

Broadside

A FEMINIST REVIEW

Volume 6, number 8

June 1985

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NEW COLLEGE



Lesbian Art: Lynne Fernie's "One Night I Went to the Cameo" at Sparkes Gallery's show, Unparallel Views. SEE STORY PAGE 11.

FEATURE

FRASER FINDINGS:

Broadside provides readers with a guide to the recently published Fraser Committee Report on Pornography and Prostitution. Though the committee's findings have a feminist overtone, according to Lisa Freedman, it remains to be seen if the recommendations will be acted on by our Tory government. Page 8.

NEWS

BOOKSTORE BUST: Pages Bookstore owner has been charged with carrying obscene material: in this case a display of work by Toronto artists The Woomers, containing various feminine domestic accoutrements. The most shocking? Sanitary napkins spray-painted red. Ingrid MacDonald reports. Page 5.

MOVEMENT MATTERS:

Read about the upcoming NGO End of Decade conference in Nairobi; about a gathering of rural women in PEI; about a woman and sports conference in Vancouver; and more. Page 5.

INSIDE BROADSIDE

COMMENT

TORY SCHOOL OF

THOUGHT: The Ontario Tories have seen the writing on the wall - their most right-wing candidates failed at the polls - but what about the black-board? How will they handle the issue of separate school funding? Susan Ursel and Sarah Eliot comment. Page 4.

PORN DEBATE: The recently published book *Women Against Censorship*, edited by Varda Burstyn, provides more fuel for the porn/censorship debate. *Broadside* presents two views, on the book and on the subject, by Pam Blackstone of Victoria's Women Against Pornography, and by Diana Majury. Page 6.

OUTSIDE BROADSIDE:

Don't miss this month's calendar of Toronto women's events, for June 1985. Page 15.

ARTS

PEACE POLITICS: The NFB's documentary film *Speaking Our Peace* leaves the filmmakers open to accusations of reactionary "women-as-nurturers" politics, but this is clearly not their intention, says reviewer Donna Gollan. Page 10.

LESBIAN ART? Though an exhibit of art at Toronto's Sparkes Gallery was devoted to the work of lesbian artists, the content was not easily defined as lesbian. But, says reviewer Randi Spires, the visibility of lesbians as artists is a major breakthrough. Page 11.

SISTER VISION: Singers Casselberry-Dupr e and Jane Sapp bring gospel and revivalism to the Toronto stage, along with their politics: a form of musical journalism says reviewer Ingrid MacDonald. Page 12.

TWINKIES ON TAP: *Ladies Against Women*, presented by Toronto's Nightwood Theatre, subjected the audience to an evening of consciousness-lowering: from Mrs. Cholesterol making Twinkies from scratch and advocating abolition of the environment, to a fashion show of endangered species. Reviewed by Amanda Hale. Page 12.

DANGEROUS PLEASURE: *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carole S. Vance, is not an anthology about pornography, says reviewer Sherrill Cheda. It is about the place of the erotic in women's lives. Page 13.

OTHER BOOKS: *Linden Hills* by Gloria Naylor, reviewed by Sarah Eliot; *Horses Make the Landscape More Beautiful* by Alice Walker, reviewed by Jean Wilson; and three collections by Canadian poets, reviewed by Betsy Nuse. Pages 13, 14.



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The *Broadside* Collective does not necessarily share the views contained in any article, even if the byline belongs to a collective member. Views of the Collective are expressed **only** in editorials, and essays signed by the Collective.

Manuscripts of articles should be typed on white paper, double-spaced (send us original, keep a copy) and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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advance notice.

Distinct Position**Broadside:**

I need to clarify a statement made by Varda Burstyn ("Erotic Rights," April 1985), concerning my speech to the annual Canadians for Decency Conference and her charge that I "do not demarcate a distinct (feminist) position but allow the appearance of consensus (with the right) on pornography at the expense of critical feminist issues." This is inaccurate and I wish to set the record straight.

I accepted the request to speak at the conference precisely because I needed to demarcate these lines. The basic theme of my presentation was that there are two types of anti-pornography groups. One group sees pornography as the result of sexual freedom—particularly women's. This group believes that the answer lies in reinstating the traditional role of men, as head of household, and would place women back in the home. Sex education would be taken from the schools, and moral teaching placed back in the hands of the father. The other group says that pornography is the most graphic demonstration yet of the lack of sexual freedom for women. This group, composed largely of feminists, says that a society truly liberated wouldn't get turned on by using its kids sexually, or by violent imagery.

I made a very clear statement that this second analysis is based on an understanding of the oppression of women—in the home, the workplace and the culture. I talked about poverty and stated that sexual liberation for women was going to mean, not more sex, but different rules and that these rules would never change until women have access to the creation of alternative cultural images: "Until women are given, or take more of our rightful place, with or without pornography, too much of the sex in their lives will remain coercive."

I said that the answers lay in affirmative action, universal day care, equal pay for work of equal value, and a whole new teaching of the human rights of women in schools and religious institutions. I said that any alliance with any groups working against these principles was not feasible. "Lesbians particularly are degraded and exploited in main stream heterosexual pornography, and their lives are viciously lied about. It is very important that we in the anti-pornography movement not align ourselves with those who confuse these issues and would work to curb the human rights of gays and lesbians."

It was a controversial speech. Many people walked out. But surprisingly most of the women and a fair number of the men who stayed gave me a long standing ovation. Many women came up to me after and told me how alone they felt and how grateful they were that someone had articulated for them, a pro-woman analysis. I spoke at the conference, as I speak to many groups, to put forward this perspective. If feminists speak only to each

other, how will the women's movement grow?

The issues that we are dealing with here—pornography, sexual expression and civil liberties—are important ones, as is the debate. It is critical that we keep it honest.

Maude Barlow
Ottawa

Data Control**Broadside:**

We would like to respond to a letter in the May issue of *Broadside*, regarding the article on the Canadian Women's Movement Archives, March 1985. There has been some misunderstanding about the most recent project of the CWMA and we would like to clarify our intentions.

We at the Canadian Women's Movement Archives have no intention of "coordinating" from Toronto any independent archives nor do we intend to "computerize" any women's lives. What we would like to do is compile a directory of archival material related to the women's movement (which would list the type of material, amount, location, and subject areas). Nowhere in this directory would individual names or details of movement activity be listed.

The aim of the Archives is to co-ordinate the listing of this material and to work with interested archives, women's resource centres, and women's organizations across Canada to compile that listing.

In order to facilitate the production of this directory, the Archives has been loaned a personal micro-computer. This computer will be used for word and data processing and will save us many hours of typing and filing.

Any information stored on these computer disks will be no more vulnerable to misuse or sabotage than information stored on paper or in filing cabinets. We at the CWMA recognize the importance of retaining control of access to our archives and we understand and respect the importance of other women's archives retaining that same control. But, using a micro-computer does not create any more of a security risk than using a pen and paper!

Computers are not "the problem." They are an important tool to be used in today's society. What is important is who controls that technology. Much of women's history has been lost and one of the many reasons is that women have not had access to information and communication technology (be it literacy, education, publishing, etc). At the archives, we feel that computers are a powerful tool which should be used in preserving women's history and we feel that computers, as another form of communication technology, will make women's history more accessible to women in the women's movement. And, if we don't use them someone else will use them to re-write our history for us.

We regret that the women at LARC feel threatened by our project. We are a collective of both lesbian and heterosexual women and we are certainly sensitive to homophobia in our society. Again we would like to repeat that the directory we would like to produce is not a collection of information about individual women. It is a listing of archival material. No group or organization would appear in this directory without their approval. If the Lesbian Archives did not want to appear in our listings, of course we would not include them.

We are an independent archives as well, and are quite aware of the importance and the need to co-ordinate our own collections. We regret the seeming hostility and suspicion on the part of the Lesbian Archives. Last summer a member of our collective tried to meet with the collective of the Lesbian Archives and Resource Centre. We have since been in touch with the Lesbian Archives and have sent them duplicate copies of archival material which has been donated to us. We fully support their activities and feel that local and regional archives are very important methods in ensuring the survival of women's history.

It was unfortunate that our intentions were misunderstood and we hope that this has helped to clarify the matter.

Canadian Women's Movement
Archives Collective
Toronto

**Apology****Broadside:**

It is unfortunate that you chose to title the extracts you printed from my letter to a friend about Pat Smith's death "A Tribute." Since I did not know Pat, I am hardly the appropriate person to write a tribute. I was also misquoted the sentence that read "I felt like crying the minute I walked in, not just because it was personal loss to me..." should not have contained the word "just." My comments were about the impact of Pat's death on the feminist community here, not about a personal loss to me. I hope Pat's friends will not be offended by my seeming presumptuousness.

Annette Clough
Vancouver

EDITORIAL**Response to Correspondence**

After a random survey, we've concluded that many *Broadside* readers turn first to the "Letters" page. It's not surprising, really. The letters are often a weathervane of community concerns; often controversies show up here first; and often the juiciest tidbits are in the letters.

But a word of caution. *Broadside* is committed to providing a forum for feminists, a place where dialogue can take place on important issues. But, with the letters, we walk a fine line between remaining open to disparate views, and allowing those with an axe to grind space to publish.

We don't want to discourage legitimate use of the forum, but we do want to minimize possible abuse of the page, not to mention abuse of individuals who are the target of

some letters.

In the past few months, we have received letters that appear to be more *ad feminam* attacks than part of a political debate. Sometimes, the letters refer to articles printed in *Broadside* and to the point of view of our authors. Sometimes, letters take on individuals who are not in any way connected to *Broadside* but are part of the larger community.

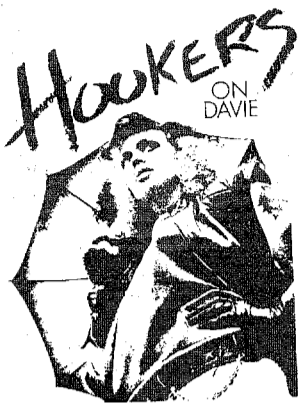
In either case, the *Broadside* collective has decided that on receipt of such a letter, a copy will be sent, where possible, to the individual being criticized, so that she can respond in the following issue of the paper if she wishes, or at the very least so that she will not be taken totally by surprise. In some cases, when letters refer to an article or author printed in *Broadside*, the author will have the opportunity to

respond immediately.

We obviously don't want to stop readers from airing real concerns, or even letting off steam: the "Letters" section is a dynamic part of the paper. But we do want to keep it open, honest and responsible.

Another word of caution. Space on the "Letters" page is limited. If you want something printed, keep it short. Seven pages of articles that start "Dear *Broadside*" will not be printed! We suggest a *maximum* of two pages, double spaced. Longer letters will either be discarded or condensed to fit available space.

So... keep those cards and letters coming in. But keep them short, and sweet.



Shortfall

Broadside:

(Re: "Hookers Film Falls Short," *Broadside* "Letters", May 1985.) We are two women filmmakers who have been working together for ten years. Our main concerns are people - especially those on the fringe; their thoughts, viewpoints, feelings and rights. We devoted two years of our lives to make *Hookers on Davie*, raised independent financing, gave prostitutes previously unheard from a voice, and travelled for an additional year to discuss the film with audiences. We do not disagree with the letter writers' point that films based on other views should be made; however it is ridiculous for them to hold us responsible for not making the film they think we should have made.

As it is, documentary filmmaking does demand a great deal of discretionary editing. Our interviews with ASP were too weak to include more footage of them than we did. We think if we had added more we would have done more damage to their case than good. So, instead, we chose to feature them en verité, as they were doing their community work.

