represented for the first time. They have the practical experience of working together, analysing and looking for solutions to problems."

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SOUTH AFRICAN DOMESTIC WORKERS

They number more than four million Black women and have launched a nation-wide campaign for a living wage and for protection under the labour laws as legal workers. Domestic workers are challenging a system that has reduced them to the most exploited workers in South Africa. This report comes from The Press Trust of South Africa.

Jane was a domestic worker in the port city of Durban. She had worked for Mr and Mrs Thomas for 17 years. When Mrs Thomas fell ill and became bed-ridden, Jane nursed, fed and cleaned her until she died. Then Mr Thomas dismissed her without notice or pay.

"She sat in this chair you are sitting in now, a grown woman with children and grandchildren and cried", recalls Mary Mkhawanzi, Natal regional co-ordinator and assistant general secretary of the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU). "When we contacted Jane's former employer requesting a pension or at least some compensation for her 17 years, all he was prepared to do was forget about a small loan she had taken from him to rebuild her house after it had been destroyed by floods.

Jane's case is by no means unique. Every day every one of SADWU'S 16 regional offices sees at least one domestic

worker desperately seeking help on issues ranging from unfair dismissals to inadequate wages, poor working conditions and the absence of any sick and maternity leave.

According to SADWU's general secretary, Ms Florrie de Villiers, the aim of the "living wage" campaign is two-fold: to demand recognition of domestic workers as a workforce and legislation to protect them as workers. The living wage campaign is being launched against a political background of increasing state repression against labour organisations in the country.

Another demand high on the living wage campaign agenda is maternity and sick leave. Pregnancy and illness are frequently used to dismiss workers without notice. Eunice of East London, for example, worked for her employer for five years. When she got sick and an operation was needed, the doctor said she must take sick leave. But her employer refused and she was fired.

According to Ms Mkhawanzi, the demand for domestic workers to get Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefits – which give unemployment, sickness and maternity benefits and worker's compensation rights, is also crucial. "I was dismissed from my job without any pay and because I am not young any more and untrained in my skill, I struggled to find a new job", said Irene, who lives in Umlazi. "My husband has been dead for four years and I have three growing children to support. Because I could not claim from UIF we lived on handouts for many

months until I managed to find work again. At that time I was trying to get the house put into my name but had to pay off a big electricity debt before they would do it. I turned into a very nervous and depressed person."

The living wage campaign will also focus on the need for 21 working days annual leave, one month's notice from either side, all public holidays off and payslips stating hours of work and deductions.

Although it is not a specific demand, the union is also hoping the campaign will make more people aware of the need to make domestic workers independent of their employers. Ms Mkhawanzi, herself a former domestic worker who was once told by an employer "it is not your job to think", said the fact that many workers "lived in" is used by many employers as an excuse for not paying a living wage.

According to Ms Mkhawanzi it is not difficult to explain the Pretoria authorities' obvious reluctance to pass protective legislation for domestic workers. "The employers of domestic workers put the government into power so it has to oblige them. In this way the government is merely responding to the demands of an electorate which is happy to continue exploiting domestic workers. Also we must not forget that the very same minister has a domestic worker back at home. But it is time people realised domestic workers are as much a part of the future of this country and the struggle for a just and democratic South Africa as anyone else, and should be taken seriously. ■

NEW BOOKSHOP

There was some sadness for members of the Broadsheet collective at the re-opening of Broadsheet Bookshop as The Women's Bookshop, now being run by Carole Beu-Barrington. Carole's enthusiasm and energy for the shop is clear in this photo taken at the opening, which was also the launching of Frances Cherry's novel *Dancing with Strings* in Auckland. We wish Carole every success with the bookshop.



PHOTO: GIL HANLY

A QUIET REVOLUTION

Debbie Ferrere writes about feminists with sons, drawing on information she gathered in a survey carried out for a university paper. This article is a shorter version of a university essay.



Debbie and her son, Marcello

I would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the women who took part in my survey. Without the energy and time they put into their responses my assignment could not have been completed.

My aim was to explore the difficulties, joys and challenges these women face in their roles as both feminists and mothers of male children. I also want to make this largely ignored group of women visible: failure to mention them in feminist herstory or theory has meant their energy, work and challenge has remained largely unrecognised by the feminist movement.

This article does not do justice to the women's stories or fully capture the diversity of lifestyle and experience they represent. The "statistics" offer the minimum of insight into the group of women involved.

The ages of the 28 male children involved ranged from five months to 32 years, with the majority falling between two and 17 years. All but three of the "boys" had female siblings, two were "only children". One household had four boys, two women had sons with different fathers and two of one woman's sons were adopted. One of one woman's sons was mentally handicapped.

Many of the women had visions of how they want their sons to be able to relate in the world that focus on the breaking of the emotional restraints they feel their sons will face as men. The power imbalances evident in society would also not be a factor in these ideal worlds.

Nineteen women responded to my survey, 13 in written form, one by tape and five in an interview setting. Six of the women were lesbian, eight were solo mothers, 11 had live-in partners (nine male, two female). One woman identified herself as Maori (Ngati Porou/Ngati Kahungunu) and four Pakeha women had sons who were part Maori. Two women identified as working class and three stated religious affiliations – one Quaker, one Christian and one unspecified. Four women lived apart from their sons, two of whom lived with their father, one with his mother's parents and two lived independently.

"It is vital to recognise that the problem is the social construction of being male, not his 'maleness'"

"My son would be able to relate to men in the same way as I relate to women now – he'd be able to be loving, physical, vulnerable, open, honest..."

"Men would relate on a more feeling level – feel free to be creative, nurturing, soft, sensitive, caring, patient..."

"All people would be equal – no traditional male/female roles."

These issues continued to be the focus for many women's hopes for their sons in the real world. They want them to retain their nurturing and sensitive sides and to achieve respect and equality in their relationships with women.

"My ideal for my sons relating to men is no different from my ideal for my daughters relating to women. I want my sons to be able to feel good about themselves as the people they are, I want them to grow up accepting other people as they are. I would like them not to be pressured into stereotypes. I would like them to be able to relate in a personal relationship where they feel equality and acceptance and room to grow and explore."

"I hope that his being Maori will not be oppressive in the same way that I hope his maleness is not something he uses to oppress."

"As New Zealand males, I hope they are bicultural and taking an active part in that."

"I would like him to grow up a sensitive, gentle and assertive male, as opposed to an aggressive, chauvinistic pig – he can be both at the moment!"

"I expect him to choose not to take on what society gives him – male power – and that he will grow up a caring man. That if he chooses a relationship with a woman,

he'll be totally in that relationship – share equal responsibility he has every opportunity to be a real shit – as all men do – what strength it would require not to take it on – all that power, privilege and safety."

"Sometimes it seems everything is working against these dreams being realised," was a sentiment expressed by many of the women. Television, school, peer pressure, friends and relatives were commonly mentioned as the things working against their hopes, with some further explaining these as the results of colonisation and the patriarchal society we live in:

"I feel the pressure for boys to be boys (men to be *real* men) is greater than that on girls to be girls. It seems to me over a perspective of 20 years as a parent that girls now have more choices but the choices for boys are not there. Girls have a huge variety of role models – even though I accept the 'norm' is still heterosexual and feminine – they have plenty of role models of women who are not conforming to that stereotype. Where are the role models for my sons? If anything there has been a polarisation for men to be macho and violent."

One woman said she felt the patriarchy was strong and well organised so it was unfair to place the expectation on her sons to come through untouched by its values. She believed it was not possible for her sons to avoid being part of the patriarchal game. At one stage she tried to counteract it but decided she didn't want to take it on, other than to live her life with her sons as who she was, believing it more important to work with women to undermine the system.

All the other women, while recognising the difficulties, were actively countering what they saw as the negative influences on their sons. Encouraging their nurturing and sensitive side, exposing them to different life-style and non-traditional role models (male and female), editing of TV, books and toys available to them when they are young and discussion of TV's portrayal of both men and women while it was watched were all seen as countering tactics.

A number of women also mentioned that younger siblings offered a chance for their sons to actively reject the stereotypical male role by encouraging their caring and nurturing side into play. Having both male and female children meant that sexist presents aimed at either child were put in a communal toy box and both shared the pleasures of dolls and building bricks. However, talking about occurrences in their lives, discussing issues and keeping the lines of communication with their sons open were the most common strategies the women used.

"I politicise them and try to involve them in activities where they get self-esteem points for not being stereotypically

*"I expect him to
choose not to take
on what society
gives him."*

male, eg nurturing of younger children or pets, playing non-sexist games with other feminists' kids, constant exposure to woman power in all sorts of areas, like building and mechanics. I encourage my boys to cook and knit – they can do both well."

"Even though I don't provide war toys for my children everyone else seems to – even though they know how I feel. I actively and successfully undermine their importance by talking about TV advertisers and how much the toys cost to produce and how much profit the manufacturer is trying to take off kids."

"I try to present a bi-cultural family life but can only do this from a Pakeha perspective. It is difficult, for their father (who was Maori) is absent (he died eight years ago) and I have a negative relationship with my mother-in-law and so have no idea how much Maoritanga is introduced by my inlaws' family."

Strategies were not limited to dealing with the boys themselves:

"I also talk to the teachers a lot about sexism. I am on the local school committee and promote, as much as I can, non-sexism, non-racism and non-violence in the classrooms ... in fact I am as subversive as I can be."

"I try to encourage his father to have the knowledge and understanding of a different idea of role modelling."

"It's an enormous job educating my parents – one of my sons wants to be a ballet dancer when he grows up. His grandmother couldn't cope with the idea, and gave lots of negative messages until I pointed out that he'd at least get a job, as male dancers are in demand. She's okay about it now!"

While school was often quoted as a negative influence, for one woman it was

*"We feminists are
at the spearhead
of change. Our
sons are part
of that change.
Our daughters too."*

part of her move to counter other societal negatives and also highlighted some success she had had in both her non-sexist and non-racist dreams:

"He has a natural relationship with girls at school. His teacher actively encourages this and has commented to me that she sees him as a good role model for other children ... the school is 50/50 Maori and Pakeha and is bi-cultural – that's why I sent him there it's not just in the classroom but in the total concept. The Head actively counters both racism and sexism."

Success with these strategies for making "different" men included:

"He is aware of all the different issues – all the isms."

"He is mostly supportive and open with me, which I enjoy, he is perhaps one of my closest friends."

One woman pointed out:

"I am not able to say if I have been successful. There are no milestones – at no stage can I sit back and say 'there, I've done it, he is a good man' as my work, raving and challenges will continue all the time – it won't ever end."

The question of success raises the issue of the responsibility feminists may feel to raise "ideal" men. One woman with a young son spoke of this:

"I feel sadness at how vulnerable he is and how his beauty and goodness could be manipulated by society. I feel an enormous responsibility to produce a 'good man'. I don't want society to win."

This is further exposed by a woman with grown up sons. As the person who compiled the survey, I was distressed to read that doing it had made her come to the conclusion, "you can see I fail to qualify as a feminist mother," because, despite her efforts to raise the awareness of her sons, they could both be described as "male chauvinists". As another woman stated:

"I would like to stress that I do not believe women are a hundred percent responsible for the men that they care for as children. I suppose the effect we can have on our sons is to teach them to be aware of the system and how it works – it is up to them to choose whether they take up the fight to change things."

While a number of women stated they saw no disadvantages to being feminists with male children, others did find conflicts additional to the feeling of responsibility in raising future men, such as:

"The constant battle – being aware of the world. I have real conflict of wanting to protect him, but needing to expose him – allowing him to find out for himself."

"Being feminist has made it hard at times, feeling I have to be 'strong' in coping, for example with chores, I have always made a point of working alongside him where I can, of not collapsing in a crumpled heap. Sometimes I think I should have – to make him more aware of my

humanity."

"It irritates me, or maybe it's my fear, that he is/will be viewed as a 'boy', therefore categorised as such, rather than as a child, by some of my feminist friends. I sometimes find myself wishing he'd be 'good' so they won't judge him as a 'boy'. This puts unfair pressure on both me and my son."

"I get extremely annoyed with the anti-male feeling within the feminist movement... such as no boy children allowed at a conference. My son should not be ostracised for being male. Feminism for me is looking at injustices - anti-male is equivalent."

"Another difficulty is having to put up with the shiteheads non-feminists are raising and trying to counter all the negative behaviour towards females."

"I am handicapped by looking after a son. It's damn hard. It looks and feels often like propping up men."

Four women raised the issue that having a son meant they were not able to be totally and exclusively involved with women. One was undecided as to whether this was an advantage or disadvantage, one felt it was a negative and two saw it as positive. One said:

"If I just had girls I would be a very separatist lesbian feminist and would live somewhere I had no male contact at all (a convent is quite appealing!). My sons have forced me to stay in another world and to broaden my horizons and confront and tolerate many situations I would have just negated. Through my sons I have men friends that I really care about - not at all in a sexual way but in a friendship trusting relationship. I have had to acknowledge the other sex on the planet and in doing so my own male energy and come to accept that also."

Other advantages in being feminist and having male children were noted:

"Being feminist has helped me cope with solo parenthood, to appreciate the imbalance that is in so many men and not feel guilty that my children did not have a father around."

"The really neat thing about having sons is doing things you wanted to do as a girl, but couldn't because you didn't have brothers - like kicking a ball around, playing with lego, play-fighting."

"It's a joy - knowing I can really contribute to the world."

Two women also mentioned in some ways it was an easier relationship than that of mother/daughter. One related this to an innate mother/son bonding, the other felt it was because her son did not have to establish a "different" sexual identity from her, as his sisters did, because right from the beginning he was different.

Of course there are advantages for their sons in having a feminist mother, was the feeling of most of the women:

"I feel the pressure for boys to be boys is greater than that on girls to be girls."

"It means he has had the opportunity to live and grow with an adult who lives and grows; who will listen to him, support him, show him things that aren't okay or fair and what can be done; who models fair, honest, optimistic ideals; who believes children are people too; who can view children as disadvantaged and stripped

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of power, who works to change that; who is well enough informed to teach her children who the world really is ..."

"My lads see my life, which is full and interesting and fun and satisfying and their respect for women is increased. They see the contrast between "TV women" and me. They know the TV portrayal of us is

"I don't know any men that are wholly positive models."

not reality, that women are strong and capable and intelligent."

Most women also recognised that their sons may feel disadvantaged too:

"Both boys get sick of me pulling TV programmes apart - the girls do too. They just want to watch the crap without me pointing out how politically incorrect it is."

"With my rape crisis work my son will hear my responses on the phone so will often hear negatives about men. He hears about male violence and its result. These things must have influence on, and be hard for, him as a male."

"It may limit him socially, he doesn't bring many friends home as he doesn't quite know if I'll say something 'radical'. It freaks the kids out if I'm open about being lesbian "There's no-one to help him work out how to be a 'man' as he has no positive male role models... he's hassled and pitied at school and by friends' fathers for having me as a mother "Sometimes he feels threatened, not personally, but as a male."

"Strong daughters tend to walk over a gentle son and spend more time with stropky one... I sometimes regret encouraging my daughters to be so tough and stand no shit. I had no idea they would turn their strength onto their brother."

As this last comment also shows, the advice "teach your girls to be strong and stropky, teach your boys to be soft and gentle" oversimplifies the complex situation faced by feminists with sons. Another woman commented:

"Always encouraging my son to be gentle and take a peaceful approach to conflict, I found it quite a dilemma that the times he seemed to most blatantly disregard this was when he was with either of two particular friends, who were both stropky aggressive girls. As, to date, he seems not to differentiate between the sexes of his friends he was not mirroring 'male behaviour' but mimicking the aggressive behaviour of two older females!"

Role models were unanimously agreed to be important for these women's sons. Most wanted at least some to be male but remarked that either they did not have any or that they were extremely hard to find. Others found partners and men in non-traditional roles provided their sons with positive male images. Positive female role models were also deemed important, with many women seeing themselves as the strongest role for this.