Regarding funds from the National Film Board, we really appreciate the NFB's support, but they are mentioned last in the list of funding bodies for the film, meaning they contributed the least amount. And it is simply wrong to state that the research money we received from the Board dried up the entire reserve. In fact, since *Hookers on Davie* was released, the NFB has made a film of its own on prostitution entitled *Street Kids*.

To imply that the increasing violence on the streets of Vancouver has anything to do with the making of *Hookers on Davie* is unethical, untrue and a complete misrepresentation. We believe it would be difficult for audiences who have seen *Hookers on Davie* to continue to dehumanize those who work on the streets by putting them in the position of "the other." In fact, we feel that the presentation of the people with all their humanity and strength, compassion and humour would tend to mitigate the degree of violence that right-wing puritans bring to bear.

We are responding to the letter because we think that when lies are disguised and presented as fact, readers deserve to hear the truth.

Janis Cole
Holly Dale
Toronto

The following letters are from four prostitutes on Davie Street in Vancouver, responding to last month's letter from the Calgary Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes.

Broadside

I am writing in response to the letter from the Calgary chapter of ASP ("Hookers Film Falls Short," *Broadside*, May 1985).

After the filmmakers spent several months on Davie Street, we the prostitutes gave them our full time and cooperation to make the film a realization. This is time they put in not even knowing if a film would result from their work. I have re-read the press book that Janis and Holly gave me and noticed many times where they mention meeting us at an ASP meeting. But the real making of the film was between prostitutes and filmmakers. Maybe if ASP had given the commitment the pro-

stitutes had, the film would show their words (and less of ours). Considering that ASP is a support group for us, I wonder why they find our words unworthy in the first place.

I feel that by working with Janis and Holly, we worked with two very talented and caring people who showed exactly what our life is about, and the fact that our friendship has remained constant since the making of the film more than shows their sincerity. As a main character in the movie I feel I can speak for all of us in the film when I ask Calgary ASP to get their facts straight.

Michelle

Broadside:

There are many points in the letter from Calgary ASP that I don't agree with. It is stated in paragraph two of the letter: "This film does not help feminists working on the issue." First, it was not solely, or even partly, made for the benefit of the feminist movement. Janis and Holly made this film to give the average citizen, who may never have had the chance to witness such a scene, a chance to catch it as it happens. They were not using their privilege to solve one of the world's oldest problems, but to give a serious and sometimes humorous look at what is happening now.

Tiggy

Broadside:

After reading the letter from Calgary ASP, it is my opinion that the people responsible for the letter are quite one-sided. It's easy to note all the bad parts of prostitution. Therefore, I give a lot of credit to Janis Cole and Holly Dale for living as our shadows during their research. We gave them our highs and our lows, and they took it with great understanding. I still believe it was for a worthy cause.

Not everything about prostitution has to have the ASP seal of approval. This film was a large step toward educating the public to the fact that prostitutes are very real people, not disposable delinquents.

Tiffany

Broadside:

I was in the film *Hookers on Davie*. I am a working mother, bringing up a nine year old boy.

I think the film's focus was right on target. Prostitutes spoke out about themselves; women, transsexuals, transvestites and gays were all included because that is what you will find the streets full of, not only in Vancouver but many other cities where street prostitution exists as well. Janis and Holly were trying to include every aspect and everyone's point of view, but even if the film was two days long, you can't cover absolutely everything. There will never be one expert, there will always be many.

The point of legalization or decriminalization was brought up in the film, and talked about at an ASP meeting in fact. I think this point was put across quite clearly in the movie.

The hostility on the streets was not caused by the film. It has always been there. No one film can be expected to make a dramatic change in the way society thinks, but even if some people with age old ideas change or open up, that is a start.

Bev

Post Haste?

Broadside:

Greetings! I am writing to further affirm Susan Rickwood's letter in the March 1985 issue of *Broadside*.

As a first-time subscriber to *Broadside*, I found it somewhat disappointing and disconcerting to receive the March 1985 issue on 9 April 1985. Now I fully realize that *Broadside* is not responsible for our shoddy mail service; however, it is surely unfortunate that subscribers should have to succumb to second class mail "privilege" and subsequently

lose out on social events, etc. It seems to me that in all fairness to prospective subscribers, *Broadside* should be "up-front" and honestly advise (warn?) those subscribers that because of the second class mail service, one runs the risk of receiving their issues just a tad on the late side.

So far, receiving late issues hasn't been a problem here; however, obviously, the potential is there. We delight in the social "happenings" of Toronto the Good, but, if we get "the word" too late, well... enough said! *Broadside* remains an A-1 publication in our estimation, but it would be nice to get today's news today. "Who wants yesterday's paper? Who wants yesterday's news?"

Thanks for listening, and keep up the fine work.

Shirley G.H. Emslie,
Kitchener, Ontario

Delighted

Broadside:

Please add the enclosed gift subscription to your list. Temporarily studying south of the border, this woman is anxious to read *Broadside* on a regular basis both because you keep us informed of newsie events in Toronto which inspire those of us in less populated and politically aware/active areas to keep struggling, and because your articles give much needed food for thought on issues in a concise, intelligible fashion.

I first read *Broadside* three, maybe four, years ago while myself living in Toronto. I must confess to only reading it once, maybe twice, since moving to Halifax, until I began receiving it myself via subscription just this year. I am delighted with the quality of *Broadside*!! I read it front to back the day it arrives; which reminds me that I appreciate its timely arrival! Even if I can't attend the events, it's nice to know what's going to be happening, as opposed to what has already come and gone.

Thanks a lot for a much appreciated feminist paper.

Maureen Shebib
Halifax

Lesbian Nuns

(The following letter to Naiad Press was sent to the Toronto Lesbian Phone line and passed on, with permission, to *Broadside*.)

Broadside:

I am a lesbian nun, at this point consumed with rage and despair. Having learned recently that the book *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence* by Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan is to be published in *Forum* magazine, I can only feel betrayed and angry. Shame on you, Naiad Press, for providing the timber with which an entire community of people will now be burned at the stake!

When I was 19 years old, I was drawn into a life of Christ by the deep spiritual need to share his love serving humanity. Years later, when my own sexuality began to emerge from a formerly unknown part of my consciousness, I tried to deny it, considering all that I had been taught of its "abominable" and "aberrational" nature to be a confirmation of the more reprehensible part of me. Struggling for years with a loneliness and despair for which the most descriptive words fail me, I searched for a way to adhere to the Church's most impassioned teachings while at the same time, I continued to love and care for the parts of humanity which I denied in myself.

While tending the sick and destitute (as a Registered Nurse), plunging myself into the important work in which my community was involved, counselling the despairing in their own quests for redemption and acceptance, I agonized daily over the increasingly incomprehensible dicta of the Church which admonished me to be a feeling person while at the same time, it cautioned me to monitor, indeed, exorcise, my own feelings.

Finally, I acknowledged that part of myself which, for so many years, had remained submerged - not only the sexual aspect of my very being, but the facet of that sexuality which was homosexual.

Yes, a sin upon a sin - so I was taught. And I wept. I wept in anguish. I wept in self-contempt. I wept for the total impossibility of my position - a nun who loved the Church and my calling and yet a woman who yearned to express that love in a way which my own beloved Church found worthy of damnation in hell.

Now that the years have passed, now that I have enjoyed the loving relationship for which I so desperately yearned, now that I have joined with other nuns (in a vast underground network) to bring both solace and encouragement to like-feeling and like-thinking people - now, I have been betrayed!

It is for this reason that I find it a moral imperative to write to you - so that others who feel and think as I do will know that our grievance has found a voice.

While I have applauded the authors' courage in bringing the vital subject of lesbian nuns to public attention, while I have participated in helping to publicize their efforts, it has now become apparent that the direction which their effort has taken is completely outside the bounds of acceptability and I can no longer, in conscience, support their particular style.

My objection is based on the fact that *Forum* magazine is a subsidiary of *Penthouse* magazine. To me, *Penthouse* is the absolute paradigm of sexism and exploitation of women. It is only to the most prurient interest that this magazine appeals to the ultimate devaluation of women to which it is devoted. *Forum* magazine writes under the guise of enhancing human relationships. However, its "hidden agenda" is the same kind of exploitation and sexism which is simply a variation on the *Penthouse* theme.

While the publisher of Naiad Press may rationalize that she wants to "convert" not only sympathizers but also those of a different turn of mind, it is not "conversion" at all in which the rest of us are interested. Our goals are to wake up every day feeling good about ourselves and to share our plight with those who may gain a greater degree of understanding and empathy for the untenable position in which we are now entrenched. It is not to be "used" as objects of derision or exploitation, nor to be publicized by any magazines which have a long and ignoble history of demeaning women, per se, and lesbian women, particularly, in the most manipulative of ways.

Sister Mary Joan
New York

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A Policy for Catholic Interests

by Susan Ursel and Sarah Eliot

When the Conservatives performed their autopsy on the Ontario provincial election results, the cause of death — which is how party faithfuls view minority government — was proclaimed to be "separate school funding." This much-lauded blanket diagnosis relieved candidates of any individual sickness: one issue could be seen as responsible for the entire Tory demise. No matter that only certain candidates were stricken, random selection was apparently at work.

Strangely enough, however, a cursory body count reveals that it was primarily the right wing of the party that was terminally affected. A review of their individual health profiles suggests that other germs weakened particular candidates.

In the wake of the PCB spill near Kenora, Morley Kells, then Minister of the Environment, blithely reassured us that PCBs were only dangerous to rats. Inouciant dismissal of the facts and a certain disregard for the health of those people adversely affected did not sit well with his constituents. Kells lost a 10,000 vote plurality and a supposedly sacrosanct Conservative riding to a Liberal candidate with environmental concerns beyond rats.

Gordon Walker postulated the ultra-conservative line that women were to blame in wife-battering incidents. Remember

when senior Toronto alderman Joe Piccinini casually remarked that unemployed women were too lazy to get out of bed and look for work? Joe was subsequently reduced to a junior alderman, and on voting day voters, many of them women, knocked Walker right out of the legislature.

Former Solicitor-General John Williams, one of Miller's more "progressive" appointees, is rabidly anti-abortion. He publicly denounced his own party's decision to supply police protection to the Morgentaler Clinic in Toronto. Williams believed taxpayers should not foot the bill to protect law-breakers. Abortion became a volatile campaign issue when he ran against Liberal Elinor Caplan, who insisted on highlighting safety and access for women. The voting taxpayers proved more interested in freedom than finances: Caplan is now the MPP for Williams' former riding of Oriole.

Russell Ramsay, famous in his own riding for a record-breaking 20+ % unemployment rate, was terminated from his post as Minister of Labour. His committed opposition to legislating equal pay for work of equal value was well-known; fortunately the underpaid can and did vote.

It is clear that we don't have to look to the issue of separate school funding to explain individual defeats. It would seem more logical to look at the individual. However, it has become a convenient excuse for the party's

debacle at the polls. And like all good propaganda, it contains a grain of truth, just enough to get in your eye and blur your perspective. Separate school funding was a sleeper issue.

The Liberal and NDP parties have long supported Catholic funding. Former Premier Bill Davis slipped his boomerang stand on first his party and then Ontario, and then did a fast shuffle off centre stage. All three parties were then left with an issue not to be addressed. Why? Because opposition to the funding had already been labelled as religious bigotry. All three parties were hoist on their own petard.

In the wake of this resounding silence, it is imperative to point out that religious bigotry is not the only reason for reservation at the prospect of full funding for Catholic schools. In a society which purports to value multicultural diversity, equality, fairness and, perhaps most importantly to this issue, the separation of church and state, continued and expanded funding of a single religion can be seen not only as regressive but positively perverse.

As women, we should seriously question funding a religious school system which condemns birth control and sex education while encouraging students to picket the Morgentaler Clinic. We receive little enough recognition in our supposedly secular educational system without perpetuating the patriarchy of the papacy.

Funding any school system to express a single religious viewpoint should be unacceptable to feminists. Not only does it represent a blow to diversity; there is the dismal record of misogyny and oppression of virtually every contemporary religion. It is highly unlikely this perspective on separate school funding will ever be aired in the Ontario political forum. Cloaked in the rightness of its stance, the Conservatives can blame a bigoted electorate for their fall from grace.

The issue of Catholic funding in any presentation, should not be used as an umbrella excuse which denies the existence to revolt against a chauvinistic, environmentally-indifferent, right-leaning party. The Tory's strident right wing alienated and angered the province. Davis's unilateral imposition of Catholic funding was only a contributory cause.

Now that the electoral dust has settled, we must not let political manipulation of the separate school issue obscure our central concern. Continued and expanded funding for any patriarchal religion, Catholic or otherwise, can only impede and further restrict us. Opposition can be effective — ask Williams, Walker and Kells.

Susan Ursel and Sarah Eliot are Toronto writers, neither of whom are Catholic nor conservative.

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MOVEMENT MATTERS

End of Decade

"Nobody can speak for me. I have to speak for myself," says Nita Barrow in summing the spirit of the upcoming non-governmental conference (NGO) in Nairobi, commemorating the UN end of decade for women. Barrow, a health worker from Barbados, is now organizing the NGO from an office in New York. While the accomplishments of the decade have only shown how much work there is still to be done, said Barrow in Toronto recently, the decade has brought "women and women's concerns into focus. Women who previously had nothing, now have made micro-gains."

The NGO conference will take place July 15 to 26, 1985, and precedes the Governmental UN conference. Both conferences are being held in Kenya. Over 1000 women will be attending the NGO, focussing on key issues—peace, development, health, equality, migrant women, and older women. A daily newspaper will be produced by a team of international journalists documenting the conference. As well, there will be an international film festival, an international churches welcome centre, and field trips of Kenya organized by local Kenyan women.

Rumours circulating in American feminist presses that the Kenyan government might withhold visas from lesbians wishing to attend are not true, said Barrow. The only people who will require special arrangements are black women of South Africa, and their visas

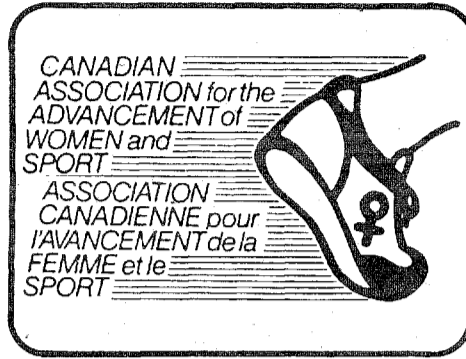
are being negotiated now. Members from Commonwealth countries, including Canada, do not require visas.

Nationalist interests, militarism, and east-west strategies have plagued the plans for the governmental conference, whose pre-Nairobi meeting this March was forced to adjourn without a document because consensus could not be reached. When asked how the NGO will manage to avoid this kind of politicization, Barrow underlines again that this conference is "about and for women, and on this basis, there is ground for consensus."

Canada has made significant financial contributions to the NGO, specifically for the travel costs of women in developing nations, that they may attend the NGO as resource persons and participants. Those of us not attending can participate at home by commemorating the decade in our own communities, as Manitoba is doing in Winnipeg this June. Correspondents from Canada will be attending and details of the conference will be published in English in *Canadian Women Studies Journal* and in French in *La Vie en Rose*.

Nita Barrow is not worried that the end of decade means the end of international interest in women's issues. "What I have learned," said Barrow, "is that when women begin anything they do not stop. The end of decade is the beginning of women."

— Ingrid MacDonald



Playing the Game

VANCOUVER—The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport is holding a conference June 14 to 16 at the Vancouver School of Theology.

Keynote speaker Grace MacInnes will talk to fitness buffs, teachers, athletes, administrators and theorists about the value of sport in women's lives, and how the CAAW&S can fit into the overall struggle for women's rights.

Conference participants will have a chance to learn how to play the game (developing new lobbying, publicity, team fundraising skills) and how to change the rules (discussing women in coaching, the connection between sport and gender, integration vs. separate-but-equal, etc.).

For information write: CAAW&S, 1200 Hornby St., Vancouver, BC, V6Z 2E2; (604) 687-3333.

YWCA's Guide

TORONTO—The YWCA's *Guide to Women's Groups and Resources* in Metropolitan Toronto, newly updated, revised and expanded to 203 listings, is now available from the YWCA, 80 Woodlawn Avenue East, Toronto M4T 1C1, telephone 961-8100, at a cost of \$4.00 + \$1.00 postage and handling.

This popular reference guide for individuals and groups wishing to access women's services has been reorganized and contains both a handy alphabetical index and category of service index, dividing the directory into eight sections related to the kind of service offered: women's centres; advocacy action groups; hostels; health information and services; other services including support groups, therapists, legal help and day care; publications/resources; and telephone information/support lines.

Each organizational listing includes the address, telephone number, hours of operation, as well as a description of the services offered.

Because the listings have been expanded, the *Guide to Women's Groups and Resources* is much more extensive than past editions, and better reflects the cultural diversity of Metropolitan Toronto and related services for women.

People in the helping professions or anyone working with women will find the *Guide* a valuable resource.

Doctors for Clinics

TORONTO—Five physicians from the Toronto-Hamilton area gathered at the Morgentaler Clinic on Harbord Street on April 24 to support the doctors who have begun training to do abortions. "As physicians we believe that abortion should be removed from the criminal code. We believe that the present law should be repealed. We support the existence of free-standing clinics providing medically insured abortions."

On the eve of an appeal of the fourth jury acquittal of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the doctors urged the government to stop wasting the taxpayers' money in the courts and to fund clinics instead. The present law has been shown repeatedly to be unenforceable. It does not represent the views of the majority of Canadians who believe that abortion should be a woman's choice. It does not allow for adequate and equitable servicing of health care needs which should be the right of all Canadians.

Pages Bust

TORONTO—Menstrual pads are making headlines again with a recent charge of obscenity.

Metro Toronto police have confiscated art work which was on display in the windows of Pages, a Queen Street bookstore, on the grounds that the installation entitled "It's a Girl," which took a critical look at female socialization, violated common decency. "It's a Girl," by Toronto artists Michele Fillion, Barbara Pavlic and Toby Zeldin, who call themselves collectively "Woomers," was part of Fem Fest 85.

The objects which have been alleged obscene and which the police now have in their possession are: one baby blue bed, one inflatable doll, two birth control packages, make up products, a douche bottle, numerous red stained feminine napkins, an empty disposable diapers box, lipstick, ladies underwear, a girdle, a shower cap, pots and pans, numerous plaster casts of penises, one K-Y jelly tube, a rubber dildo, hair spray, a plastic toy machine gun, and other feminine and domestic products.

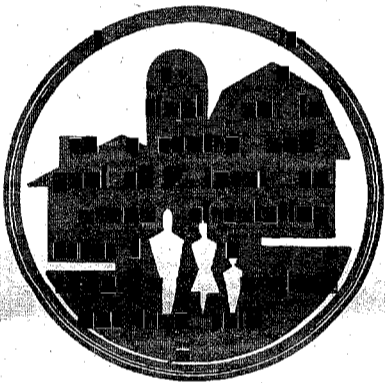
Marc Glassman, the bookstore's owner, has been charged with exhibiting obscene material. The police officer, according to Glassman, found the red stained menstrual pads to be the most offensive. "What is revealing is that people still find this, the menstrual pads, threatening," said Glassman. The window was a "history of girlhood and pop icons, magazines about how to flatten your stomach and the like. I was astonished that this turned out to be controversial."

Women's Filmforum in Nairobi

An International Women's Filmforum, produced by Toronto Harbourfront Corporation in conjunction with the National Film Board of Canada, will be an integral element at this summer's UN Decade For Women Conference and UN Non-Governmental Organization Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. The Conference, NGO Forum and the films will all address the universal themes of equality, development and peace as well as health, education and employment issues.

The necessity of providing an outlet for film at the Nairobi Conference was underscored at the 1980 UN Women's Conference in Copenhagen, a similar event organized to mark the midway point of the Decade For Women. Women by the dozens arrived in Copenhagen with films tucked under their arms, rented church basement projectors and screened their films on the walls of vacant lecture rooms. Regions were either overrepresented or not represented at all, propaganda films abounded, and, worst of all, none of the 10,000 people attending the conference knew when or where the films would be screened. The International Women's Filmforum in Nairobi hopes to eliminate most of these problems.

For more information on the International Women's Filmforum 1985 in Nairobi, please call Vivienne Kugler or Debbie Westphal, (416) 364-7127.



Farm Women's Conference

CHARLOTTETOWN— "Farm Women: Networking For Action" is the theme of the Second National Farm Women's Conference slated to be held this year in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island next November.

Wanda MacMurdo, Planning Committee Chairperson, explains that while farm women have made strides in bettering their lot, much work remains to be done. "It's time for farm women from all parts of Canada to assemble to demonstrate our motivation and find new and creative ways to better our situation within the farming industry. This Conference will bring together women from the grass roots of Canadian farming and women's agricultural organizations," said Wanda MacMurdo of the conference planning committee.

The progress of farm women within the fabric of Canadian society has been slowed somewhat by the difficult economic times facing the farming industry and that means there is still much work to be done. The planning committee representing farm women from across the country is now putting the finishing touches on the program for this year's conference. For more details contact the Department of Agriculture in your province or write to: Wanda MacMurdo, P.O. Box 984, Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 4A2.

GALA '85

EDMONTON—For the fourth year running, Edmonton's lesbian and gay community is hosting GALA '85 (Gay and Lesbian Awareness), a week of art, fun, and discussion, to coincide with International Lesbian and Gay Pride Day on June 27, 1985.

The GALA Steering Committee has once again requested Edmonton City Council to declare an official day to mark the week.

For more information, call Womospace at (403) 488-2918, or GATE at (403) 424-8361, or write GALA '85, Box 53, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2G9.

Their laws, our lives

TORONTO—From July 1 to July 7, 1985, the annual International Gay Association (IGA) conference will be taking place in Toronto, Canada, with delegates and observers from around the world. In association with this event an international lesbian and gay history conference is being organized from July 3 to July 6, to be held at the University of Toronto.

The proposed theme of this conference is "Sex and the state: their laws, our lives" and organizers hope to be able to bring lesbian and gay historians together from around the world for this important event. The conference should build on the success of "Wilde '82," a lesbian and gay history conference held in Toronto in June, 1982, which included presentations by Martha Vicinus, Allan Berube, The Buffalo Lesbian Oral History Project, Jonathan Ned Katz and many others. The topic "Sex and the state" encompasses the various ways in which the law, state policy and morality have restricted and controlled our behaviour as well as the ways in which we have resisted these restrictions and controls in our daily lives.