"I feel positive role models are important - but I'm not going to go out and hunt for "good" men. I wish the men he has contact with would put across an alternative, as at the moment he only hears that soft and gentle is okay (for boys), there's no man to put that across."

"Role models don't all have to be male but I feel he needs both and yes he has

some really positive ones.... Things like physical hygiene and body education – I can only give a female perspective – my partner can give the male view I feel it needs to be balanced."

"I don't know any men that are wholly positive models – due to the patriarchal society – but I feel it's very important sons get positive female role models so hopefully they'll grow up to realise women aren't in the world for the sole purpose of pandering to men and men's needs."

The women also raised the need for their sons to have a positive image of themselves as a male:

"I feel it's important that he feel good about himself, who he is, which among other things will obviously be a man. That the awareness I pass on to him will cause him to be active in the fight to change the present structures of society but not make him walk around feeling guilty. A parallel can be drawn with me as a Pakeha woman – recognition of the privilege I receive being white is vital in the fight against racism. However, 'white guilt' does nothing to change the present system."

"I would like/hope him to be proud and strong in his own identity.... My legacy to him is that I know who I am as a Maori, I am able to pass that on to him. I hope he will be aware that to be anti-Pakeha is not the only way to be Maori I have the power to make him hate being male. It is vital to recognise that the problem is the social construction of being male, not his 'maleness'."

"If they feel good about themselves they won't abuse others."

Many women noted the abundance of negative role models visible to their sons, from the media to men in the community. It was also noted a number of times that "a bad model is worse than no model". As far as personal support was concerned some women mentioned family and friends as support, with one saying she actively sought support and got it. Most of the others felt they received little or no support in being feminist mothers with sons. It was something they all saw as important and would have liked more of.

Ideas for raising sons came from books, other feminists, observations and reflection on their own childhood, but were mainly their own:

"I guess I get most of my ideas for raising my son from my own observations, reading, dreams, discussions with other like-minded (and opposite) women friends. I get most of my 'how not to' ideas from observing society generally."

"My ideas are 90 percent my own – I think a great deal about how to manage and raise my lads – I talk heaps with them, involve them (after age 10) in decisions. I read heaps, but mostly it's original decisions and ways of coping and teaching them."

"If they feel good about themselves they won't abuse others."

When asked if raising sons was worth the effort, the women responded with a resounding "yes", although a number questioned just how much social change would be created:

"It is worth the effort. It's the silent revolution! Thousands of women contributing to the breakdown of the patriarchal hierarchy by undermining the traditional male value system from the inside!"

"Of course it's worth the effort. We have a big influence on our kids – looking back and seeing how my parents influenced me reinforces that belief. Changes are happening. They're slow, but they are there – we have to be part of that."

"We can't change society solely working with people on an individual level – we need to work at a range of levels – the central part though is individually based. We have potential to influence our kids, but we can't be sure it will work."

"It is always worth the effort – to give up trying means death."

"Yes, it's worth the effort. Yes, we have influence and yes, they'll be 'different' men. Yes, we can change society with our 'new thinking' men. Yes, it's all worth it!!! Let's keep raising our lads this way – if we don't it's leaving it to the men and what an awful job they'd make of it – even the best of them needs a woman's wisdom to do it right."

Despite the challenge, difficulties and often lack of support, these women continue to be positive in their dual role as feminists with male children and I feel it is important that the work, energy and effort of these and other feminists with sons be considered worthy of recognition and as playing a vital part in the achievement of the ultimate aims of the feminist movement.

"Of course it's worth the effort. We feminists are at the spearhead of change. Our sons are part of that change. Our daughters too. It's exciting, it's amazing and it is happening. We might seem to go two steps forward and one back, but oh, it's changing and it's wonderful. It is painful for our sons, but in the end for them too to be able to be accepted for what they are, live as wonderful human beings and for us as women, to live in a world without fear of men – it's worth it, a thousand times over. We are the changers. We are changing the world!!" ■

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SCHOOL DAZE

*A is for award talks,
B is for boards of trustees,
and C is for classrooms.
Things are not so clear
though, when it comes to
spelling out what the
reforms outlined in
Tomorrow's Schools
will mean for students,
parents or teachers.*

*Lisa Sabbage
goes back to basics and
talks to Athina Tsoulis
and Maryan Street.*

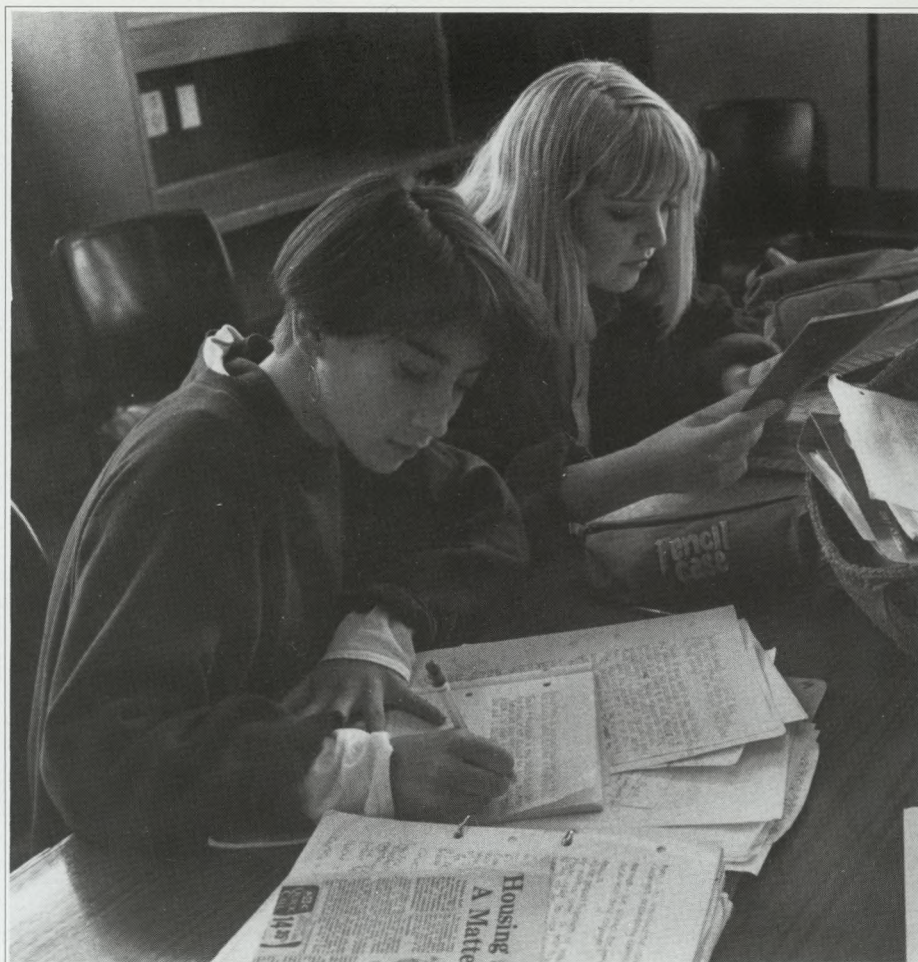


PHOTO: GIL HANLY

In his introduction to the *Tomorrow's Schools* booklet, David Lange boldly states that the government is certain that this education reform "will lead to improved learning opportunities for children in this country". He maintains that the reform will "result in more immediate delivery of resources to schools, more parental and community involvement, and greater teaching responsibility".

While the Minister of Education and his department seem unequivocally certain that these commendable goals will be realised, others are concerned that *Tomorrow's Schools* may prove to be a costly experiment for which teachers and students will pay the price.

Although she had major problems with the Picot Report on which the *Tomorrow's Schools* (TS) policies are based, Athina Tsoulis decided to stand for the board of trustees at her children's primary school. Wary of the way education has been run in the past and the government's motives for rushing in the new system, she still thought it was important to get trustees that weren't simply going to act as financial managers.

Like a lot of parents, Athina felt that the whole education system has been due for an overhaul for a very long time. She

**Tomorrow's Schools
may prove to be
a costly experiment
for which teachers
and students
will pay
the price**

was always disturbed that the quality of her children's education seemed to depend on the particular teacher they had from year to year. She was also concerned as a former teacher that schools so often destroyed the desire to learn in children. Athina left teaching because she felt it was teaching children to fail and didn't cater for their needs.

"In the past the education system has only provided for middle class children and geared itself to allow only a certain percentage to pass."

This was brought home to Athina as a Greek immigrant in Australia where immigrants were brought out as factory fodder for low skilled jobs. There was

little awareness in schools of the children's special needs, in fact they were given things like IQ tests based on the dominant white cultural beliefs and values. Inevitably immigrant children failed and were classified as stupid or lazy. Historically, much the same has happened with Maori and Pacific Island children in New Zealand schools.

The government claims that opening schools up to local communities will address the inequities that made Athina and other teachers and parents withdraw their support from them. Thus from 1 October, boards of trustees – five elected trustees, a staff rep, and a student rep in secondary schools – will be responsible for broad policy objectives and the efficient running of schools.

However, the concept of "opening up" schools to parents and expecting them in droves is not as easy as the government proposes. Most people have a very negative experience of their past schooling and aren't suddenly going to get involved because they're told things have changed. "There will still be a large unrepresented group who don't feel comfortable in the school institution. These are precisely the people who need to have input because they're the ones the education system has failed. It's naive to believe that after all the damage that has been done you can make

people feel welcome in schools".

The idea of opening up schools is a good one, but it assumes that everyone has the same ability to participate and that everyone wants to.

From the perspective of parents, TS has a number of problems.

The issue of funding for schools is one the government has not yet explained fully. The TS booklet states that all funding will come to schools in a bulk grant for teaching salaries and operational activities. The amount each school receives will be based on its own "funding formula" taken from averages over the last three years for energy costs. Funding will also depend on the principal of "social equity" – the idea that less well resourced schools should receive more than well resourced schools. Just how the government will assess and apply this remains unclear.

While the bulk grant has two parts, the board of trustees will have some discretion in the use of the funds. There is leeway in the numbers of teachers the board can hire, and at what rate in the salary scale. The board may decide an extra teacher is a priority and use funds from the operational activities grant to create another teaching position, or it may forgo a position and use the funds to buy a computer or other teaching resources.

Both teachers and parents are uneasy about this aspect of TS, and feel it introduces competition into the concept of education, an approach they feel will actually reinforce inequity.

"When you introduce competition into the concept of education, it's extremely dangerous. What it means is that schools that can offer better salaries and better working conditions are going to get 'better' teachers, whereas schools in poorer areas are going to find it very difficult to get teachers and are going to have to work with less resources.

"I feel uneasy that the government is giving each school a set amount of money. Is that school going to try to cope with that grant and fundraise for extra money? I believe that education is a basic right for every child that shouldn't depend on local communities' ability to fundraise."

A community's ability to raise money is going to affect its school. Some areas are simply unable to constantly donate time, money and energy to their schools, even if it will improve the education of their children. Other areas will be able to raise all the money they need.

The concept of competition between schools will introduce an individualism, encouraging schools to concentrate on themselves and not to see themselves in the wider context of education as a whole.

"TS will make each community focus inwards on its own school. They won't see what is going on in Manukau or wherever, they won't care. The important thing will

"Under this system you're going to get children presented with one 'correct' world view"

be that their school has got money and is getting the best things. That's sad because we should all be concerned about the education of every child in New Zealand, not just those in our local community or our own children."

The fear that boards of trustees can be stacked is a real one. For instance, of one West Auckland school's list of nominees, 50 percent had religious affiliations. However we have to be wary of calling for protection of schools from "small sectors of the community", for the very reason that we as feminists are often seen in precisely those terms. It is far more valuable to analyse boards of trustees, not in terms of affiliations, but in terms of what those affiliations mean to the board's approach to education.

Athina puts it like this: "I see it in terms of concepts of education. If your concept is to open a child's mind rather than to close it; if you believe that a child should be given as much information as it can handle to make its own decisions and that we should foster the desire to know and learn; and if you believe in drawing on the resources of the community and breaking down barriers that have been put there –

"If teachers are pitting themselves against each other for a pay increase you won't get sharing of resources, you'll get people watching their own backs and being there for the pay packet and not the kids"

racist barriers, sexist barriers, barriers to prevent disabled children from being part of the community – if that's your concept of education I believe that's the right one, the true meaning of education in the wider sense.

"Unfortunately a lot of people see education purely in terms of getting a job, learning to behave and conform. That halts the spirit of inquiry. I fear a lot of schools will reinforce what the parents in that community want – which might be a very materialistic approach to life – getting a job and a house and having lots of things. That concept is anti-education and it's very dangerous.

"Teachers who are enlightened and do have a broad attitude to education are few and far between and they're going to be concentrated in areas where parents have the same beliefs they do. When you had an education system that assigned teachers to schools, it meant you got a cross section, a quota of good and bad teachers. Under this system you're going to get children presented with one 'correct' world view. That's not education to me."

Athina believes it is important that the school charter embodies exactly what is meant by education, how the community sees it, and what it wants to foster in children.

While the new reform will allow schools to formulate their own charter, the government does have some guidelines that must be met before each charter is approved by the ministry of education. However, Athina, like many other parents, is sceptical about these guidelines, and thinks they may prove to be meaningless.

"The guidelines sound good – schools have to be aware of sexism and racism and all the rest of it – but so what? Schools are supposed to be aware now. The guidelines will not stop schools from employing teachers who reflect the dominant culture's values and beliefs, which are expressed every day in teaching. How can that not affect children? When you're basically racist at heart, it makes no difference whatsoever what charter you've got or which school you're in.

"There's a lot more to anti-sexist and anti-racist teaching than having open days or teaching a Maori word every now and then. Sexism and racism are embedded in society and its institutions. The question is how many schools will appoint a Maori principal or ensure that the school has a balance in teaching staff, or put extra resources into getting people into schools who don't have normal teaching qualifications?"

Former field worker for the Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA), Maryan Street, says that at its best the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms will produce a creative tension between state funded and monitored education, and local com-

munity power.

According to Maryan, both the PPTA and the primary teachers' union, the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI), want TS to work.

"We want a closer genuine partnership between the community and the school so parents can have input into the school's priorities, and some control over resources – a relationship of trust and mutual support between teachers, parents and the local community, for the sake of the students."

That's the best construct teachers envisage the new reform operating within. But TS also has risks accompanying it – the risks of any new system trying to find a balance between central control and devolved power. If it works well, it could be brilliant, but what makes it a high risk experiment is that it has the potential to go disastrously wrong for kids.

"An extreme scenario is if four of the trustees are fundamentalist Christians, they will have a great deal of influence on the school charter. They may want bible studies taught or they may object to evolution being taught in science – that will directly impact on kids. Not one state school staff in the country will wear this easily because over the years the state school system has built up a reputation for secular education. The government guidelines don't prevent that from happening, and the school will have to arrive at a compromise".

Under a TS regime, those teachers most susceptible to unfair dismissal are feminists, lesbians and homosexuals

Just as serious for students and teachers, is the scenario of an incompetent board of trustees, or one which chooses very controversial priorities for spending. For example if the board got entangled with a legal battle with one of its employees and spends its allocation on legal fees, how does that affect the school's students? If a proportion of the budget for all the school's needs goes on legal fees, that means there will be less for basic classroom resources, textbooks, science and physed equipment, adequate shelter and attractive grounds for the students.

In this situation of a board being manifestly incompetent, the government can dismiss it and replace it with a commissioner in much the same way as the Minister of Health, Helen Clark, dismissed the Auckland Area Health Board. Alternatively the board can be expelled the next time the community votes for a new board. But in the meantime, that board may have deprived up to three years of students of what they should get by rights.

The PPTA is most concerned about the kinds of industrial powers the reforms propose for the boards of trustees. These issues are what were thrashed out in the Award talks between the PPTA and the State Services Commission (SSC), and which led to the teachers' strikes earlier this year.

Tomorrow's Schools proposed to give boards of trustees the power to hire, fire, assess teachers, and to pay accordingly. The board is effectively the employer and is not bound by the national teaching award. Teachers want to retain the present system in which teachers salaries are nationally and centrally negotiated.

The PPTA is bitterly opposed to devolving industrial relation decisions to boards of trustees. It believes keeping industrial relations issues separate from how the school is run will prevent any kind of antagonistic management/worker relationship that exists in other industries. Overseas every model of devolved education administration around the world has stopped short of devolving industrial relations decisions to boards of trustees. In-

dustrial decisions remain centrally negotiated.

Cogent arguments were presented to the SSC about why a range of rates would lead to inequity. For instance if a man and woman of the same teaching experience apply for the same job, it is likely the board will view them in very traditional terms.

"If the woman took three years off to have a child, perhaps the board of trustees will not take into account the social contribution the woman made, the unpaid work she did, or the fact that she came back part time while she was raising her child. They will see that the male teacher is worth more, and if they have the facility to pay him more than her, they will.

"The board will see her as a cheaper teacher because she hasn't got so far up the salary scale. Perhaps they'll think she won't be expecting as much and put her in that job because they'll be able to pay her less. There will be a depressing of women's salaries."

The other side of this issue that Maryan stresses is that there would not be a need for Pay Equity legislation if the values in society had equitable outcomes. A flexible range of rates for payment for teachers will do away with the concepts of pay equity and equal pay.

"Society is not sufficiently equitable in its thinking to work out that the woman teacher should be paid the same as the man for doing exactly the same job. If the board

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can get away with hiring a cheaper teacher and using the surplus money to buy a computer, then the temptation will be there.

Under a system in which teachers will have to sell themselves to a board of trustees, the PPTA maintains that it will be women and Maori teachers who will come off worst. When the PPTA presented these arguments to the SSC, it went away and thought about it, came back to negotiations and said it recognised there would be costs for women and Maori teachers – end of story.

Maryan says that the SSC did not present one coherent argument that had anything to do with education.

"They kept saying they weren't interested in education, but in administration. We pointed out that the two can't be separated as easily as that. The kinds of industrial proposals they put up have educational affects further down the line for kids. If teachers are pitting themselves against each other for a pay increase you won't get sharing of resources, you'll get people watching their own backs and being there for the pay packet and not the kids".

One of the government's biggest selling points for TS was that it would make teachers more accountable and flush out incompetent teachers from the system.

"As far as the union is concerned we do not want incompetent teachers in schools. they damage the students, wear teachers out who have to prop them up, and they give everybody else a bad reputation. However, the proposal to give boards of trustees hiring and firing powers does not address accountability or competence at all. It simply means that teachers become vulnerable to the board of trustees. It has everything to do with power and nothing to do with accountability".

Under a TS regime, those teachers most susceptible to unfair dismissal are feminists, lesbians and homosexuals. This is another reason why the PPTA wants to retain and strengthen the present award system – it is the only protection that teachers have from arbitrary decisions.

The PPTA is much keener on retaining the present classifications procedure to deal with an incompetent teacher. This process identifies what a teacher is incompetent in, gives them advice and guidance and a year to shape up, but if those deficiencies are still evident after a year then they're out of teaching for good. The second way teachers can be removed from the profession is by a disciplinary procedure, in which a teacher can be suspended immediately for any behaviour considered serious, usually something grossly inappropriate like violence or sexual relations with a student.

Although no one disputes that change to the education system is needed, and that the goals of TS are admirable ones, it does

WOMEN AS DEMONS

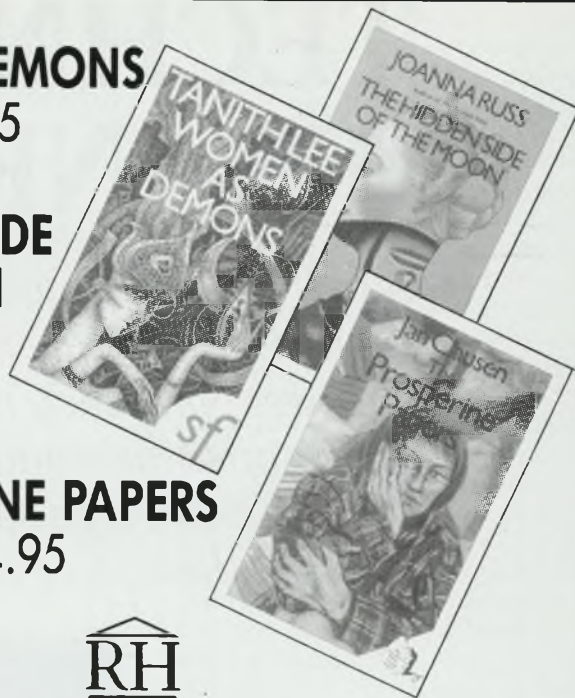
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seem that there are major holes in the proposal and no safeguards in place to protect the most important resource we have – the children.

Athina feels it is bizarre that teaching is the only profession the government has seen fit to throw open to the community.

"I think it's important that people have their say, but why hasn't the government done this with everything? The medical profession has damaged people so much, yet we have no recourse. There is an underlying notion that teaching is not really a profession and I think one of the reasons for this is that it is one of few professions

that is dominated by women. I don't think the government would dare take on the medical profession with all their vested interests, but teaching has never attracted that status or power because it's largely run by women. It's not seen as an important profession at all."

This is ironic, because if there is one group of people that has the power to change future attitudes and values, it is surely teachers. This government has rushed through untested reforms, and in doing so it may actually disempower the very communities it says it wants to empower. It may rue the day it did so. ■

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TECHNOLOGICAL FRANKENSTEINS

A decade ago microwave ovens and video display units were hailed by their makers as great leaps forward into the future. Now they are causing their creators and consumers more than a few headaches.

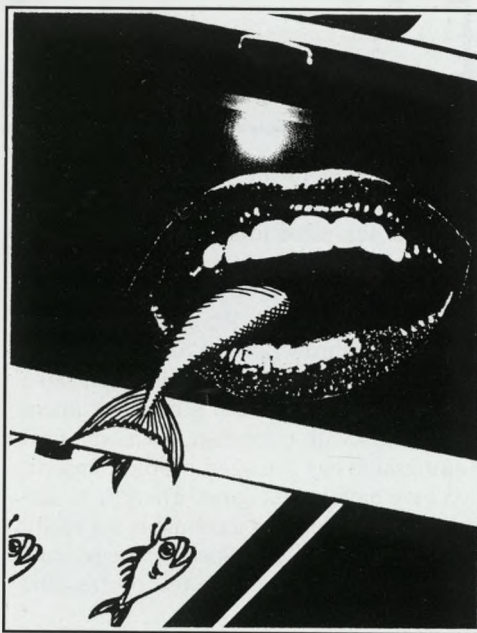
Lisa Sabbage scrutinises these technologies and others, from a not-so-safe vantage point

When Alison Holst started her Microwave Cookery Books and Cooking Classes, she knew she was onto a good thing. Microwave ovens are as common in New Zealand as the quarter-acre section used to be, but not so many people know how to use them properly, and even less are aware of their potential risks.

Microwave technology has been around for the last fifty years and is very much a part of our modern lifestyle. One story about the birth of microwave ovens is that during the war a radar technician found birds that crashed into the radar masts were cooked to a cinder. Whether this story is true or not, it does underscore the fact that overexposure to microwaves is now known to cause serious damage to the human body.

At one time microwaves were assumed to be harmless at low levels of exposure. A multi-billion dollar industry was built on that assumption, moving microwaves from the military base into commercial and domestic use. We not only utilise microwaves at home, but they are also in operation when we go out for dinner, or when we go to any fast food chain like MacDonalds, and most hotel and restaurant workers use them in the workplace. Like any technology we take for granted, dangers arise when people are not instructed on proper use and maintenance.

The ovens take their name from the microwaves they harness for cooking. Microwave radiations are electromagnetic waves composed of electric and magnetic fields. They are not radioactive, but will



The biggest problem is that the microwaves can potentially penetrate and burn the body tissue at deep levels without causing any noticeable body sensation

heat any substance that contains water, including living tissue. The biggest problem for people is that the microwaves used in ovens can potentially penetrate and burn the body tissue at deep levels without causing any noticeable body sensation. Accordingly, if an oven has a defective or dirty door seal which allows leakage, any person standing within two metres may be subjected to serious hazards.

According to the New Zealand School of Cell-ectrology, evidence of the damage and health problems that microwaves can cause has been around for forty years. It believes that because this information was commercially sensitive the American Government censored it until forced by pressure groups to release it in 1970. Twenty years earlier Russian research had reported similar symptoms and disorders.

The health effects of long term exposure to electromagnetic waves, which have been identified in humans or in laboratory experiments on animals, include cataracts, genetic damage, reduced blood count and antibody production, reduced fertility, miscarriage and birth deformity, skin effects, and effects on the nervous system like headaches, fatigue, dizziness and changes in behaviour.

Parts of the body with a poor blood supply – like the eyes – have difficulty dissipating heat which is why some literature warns against peering through microwave doors. The lens of the eye is especially vulnerable to microwaves and if they are exposed to even moderate radiation, small opacities (or areas which are impervious to light) develop at the back of

the lens. It is a gradual and irreversible process which leads eventually to the formation of cataracts and to blindness.

Recently the United States agency of the Food and Drug Administration responsible for the study of the biological effects of microwaves had compliance hearings. It found that nearly 100 of the 1900 ovens tested leaked in excess of the permitted standard. At the same time the American Consumer Association also tested a wide range of ovens and concluded that not one of them could be recommended "because the popular makes tested, did leak radiation at levels we cannot be sure are harmless." This is not to say that all microwave ovens are dangerous but that no one knows how much leakage is safe. There is no international consensus on exposure standards. In 1985 New Zealand's *Consumer* magazine tested nine models of microwave ovens and found that *none of them leaked more than the small amount allowed by New Zealand regulations.*

If you have a microwave in the home or the workplace, be aware that it needs regular servicing to test for microwave leakage. A build up of grime or dirt and continual cleaning can damage the seal around the door. Anything spilt on top of the outside of the oven can damage the magnetron that produces the microwaves because liquid can seep through the vents. If you shift premises and the microwave gets jostled about, you should get it tested. Some people recommend that microwave ovens should be checked every six months.

Don't lean on your microwave, and if you are pregnant stand at least two metres away from it when it is in use, just to be safe.

If you want to look at the food, take it out, and if you've got kids who lean their faces against the glass door to watch the food rotate, let them know about the danger.

Microwaves are reflected by metal so they continue to bounce off the sides of the oven until absorbed by food. This is why you should not turn the oven on unless there is food or liquid in it because the microwaves can't be absorbed and will escape from the oven once the door is open.

From the limited literature available it appears that those most at risk from defective microwave ovens are women in the workplace. Kitchen staff use microwaves over prolonged periods of time and often work in close proximity to them. Employers are often lax about regularly testing microwave equipment in order to protect the health of their employees. In America in 1972, two women received workers' compensation for occupational injury due to working with a defective microwave oven. The case is worth recounting because it outlines the kind of prolonged exposure that can result in injury.

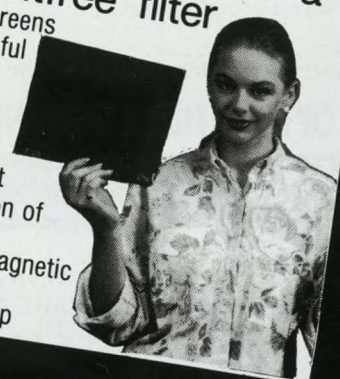
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The women worked in the same snack bar, operating this particular microwave oven for two years. They received chilled pre-prepared food which they heated in the microwave oven before serving. They used this oven about 200 times a day, five days a week.

During the two year period in which the women used the oven several problems arose. They complained on various occasions that the oven did not turn off properly and that in order to shut it off, it was necessary to open the door, shut it again and push the button on the side of the oven. At no time was there service of the oven on the premises, nor had the women ever received instructions about its proper use. Eventually the oven was removed from the premises for repairs.

The women first became aware of discolouration of their nails and fingers and some slight deformity after they had been using the oven for about 18 months. They reported this to their family doctor, who referred them to dermatology specialists.

The specialists concluded that the microwave oven was the cause of the injury to the women. They said there was overwhelming evidence for this: the women were the only two employees in the snack bar who used the microwave and the only ones to develop lesions; the lesions were similar and occurred at about the same time in both women; there was no similar problem in the women prior to the use of the defective microwave; and the lesions began to improve when the unit was removed.

Shortly before the compensation case was ready for hearing, one of the women complained of discomfort and impaired vision. She went to her family ophthal-

mologist who found she had the beginning of cataract damage.

Here in New Zealand all branches of the Hotel, Hospital and Restaurant Workers' Union have microwave leakage detectors and are happy to test ovens at regular intervals. Staff who are working with microwave ovens should make sure they have regular medical checkups and eye tests and advise their local unions if their workplace has a microwave oven installed.

MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING

Like microwaves, the Video Display Unit (VDU) was introduced into the workplace as a revolutionary tool to increase productivity without research into possible hazards.

The question of whether VDUs are as safe as manufacturers assumed has been hotting up for the last five years in the United States. At least 19 million people in the American workforce operate a VDU (at newspapers, banks, libraries, airline and train reservation offices, insurance and computer companies, and in government agencies) for more than 30 hours a week. Here in New Zealand VDUs are widespread throughout the workforce, and are making their way into schools and homes.

Some technical information: a VDU is a computerised blend of a television screen and a typewriter keyboard. It stores information in files that are easily accessible and reduces the need for paper, pen and bulky filing systems. Information is displayed on the screen in much the same way as a TV. An electron beam scans the screen which is coated with phosphor. The

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Negative dust particles, generated by an ion imbalance due to electro-static fields emitted from the terminal or CTV, dry out skin and eyes.
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electrons excite the phosphor and visible light is given off.

Eye-strain and muscle fatigue is caused by an electro-static field emitted by the electron beam. The field produces a negative ion charge on operators' eyes and face causing eye-strain and headaches. This emission has caused rashes on the hands and face of some operators and long term use can cause muscle fatigue.

Since 1984 American workers have been complaining about eye-strain, vision problems, dizziness, and muscle pains. Most controversial are the concerns consistently voiced by women that VDUs can cause miscarriages, birth defects and fertility problems.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health finished a study in 1984 which found that VDU operators had higher levels of anxiety, more eye and muscular complaints than workers who did not use the units. Its report urged employers to control the machine glare better, provide for an annual eye test for workers, and introduce ten minute workbreaks for every hour at the screen.

Predictably many employers dismissed the study findings as biased. One wonders if they felt the results were biased because they didn't come up with what they wanted to hear. Other employers state that the results are not conclusive and that not enough research has been done. Of course other studies have been done since then all pointing to much the same conclusions, but employers are still disputing them.

Karen Nussbaum of Nine To Five, the US National Association of Working Women, pointed out that a high percentage of VDU users are low paid women clerical workers. Perhaps this is why so

many employers find it easy to dismiss concerns about VDUs as groundless and exaggerated. It's a way of trivialising and ignoring a problem that no one ever thought to look into.

Nine to Five have also been most vocal in the call to shield VDUs to reduce emissions and for pregnant employees to be given the option of transferring to other work without loss in pay or seniority

Last April, researchers from six laboratories in the United States, Canada, Spain and Sweden confirmed that weak, pulsed magnetic fields can cause "significant developmental abnormalities in chicken embryos". VDU manufacturers dismiss the animal research as inapplicable to humans. Yet twelve clusters of pregnancy problems have been documented among VDU workers in North America and Europe.