This conference is to be an important forum for new research and historical discoveries, as well as for the sharing of information and research. Organizers particularly hope that there will be an opportunity for historians from Europe and Australia and New Zealand to participate. Papers and ideas are being solicited for panels and discussions at the conference. Slide-shows, films and other visual presentations are also planned. The conference is organized so that a healthy balance of public presentations and private exchange will be maintained. The basic format of the conference will be papers and presentations of approximately 45 minutes in length during the day, with major slide-shows and films in the evenings.

Call for Submissions!

Prairie Fire, a Manitoba Literary Review, in co-operation with Winnipeg's Women and Words/Les femmes et les mots, is planning a special issue for Summer of 1986 to celebrate Canadian women's writing. We welcome submissions, in English or French, by and/or about Canadian women writers. Payment will be upon publication. Send us poems, songs, stories, drama and visual art. Query first for essays, articles, reports, reviews and interviews. (Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all submissions and correspondence.) Submit contributions before October 31, 1985 to: *Prairie Fire*, 3rd Floor, 374 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2J2.

MOVEMENT COMMENT

Word from the Front Lines

by Pam Blackstone, WAP

The sexuality debate—only now emerging in the Canadian women's movement—has raged for some time in the US, where it has been bitterly accusatory, dogmatic and unproductive. Women fall into two armed camps on these issues. The trenches have been dug, and the ammunition stockpiled, on both sides.

Women in Canada can learn from the American example. In Canada, the discussion is just beginning, and it is essential to keep communication open. Already the debate around censorship has become recriminatory. Efforts to stimulate genuine dialogue should be applauded and encouraged. (See Varda Burstyn's elaboration of Feminists Against Censorship's position and Susan G. Cole's overview of the current crop of "pro-sex" books, *Broadside*, April 1985) It is vitally important to our movement.

We have perhaps been reluctant to begin these discussions, sensing the necessarily painful nature of the process and the potential divisiveness of sexuality-related issues. We have also, rightly, feared a debate being used against us by the mainstream media. All of which is inevitable—just as the debate itself is, given the direction of most anti-porn lobbying.

Women Against Pornography (WAP), from our vantage point in the middle of this minefield, is in a position to see the merits and the flaws in arguments used by both sides. We hear much that we can agree with, yet we cannot fully embrace either position.

We are in strong agreement with some of the arguments raised by Feminists Against Censorship, despite shortcomings in their approach. We have had a strong anti-censorship position ourselves for most of our three-year history. And, despite frequently and publicly stating our position, we have been consistently misrepresented by the mainstream media as pro-censorship.

The assumption is made by mainstream media and anti-censorship feminists alike that anti-porn groups are by definition in favour of state censorship. Some anti-censorship feminists have a tendency to trivialize the anti-porn movement altogether, dismissing concerns about pornography as a

"distraction from the real issues." This detracts from the validity of their otherwise well-reasoned, important analysis.

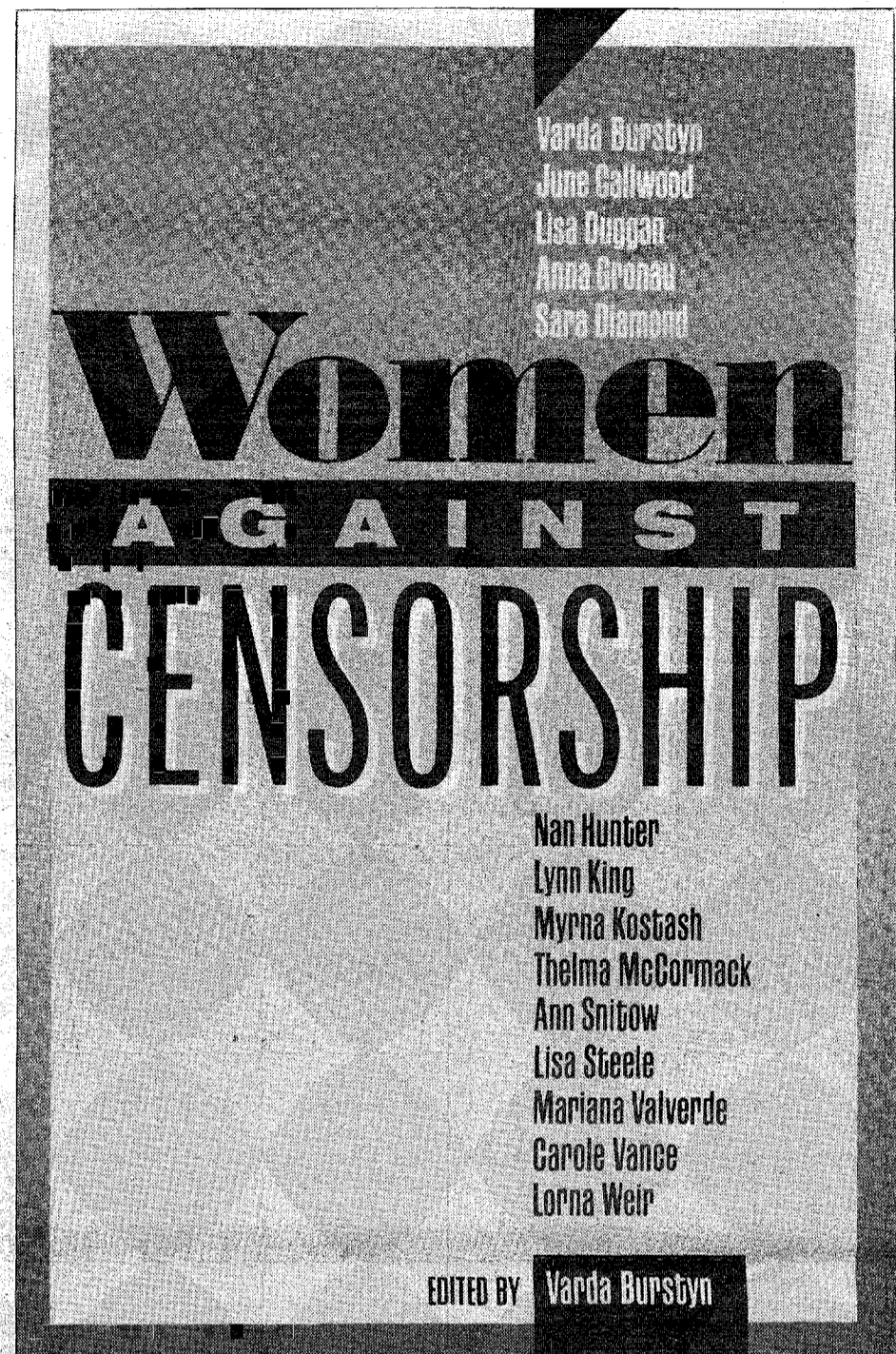
Nevertheless powerful arguments against state censorship are being raised. Varda Burstyn's book, *Women Against Censorship*—a collection of essays by prominent Canadian feminists, artists and writers—is an important one that should be carefully read by every anti-porn activist. It contains several articulate and compelling arguments against giving the state further power to control what we can see, read and hear. It is full of concrete and frightening examples of the abuses of this power that have already taken place, mostly in Ontario. It points out quite clearly that the targets of state censorship are almost always feminists, homosexuals and dissidents, not pornographers. These writers brilliantly illustrate the absurdity of expecting the patriarchy to apply the tools of state censorship against itself and in the interests of women.

It is refreshing to hear a feminist argument against censorship. Most of these writers understand that, to many women, "freedom of expression" is a meaningless abstraction. Yet they succeed in examining ways in which state censorship threatens women and fails to stop pornography, without resort to civil libertarian rhetoric. They offer a lucid and careful analysis of the faults of various pro-censorship remedies such as the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance.

Many of them argue that the anti-porn movement, in narrowing its focus to violent pornography, has made a serious tactical error. We have to agree. By focusing on images of extreme violence, are we not implicitly condoning subtler forms of cultural misogyny? Artist Lisa Steele takes this view to an extreme in her examination of sexism in the mass media, arguing that a dancing candy bar is no less harmful visually and psychically than a fragmented female form.

All of the authors, obviously, repudiate the causal relationship theory (ie, porn and rape: theory and practice), citing Thelma McCormack's controversial 1983 report (which some claim was deliberately suppressed). But none, in our opinion, adequately addresses this crucial issue.

Our strongest grievance with the anti-



censorship stance, to date, has been its lack of concrete alternatives. OK, so we don't censor. Just what do we do? Until the emergence of Burstyn's book, this question had been studiously avoided. (To give them credit, most of the authors have since put considerable thought into constructive alternatives.) In the book, they argue for increased feminist cultural production, including erotic work, to counter and subvert misogynist imagery. On the agenda are items like women-owned and operated television networks, and women-identified film, visual art, dance, video, performance and writing. Such proposals are helpful, but unrealistic in this depressed economy and climate of political repression.

Not one contributor addressed the crucial question, just what *do* we do about images of extreme misogynist violence. June Callwood complains about being shown images of meat hooks in women's vaginas. Perhaps feminists have been manipulative in their use of such images, but that does not change the fact that these images exist, as do Snuff films (WAP has a print of one). Nowhere have we seen this issue adequately addressed by anti-censorship feminists. WAP chose the course of direct action regarding *Snuff*, by obtaining and destroying as many prints as possible locally. Such actions could be carried out on a grand scale, with women organizing a covert, nation-wide campaign to simultaneously obtain as many copies of Snuff films as possible and publicly destroy them in co-ordinated, well-publicized actions. This suggestion is one of many creative possibilities which would utilize neither the tools nor resources of the patriarchal state. We should put more thought into such direct action strategies; into ways to educate, revealing and opposing pornography's message; into ways to empower women to deal with the presence of this material in our lives ourselves.

Detractors of the anti-censorship feminists tend to dismiss them entirely because they disagree with their viewpoint. To discount an observation or criticism from someone for this reason is counter-productive, denying

that they may have any valid input whatsoever. This is a mistake feminists on both sides of this issue are guilty of making.

For example, many criticisms of the anti-porn movement have emanated from the so-called "pro-sex" feminists. The "pro-sex" position is structured on several shaky premises which are far from universal truths: (a) any sex is better than none; lesbian sex is better than heterosexual; S&M lesbian sex is superior to "vanilla" lesbian sex; (b) pornography, like S&M, prostitution and "cross-generational" sex, is an issue of sexual preference; and (c) sex and power are inextricably bound.

As Susan G. Cole points out in "Sexuality and its Discontents" (*Broadside* April 1985), these women are too quick to infer censorship in any critical discussion of these issues. Debate does not equal proscription. We are able to critique the institution of prostitution without saying women must not be prostitutes. Likewise, the form of sexuality "pro-sex" women practise may be personally repugnant to many of us. But this does not justify dismissing as invalid the observations and criticisms they put forward.

The fact is, several very valid criticisms of anti-porn organizing have come from anti-censorship feminists. WAP has attempted to address many of the issues these women have raised, and some of their criticisms have radically affected our analysis. They are raising issues which have to be faced in any discussion of our sexuality, however difficult, painful and unpleasant. Particularly since feminist anti-porn lobbying relies on an arbitrary and simplistic distinction between erotica and pornography. It was this distinction, plus concern about the trend toward censorship, which motivated WAP's work on erotica.

We have learned that, if we remain open, we can learn from each other, however dissenting our viewpoints. No one ever said it would be easy.

This article was written by Pam Blackstone for *Women Against Pornography* in Victoria.