In 1984, Nine to Five uncovered a worksite where 50 percent of pregnancies of VDU operators ended "adversely" over a four year period. During that time 48 VDU operators became pregnant at San Francisco's United Airlines Telephone Reservations office. Of those pregnancies, 15 ended in miscarriages, there was one still birth, one death of a newborn infant, two children had birth defects, there were two premature deliveries, and three other undisclosed "problems".

The furore around potential reproductive hazards reached full pitch in America last June when researchers from the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Programme in Oakland, California released their study. They found that women who used VDUs more than 20 hours a week in their first three months of pregnancy had nearly twice as many miscarriages as non-VDU

users. The study involving 1,583 women, is the first definitive study linking VDUs and miscarriages. The findings were not due to other characteristics of the mothers, such as age, education, smoking, or alcohol consumption. However, some critics have said that pregnancy problems may not be caused by the equipment, but by stress factors in the typical clerical VDU job.

In January this year, America's first law regulating use of VDUs became effective in Suffolk County, New York. Reproductive hazards of VDUs were not addressed in the Suffolk law because this most controversial issue would have made the passage of the bill more difficult.

Suffolk companies with 20 or more units must pay 80 percent of the cost of annual eye exams and glasses if needed, for employees who work more than 26 hours a week at VDUs. The workers must also be given a 15 minute break every three hours, although they can be asked to perform non-VDU tasks. Adjustable chairs, keyboards and screens, and adequate glare-free light will also be required. It is hoped that pregnancy protections could be added by a review commission which will update the law at two-year intervals.

The Suffolk legislation pitted local business leaders against unions and workers. Business leaders stated that there is no medical proof that computer terminals cause medical problems and that the legislation would make Suffolk businesses less competitive than firms elsewhere.

This is an indication of just how much corporations and companies have invested in maintaining the belief that VDUs have no harmful effects.

New York Telephone, which has 1500 employees working at VDUs, stopped hiring and plans to relocate from Suffolk due to the law. The manager of the company's Suffolk branch, Thomas Calabrese, explained that the law created a precedent for its telephone employees elsewhere in New York state. Four other companies and business associations have also filed suit to block the law.

Despite what could be called corporate economic terrorism, office workers and unions in Suffolk are refusing to be intimidated. As one observer pointed out, business claims that there is no proof of VDUs causing physical problems, are no different than the tobacco industry, which to this day claims that there is no medical evidence for the danger of cigarette smoking. It also pays to remember the days when there was no medical evidence that asbestos was harmful, and workers were dying of what is now recognised as asbestosis.

In New Zealand, the Public Service Association and the State Services Commission formed an agreement on the introduction of VDUs into the public service in 1981. Management is supposed to provide

training that embraces health and safety information. If the PSA and staff desire it, they can elect health and safety delegates to each workplace a VDU is sited. The delegate can monitor the environment and design of the workplace to make sure they are what amounts to being "user-friendly".

Under this 1981 agreement operators are not supposed to be at work continuously at a terminal for more than 50 minutes in an hour. Apparently these measures are in place in most Social Welfare offices, who, like the Auckland Harbour Board also provide VDU workers with optical filters. These filters, (which can be attached inside or outside the screen), reduce glare and reflections. Tests in Denmark have found that the filters also eliminate 80 to 90 percent of the electro-static field.

Employers in the private sector have not been as willing to protect their employees. The local importer of the filters said that employers in New Zealand are five to ten years behind the rest of the world in taking responsibility for the welfare of their VDU operators.

DICING WITH DIOXIN

The dioxin scare here and overseas follows a similar path to concerns regarding microwaves and VDUs. In other words manufacturers have ignored the risks until consumers have

discovered them and demanded change.

For some years in Europe, consumers have been expressing worries about dioxin (which is the most toxic manufactured substance known) in their milk cartons, paper nappies, and coffee filters, not to mention tampons and sanitary towels. Unbleached paper products are now appearing on shop shelves as manufacturers realise they can exploit the environmental and health concerns of the market.

Scientists in Europe have supported consumer concerns. Research in England found that coffee filters and paper nappies contain 90 parts of dioxin per trillion, while tampons contain 130 parts per trillion, and sanitary towels contain 400 parts per trillion. The Women's Environmental Network is particularly disturbed at the content of dioxin in tampons because they are worn internally, and used by women for a prolonged period of their lives.

In a typical move to downplay questions from the public, the British government stated that it was difficult to determine what were dangerous levels of dioxin until proof came to hand. How much proof do they want?

In this country, traces of dioxin have been found in eels in the creek that Tasman Paper Mill discharges its effluent into. This means firstly, that New Zealand's waterways and eco-systems are being polluted, and secondly that dioxins are

present in paper products here.

Some manufacturers have claimed that tampons and tampons in New Zealand are made from an imported rayon/cotton mix that doesn't contain dioxin. This is difficult to assess because only two out of the four New Zealand manufacturers have provided information to the Health Department about the levels of dioxin in rayon in tampons. Health Department spokesperson Trevor Nisbett says there is no detectable level in the rayon. How do we know that the manufacturers are telling the truth?

Johnson and Johnson have gone so far as to say that they will change their products according to consumer demands. Is that an acknowledgement that their products contain dioxin?

It is interesting that the same pattern reveals itself. First manufacturers deny that there is anything to worry about, then they say that the levels of whatever – microwave leakage, electro-static emission, or dioxin – are so small they can't possibly be harmful, and then they maintain that there is no proof that those levels are dangerous to health.

If we are not to be the casualties of this technological revolution, we have to start questioning what we are told as consumers and workers. Ultimately what is not good for the planet is not good for us as women, and vice versa. ■

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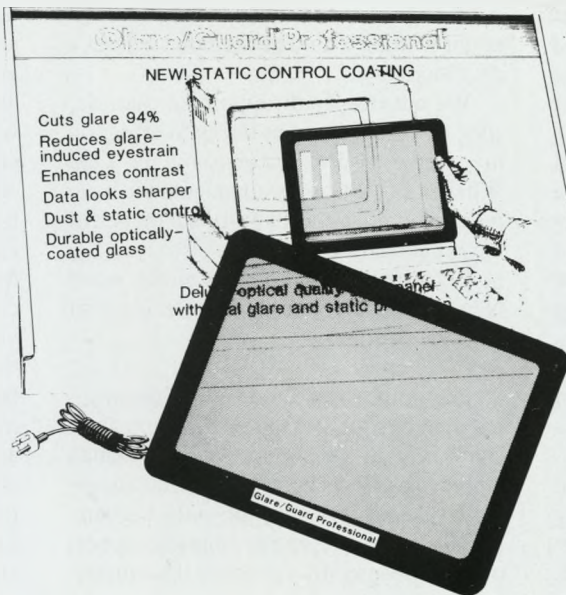
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EHARA TAKU TOA I TE TOA TAKA TAHI ENGARI HE TOA TAKA TINI

(My strength is not one of the individual,
but one of unity.)

When interviewed in *Broadsheet* (issue 162, October 1988), following her appointment as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Judith Aitken stated that Te Ohu Whakatupu would continue as in the past with the staff retaining accountability to their iwi, as "it's incumbent on me to have regard to the interests, the concerns and the guidance that the staff in the unit can obtain and that I can obtain from those iwi, because of the procedural opportunity for reference to them."

Recent events indicate that processes within Te Ohu Whakatupu are reverting to standard bureaucratic models, as they have within the rest of the Ministry. There have been reports in the *Dominion* of plans to take the Ministry to the Waitangi Tribunal and the Waitangi Consultancy Group (a Pakeha anti-racism advisory group) has been "dispensed with".

What has actually been happening at Te Ohu Whakatupu? What has led to the following statement from Helene Leaf and Bella Ruatara, whanaunga of Lee-Anne Farrach who has recently resigned after three years with Te Ohu Whakatupu? The statement represents the thoughts and feelings of Lee-Anne's many whanaunga in Taitokerau. Lee-Anne's whanau includes many kuia and kaumatua who supported her for the position she held within the Ministry, particularly her own kuia, Bella Ruatara. The statement says,

It was with a sense of pride and hopefulness that we of Taitokerau put one of our women forward to be part of Te Ohu Whakatupu. We understood the relationship with the Ministry would be one of dual accountability, with us providing whanau support and knowledge and the Ministry ensuring that the particular needs

**Shirley Tamihana
and Pat Rosier have
been investigating
changes at Te Ohu
Whakatupu, the
Maori unit of the
Ministry of Women's
Affairs**

(Our thanks to GPT Business Systems)



**"Maori women who should
have been your colleagues,
your whanau, actually
became your competitors"**

of our women would be included in policy developments.

We are deeply disappointed that, despite our attendance at hui in Wellington to resolve issues surrounding Te Ohu Whakatupu, Ministry management have failed to address the institutional racism of the organisation.

Because of the Ministry's action, we of Ngapuhi can only be left with a sense of betrayal of trust.

Lee-Anne says: "I was one of the original members of Te Ohu Whakatupu and I came in with the support of my whanau which has always been as important to me as the actual job. The job only had any validity for me as long as I had the support of these people, it's a process of accounta-

bility. If you're not accountable to the iwi, your whanau, then you can only be working for yourself. When things changed in the ministry and I and some others tried to question some of those decisions, my whanau was always behind me and it was on the advice of my whanau that I resigned."

Letters and memos from Lee-Anne's personal file tell a sorry tale. To an outsider reading them, it is a saga of trying to contain and restrict a Maori woman's influence. Attempts to deal with issues as a group are turned into individual personal "problems". (It is interesting to relate this to the ideas in "Challenging Change", page 28).

Judith Aitken was appointed as Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry in July 1988, and quickly began making changes in the way the Ministry was run. "It was fine by me in a way," says Lee-Anne, "because structures are structures, they're not going to be Maori structures. But it got harder and harder to be Maori in the new structure. I felt that I couldn't practice cultural values as I see them. There would always have to be an explanation about why we were doing something. It became very individualistic in that the system was set up so you worked for your own promotion- like pay incentives and performance assessment targeted on an individual basis. Maori women who should have been your colleagues, your whanau, actually became your competitors. The structures coerced the manager of Te Ohu Whakatupu into being in the first instance accountable to management rather than Te Ohu Whakatupu and she became increasingly isolated from the rest of us. She had to perform on an individual basis, the same as the rest. I found it a really lonely, frustrating experience. It was really, really difficult to try



and keep any sort of group identity because we weren't seen as a group. Sure we were a group of Maori women in there but in terms of the way we worked we were individuals.

"As soon as you actually say, 'hang on what about the others, what about Maori women as a whole,' that's when the system couldn't handle it any more. If you're a good Maori, if you're a friendly Maori then you'll make it in there, but if you're not....

"Maori women have been marginalised in the management structure in that they have one representative in four managers and so three other Pakeha women will make the decisions on major policy issues for Maori women."

This point is reinforced by the confidential (leaked) Waitangi Consultancy Group Report of March 1989, when it stated, "The shared management structure means that non-Maori women may be making major policy decisions on behalf of Maori women." (The Waitangi Consultancy Group is a Pakeha group set up in 1987 to provide the MWA with an anti-racism consultancy. On 10 April Judith Aitken wrote to the Group stating that their contract, which expired on 31 March, would not be renewed. The Ministry has dissociated itself from the report. The Waitangi Consultancy Group believes that the Maori women have a prima facie case to take to the Treaty of Waitangi.)

"The other thing was that with the changes that happened there is a danger that our role as Maori women within the Ministry would become merged with the struggle of women in general. And with the advent of project teams, that's certainly what happened - the style of working, the way I work had to change. If you were a project team leader - and I was - you actually had to start looking after the Pakeha side of things, co-ordinating that, making sure that was okay and then you could slip in your little bit of Maori.

"What Te Ohu Whakatupu needed was the opportunity to establish its own power base for Maori women. Project teams are divisive. They really hook into that popular white feminist theory of 'we are all one'. So long as you're a Maori who wants to be 'we are all one', sure you'll make it.

"I don't think that the dual accountability for Maori women now - being accountable to their iwi and to the Ministry - works in reality. Certainly my experience when I wanted to have my whanau involved proved that. They'll pay lip service to it but the onus is actually back on the individual and you're the one who has to come up with the goodies, the system is not going to bend at all. It can't find any

money for you to get your whanau down but it can find heaps of money to buy champagne for its visitors and kai for important guests from the reserve bank. That is seen as valid whereas getting our whanau together to make sure we are strong so we can actually carry out the job is not part of it."

The distress of Lee-Anne's whanau is further expressed in a letter to Judith Aitken of 2 May, from Tama Ora/Men's Support Services of Taitokerau, which begins, "We as Maori Men of Taitokerau are shattered by the situation which has brought about the resignation of our Au Wahine Lee-Anne Farrach." It goes on to ask for a direct answer to questions about



"Maori women have been marginalised in the management structure in that they have one representative in four managers and so three other Pakeha women will make the decisions on major policy issues for Maori women"

the accountability of people giving advice to the Ministry and the Minister on Maori issues.

Carrol Thomson, Ngati Porou/Kati Mamoe, worked on contract for Te Ohu Whakatupu on and off for about a year, and did university study as well. She has decided never to do work for the Ministry again. Jo Spooner, Ngati Kahungunu/Te Aupouri, another worker, has also resigned on the advice of her whanau. Carrol believes that whanau are no longer important to the Ministry: "At one stage we wanted to get a whanau down and we had to go to an outside agency to ask for the money, because it wasn't a priority for the Ministry. It seems like they're bringing our women in to consult with them on the things they want to know, instead of saying, what do you want, what is important to you, what would make your life easier - good, we'll go with that direction. Making the direction and making Maori women slot in to that direction doesn't bring validity for anybody."

All the women felt great disappointment at the way any attempts to deal with management style and issues became personalised and whanau members were insulted. "It's my belief that so long as we were always prepared to work on the intercultural things and provide the bridge for Maori and Pakeha women to work together then the organisation would be quite happy. But when there is any attempt on our part to say we want to work these things out among ourselves as Maori women, it didn't happen. The priorities were always set by someone else. First the Minister and then further defined by the CEO, who in turn would pass it on to the manager of Te Ohu Whakatupu."

Jo Spooner, in her letter of resignation of 19 April writes: "Initially, when I was employed by the ministry there was an assurance that the organisation has a commitment to biculturalism and was working towards equity for Maori women. Whilst I will acknowledge that there are individuals within the Ministry who actively demonstrate that commitment this has become less and less true of the organisation and its management. Te Ohu Whakatupu exists as a brown facade and I am distressed to see the unit, its staff and manager forced into compromising themselves."

Under Judith Aitken's management pay deals have become an issue. As Carrol says, "Another thing that shows how much the Ministry values Te Ohu Whakatupu is that the ranges of pay being given throughout the ministry are higher to other policy writers, particularly to the newer policy writers that have come in. Quite large packages have been negotiated by Pakeha 'expert' women that are coming in to the ministry."

Powhiri Rika-Heke, Ngapuhi, worked in the office of the Minister of Women's Affairs as her private secretary until January 1989. She says, "It appears to me that Te Ohu Whakatupu was not being used as it should have been by the government. There was a wealth of information by and for Maori women in Te Ohu Whakatupu that the government could have used but it seemed to overlook this."

Community links are fading fast, policy is being created "in a vacuum". Carrol: "Community organisations came in with good will, to provide information, because when the MWA was first set up it looked like it was seriously going to take on board those issues and work towards raising them in the political arena and supporting us in raising them as well. But it seems now that that's not happening and yet community groups are still getting called on to support the ministry - for



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**"Te Ohu Whakatupu exists
as a brown facade and
I am distressed to see
the unit, its staff and
manager forced
into compromising
themselves"**

hands are tied, they're the same as every other government department now."

"If you want to know what you can expect from the Ministry as Maori women just have a look at how the Ministry has treated Maori women. Appallingly. You'll get 'outputs' but you won't get anything that's significant in terms of your lives."

They mourn the loss of the resource they and other women who have left Te Ohu Whakatupu represent. "We know how to tap the resources of Maori women and that loss is an awful waste." They feel they put a lot of effort into changing things from within and they and their whanau suffered a lot of stress before they "went public". Two are now without jobs. "If the CEO is thinking we are playing some sort of game she's got to think again because who would go through this for a game. The main issue is that within the structure of the Ministry Te Ohu Whakatupu is not equitable to Maori women, it doesn't let us express ourselves as Maori women it, doesn't let us be Maori women, it requires us to be house niggers. So long as we are friendly Maori we are rewarded."

Lee-Anne: "I believe management of the Ministry is going to consult with the different iwi authorities. That's a good thing because it gives the different iwi a chance to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction about the structures and the mahi of the Ministry and Te Ohu Whakatupu in particular. Maori women know what they want out there and if the Ministry's management can't find it in their best interests to deal with equity for Maori women then we'll do it ourselves."

"Maori women are fighters, we've been fighters now for a long, long time and basically all we've got is just one more institution that we have to keep an eye on and if necessary fight. If its swimming with the tide, swim with it, if it's not, fight against it. It's a shame, it didn't have to be like that, the kaupapa was set down, the vision was laid down. And now it is being wasted, thrown away." ■

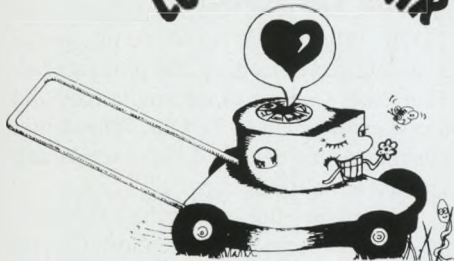
nothing. The ministry could say 'we are small, with little funding,' and so on, but I think that there's been no active work on the priorities that grass-roots women say they want.

"The rights of Maori women have certainly been put aside and also the rights of other smaller groups, particularly lesbians. Lesbian issues were put aside, yet they'd gone through the whole process of consulting lesbians, as they did with Maori women, and then ignored what they said."

It was frustration at not being heard that

led these women to talk to *Broadsheet*. "It's up to women – Maori and Pakeha to hear what we have to say and make up their own minds. If they want to continue using the ministry because it's good for them, kia ora, use it, but use it knowing our truth. My advice to Maori women about how they can best get what they want from Te Ohu Whakatupu in the future is, be specific, say, 'We want this, you provide it'. But if you actually think they are in there batting for you, you've got another think coming, because they can't if their

LOV YA MOWAR



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MEGAN... HAVE YOU SEEN **HARRIET** SINCE LUNCH?...

YEP-SHE'S OUT IN THE GARAGE WITH HORSE AND a **BUCKET** OF BUTTERED POPCORN, WATCHING **FOLLYFOOT FARM**...

DON'T GET ME WRONG, MUM, BUT... I'M NOT SURE THEY'RE THE **RIGHT** COMPANY FOR EACH OTHER...



YOU'RE **ABSOLUTELY** RIGHT, MEGAN! I'VE BEEN WONDERING IF I SHOULD SAY SOMETHING... IN FACT, I THINK IT'S DOWNRIGHT **DANGEROUS!**...

YOU WHAT?.. I MEAN - YOU DO?.. **DANGEROUS?!?**

YES! WITH **HARRIET'S** CHOLESTEROL LEVEL, THE **LAST** THING SHE SHOULD BE EATING IS **POPCORN!**...



WHAT'S NEW

■ AUCKLAND

Towards a Nuclear free and Independent Pacific Hui Programme: French Colonialism in the Pacific, July 5, Otago Music and Art Centre; Pacific Environment Concerns 6 September, Otago Arts and Music Centre; Japan's New Invasions in the Pacific, 2 August, Ponsonby Community Centre; Fiji - Recognition of Indigenous Peoples Rights in a Democracy, 1 October, Ponsonby Community Centre; US Military Bases in the Pacific, 1 November, Otago Music and Arts Centre; Te Hui Oranga 1989, 1-3 December, venue to be announced. Further information from: PAPANAC, (09) 2747706 (Philomena); PCRC, 375862 (Jane); Tamaki NFIPC, 776128 (Julie or Alice).

Prominent Women An exhibition of rare books by women from Mary Wollstonecraft to Robin Hyde, Rare Books Room, Auckland Public Library until 17 June. Phone 770-209 for details.

Fay Weldon will be taking two Sargeson writing workshops: Fiction, 16-18 Sept; Screen Writing 23-25 Sept. Each costs \$199. Residential. Contact Wemsley Willcox (09) 463-730.

■ HAMILTON

Patients Rights Advocacy Meetings first Wed of month at 7.00pm, 65 Tawa St, Hamilton, phone (071) 435-837

Lesbian Links Tuesdays 7-10, phone 80341

■ WANGANUI

Lesbian Line available for information and support on Mondays, 7-10 pm, phone (064) 56833

■ DUNEDIN

Women's Festival Otago University, 17-26 June. Workshops, forums, women's poetry and acoustic evening, women's art exhibition, cultural foods night, market, winter solstice ritual, bands night with *Cassandra's Ears* and local women's bands, women's dance, festival magazine and organisers will be taking over Radio One for the week. Low entrance fees, free childcare. For more information ring Dunedin 777-961 extn 843 or write to OUSA, P O Box 1436, Dunedin. **Reign of the Mothers** Play by Leah Poulter, directed by Elizabeth O'Connor, produced by The Women's Theatre Collective. Running 31 May-11 June at Allen Hall Theatre.

■ NATIONAL

Short Story Competition Send your previously unpublished story of up to 6000

words with a \$5 entry fee to Short Story Competition, Hamilton Business and Professional Women's Club, PO Box 1049, Hamilton. Entries close 31 July. More info can also be obtained through this address.

Not the 1990 Calendar! Produced by the He Taua/Atac Coalition. \$10 plus GST per copy to P O box 68553, Newton (Auckland) Tamaki Makaurau

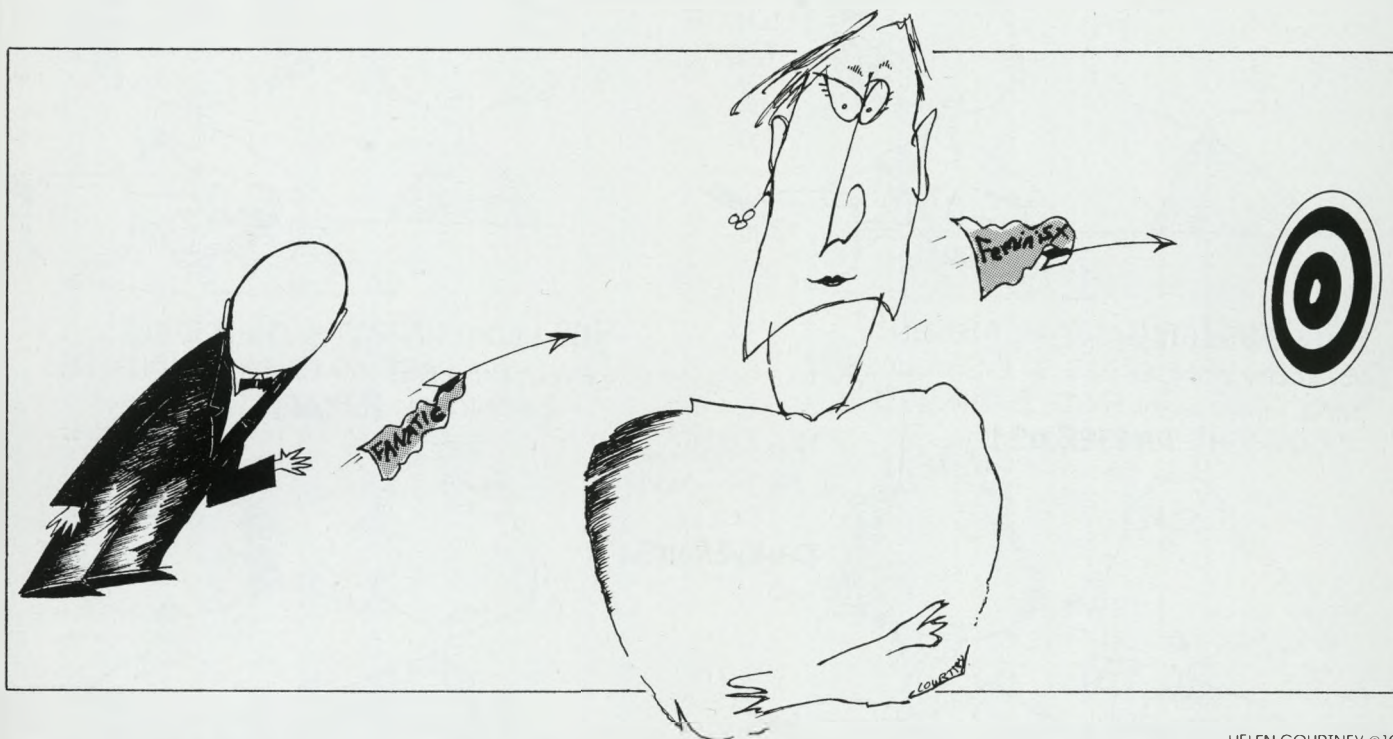
Discrimination Survey This is being conducted among lesbians and gay men by way of a confidential questionnaire covering employment, housing, insurance, social services and health, equality of legal status and more. Copies available by phoning (09) 390-789 Extn 851 or writing to Discrimination Survey, P O Box 6663, Wellesley St Post Office, Auckland.

Winter Solstice gathering on women's common land, Waihopai Valley. Women will be coming and going and celebrating from 20 June to 5 July. Come when you can for as long as you can. Bring camping gear and warm clothes. Information contact Becky (0818) 7526 or Joan (057) 24866.

Support our songwriters and musicians Mahina Tocker of Raukawa Tuwhartoa, Waikato, Maniopot descent has the privilege of being the first Maori woman to be invited to the 1989 Vancouver Folk Festival. It is important she travels with her daughter and support person. To take up this opportunity she needs your help. Please send Koha to; Te Haerenga Fund, P O Box 47137, Ponsonby, Auckland. Phone Julie (09) 786698

CHALLENGING CHANGE

Johnella Bird, a survivor of organisations, now working in training and consultation, writes about change in large workplaces



HELEN COURTNEY ©1989

There is a high level of change going on in all kinds of organisations around New Zealand at present. Government departments, and now corporations, state-owned enterprises, local bodies and voluntary organisations are all being challenged to operate “efficiently”. Previous ideas of “service” are being challenged and dropped, along with old organisational structures and decision-making processes.

Those responsible for initiating change, from the Prime Minister (remember the Royal Commission on Social Policy?) to chief executives, directors and managers like to talk about how they base their changes on consultation. But very often the consultation makes little difference to the outcome (again, remember the Royal Commission on Social Policy) because those in authority believe that their world view, information sources and vision are superior to others’: so they “consult” and then do what they had always intended. The people who have to adjust to these changes then experience them as an imposition rather than something they have taken part in creating.

The hierarchical nature of most organisations means that people in positions of authority are responsible for change so that the organisation’s objectives (provid-

In the past following orders and performing set tasks was rewarded. Now it’s taking initiatives, making proposals for more effectiveness, competing for salary packages ...

ing a service, staying within a budget and so on) are achieved. On the whole this is done by telling people the new rules and expecting them to be implemented immediately. This demand for changes in attitudes and work patterns causes people great stress and not everyone can adapt as required. Some do not agree that the changes being made are the best ones for themselves, the workers generally or the organisation.

In the past government department employees have been rewarded for loyalty and long service – translated, that means following orders and performing set tasks.

As a result of recent changes those same government employees are now rewarded if they take initiatives, put forward proposals that increase effectiveness and compete for salary packages, etc. Those unable to change and those who challenge the nature of the changes become labelled resistant and disloyal.

To make change effectively, and without such a huge cost in human terms, it is necessary to understand the relationship between an organisation’s goals, the way it is structured and its “relational environment”. The goals are what the organisation hopes to achieve, the structure is the way it is run (how the hierarchy operates, the lines of power and influence) and “relational environment” refers to the interaction of individuals and groups and the meanings attributed to them. The meanings given to these interactions are a crucial element of the “relational environment”. For example, an employee – I’ll call her Anne – goes to her manager – Rosemary – to express reservations about some proposed changes. Unknown to Anne, Rosemary has just had a letter from a group of workers expressing the same concerns, so she sees Anne as the “group leader” (which soon becomes “chief troublemaker” in her mind) and responds defensively and negatively to Anne. Anne, therefore, sees Rosemary as unsupport-

tive, unco-operative and authoritarian. These are meanings that each takes from the interaction without the other knowing, and they will affect future interactions for them both.

Goals, structure and the relational environment all affect and influence each other. Rosemary, for example, may block Anne's next promotion because she fears her "influence". Anne, in turn, may be less committed to the organisation because she feels unsupported and discriminated against.

An environment that accommodates change requires: a clear statement of the organisation's goals, philosophy and policy; a regular (eg yearly) structure for reviewing these; decision-making processes that everyone understands; ways for feedback on performance to be conveyed; communication structures that work in many directions; clear descriptions of jobs and roles that are known by everyone concerned.

Failure to acknowledge and work with both the relational environment and the organisation's goals reduces the effectiveness of the organisation, particularly in making change. An inability to achieve this results in escalating conflict which can occur between two people, a team leader and a team, a section and an organisation, an organisation and a government.

To continue the earlier example, a year after Anne and Rosemary's initial interaction Anne may have organised her colleagues into an action group to discuss working conditions, which is likely to be seen as increasingly threatening by Rosemary. The discussion about working conditions, however, has become secondary for Rosemary to the belief that Anne is determinedly attacking the organisation for her own ends. Meanwhile Anne believes she is working for an employer who is increasingly unsympathetic to the needs of its workers.

Action will be taken to prevent this conflict from escalating to a point that it threatens the organisation. This may involve scapegoating a particular group or individual by identifying them as "the problem" rather than identifying the relationship as "the problem". If "the problem" is removed (by removing the person rather than dealing with the process) the organisation seems to achieve its goal of stability. What happens in political parties is an example here. Neither Labour or National is able to accommodate members who take a different "line" on policy issues: individuals are "dealt with" rather than the differences of opinion, the party must be seen to be "unified".

The knowledge of "the problem" and the outcome will, however, influence the meaning people give to the organisational goals and to future communications. It becomes part of the organisation's "story" to be told and retold long after the event, so

Before taking on the role of change agent consider the influence you have within the organisation

that it becomes part of the organisational culture. For example, if politicians continue to believe that teachers are radicals who don't understand the real world and teachers believe that politicians always have their eye on the next election rather than on meaningful educational change, then communication between those two groups will be influenced by those beliefs. Vicious cycles of misunderstanding occur, reaching crisis point whenever planning for change and setting new goals. These vicious cycles can be interrupted by understanding the restraints operating on the organisation or system. These restraints include:

1. Economics, eg resources are limited or unavailable.

2. Organisation and/or individual beliefs, eg that line management is the only effective model of management or social workers are too emotional.

3. The interactive processes between departments, groups of people or two individuals. For example a supervisor experiences a worker's questions as a challenge to her authority. She responds to the questions in an authoritarian and controlling manner. The worker continues to pursue answers to her "valid" questions. This is experienced by the supervisor as increasingly threatening and she becomes even more authoritarian and so on.

THE ROLE OF A CHANGE AGENT

Before taking on the role of a "change agent" it is important to consider the influence you have within the organisation (for example, if you are a storehand the influence that you will have on the management's beliefs or actions is limited); and whether it is possible to achieve an agreement between all parties to take part.

People who are not in a position to influence a substantial shift in the organisation's relational environment can still benefit from understanding the restraints on change as this will help them to keep themselves and their colleagues "safe" within the organisation.