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Comment on the Crusade

by Diana Majury

For all its insights, creativity and commitment, *Women Against Censorship*, edited by Varda Burstyn, is frustrating. The book contains eleven articles by fourteen authors, all of whom are well known and highly respected within the feminist community; all of whom adamantly believe that censorship is a risky and inappropriate strategy for feminists to pursue in the fight against pornography. As Varda Burstyn says in her introduction:

We hope that from the first article - a call for reconsideration of current strategies - to the last - a set of proposals for alternatives to censorship - the record of our thoughts on the issues and the stakes in this fight will convince many others that difficulties and contradictions notwithstanding, for women freedom lies not in accepting censorship, but in repudiating it.

The problem is that with such a narrow purpose comes a somewhat narrow argument, in the hope that we will be led to the necessary conclusion that censorship is evil: the arguments seem to have been molded and constructed to fit the conclusion, rather than the conclusion flowing from the arguments. Some of the articles feel stilted and contrived in places; in others the inevitable "and therefore censorship is bad" seems to be tacked on to an otherwise thoughtful and complex analysis. If the discussion had been less directed and more open, it would have been deeper and richer and more convincing. All of the articles would, of course, still have been informed by an anti-censorship position, but the dogmatic and polemical manner in which the anti-censorship position is sometimes put forward impedes its full consideration.

Consistent with this singularity of purpose is a tendency to set up straw arguments which can be easily knocked down and victory claimed for the anti-censorship position. The authors tend not to address directly the issues and concerns raised by women against pornography; instead they frequently misrepresent, oversimplify or ignore the pro-censorship arguments. These may be good tactics in a debate where the object is to win, but they do not contribute much to the honest, deep and open discussion which the issues of pornography and censorship require and the feminist community deserves. I am not saying that anti-pornography advocates do not engage in these same tactics; I fear and suspect that they do. But the result is that the two groups tend to talk at cross purposes without communicating or responding to the legitimate concerns raised by each other. Thus, they ultimately provide little assistance to those seeking information on the issues involved, and desirous of reaching their own conclusions.

One of the arguments is the myth of the pro-woman state. We are constantly reminded that the state is not pro-woman, in fact not even neutral, and therefore should not be entrusted with legislation designed to protect women. The inference - sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit - is that anti-pornography feminists who support censorship view the state as women's protector, a view which is characterized as sexist as well as naive. It is hard to imagine that any feminist, possibly any person, thinks that the state is pro-woman. Women's relationship to the state and the strategy of feminist law reform are difficult and complex issues.

Catharine MacKinnon succinctly outlined the dilemma as it applies to rape and battery legislation - "Liberal strategies entrust women to the state. Left theory abandons us to the rapists and batterers." ("Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Toward a Feminist Jurisprudence" *Signs*, Summer 1983). This is precisely the issue which censorship raises: whether the risks inherent in censorship outweigh the risks of leaving pornographers free to produce and disseminate material without being held responsible for the individual and social consequences of its production and consumption. This is a tough question which most of the authors touch on. But often in the next breath they dismiss the

censorship position as naive and hopeless reliance upon an anti-woman state. The argument that the state is anti-woman can be used against any legislative action (equal pay, rape reform, the Charter equality provisions). State intervention and state control always involve risks, but surely the alternative is not to throw up our hands in despair at the power of the state and abandon legislative strategies altogether.

A second straw argument is the alleged alliance between anti-pornography feminists and the right wing. Being on the same side of a debate does not necessarily reflect an alliance. Right wing support of censorship and of feminist censorship strategies is problematic, but to describe the problem as an alliance is to mischaracterize and over simplify it. Much as I hate to admit it, the right wing is smart. They know a good thing when they see it and they are good at turning strategies to their advantage.

Whatever one may ultimately decide with respect to the desirability of the Andrea Dworkin/Catharine MacKinnon civil rights ordinance which characterizes pornography as sex discrimination, it is a creative and innovative approach. Not surprisingly, the Right has tried to appropriate the ordinance and adapt it to their own ends. But this cannot be seen as a critique of the ordinance per se. The ordinance supported by feminists and the ordinance promoted by the Right are fundamentally different. The Right did not need a proposed ordinance to galvanize them into action. They were advocating more expansive obscenity and censorship laws long before feminists became active on the censorship issue, and they will still be advocating expansion long after feminist reform is accomplished in this area. The beliefs and goals of right wing censorship advocates and anti-pornography feminists are diametrically opposed. There could never be an alliance between these two groups, however hard the mass media tries to create one.

Women Against Censorship tends to portray anti-pornography feminists as a narrow and rigid group focussed exclusively on censorship, whereas a number of the authors offer a broad range of alternative strategies. But it must be pointed out that a censorship position does not preclude any of these other strategies. Feminists who are advocating regulation of pornography, a point somewhat glossed over in *Women Against Censorship*, do not support the forms and formulations of censorship presently employed in Canada. The book's authors give the impression that anti-pornography feminists are advocating a broadening of state censorship powers. In fact the opposite is true: they are arguing for a much narrower offence (pornography) than the obscenity offence currently contained within the Criminal Code. A number of anti-pornography feminists support the decriminalization of pornography and the institution of civil remedies instead, an approach which should not necessarily be characterized as censorship.

Lynn King's article, "Censorship and Law Reform: Will Changing the Laws Mean a Change for the Better?", provides a critique of existing censorship laws. King is particularly critical of the powers and decisions of the Ontario Censor Board, and with ample justification, but her criticisms do not address the types of reforms being proposed by feminists. Thus, although she makes a strong case against existing forms of censorship, she fails to make a case against censorship per se. King invokes the spectre of the anti-woman state as a general argument against censorship, and points to problems with family law reform and equal pay legislation as examples of alleged reforms which have created problems for women. King does not suggest that we abandon family law and equal pay, but rather that we lobby for improvements in these areas. She does not, however, think the same strategy would work for pornography:

While further lobbying may eventually bring about improvements in the areas of family law and equal pay, laws dealing with pornography and censorship are fundamentally different and far more dangerous, for they are totally subject to interpretation

by people who are selected by an anti-feminist system.

But interpretation by an antifeminist system is equally true for all laws, family and equal pay reforms included.

One of the difficult questions raised by *Women Against Censorship* is that of where to draw the line, the primary focus of Lisa Steele's article, "A Capital Idea: Gendering in the Mass Media". Essentially, the question of line drawing posits a continuum of pornographic and/or negative images of women, from violent "hard core" to the *Playboy*-style "soft core," to mass media advertising. All are offensive; all are sexist, if not misogynist; to censor only some of it is arbitrary and also, by implication, condones those images and depictions which are not subject to censorship. While I am sympathetic to the problems posed by line drawing, I am not convinced that the line drawn in any way demarcates the offensive from the non-offensive. Sexist images of women are different from sexually violent images of women, and require a different response and strategy from feminists and from society. Because censorship is such a powerful tool, it should only be used in very limited circumstances. Mass media portrayals of women can be more effectively dealt with through some of the alternative strategies proposed by the authors.

The target of censorship legislation must be precisely and narrowly defined in order to avoid the over-inclusion which so many feminists legitimately fear. This fear - that censorship legislation will be applied against sex education materials, lesbian erotica, women's health books, as well as, or even instead of, sexually violent images of women - is a prevalent theme of *Women Against Censorship* and one which those advocating censorship must take seriously. Particular concern must be paid to the concerns of lesbian and feminist artists, such as contributor Anna Gronau, that censorship laws will be used to silence and harass alternative artists and political activists. Censorship which, for example, curtails the development of lesbian

culture or which eliminates women's discussion and exploration of their sexuality may be purchased at too high a price. Anti-pornography feminists must be able to convince women that their definition is sufficiently narrow and precise to foreclose such widespread application. Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter and Carole Vance provided a detailed critique of the definition of pornography contained in the Dworkin/MacKinnon ordinance. Their critique does raise some serious concerns with respect to the wording, though these may not be insurmountable problems.

Despite attempts of the authors to be hopeful and forward looking, and to offer positive alternatives to censorship as a feminist strategy against pornography, reading *Women Against Censorship* can be somewhat overwhelming. Anti-censorship feminists often accuse anti-pornography feminists of viewing women simply as sexual victims. However, I find the analysis put forward by some of the *Women Against Censorship* authors much more disempowering. Women are depicted as powerless victims of a male dominated state; any attempts on our part to assert ourselves will be turned against us to solidify our secondary status. We cannot change or improve any aspect of our lives unless and until we can change the whole social structure. The strategies put forward by Varda Burstyn and others are excellent, but they are not new. We do need to remind ourselves periodically of the big picture, of the full feminist agenda, but as a strategy with which to start addressing the issue of pornography, the all or nothing approach is a bit overwhelming.

Women Against Censorship should be read and seriously discussed both by those new to the pornography debate and by feminists who advocate censorship. The fears and concerns raised must be addressed and responded to if the pornography issue is to move beyond a polarized debate to a more productive level of feminist discussion.

Diana Majury is a Toronto feminist currently living in Wisconsin.

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Sex, Trade a

by Lisa Freedman

After nearly 20 months of intense study, examination, travel and travail, the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution presented its recommendations to Minister of Justice John Crosbie last month.

The Fraser Committee had a difficult task to perform. It was to take two of the more contentious social issues of the day, pornography and prostitution, and attempt to reconcile the myriad of competing views in order to recommend some action to the government. Over the months, the committee travelled across Canada and heard the opinion of anyone who cared to proffer one.

The results are contained in a two volume report that includes a philosophical and constitutional consideration of the problems, an examination of pornography and prostitution as social issues, reactions to these problems in other countries, and the committee's own recommendations.

The purpose of the following article is to acquaint feminists with what is in the Fraser report so that we can properly evaluate legislative initiatives that are purportedly based on the Fraser Report and so that we can instruct the government on what to do with these recommendations. . . The article is not comprehensive; it is difficult to synthesize 753 pages succinctly. But hopefully it will familiarize groups and individuals with the essence of the report so that informed responses can be prepared.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Liberal View

The liberal view states that society benefits from an open marketplace of ideas rather than the prescription of majoritarian wisdom, and that each individual is the best judge of his or her own interests. The state is justified in intervening only to punish or control human conduct when it does harm to other people. What people do to themselves or in concert with others, which has no injurious impact on third parties, is an individual's own business, even if it involves the self-infliction of either physical or moral harm.

Applying a liberal analysis to prostitution leaves us with the view that the law has no legitimate function in prohibiting anyone from choosing or practising that lifestyle, or in penalizing adults who, by consent, engage in sexual activity for money as long as no physical harm is caused or threatened to either participant, and neither physical nor psychic harm is done to others. The law may interfere if there is coercion involved or a penalty may be invoked to control the nuisance caused to other people by prostitution.

Applying this liberal analysis to pornography, the law has no acceptable role in preventing the production, distribution, sale or possession of pornographic materials, unless some recognized harm can be attributed to it. It is legitimate for the law to intrude to prevent physical harm being done, or even threatened, to those who participate in pornographic productions.

The law may be used to ensure that pornographic materials are not marketed in such a way that they cause involuntary offence to members of the public. Any recognized harm caused by pornography must rest upon empirical study and statistical probability, not upon supposition or anecdote, even though these may claim to reflect common sense.

Reorientation in the legal system requires a change of focus in the substantive law. With regard to prostitution, this means decriminalization. In the area of pornography, what is required is a new emphasis on proscribing violence against women.