If change is not being facilitated effectively by those who have the power then others within the organisation may try to deal with the escalating conflict and confusion. In doing this they may experience:

1. Increased stress as they attempt to do their own job plus organise and attend meetings, write memos and minutes. In other words, their workload will increase enormously.

2. Increased conflict. People in the hierarchy will see the change process as a threat to organisational stability. In many hierarchies anything coming from below is seen as an aggressive challenge. This is held up by beliefs like – "worthwhile ideas only come from the top", "if we agree to this they'll think they can do it again", "we have to be in control", "they don't understand, they're so emotional".

3. Individuals or groups may be scapegoated or targeted by –

- a. Discrediting them with labels like feminist, radical, activist, lesbian etc, in the hope that this will distract from the issue and reduce support.

- b. Challenging their competence and then advertising this throughout the organisation, eg case load is too low; certain client groups are discriminated against, forms aren't filled in accurately.

- c. Challenging their motives and reasonableness, eg "We've offered to compromise but she won't meet us half way", "She has an anger problem or a problem with authority", "We have women in management positions, what more can they want".

- d. Harassment – this occurs when the process of discrediting has not been effective in reducing or isolating them. Harassment may take the form of constant surveillance and censure for the breaking of minor organisational rules, eg "You haven't filled in forms at the right time", "Your morning tea breaks are too long", "You haven't cleaned the company car this week", "How do you account for your time-in-lieu?" The intent at this point is to remove the individual(s) from the organisation.

HOW TO SURVIVE

Firstly it is important to have an analysis of the organisational system. This can be achieved by answering the following questions.

1. Describe the decision making processes in your organisation – how are decisions made?

2. In what areas do you have total decision making authority?

3. In what areas are you required to consult the hierarchy?

4. In what areas do you have the authority to advise only?

5. In what areas do you have no input into the decision making process?

6. What is organisation's stated policy about decision-making processes?

7. What actually happens in respect to decision making processes?

8. Who is the most influential person in the organisation?

9. Who has the most influence over this person? Who next and where do you fit?

10. How would you describe your role in the organisation?

11. How would others describe your role in the organisation?

12. What do people in authority expect from those in a leadership role?

13. What do staff expect from people in a leadership role?

14. What are the organisational goals and how are they constructed?

15. What is the process of information feedback within the organisation?

16. Which departments or people are seen to have a connection with each other?

17. Which departments are seen as strong or powerful?

18. Which departments are seen as weak?

19. How does that perception affect their relationship with people in authority?

Then analyse yourself in relation to the organisation by answering the following questions.

1. How am I described by those in authority – include strengths and weaknesses.

2. How would colleagues describe me – include strengths and weaknesses.

3. How would people who I supervise describe me – include strengths and weaknesses.

4. What role am I expected to play within the organisation?

5. What role do I play within the organisation?

It is important to have an analysis of the values and motivations of people in positions of authority. The answers to the following questions will clarify your understanding of this.

1. What are their hopes for the organisation?

2. How would these hopes impact on their career motivations?

3. What are their hopes for themselves?

4. What strategies have they used to deal with organisational conflict in the past?

5. What are their beliefs about hierarchy, decision-making processes and authority?

Finally, set clear goals and plans for yourself and/or the department you work within in respect to initiating change.

To take on this process successfully it is critical that potential conflicts are addressed by dealing with the relational and organisation processes rather than confronting the individual(s). For example, if you are placing a new employee off the organisational salary scale, what implications does that have for future salary negotiations with staff – in contrast to “Why are

Very often consultation makes little difference to the outcome

you putting her on that salary?” Indicate by your questions that people in authority don’t have all the necessary information to make a wise decision. For instance, ask future-orientated questions like, “What will happen to staff morale if the organisation’s goal for 1989 is to appoint more women managers and you continue to fill those positions with men? Do you think the staff will have more or less faith in the usefulness of annual goal setting?”

Another method of legitimising proposals or questions is to connect them to organisational goals and/or benefit for the client population, and/or benefit to the organisation. For example, the organisation says it is committed to biculturalism and you have asked that instead of employing one Maori worker, two are taken on. The response is “No, the need for this is not proven.” Rather than continue an escalating argument around proving the need, you go back to the stated bicultural policy and ask how they are planning to put this into practice while employing so

few Maori workers.

If you are successful in surviving organisational change or retaining a department or unit’s identity that challenges the organisational beliefs (which may be stated or hidden), you may nevertheless be labelled by those in the hierarchy and you will be watched very carefully. One small mistake in judgement may result in an escalation of events which is quickly beyond your control. The conflict will now be open and direct.

To survive this it is necessary to activate support systems within the organisation, set goals (what needs to be changed, how far are we prepared to go?), address the issue of timing (how long do we wait until we respond?), and activate support systems outside the organisation, eg media, professional and community groups.

WORKING WITH WOMEN

Feminists who are appointed to positions of authority are being challenged to incorporate their feminist values into their practice. This is often experienced as a lonely and unsupported task as they really are, usually, on their own.

Women seem to choose one of several directions. They may totally adopt the organisational culture because finally this represents their actual rather than idealistic values. We lack models for operating differently – but we do not lack ideas. If we can provide an environment that allows experimentation and trust then we could create these alternative models. But women who have a feminist understanding are often unable or unwilling to experiment because they cannot give away authority, by asking for other people’s input and knowledge, as they need to hold on to the power of their position. These women need to retain a powerful public image and, regardless of their rhetoric, will usually adopt the dominant culture’s values. They will not become agents for change.

Alternately, women may develop a vision that incorporates values of co-operation, accountability, excellent service, appreciation of diversity and acknowledgement of power differentials both inside and outside the group. These women risk becoming isolated, as the dominant culture will see difference as a challenge and a threat to the status quo. The effect of this is to put any individual woman trying to make change under such stress that she can remain in the job for only a limited time. Her replacement will apply her own philosophy to the organisation, regardless of any previous changes towards a feminist process. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs is an example here.

Is it possible to survive as a feminist in a large organisation? With personal strength, support, skills and a vision, it may be. Tell us about it! ■

Caril Cowan

INDEPENDENT NURSE PRACTITIONER

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- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| \$ A \$
for Admen and for Accountants, also for the Acquisition of Associated Affluence. | \$ J \$
for Journalism, i.e. Joker's Jargon for Jaded repetition of Jingoism and Jiggery-pokery. | \$ S \$
for Scam — we are Sailing on a Sea of Sales talk. |
| \$ B \$
for Boy's Boats, Bullshit and the Big Bucks that Benefit the merchant Banks. | \$ K \$
for KZ7, a Kinky Kind of Kayak, also for Kidstake. | \$ T \$
for Televised Tedium and for Tales of Trivia about Traditional Tarzan Types (see M for Media). |
| \$ C \$
for Corporate Confidence tricks. | \$ L \$
for Lawyers, Lawsuits and Lots of Lovely Lolly. | \$ U \$
for Unemployment Untouched by Underwriting a U (for Ubiquitous) boat. |
| \$ D \$
for Deliberate Distraction from Debating the Disempowerment and Disappointment caused by Deregulation. | \$ M \$
for Money, Millionaires and Manipulation of the Media. | \$ V \$
for Vessel for Verbiage (see J for Journalism, K for KZ7, M for Media, P for Parasites, W for Waffle). |
| \$ E \$
for Effluvia. | \$ N \$
for Nausea and for Nautical Nonsense. | \$ W \$
for Waving good-bye to Water (see Y for Yacht-race and Yesteryear) also for What's in this Wankers' Waffle for Women/ (see Z for Zero). |
| \$ F \$
for Fooling some of the people all of the time, also for Fay (i.e. Fairy) tales ending Felicitously. | \$ O \$
for Old-fashioned, Ocean-going Odyssey. | \$ X \$
for Xeroxing and Xeroxing Xcess Xpressions of Xaggerated Xpectations. |
| \$ G \$
for Government Grandstanding and Gobble-dygook about Getting fay (i.e. fairy) Gold. | \$ P \$
for Profiteering Portrayed as Philanthropy and Patriotism by Public Relations Parasites. | \$ Y \$
for Yacht, Yachtie, as part of Yacht-racing, also for Yesteryear. (See O for Old-fashioned). |
| \$ H \$
for Histerical Hype, also for Heartburn. | \$ Q \$
for Qualms (see N for Nausea) and for Quick Quids (see B for Big Bucks). | \$ Z \$
for Zigzagging through the alphabet to find Zero, also Zilch. |
| \$ I \$
for Investment Ideology which Inspires International Infighting, Inveigles the Impecunious and Idiotically Impetuous. | \$ R \$
for Regatta (see O for Old-fashioned) for Rigging Races, for Reviling Rivals, Recycling Riches to the Rich White and famous. | |

Margot Roth

THE SOCIAL WORKER

NORMA MICHAEL

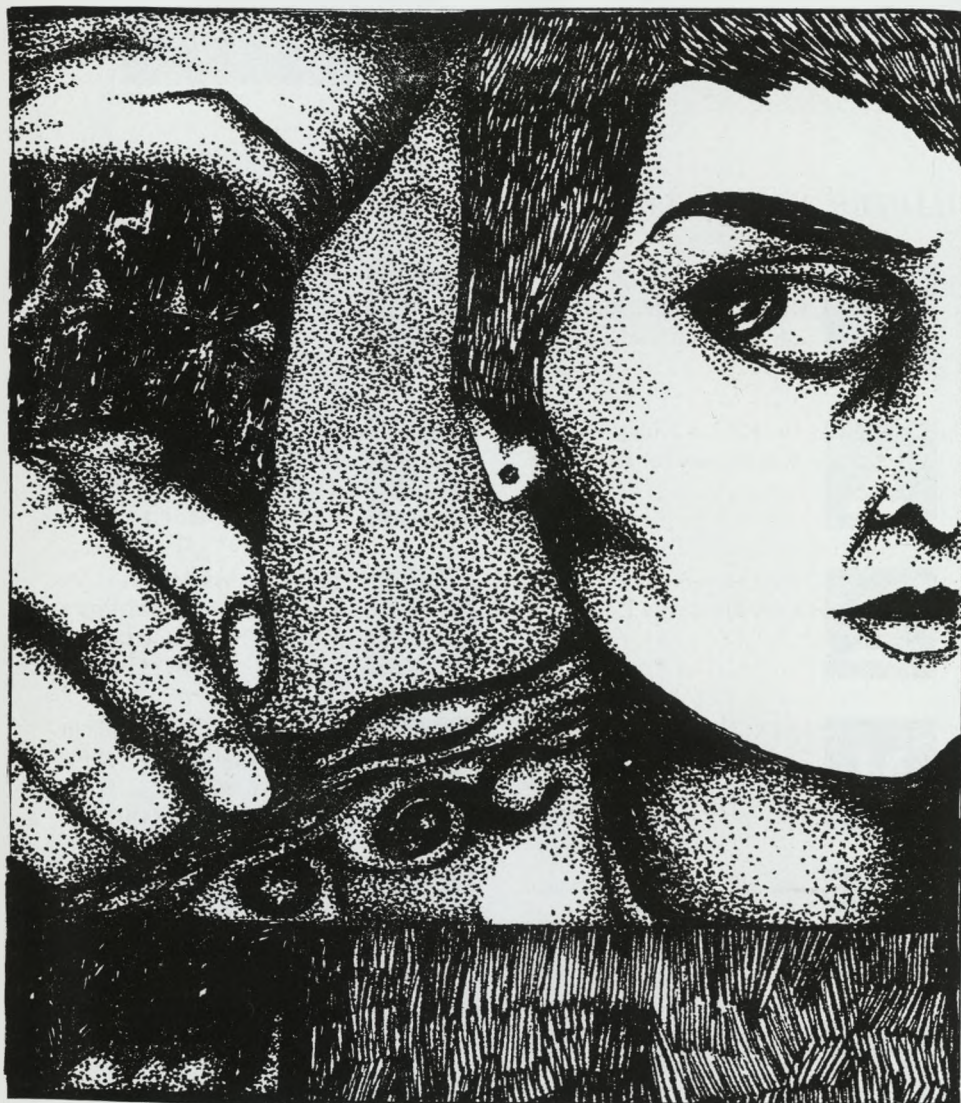


ILLUSTRATION: LINDA SABBAGE

Who am I afraid of? What am I afraid of? Are you kidding? Bloody everything.

And the bloody kid. She never friggin stops. If she's not hungry, she's shitty, and if she's not shitty she howls anyway. Sometimes I get so churned up I feel it down here, and I look down at her and I think, Christ, I'll put a potato in your mouth, anything to stop that noise.

What? Oh yes, Ms ten-feet-off-the-ground Everything-orderly Full-of-self-esteem, you're damn right I'm feeling

angry and depressed. Try "exhausted" too while you're at it, and how about "abandoned" and "totally pissed off".

How old are YOU? Twenty-one. Fancy that. Same as me. Would you have guessed it, Ms Jonathan Seagull? You're afloat. I'm in the pits. Got it made with your good job and your gear, haven't you? Easy for you to come dispensing cheer and charity, little Ms Do-gooder. Okay, okay, all right – you're only trying to do your job.

Are you hungry? Can I get you something? Would you like some of this? It's

cold. From last night, but nice, if I do say it myself – noodles with tomato, garlic and two spring onions from last weekend. I've still got hot water to wash a cup if you want coffee. Better have it now. I may not have the water next week. The power bill's ten days overdue.

Oh, that's nice. That's a laugh (pardon me). You'll give me a hand to budget! A little miracle worker too. A regular good fairy. Well, if you're so damn clever, Polyanna, show me how you can make three dollars last three days 'til my next benefit.

Do you want this coffee, or not?

Shut up, you little bastard. Stop that howling. No, she hasn't had a bath today – or yesterday. Shocking, isn't it? You can, if you like. Yes, that pile over there. I washed them last week. Must have been one of my manic days. Tra-la-la, everybody happy.

No, I haven't been out of the house for three days. Don't they teach you to listen at the university? I just told you, I haven't got the money to go to the shops. Oh, you think I should take the child and my depression out for an airing, do you? I suppose you think all those friendly happy faces I see on the streets will cheer me up. The old ones look as if they're going home to put their heads in the gas oven and the rest look like me.

Yeah, I did go out last week. didn't I tell you about it? Last week I went to this shop in Kilburnie to try on a skirt. They didn't know I couldn't buy it. I just felt I wanted to see how I looked in something not covered in spew. Bitch, here, howled the whole time. "Shut your effin' mouth," I said, and this middle-aged dame came over, about forty she was, fresh out of the hairdresser's by the smell of her. "Would you like me to look after your baby while you try that on," she said. I gave the the big PO. Take your ass home to Daddy, I thought, and the football out of your mouth; go find somebody else to make you feel good about how kind you are to the underprivileged. I can just hear her telling her friends at afternoon tea about the terribly common woman she heard swearing at her dear little baby. If you're not like them you're common. Another battered baby, they'll suppose. Another murdered baby, if you don't shut up, you little beast. I wonder of SHE'S got six units towards an arts degree? Oh, surprised, are you, Ms Wonderful? Argument and analysis, as in language of logic, as in all mothers are radiant, sweet and lovely; I'm a young mother; therefore I am radiant, sweet and lovely.

I haven't told you before how I got her? Loneliness, not lust. He's still wet behind the ears (living in a Varsity residence now). And so was I, wet behind the ears, and living in grotty room in Newtown. I was on my own one weekend. I got really

homesick and Sunday morning I went out to ring Mum in Hawkes Bay. The whole inside of the telephone box was covered in blood. Somebody'd been beaten up on Saturday night right where I was standing. I just stood there and cried. Couldn't ring home. So I rang him and that was that. Both of us hayseeds, missing home. Now I'm really stuck in Newtown, with that brick wall growing outside the kitchen window. Trendy area! That's a laugh. No, we don't want to get married, either of us. And I want her. No, my parents can't help. They've got problems of their own. May have to leave the farm. Anyway, they think I'm working in Australia.

You know when you came last week? Well, I really made an effort after I saw you – tried to get myself organised. Selling, I thought. Selling. Make my own time. Get a baby-sitter or put Princess in the creche with those nuns. So I went into one of those "good bookstores". This big, bearded guy in glasses was bent over a desk licking stamps and sticking them on envelopes. It was a shame I intruded on him. What a nerve I had – me with my pushchair and my tatty look. I stopped beside him. He paused with his hand in mid air, a stamp stuck on his finger and looked me up and down. He lifted his eyebrows. "Can I help you?" he mumbled through his fungus. I DOUBT IT SIR, I REALLY DOUBT IT. He'd have crapped himself if he'd smiled. Even turning to look at me had required a mammoth effort. "I'd like to see some books on selling," I said (I'd just got my benefit). He said, "Selling". I heard "My God! We don't stock books on selling." He spoke very carefully, enunciating like hell. "You should, you big git," I said, and did a wheelie with Madame here. Just another bastard.

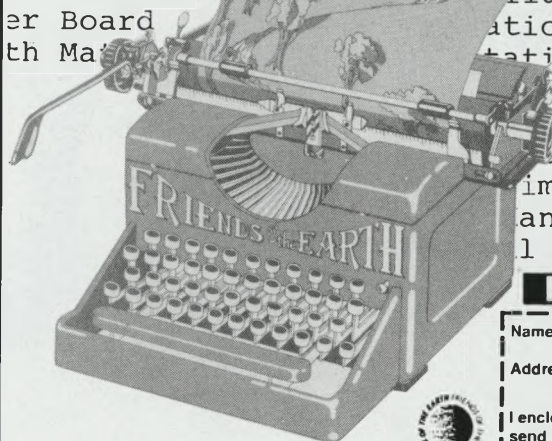
Here's a clean sheet. you can put her down on that. Thank God, she's shut up. Thanks. The Duke and I wish to thank you for your wonderful work. No kidding. Thanks heaps. Here – let me take her. Hello, little goosey, goosey gander. I'll put her down here and get you some more of this bilge.

Look, I really don't know how to say it, but you're doing a great job, coming in here and letting me talk to you. And looking after her. But you're just kidding me, aren't you? I mean, why don't you say what you're thinking? That I'm the pits. Another self-pitying bludger. Another case. That's what I am. Just another case. True, isn't it? "Now we'll have a little role play, class. I want all you social workers to imagine you're blotting paper, soaking up all the shit you're going to get, particularly from the single mums."

Have you ever felt you're stuck on the ceiling, looking down on yourself? If I'm disgusted with myself, why aren't you, instead of sitting there, nodding your head at me, telling me I'm angry and depressed,

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as if you understood? You! What do you understand about it? Can you understand that I want to postpone the rest of my life? That's what's to understand, Ms Lovely 1989. Pity I haven't got a brown skin, then you could really go to town. But I'm a Wasp – and pardon me all to hell, but that's where I'm coming from.

No, thank you. I won't have a good cry. I feel really bad about that. I think she really did want to help. May I? – for my nose! She probably looked at me and said to herself, "That young girl's stressed." I'll probably never see her again, never be

able to tell her I'm sorry I spoke to her like that. Yeah, well, she'd probably knock me back now. But I'd still feel good I'd done it, wouldn't I?

You're leaving now? There's your bag. Thanks for your visit. You're okay. Yes, yes, I'll do that. I'll go down to the library. They'll have tons of books on selling. See you next week? Oh, tomorrow? Great! Up you come, Princess. Wave ta-ta to the social worker. Bye for now, Stephanie, see you tomorrow. And thanks.

See you tomorrow. ■

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STROKES AND ART ATTACKS



Angela Walsh, Debi Jones and Lorraine Ashbourne, *Distant Voices, Still Lives*

It's almost film festival time. That means trying to decide which films to see and then wondering whether to believe the publicity gumpf at the risk of seeing a film that you're not quite sure about. *Athina Tsoulis* has jumped the queue for a few sneak previews of films for women that might just make those decisions a little easier.

S.N.E.A.K P.R.E.V.I.E.W.S

class Britain, the women are strong and keep the family together. All the actors are excellent and Davies holds the camera steady allowing the performers to shine.

This film is one of the highlights of the forthcoming Film Festival.

BAGDAD CAFE Dir: Percy Adlon

Bagdad Cafe is Percy Adlon's first American film. This German film maker is best known for *Sugar Baby*, starring Marianne Sagebrecht who also appears in *Bagdad Cafe*. Marianne plays the role of a Bavarian frau replete in suit and hat with feather common to that part of the world.

Jasmin is a tourist in America and falls out with her husband in the middle of the Mojave Desert. She stumbles upon a ramshackle motel and its black owner, Brenda, who has also despatched her "no-good" husband.

The film is largely about the blossoming and growing friendship between two unlikely women - neither glamorous in Hollywood terms. One a large, childless woman in strange clothes (and why does she have a suitcase full

of men's clothes?) who demands order and cleanliness, the other a skinny, loud black woman who has allowed chaos to reign in her domain.

Predictably as the two become friends, Jasmin loosens up and Brenda gets her act together and smartens up the Cafe. Together they are a formidable pair.

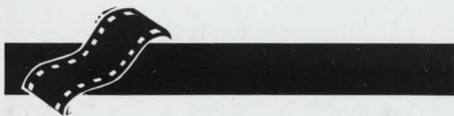
Jack Palance is thrown in as an eccentric resident of Bagdad Cafe and artist who is fascinated by the sensuous body of Jasmin and endlessly paints her along with pieces of erotic fruit.

Although the film is set in America, the pace is slow which captures the lethargy of the desert.

This is a warm, unpretentious sort of film that does not make many demands of its audience or needs much reflection. The last line is definitely worth waiting for.

WOMEN ON THE EDGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN Dir: Pedro Almodóvar

If you saw *Law of Desire* and liked it, you will definitely enjoy this film. It is an over the top Spanish film made by a gay film maker who



DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES Dir: Terence Davies

Few films by men ever capture the realities of women's lives. This one does.

This beautiful and unsentimental film is about the common oppression Terence Davies, his sisters and his mother endured at the hands of a violent father. It is divided in two parts, the first when his sisters are teenagers, the second when they have married.

Davies' brilliant film is not depressing. Despite their grim lives in 40s and 50s working

likes women – except for the hard, cold feminist variety!

The film revolves around an aging lothario, although we see little of him, and the antics of Pepa, his recently deposed lover. The film exposes the hypocrisy which men use to tie women to them and the obsessiveness that overtakes a woman when a relationship ends. All this is done with extremely good humour as the women seek revenge.

GREEN TEA AND CHERRY RIPE

Dir: Solrun Hoass

A delightful short documentary film about Japanese war brides who were brought to Australia by their husbands.

Its style is fairly conventional and the film wanders from one older woman to the next. We discover the grim reality of post-war Japan which prompted these women to leave. But as they found, life in Australia was even worse. They were still seen as the enemy and this was compounded by racial prejudice in their host community. Loneliness was the biggest burden, isolated as they were in the suburbs, not being able to speak the English language.

One woman recounts how she used to go down to the wharfs when a Japanese boat came in and follow the sailors around just so that she could hear them speaking her language. Husbands added to the problem by not allowing their children to learn Japanese.

Many of the women sought comfort in religion, but not the Christian religion. The saddest woman sought distraction at the bingo table and poker machines.

The problems facing these women apply to any immigrant who enters a country where there are few of their kind. Unless experienced it is difficult to imagine the devastation of the loss of one's culture and language.

A WINTER TAN

Dir: Jackie Burroughs

A Winter Tan is an exploration of female desire, the way it is distorted and mangled out of recognition by our socialisation.

Our protagonist, Marissa (as she is called by her Mexican lovers), a bulimic with a dreadful body image, has such low self-esteem that it is impossible for her to separate heterosexual conditioning and untainted desire. Marissa places low value on her self, running after men and being used by whoever wants her. She claims that she only wants to fuck, that she only exists when a man is fucking her, and that her feminism has not helped her because it only served to hide her "natural sluttishness".

We are dealing in stereotypes here. A white gringa goes to Mexico as an extended tourist and seeks hot Latin, male blood. Marissa says she is looking for love, which she confuses with sex, and is in the right place because the men have big cocks.

The film, based on letters sent to a Canadian friend, is conducted more in the form of a monologue. Jackie Burroughs, the main actor, is also the director. This is perhaps part of the problem. As you watch this painfully thin person, in plunging necklines which reveal her sunken chest, rambling on obsessively like a junkie, I have a feeling that we are supposed to marvel at Marissa's profundity. But you rapidly lose



Pepa and Marisa in the comedy *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*

patience and wish she would shut up. And the film goes on relentlessly even though there are several points where it could have ended.

However, the film maker drags us down with Marissa further and further into self-destruction.

The film is shot in a voyeuristic manner one would normally associate with male directors. Burroughs may have deliberately chosen this technique to further enhance the objectified status of Marissa.

There are interesting segments like the bullfighting episode which Marissa likens to heterosexual love. The bull (women) are "attracted" and drawn to the cocky, strutting matador and thereby to their own destruction. However, unlike women, the bull would tear the matador to pieces if it got the chance.

The way love overpowers intelligence is a theme running through the film and is clearly demonstrated. Undoubtedly, this tortuous film will be controversial, especially if it is read at face value. It will irritate many feminists, but it is still worth seeing as it will challenge you into working out why you object to it. But there will be those who can identify with the self-hatred and constant search to fill the void in such a self-destructive manner.

FAMILY VIEWING

Director: Anlom Egoyan

The narrative of this Canadian film revolves around a teenage son's 'affection' for his elderly Armenian-Egyptian maternal grandmother. She lies in an old people's home, bed-ridden, joyless. The Boy's father, an unlikeable, cold, and distant Anglo Saxon lives with his female lover. The mother has disappeared. Thorough the discovery of some old video tapes, we are allowed to piece together the horrifying reasons for her flight.

Egoyan captures the isolation contained within modern nuclear homes, an isolation



Green Tea and Cherry Ripe

PHOTO COURTESY GOSHU FILMS

enhanced and typified by television viewing. People become voyeurs instead of active participants. The film, partly shot on video, contains a great deal of television viewing, with reality and fantasy often intertwined. The camera is a constant intruder – in building surveillance, in the father's bedroom. The father can only get aroused indirectly. He has ordered a 'dirty phonecall' at a certain time in the evening whereupon his lover enact the 'phonecall's' instructions. He then views the performance through a television monitor which is recording the proceedings.

At the 1988 Piccadilly Film Festival, the director claimed that all his characters were passive.

However, the women are most obviously passive in that they have no control over events. The father's lover is disgusted, but acquiescent; the young woman makes dirty phonecalls in order to survive; and the grandmother is, of course, completely helpless. By contrast the two male characters, father and son, are engaged in a power struggle. The son plots to wrest control over the 'care' of his grandmother. The father goes berserk at the usurpation of his power.

'Family Viewing' is a study in power dynamics: of men over men, of men over women, of Anglo Saxon over non-Anglo Saxon. It did not titillate (though this angle is often used in its promotion) nor did it condone the situation.

The two male characters are absurd figures. The women, as ever marginalised, watch on, sometimes in amazement but more often with indifference. They manage to maintain their dignity throughout. The film is certainly refreshing, both in its content and construction, the two beautifully enmeshed. If you are tired of glossy, slick, shallow movies, then this is definitely for you.

Athina Tsoulis.



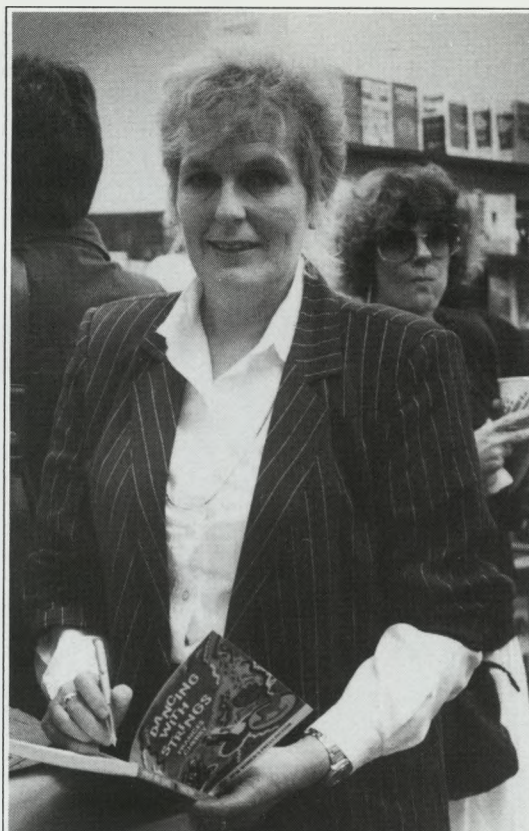
INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES CHERRY

Frances Cherry, author of *Dancing with Strings*, recently published by New Womens Press (see review in the April *Broadsheet*) and an earlier collection of short stories, *The Daughter-in-Law and other stories*, Talked to Pat Rosier.

It wouldn't surprise me to hear there was an autobiographical element to Dancing With Strings, particularly the early part. Constance, the mother for instance. So much of what we read about mothers falls within a narrow range and here is this wonderful eccentric mother who has always been a communist.

You have to know what you are writing about. All that early family material is, from my perspective, pretty true. My sister found it fascinating but she sees it slightly differently because she is a different person in a different place in the family. The father is very much my father, too.

I have started another novel, which is very different. It's not autobiographical in any way. I always wanted to write: I didn't work at



Frances Cherry

school because I thought I was going to be a writer. As the years went on I had four kids and was always going to write "one day". I wrote little bits and then chucked them away. Then I went to some WEA classes that Fiona Kidman took and I started going to Christine Cole-Catley. Then I got pregnant with my fifth child, who was six and a half years younger than the one I thought was the baby, and that was the thing that really made me think "I have to do it".

Another five years of excuses and I would be dead before I got to do it. I had a friend who wrote, and I am sure as a baby she thought all mothers had typewriters and talked about writing. Everything has been published. It's a matter of confidence in a way. We don't always do things because we don't feel confident.

I sent a couple of short stories to Cathie Dunsford when she was editing the *New Women's Fiction* collection for New Women's Press and one was accepted. Then I sent a collection of my stories, some of which had been published, to Wendy Harrex at New Women's Press and the publication of those was a real confidence booster.

I read those stories a long time ago, but I remember one in particular about a woman locking her husband in the sauna.

That's a story that women always ask for when I'm doing readings. It's called "Waiting for Jim". I think it's a black comedy, it always makes me laugh. I used to lie in bed and plan ways of murdering my husband – not that I would ever have done it, because it might have failed for one thing, and the consequences are really too great. So the next best thing you can do is write it. Since I wrote that I was in a sauna and I really felt panicky, I thought, my God, what if I couldn't get out of here. I had gone back to a class of Fiona Kidman's just to get a bit of feedback, and she got us into groups to talk about something different we would like to

write. I said I'd like to write a murder, a Roald Dahl type of thing. I left it until the last minute and I didn't know whether it had worked or not, but when somebody read it out to the group it was really quite chilling.

Do you make a living out of your writing?
No.

Would you talk a little about the writing courses you take?

I have been taking writing courses, at Wellington High and at WEA for about seven years. Then two of us had this idea about doing correspondence courses – we're having to pay back money and not making anything out of it yet. I've always been good at working with people and I like it – but you can get to the stage that you start organising people at parties. By correspondence it's very individual.

The course is in ten parts, with a month to do each assignment. They are marked very thoroughly, and sometimes I get them to do something again. They get much more feedback than when everyone is together, although in a group they do get feedback from other people as well and that's worthwhile. So this way is a lot of work for me. When one assignment is sent in I send out the next one. A good thing about it is that I have time to think about my feedback. I always tell the truth but I like to do it in a constructive way and be encouraging. It's very exposing to have your writing made public.