The Conservative View

The conservative view of society has two variants. The first states that societies are not simply collections of individuals, but organic units with shared ideas and institutions. Their embodiment in the law is preferable to the easy or uncertain morality of pluralism, which ignores the reality that individual actions, even if directed towards the self alone, have an impact on the moral environment of the community.

The second variant adopts the more pessimistic view that unless the law embodies and enforces traditional moral values, society will lose its "moral cement" and gradually disintegrate. The cohesive power of shared morality is essential to society's welfare, and requires the support of the law.

Both these theories invite government intervention to proscribe immoral conduct, even where it is freely chosen by the individual concerned, conducted in private and of no direct

harm to anyone else. The state has a right to step in and prevent personal immorality where it clearly offends the sense of propriety and decency of the majority of the community. Moreover, the criminal law has an important symbolic role to play in stating what the common morality will not tolerate.

The conservative view on street prostitution is fairly clear. Prostitution offends the common moral values and, therefore, ordinary citizens should not have to contend with this affront to their sensibilities as they move about their communities. Conservatives also view the role of pimp as particularly reprehensible. Those who do not earn their own living and live on earnings gained through immoral activities are condemned.

The mere fact that pornography is produced to stimulate sexual feelings or fantasy is subversive of the moral values of the community. Thus the intent of the material, rather than any empirical association with harm to an individual, is the measure of its illegality. The conservative is concerned with preserving the sanctity of the family; sexual relations should take place only within the context of marriage. Any activity which might be seen to encourage sexual activity outside of this context is thus to be strongly discouraged.

The Feminist View

Feminists have begun to challenge both liberal and conservative thinking. Our society is built around a sexual class system, which frustrates the legitimate aspirations of half the population for economic, social and sexual freedom.

Pornography is seen as especially odious because it reinforces that system by instilling and perpetuating notions about women's inferiority and limited role within society. It sets women apart as different and characterizes them as the legitimate objects, not only of male sexual pleasure, but of male frustration and violence.

With prostitution, the sexual class system operates in a more limited but nevertheless vicious manner, setting aside a small and disadvantaged group of women to satisfy the sexual needs of men who cannot find the satisfaction they want elsewhere. Both pornography and prostitution are predicated on the assumption of men's power over women and men's right of access to women's sexuality.

There are, of course, different strategies advanced depending on what strand of feminism one subscribes to. Those who have a Marxist orientation incline to the view that the answer to pornography and prostitution, both evidence of sexism, lies the removal of the capitalist values and structures which make it possible and which create women as an economically exploitable class.

According to the Report, a larger group sees women's problems as those of gender discrimination rather than of classic economic exploitation. This group assumes the continuation of liberal democracy, and relates a critique of sexism to that context. They see little value in the use of the law to reform society, believing that education and other socialization processes are likely to be much more successful in the long run.

Many feminists, however, argue for the vigorous use of legal as well as political and social strategies to combat and eliminate sexism. Reorientation in the legal system requires, first of all, a change of focus in the substantive law. With regard to prostitution, this means decriminalization of the activities of prostitutes. In the area of pornography, what is required is a new emphasis on proscribing the violence and degradation of women and children which it involves. Women's rights to equality, freedom from personal abuse or threat, and to dignity, are entitled to consideration and protection.

Feminists argue that as long as "rights" in the liberal sense mean being free to act without restraint, these have little value in a society in which fundamental inequalities exist. If the social environment prevents women from exercising their rights, the fact that they may have the formal right to do so is immaterial.

On the subject of harm, many feminists argue that there is enough data to demonstrate that women are victimized by the sexism inherent in pornography and prostitution. Not only is there an increasing body of research by social psychologists which suggests a link between pornography and violence against women, but common sense would suggest that frequent exposure to this type of material is likely to have an adverse and brutalizing effect on male perceptions of women as well as male sexuality.

Feminists see conservative theory as oppressive and unsatisfactory because its fundamental assumption is that the ideal society is one in which women have a subordinate and submissive role, and in which sexual expression of all but the most orthodox type is frowned upon. Feminists see sexual freedom as essential to female liberation but oppose a form of male sexual licence which prevents the full expression of female sexuality and threatens the physical and psychic welfare of women.

PORNOGRAPHY

The Fraser Committee started off by stating its conclusions and restating its concerns upon which its recommendations are based. In essence, it said that the concern of most people regarding pornography is threefold:

- pornography degrades women, robs them of their dignity

as individual human beings and equal partners within relationship and treats them as objects or possessions to be used by men

- male violence against women is treated as socially acceptable and viewers are desensitized to the suffering of other
- these two influences will have a strong negative influence on children and on the family

While addressing these concerns, the committee did not want to fashion a criminal law regime that, in the name of protecting women, may serve to silence them: the criminal law, say the Report, should not stifle the development of erotic art.

The committee could not conclude that pornography is a direct cause of crimes of violence or the sexual abuse of children or the disintegration of society. Even after reviewing the data systematically, the committee considered the existing body of information to be chaotic and inconsistent.

Still, the committee set up a regime of offences that reflect the view that there are two forms of harm flowing from pornography. The first is the offence which it does to members of the public who are involuntarily subjected to it. The second is the broader social harm which it causes by undermining the right to equality which are set out in section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The committee's entire approach is predicated on the belief that impairment of a fundamental social value (equality) can properly be regarded as a harm meriting legislative control.

The committee recommends a three tier approach to the problem of pornography. (Here, feminists may have trouble getting by this concept after our not-too-successful experience with a three tier approach to sexual assault crimes). The first tier is the most serious and it would cover:

- a visual representation of a person under 18 years of age participating in explicit sexual conduct and material which advocates, encourages, condones or presents as normal the sexual abuse of children
- visual pornographic material produced in such a way that actual physical harm is caused to the participant

This material is covered for a number of reasons. The recommendation reflects, first, the concern for the sexual exploitation of children, and second, the awareness that producers of violent pornography have little or no respect for the rights and physical welfare of the actors in it. The committee wanted to reflect the fact that it is *not* acceptable to cause physical harm in the context of sexual relations.

Recommendations

On Pornography

- The term "obscenity" should no longer be used.
- Controls on pornographic material should be organized in a three tier system with the first tier attracting the most serious criminal sanctions and the third tier material attracting sanctions only if displayed without a warning.
- The pornography amendments should be incorporated into the Customs Act.
- Higher priority should be given to the control of the importation of pornography.
- The postal service should assign priority to the effective control of distribution of pornography by mail.
- The pornography amendments should be incorporated into the Broadcasting Act.
- Human rights commissions should vigorously explore the application of existing legislation on pornography.
- Legislation should be enacted to provide a civil cause of action in the courts in respect of the promotion of hatred by way of pornography.
- The hate literature section of the Criminal Code should be amended to include "sex" as part of the identifiable group.
- Provincial censor boards may refuse to permit exhibition of films which are contrary to the Criminal Code. They should not be empowered

Commerce

The second tier is aimed at violent pornography including which simulates actual harm being done. Conviction for this category would also carry a ten year sentence, but the committee would allow the defences of artistic merit, education or scientific purpose which are not allowed under the first tier.

The committee believed that in certain contexts the production and distribution of this material may be quite legitimate. The reasoning is that the material is acceptable or unacceptable on the basis of what it describes or depicts but on the basis of its purpose. The possibility that materials produced for genuine educational or scientific purpose may be sold for less "noble" reasons is addressed by relating the defence of a case of retailers to the original purpose of the material and the purpose of its sale.

The committee acknowledged that some people will argue there can be no such thing as an artistic defence of material which is sexually violent. The committee deals with the problem only to the extent that it argues that artistic and literary endeavours are a vital component of our society and as such have to be protected and encouraged.

The remaining recommendations on pornography covered areas where the law could reach: customs, the post office, literature, human rights, censor boards and municipal laws were all addressed (see box).

PROSTITUTION

The committee concluded that prostitution in Canada is based on three interdependent factors:

1. the pervasiveness of sexism in Canada

2. our partial recognition of the complexities of sexuality and sexual preference

3. the failure to develop educational and social programs to assist young Canadians in dealing with problems of sexism, sexuality, and sexual identity in a responsible, confident way

The committee dwelt for a long time on the economic factors that contribute to prostitution and concluded that until Canadian society comes to terms with the causes of economic inequality between men and women, the likelihood that a proportion of women will seek to support themselves and their families through prostitution will continue to exist. And here, the committee felt that the government "should strengthen their moral and financial commitment to removing the

economic and social inequalities between men and women and discrimination on the basis of sexual preference."

The committee also considered that the acceptance of women's subordinate and unequal status has a lot to do with prostitution: its acceptance as an enduring social phenomenon rests on our acceptance of the notion that women exist, in part, to answer men's sexual needs. Until Canadian society recognizes the seriousness of these wrong perceptions, and the immense personal and social harm which they cause, any chance of creating a social atmosphere which does not, in effect, promote prostitution is slight.

Still, with their social response to prostitution the committee concluded that:

- there are all too few social agencies and programs which meet the special needs of active or reformed prostitutes
- even where they do exist, they are viewed with some suspicion by the prostitutes

(The committee did note that some programs for reformed prostitutes and support provided to male homosexual prostitutes by gay groups had been relatively successful.)

With this in mind, the committee recommended that the governments undertake the direct funding or indirect financial support of community groups involved in the care and welfare of both practising and reformed prostitutes, so that adequate

The Fraser Committee did not want to fashion a criminal law regime that, in the name of protecting women, may serve to silence them: the criminal law should not stifle erotic art.

social, health, employment, educational and counselling services are available to them. There are of course difficulties with this recommendation. Prostitutes may be closely controlled by pimps (although the committee concluded that most prostitutes were independent operators) who do not want to have third parties intrude, or they may want to steer clear of any group or individual who they feel will be judgmental. Therefore the programs must be voluntary and staffed by people sensitive to the realities of the street scene and who will respond to need, rather than intrude. Here the committee felt that former prostitutes could play a beneficial role.

The committee seemed to take a veiled potshot at conservative attitudes by stressing that whatever agency assumed this role be supportive without being judgmental, avoiding at all costs the view that their major objective is reform or (worse still) repentance. This is a field, said the committee, in which misplaced moral fervour or even unthinking condescension can be extremely counterproductive.

Legal Responses

The committee rejected the idea of insulating the activity of prostitution from the law. To do this, they said, would be to attach a special immunity to it which would have no justification whatever, and in particular, would ignore the very real harms, conflicts and opportunities for exploitation which are associated with it.

The current law has to be reformed. The committee pointed to the two rather incongruous motivations for the current criminal law: the view that prostitution as a social problem is the product of loose morals amongst women, and that women must be protected from immoral and devious males. Apart from whether this criminal law has any rhyme or reason to it, it reflects a sexist view of women.

Furthermore, the current criminal law on prostitution discriminates against gay male prostitutes, not only because the law on homosexuality itself is draconian (the committee's word) but because, while police may be at least paternalistic towards female prostitutes, they often despise male prostitutes. The result is that they tend to be rougher and more peremptory in their treatment of the men.

The committee, while not in any way favouring people pursuing prostitution as a career, took the radical step of believing that adults who determine that they want to pursue such a lifestyle and who do so without engaging in incidental criminal activity, should be able to do so with dignity and without harassment. Therefore, prostitution-related activities of prostitutes should be decriminalized as far as possible. This recommendation produced a minor split in the committee, with one member arguing that if the committee truly believes that prostitutes have the same right to equality, dignity and liberty as do others then there is no reason for any special provisions in the Criminal Code dealing with prostitution. The rest of the committee, though, did not feel that the Criminal Code as it

currently stands is adequate to take into account the exploitation which is apparent in prostitution, and by not having specific provisions that deal with the exploitation of prostitutes by bawdy house operators, pimps and procurers, it would appear that the committee simply appears to endorse the activities of these potential exploiters.