After the launching of *Dancing with Strings* in Wellington I knew there was going to be a review in the *Dominion*. That was all right but they were also doing a feature and I just had this panicky feeling about it. And someone said to me, "Do you realise that success is more frightening than failure?" And it is. You don't know

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what is going to happen and how people will react.

My own writing reflects my interest in people. I want people to understand things and see something differently, I hope to change their minds about things. I find people fascinating.

A lot of women write - that's very clear from the number of short stories we get sent at Broadsheet, and a lot of women are interested in other writers' process. What happens for you once you have an idea?

I always write directly onto the typewriter. If something is not quite right I might get a pen and write bits over it, or cross things out. I really feel I could do more than I do, I'm a terrible procrastinator. I know you have to just sit down and do it, but it's quite frightening, especially when you're going to start something new. I admire people like Fiona Kidman who do so many hours every day. I keep saying to myself that I will do that but I don't.

I've been so busy I just haven't had a chance to write at all. I find I do need a bit of space around me to write, doing something that's really jingle-jangling and then sitting down to a typewriter is too hard to do. Once you've started writing something, it's working around in your head, whatever else you are doing. But you do need to write: it's like talking, you don't really know what you're going to say until you start. Once you start talking or writing one thing leads to another. The characters you are writing about become themselves, it's a bit magic. They go the way they have to, because that's the sort of person they are. The right words come for the sorts of characters they are. Once you've got a character you can take them anywhere.

What would you say to women who have a burning ambition to get published?

You have to write and get feedback, in the right sort of environment. I don't think anyone, like myself, could make someone a writer if they weren't, but everybody gets better. But there are always technical things you can improve, but you can never teach a person to be a writer, but you can help them to use their talent. Often the people who have the talent are those who listen to feedback, and don't get defensive.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN AOTEAROA

Edited by Sue Middleton
Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press

Education has been a focus for feminists who recognise it as an agent of our oppression in the image of "woman it has inculcated and perpetuated, the nature of the knowledge that has been defined as important and the limitations that that have been placed on our futures". But it is also seen by feminists as a vehicle for change, as liberation.

Women and Education in Aotearoa, brings together articles by 12 New Zealand women whose experiences range across the education system and education in its wider sense. In general they document the role of education in limiting our lives, but in doing so they also imply the changes that need to be made to create a more just and equitable future.

The title suggests the breadth of the book's feminist perspectives. In addressing women and education in Aotearoa, Sue Middleton states her concern not only for the differing experi-

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ences between male and female in education but also the differences that occur among groups of girls. Rangimarie Rose Pere argues from her traditional Maori girlhood and her later research that male domination belongs to the post-Pakeha world and Ngahuia Te Awakotuku analyses her school experiences, identifying the institutional and personal racism and sexism she experienced as well as the teachers who offered her conflicting models from which she could mould her own resistance.

Alison Jones's articles goes beyond Dale Spender's radical feminist investigations of mixed gender classes to use some of the same questions about classroom talk in an all-girls' school. "Which girls are learning to lose?" is a revision of a paper that appeared in the *Women's Studies Journal*. Her comparisons of the verbal interaction between girls in a "mid-to-low stream" class of mainly working class Pacific Island girls and a "high-stream" class of mainly middle-class Pakeha girls, along with her documentation of teacher-student interaction in the mixed Pacific Island-Pakeha classes clearly demonstrates "the differential distribution of knowledge on the basis of race and class..."

The book is divided into two sections, the first organising the chapters on the education of women and girls chronologically, the second focussing on particular educational experiences of the girls and women in them, using different research methods and theoretical perspectives.

Chapters describe areas of contradiction ("Motherhood in the 1950s" by Helen May and "A Short Adventure Between School and Marriage" by Sue Middleton) and the juxtaposition of particular chapters and the connections that the reader can make amplify the contradictions. Kay Matthews describes "Pakeha Women's Experiences of Primary Schools in Hawkes Bay 1880-1918" and notes that the majority of girls left school at this point to become domestic help for their families. "The Curriculum and Girls' Secondary Schooling 1880-1925" (Ruth Fry) documents the changes in schooling to ensure that girls became the

mothers biology had destined them to be. Jane Ritchie investigates the the sexual politics in the early twentieth century of the the academic discipline, psychology, a discipline whose "prescriptions" of womanhood have been basic to the education women have been allowed to receive. And Barbara Bell looks at "Girls and Science" and shows that the teaching of science has ignored the different experiences and values of female students, making the area inaccessible and apparently irrelevant. Helen Watson queries "The Impact of the Second Wave of the Women's Movement on Policies and Practices in Schools" and the response of the moral right to the second wave is described by Allannah Ryan in relation to "Sex Education and Populist Moralism".

The politics of knowledge and its construction, which are basic to Jane Ritchie's chapter, are picked up again in Teresa Baer-Doyle's study of three extra-mural students in "To Learn or to Know - What is the Quest?" In the final chapter of this section, "Towards a Sociology of Women's Education in Aotearoa" Sue Middleton acknowledges the two sources of the theoretical perspectives used by the writers and brings together feminist theory and the sociology of education in an investigation of their usefulness here.

Considering that one of the over-riding themes of the book becomes the contradictions of women's experience, there is a nice irony in the contradiction Sue identifies in her own work. In "Researching Feminist Educational Life Histories", the chapter that opens part two, Sue points out that at least six of the chapters either exemplify kinds of life-history research or use life-histories in wider contexts. Since the life-history method is about connection "biography, history and social structure" and since feminism is concerned with the connections between the personal and the political, this is not surprising. What is ironic is the impact on Sue's thesis of the very small size of New Zealand's population. To maintain confidentiality Sue had to keep the private and public lives of her interviewees separate. The reader

could not be allowed to connect directly the personal and the political!

This book is the first entirely devoted to women and education in Aotearoa and part of its value is in the questions that are not answered, the areas that are not covered. Pre-school education, kohangareo, non-formal adult education at least are there for the next book and every chapter of this one raises questions that inspire new documentation and further discussion. It is essential reading for anyone involved in women's studies. It joins two previous Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press publications, *Public and Private Worlds* edited by Shelagh Cox and *Women in History* edited by Barbara Brookes, Charlotte MacDonald and Margaret Tennant, to provide a strong basis in information and analysis to take us towards the feminist theories that will be useful here because they come out of our own context, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Claire-Louise McCurdy.

This review was first printed in the Women's Studies Assn (NZ) Newsletter, Vol 10, No 1, November 1988.

CO-DEPENDENT NO MORE
Melody Beattie
Collins \$17.95

"How to stop controlling others and start caring for yourself." That's the sub-title. Sounds great. Beattie acknowledges that the concept can be vague, runs through some of the history of the idea and comes up with her own definition: "A co-dependent person is one who has let another person's behaviour affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behaviour."

Whereas Anne Wilson Schaefer, in *Co-dependence Misunderstood - Mistreated* states firmly and often that codependence is a disease, Beattie doesn't know. She takes a pragmatic approach, deciding that these issues matter less than identifying what it is that codependents do and looking at ways to change. "Having these problems", she emphasises, "does not mean we're bad, defective or inferior. Some of us learned these behaviours as children. Other people learned them later in life. We may have learned some of these things from our interpretation of religion. *Some women were taught these behaviours were desirable feminine attributes.*" [My emphasis.]

At this point in reading the book I had an "aha" reaction. Of course. Describing codependent behaviour is describing the oppression of women. Feminism analyses this as a social and cultural phenomenon that affects us each individually, writers like Beattie and Schaefer describe it just in individual, emotional terms. So we end up with a non-political description of "feminine" behaviour - caring for others before yourself, not recognising your own needs, feeling bad about yourself - being, in Schaefer's words, "externally referenced". Stop looking after other people and start looking after yourself is the message. Like yourself. Put yourself first. Set your own limits. Work out your needs. These are powerful messages for women because most of us have been so thoroughly socialised into the belief that looking after other people is our function.

Beattie's list of what codependents do goes on for over nine pages and describes everyone. Then she goes on to the basics of self care,

which will be helpful to anyone who gets value from the twelve-step method that originated with AA. But by the end of the book I thought a lot of it was silly. There were so many examples, the lists were so long, that it somehow lost its point. I think she is saying that nearly all of us could stand to look at how we deal with our emotions and get more clear in both our understanding of ourselves and the way we communicate with each other. Which is okay as far as it goes but it does lead readily to a feeling that it's our fault if we don't manage to do better. What a feminist analysis gives us as well is an understanding of the context we are operating in - we are not *meant* to have needs or expect to meet them.

Putting something that is a collection of emotional responses and behaviour into a disease model, as Schaefer does in particular, also needs to be questioned. How useful is it to identify nearly all women as "sick" in our relationships (I guess it certainly helps sell books)? Another danger is that we can give ourselves the label and punish ourselves accordingly. "I am a codependent" as a label feeds the assumption that it's my fault and I'm pretty hopeless, as well as identifying me as the label. "Some of my behaviour is codependent" is more accurate and useful.

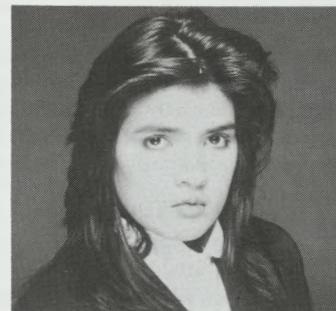
The concept of codependence was developed in the context of treatment for alcohol and drug abuse so it is very hooked into addiction models. It would be better, I think, if the useful things about the descriptions and suggestions could be taken out of the addiction/disease context and explored as ideas in themselves. (And we might just find that a lot of the work has already been done by feminist writers.)

For example, Beattie urges us to stop caring for everyone else and care for ourselves. Tell that to a solo mother with three pre-schoolers! The disease label describes all the aspects of the behaviour as negative, but presumably we don't want a world where we are all "perfectly" good at taking care of ourselves and don't give a damn about anyone else. More constructively, let's look at the whole idea of caring and

who does it for whom as well as cultural and racial differences of attitude and expectation. Caring for others is not a bad thing in itself, but women in our Pakeha society are certainly oppressed and exploited by being identified as the "carers" and invisible as people needing care, often to ourselves.

Pat Rosier

ANCIENT HEART
Tanita Tikaram
WEA Records
Angela Corry interviewed
Tanita by phone.



Ever listen to an album so good you wonder why you haven't heard of the artist before? This first album, *Ancient Heart* grabs you from the beginning and fulfills all the promise of the hit single "Good Tradition".

Tanita Tikaram can share room in your collection with Enya, Tracy Chapman and others without apology. Her voice is warm, deep, controlled, the lyrics clear and softly, softly mysterious. If age is relevant, she is 19, if it's nationality she's British, Indian, Chinese She says of herself she's "just a songwriter, that's all".

Armed with *Ancient Heart*, her autobiographical notes, the dubious benefit of someone else's article (Adam Sweeting, "Big Girls Do Cry", *Guardian*, 1 July 1988) and the promise of an early morning phone call to Tanita in the United States I set out to learn all:

She was born in West Germany in 1969,

TANITA TIKARAM
ancient heart



Out now through WEA on album cassette and CD through all good record stores.

lived there for 12 years then moved to England. She began serious songwriting at 16, having previously deemed music a "low art". After her A levels she sought refuge in the local library and other useful distractions such as coffee shops, affairs, and other people's revision plans. "Poor Cow" and a flood of other songs were written then, she says, "because there was nothing else to do".

Tanita played her first gig at The Mean Fiddler in December 1987 and signed with WEA in March 1988. I asked whether this was an uncommonly swift experience and she explained that many artists still record in England without having played a single gig. (England still lacks an accessible performing circuit.) She regards her own experience as fortunate. "Good tradition" was released as a single in England and easily made it to the Top Ten, a success which seems to have sent the *Guardian* reviewer into a frenzy: "Any woman who can pen half a tune, stand on her own two feet and brandish a guitar is likely to find herself being picketed by men from recording companies waving contracts.... record labels have stumbled on 'girls' as a temporary solution ... even if their records aren't brilliant they can invariably be sold on the glamour ticket."

Reviewer Sweeting bills Tanita as "the latest in a line of post-feminist singer/songwriters". She regards the labelling as inevitable – not because she fits the mould, but because the media always does it. Most women in the last 20 years have been influenced by feminism, she believes, but they don't "wear it on their sleeves", they just get on with their lives.

She doesn't see that women are disadvantaged in the recording industry, for one thing it's young enough to shrug off the mantles worn by those with entrenched attitudes, and besides, to Tanita it's a matter of deciding whether one tolerates second best or not. She doesn't, and like the song says, she's no "sighing innocent". Her autobiographical notes tell us that her music is "part elaborate code and part feet off the ground logic" and she cites individual and eclectic artists like Joni Mitchell, Tom Waits, Jennifer Warnes, Leonard Cohen, Otis Redding and Van Morrison as influences.

When I asked how much of her own "agony and ecstasy" became part of her music she insisted it is not about her, she just writes about people she cares about and bits and pieces she picks up on the way. She would not write political songs, she said, because they wouldn't come out naturally. I sensed room for debate with her on this point – the songs that did come naturally then were from *her* and therefore to a certain extent they are *about* her ...

Tanita has toured the UK and Europe since *Ancient Heart* was released and she is part way through her tour of the US. I asked whether she was likely to perform in the South Pacific. "Maybe" was all she gave.

Indisputably a highly motivated and talented singer/songwriter, she is conscious of being considered ambitious and wants to defend her position... "there is just a right way to run my career and get on with the main event, which is writing songs and recording." Fair enough.

I asked Tanita whether she had any advice for young artists trying to get a break in the industry. Her response: "If anyone wants to be there they won't need advice from me, they'll have their own vision." Thanks, Tanita. ■

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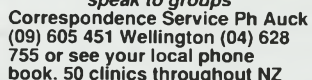
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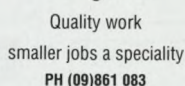
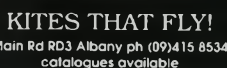
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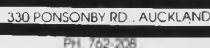
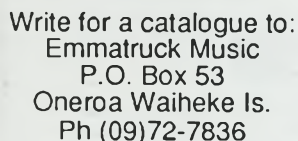


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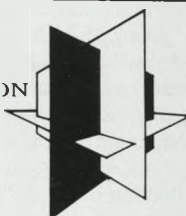
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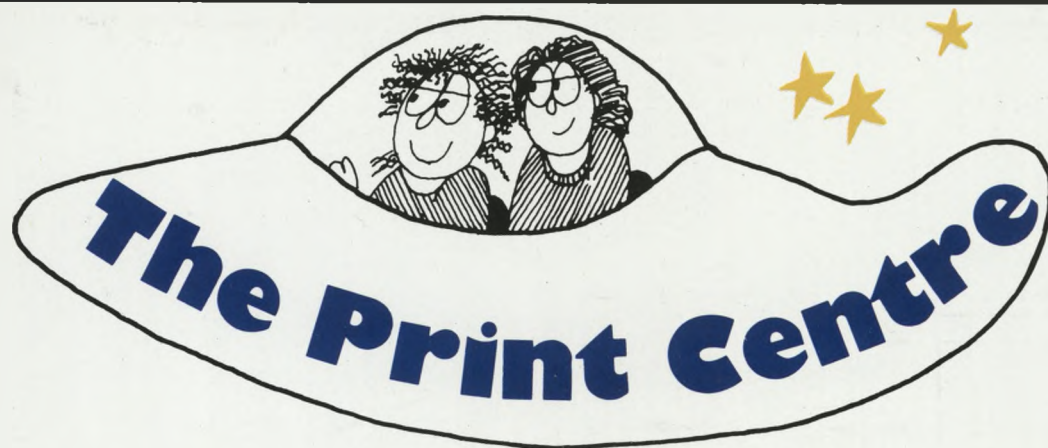
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