The committee therefore concluded that the law must be rewritten with a focus on the nuisance caused to citizens by the activity of prostitution. The committee also advanced perhaps its most controversial recommendation by stating that the criminal law relating to prostitution establishments should not thwart the attempts of small numbers of prostitutes to organize their activities out of a place of residence, and so as not to prevent provinces from permitting and regulating small scale, non-residential commercial prostitution establishments employing adult prostitutes. The committee felt that this recommendation might well provide a desirable alternative to working the streets, because it would be free of the exploitative elements normally associated with bawdy houses. Furthermore, prostitutes working together could well help one another with rent, child care and emotional support, instead of exploiting each other.

MEDIA LITERACY

The committee realized that the criminal law will not solve the problems of pornography and prostitution. In its dealing with the issue of children, the committee proposed what might, if implemented, prove to be their most worthwhile recommendation. If educational programs are directed towards today's children, we will eventually have adults who are better informed about human sexuality and less likely to depend on misleading and erroneous material such as pornography. This is the core of any action to lessen the dependency on and effect of pornography. In addition, accurate information about the buying and selling of sexual services and the harms associated with such activities for young people should be available to counteract the partial and misleading information which is often contained in the media.

Children using the media receive implicit, if not explicit, messages about such issues as the role of women, how to be successful in life, and the commodities necessary in order to be happy. Despite the overwhelming presence of the media in our lives, we do little to educate children about how they should interpret the messages they receive or how and why the programs on television, for instance, are constructed in a particular way. There is, therefore, a real need to increase children's awareness of these issues through what is referred to as media literacy programs.

These programs should be designed to:

- decrease children's belief that TV programs depict real life
- increase children's tendencies to compare what they see on TV with other information sources
- decrease television's credibility by teaching children about economic and production aspects of television.

CONCLUSION

This report, of course, has its shortcomings. The committee starts with certain assumptions and does not address others. What, for example, is it about prostitution that requires a criminal sanction? What is a prostitute doing that everyone else in society isn't also doing? What is a prostitute selling that, say, a model isn't also selling? Are there other ways than the long arm of the criminal law to deal with prostitution and pornography? What is really going on in pornography? What social value does pornography fulfill, if any? What is it about pornography that makes us so loathe to get rid of it? How is organized crime involved in both of these issues? Whose interests are being protected?

One of the intriguing things about the Fraser Report is that in some parts it can pass as a feminist tract. The analysis is dead on, and almost elevates feminist analysis to the mainstream. But the problem with this report is the problem with all government reports: when a government is faced with a myriad of recommendations it has the option of being selective.

John Crosbie, the Tory Minister of Justice, has already proven this. Bill C-49 was introduced just after the release of the Fraser Report, wherein Crosbie chose to remove the "pressing and persistent" clause required of the current soliciting law and replace it with a person's behaviour which "in any manner communicates or attempts to communicate with any person for the purpose of engaging in prostitution." What this means is that prostitutes will bear the brunt of wide scale police harassment and clients will seldom be charged with soliciting.

Whatever we as feminists may say about the report, chances are that Crosbie will continue to choose what he thinks should be done and will focus on the recommendations that support his view. We should worry that he'll clean up the streets but forget to ensure safe working conditions for hookers working indoors, and that he'll toughen the laws that empower cops and do nothing to empower women or to produce media literacy. A report can be wonderful - but will it be neutralized in Tory hands? ●

Nurturing Sensibilities



Filmmakers Terri Nash (l.) and Bonnie Klein

by Donna Gollan

Speaking Our Peace. Dir.: Bonnie Sherr Klein and Terri Nash. Prod.: Bonnie Sherr Klein, Margaret Pettigrew. Exec. prod.: Kathleen Shannon. Commentary: Gloria Demers, Gwynne Basen, Bonnie Klein, Terri Nash. Nar.: Margot Kidder. Ed.: Janice Brown. Cin.: Susan Trow. Research: Dorothy Rosenberg, Terri Nash. Music: Judy Henderson. NFB, Studio D, 1985.

Bonnie Klein, director of the internationally acclaimed *Not a Love Story*, and Terri Nash, director of the Academy Award winning *If You Love This Planet*, have pooled their talents to direct the National Film Board's new release: *Speaking Our Peace*. In Studio D's best tradition, they consult women experts, speak through the voice of a woman narrator (Margot Kidder), and maintain a point of view which is simultaneously multilingual and pointedly Canadian. Despite the horrifying subject matter—the already present dangers of nuclear waste and the ever-looming threat of complete annihilation—the film itself does not reduce us to a state of helpless terror. *Speaking Our Peace* is a documentary about women and peace which successfully combines Nash's archival skills with Klein's proven abilities in the art of gentle persuasion.

The film opens at Greenham Common, a British site which used to be kept open to the public for the "common good." It is now, ironically, the home of thirty-two nuclear missiles and a band of determined women who live just outside the fences in persistent protest. Men in drab uniform roll out barbed wire to reinforce their fences. Women in bright, colourful clothing continue to batten on those fences and, indeed, scramble over them whenever possible. The soundtrack of humming and singing defuses the anger of the scene. It is an image of startling clarity: women do things differently.

The female presence in this film is always kept to the positive, the heroic. Gone are the difficult examples of individual responsibility that abound in *Dark Circle*, a US independent documentary about living in the nuclear age. In *Dark Circle* (see *Broadside*, December 1983) we meet women who know their houses

are built on radioactive soil and who divide their time between trying to alert the neighbourhood and finding a buyer so that they may move their own children to safety. There are no women in *Speaking Our Peace* who are similarly torn in two. Instead, we hear of the peace work being done for few rewards and against all odds by such well-organized women as Solanges Vincent in Quebec, and Muriel Duckworth, in Halifax. Women with high profiles, Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar and author Margaret Laurence, bring their diplomatic skills to the fore, while experts like physicist Dr. Ursula Franklin and nun and low-level radiation expert Dr. Rosalie Bertell back up the peace workers with undeniable evidence and authority. There are also eye-witness accounts, like that of Darlene Keju, a public health nurse from Micronesia who appears briefly and describes birth defects to an attentive, largely female audience. These women are not aggressively angry, not threatening, not particularly radical, and especially not easily dismissed. They deliver their messages and continue to use their skills in the face of considerable opposition with calm human dignity and a quiet strength.

The choice of these women, indeed the whole peaceful tone of the film, might be designed to be an essay on the superior qualities of womanhood. Certainly it is problematic to the goals of feminism if we take this point of view to imply that women are biologically determined to be more nurturing, less aggressive and more diplomatic in our dealings than are men. This kind of logic can not only require that we take the whole responsibility for the survival of the species on our shoulders, giving up all other demands to keep the peace, but also brand men as hopelessly militaristic and all our efforts as completely useless anyway. Clearly this cannot be the filmmakers' intention.

Just as Germaine Greer, with her latest book *Sex and Destiny*, has been condemned for doing a complete backflip merely for pointing out that we currently live in a child-hating society, so the makers of *Speaking Our Peace* will be accused of reactionary politics by suggesting that women use our particularly

female skills to stem the nuclear tide. Women have been socialized to be nurturing, more protective of the vulnerable, because we have always had the power to give birth. We are more aware of consequences because we are the ones who must deal with them. There is no biological magic that gives us all the common sense or purely emotional genes. Our diplomacy has developed over years of oppression, so that we may protect our interests in the face of overt hostility. As Dr. Ursula Franklin explains: "Militarism means, Do what I say, or else. . . . Feminism is an experience that tries to enhance cooperation and respect for differences." Given this definition, few women would deny that they are feminists. Few feminists would deny that anything we have been socialized into, we can socialize ourselves out of—witness the many women in positions of political power who have put nurturing well behind them. Surely this is a move in the wrong direction. It is crucial to the women's movement that we continue to fight for reproductive choice but let us not deny the power of the act of giving birth, lest we lose that power to the scientists and their test tubes.

Children play a very large role in *Speaking Our Peace*; after all, the film is pro-future. The filmmakers are taking a big risk in tugging at our heartstrings, given the way that feminists have come to feel about the trap of supplying the world's nurturing. In examining the pointlessness of the concept of "the Russian enemy," we follow Muriel Duckworth to the USSR and see images of soldiers and their sweethearts, the faces of the very young and the very old set to music. Archival wartime footage of Russian people freezing to death, of mothers mourning their starving babies, shows us that they, too, fear war. As Margaret Laurence puts it so succinctly: "I'm sure that people in the Soviet Union feel the same way about their children as I feel about mine."

Dr. Rosalie Bertell describes the "death process" into which we have put our planet. Radioactive wastes simultaneously damage the gene pool and severely pollute the world into which our children are born. They will

have more to cope with while we are crippling their ability to cope at all. Darlene Keju talks of babies born to the women of the Marshall Islands, the site of numerous nuclear tests. They have no arms, no legs, are born resembling "jellyfish" and lie, pulsing with life, on the operating tables. We see the women in her audience stung by her words. The next image in the film, that of a small, happy child on her father's shoulders, lulls us into a false sense of security. We need not worry, we live in Canada. The narrator's words immediately dispel that feeling of safety: "We all now carry a small amount of cancer-producing plutonium in our bodies. World War III has already begun."

Lest we dismiss these words as unrealistically shocking, the film goes on to document exactly what is threatening us here, in Canada. We must take responsibility for being the world's largest exporter of uranium as well as producers of more nuclear waste than anyone knows what to do with. What about the cruise missile and its various testing sites? What about the ruined hunting and fishing grounds of many of our native people? Klein visits El Dorado, a plant in Port Hope which is reported to have had a spill the night before her visit. At first the men will not admit to any knowledge of the spill, but eventually they agree that as workers with families in the area, they are worried about the radioactive waste—but more worried about the economy of Port Hope, should the plant close. A man who fishes nearby waters admits that he does not eat many of his catch, but gives them away to friends. With friends like this. . . ?

Dr. Rosalie Bertell visits the Toronto suburb of Scarborough where the neighbours gather to watch her test the earth for radioactivity. As her meter ticks frantically the adults explain the stress factors that are chewing up their lives. But it is a small boy who catches at our hearts when he asks if he might already have cancer. Dr. Bertell knows that he is looking for reassurance. Sadly, she is unable to give him any. If you can dismiss this as just so much sentimental claptrap, your thinking is right where most of our great leaders would like it to be. ●

Unparallel Views: Lesbian Visibility

by Randi Spires

When Ruthann Tucker and Anna Marie Smith, the co-ordinators of Sparkes Gallery in Toronto, began organizing Unparallel Views they went looking for works of art produced by lesbians rather than specifically lesbian artworks. The resulting show, seen in Toronto in May and co-sponsored by Branching Out Lesbian Productions, was certainly eclectic. Whether or not they believe there is such an animal as lesbian art these two women aren't saying, but in their words through this show, "the viewer is invited to consider the possibility of the existence of a lesbian aesthetic, or an aesthetic which is informed by the perception and representation of social oppression and underground sexuality."

Surely one would be hard put to find something particularly lesbian about Cheri Miller's brightly coloured abstracts or Mary S. Lyons' childlike oil pastel drawings of animals. Donna Marchand's pictures of women, and not necessarily lesbian, musicians are meant to celebrate the power and vitality of these performers without being sexually exploitive as such pictures often are. One photo shows a smiling Heather Bishop standing next to a clowning Lauri Conger, a representative of the older folk-based tradition of women's music standing shoulder to shoulder with a member of the newer generation which wants to have some (electronic) fun.

One of Nina Levitt's three coloured photographs is entitled "For Walter Benjamin". It consists of carefully arranged pieces of plastic cutlery and cut up pieces of woven place mat coupled with the quote "afraid all the guests would look alike." Benjamin was a German Jewish art critic prominent in the 1930s. He died on the eve of D-Day on the border between France and Spain while attempting to escape the Nazis. In addition to his critical writings, he left behind some reminiscences about childhood in which he describes his feelings as a young boy setting the table for dinner. As he put together identical place settings he began to be afraid of the connections between these inanimate objects and their animate users; he began to be afraid "all the guests would look alike." In one sense Levitt's picture is simply homage to one man who managed to remember and express the pre-rational sense of the inter-connectedness of all things which many children acquire but few adults retain. In another sense it also asks the viewer to consider the idea that if we literally are what we eat are we not also symbolically what we use. It can be seen as a plea for quality over quantity, for craftsmanship over mass production.

Another of Levitt's works shows a pair of women's undergarments on a black background. The underpants themselves are tinted pink and blue. Levitt has been using underwear as a motif for some time. While still in art school she found this choice was viewed with some hostility by those same male students who happily produced picture after picture of nude models or girlfriends. But images of naked women have long been accepted as part of the male-defined public domain. Naked women are acceptable as art objects because they are also sexual objects. Much of male ancillary sexual expression is public (including such activities as bragging about, fantasizing over, or insulting women) because it is as much about power as it is about erotic desire. A frilly lacey undergarment might have been acceptable because these are usually worn to be seen by the masculine eye. But might the plain serviceable item used in Levitt's work be disturbing because it makes something private public and serves to remind the male viewer that not all that is female is either under his control or oriented toward his pleasure? Yet in a culture that worships the power of money, lucre legitimizes. Previously Levitt did some work for A Space Gallery in Toronto which looked at the relationship between underwear and advertising. No doubt those same men who are upset by Levitt's present work remain undisturbed by the billboards, magazine and television ads for women's underwear which are ubiquitous in our culture.

There is no mistaking the lesbian content of Cyndra MacDowall's three colour prints. The first, *Back*, is a shot of what one assumes is a lover in bed. The second, *Heart in Hand*, is of a nude woman from just below the navel to just above the knees. Her hands are placed over her mons, fingers forming a heart shape. The third photo is of two naked women holding hands over the pubis of one of them. While most viewers seemed to enjoy these pictures, what is to differentiate them from

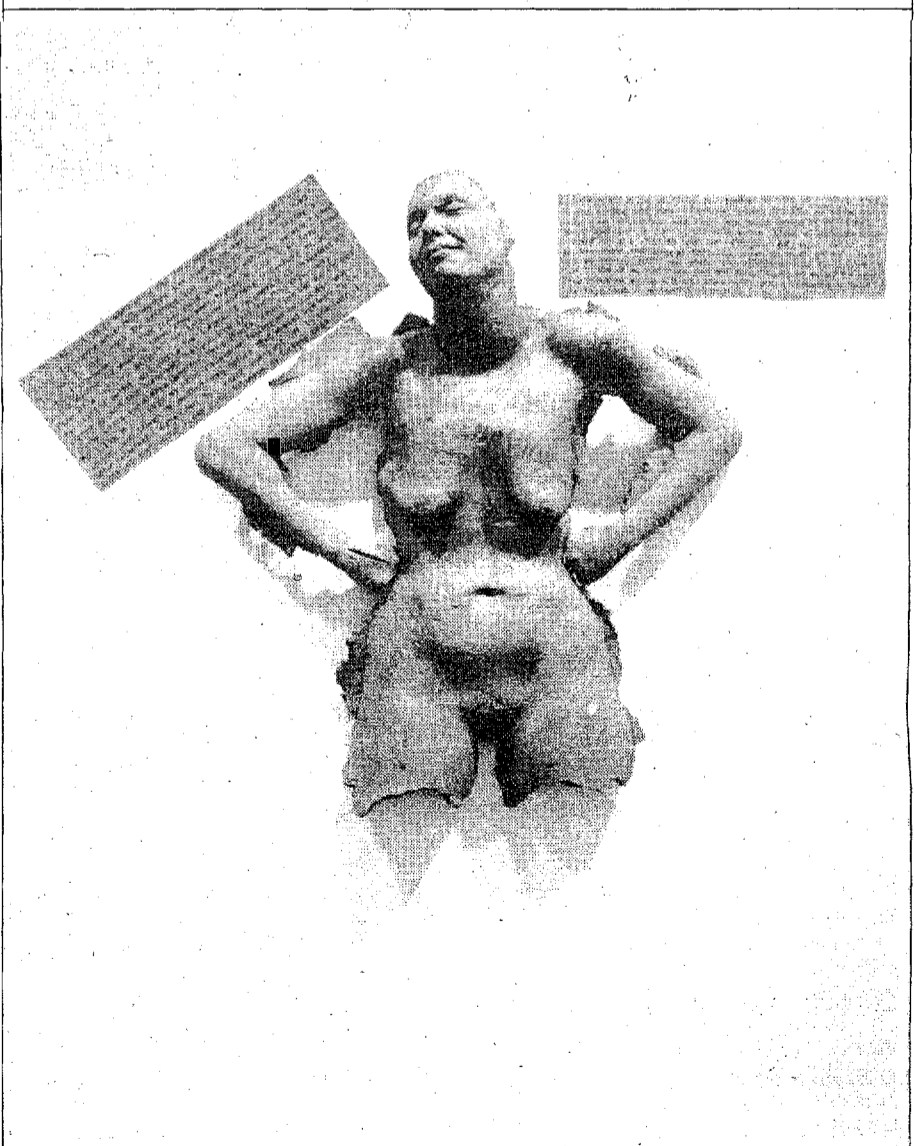
similar images found in advertising and soft porn? We know that these photos were taken by a lesbian, probably of other lesbians, for viewing by still other lesbians. We suspect that the artist made these pictures in order to celebrate her sexuality, a sexuality which is often denied and/or denigrated by mainstream society. We also expect that all the participants acted freely. In other words, the essential difference is not in the images themselves but in the context in which they are meant to be seen and the manner in which they were made. A critical contextual analysis of all the images we come across, whether they are found in advertising, in pornography or in art, is essential if we are to learn new ways of celebrating women's sexuality, if we are to learn how to eroticize equality. Because of the long-standing relationship between certain types of pictures and the powerlessness and oppression that women in general and lesbians in particular must endure, it may not be enough to simply appropriate those images, call them positive and expect this reclamation to work. We may indeed have to invent a new visual vocabulary.

Lynne Fernie is represented by two black and white drawings, *One Night I Went To The Cameo* and *Echo*. The Cameo piece is a joyous work showing women embracing, dancing and seemingly freely flying about the room. But Fernie said she felt able to draw in this manner only because she knew the picture would be exhibited in a show of lesbian works for an audience made up of lesbians and feminists. In this context, her function as an artist was to help celebrate and reinforce certain shared positive assumptions. For an audience of heterosexual men and heterosexually colonized women she said she would not have felt free, for instance, to show women embracing without deconstructing the image to show how it is generally used for pornographic titillation or the reinforcement of homophobia. For a mixed audience she said the role of the artist would have to be different again. By recognizing that there is not one but many audiences, and that there is not one but many roles necessary for the artist, Fernie and others like her are questioning the ways in which art has been traditionally produced and consumed, that is with a single authoritative artist pontificating to a homogenous male-centred audience.

At first glance, the two excerpts from *Still Sane*, a twenty-five piece series by Vancouver artists Persimmon Blackridge and Sheila Gilhooly, does seem specifically lesbian. The work consists of installations which combine powerful sculptures of women by Blackridge with text by Gilhooly. As a young woman, Sheila Gilhooly was committed to a mental hospital by her parents for being a lesbian. During her three years there she endured being forcibly drugged and was subjected to 19 shock treatments. At first she resisted in the only way she knew how, slashing herself with a razor. Eventually she realized that the only way she would be able to get out would be to mindlessly conform with the hospital's (and by extension society's) expectations, by wearing make-up and skirts. She played along, was released and eventually was able to reclaim both her life and her lesbianism. What happened to Sheila Gilhooly may have been sparked by her lesbianism but it is not very different from what often happens to any woman who refuses to happily conform to certain expected female roles. Women who become justifiably depressed by the objective conditions of their lives are not often encouraged to change them. Instead they are often plied with tranquilizers and anti-depressants and told to go home and adjust. Their complaints aren't taken seriously because to do so would be to question the ways in which women are restricted in society. Instead of being neutral practitioners of objective medicine, most mental health workers are in fact serving as agents of conservative social control.

One of the most exciting things about the Sparkes Gallery exhibition is that these ten women, and others like them whose work was not shown, felt comfortable enough or brave enough to come out publicly as lesbians. That might not have been possible ten, or even five, years ago. If women's culture is to be built we have to know who our artists are so that we may dialogue with them. And if we are to be empowered in mainstream eyes we cannot continue to be invisible. This exhibit may not have proved or disproved the existence of a lesbian aesthetic, but it has served notice that many lesbians are no longer willing to remain in the proverbial closet.

Randi Spires is a Toronto feminist writer.



Two pieces from the "Still Sane" series by Vancouver artists Persimmon Blackridge and Sheila Gilhooly

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUTHANN TUCKER

Femmes Against Feminists



Ladies Against Women

by Amanda Hale

Nightwood Theatre's production of *Ladies Against Women* had a full house rolling in the aisles on opening night in Toronto. They also had us up on our feet doing Consciousness Lowering exercises, led by Candy Cotton, LAW's version of Jane Fonda. Candy, the genotype cheerleader, led us in exercises guaranteed to "Get rid of excess cranial bulk." She refreshed our memories on how to combine weak feminine body language with such phrases as, "Sir, could you lift that? It's too heavy for me."

Ladies Against Women, An Evening of Consciousness Lowering, was presented by

Nightwood in association with Womynly Way Productions. The show was written and performed by the Plutonium Players of San Francisco. The group consists of Jain Angeles, Selma Vincent, Gail Ann Williams, and Jeff Thompson of the men's auxiliary.

Mrs. T. Bill Banks, alias Selma Vincent, appeared on stage with her master charge card on her hat, briefed us on LAW, and told us why the Ladies felt we needed them in Toronto. She surmised that we had all been ESTed, Rolfed, Polarized, in short thoroughly liberated, and were now unable to leave the Annex. Mrs. Banks was joined by Candy Cotton (Jain Angeles) and Mrs. Virginia Cholesterol (Gail Ann Williams)—real name, Mrs.

Chester Cholesterol—for the reading of the LAW Manifesto. The Ladies led us in such rousing slogans as Support BRA not ERA; Make America a Man Again, Invade A-Broad; I'm No Queer, I Have a Baby Every Year; and Lady Nancy's special chant, China Today, Curtains Tomorrow.

Mrs. Cholesterol expressed a special interest in the right of the unconceived. "Sperms are people too," she said. "We must save them from those dreadful rubber concentration camps. We must abolish penal colonies." She also called for abolition of menstruation, masturbation and other forms of mass murder. Mrs. T. Bill Banks expressed a preference for suffering over suffrage. And Virginia Cholesterol agreed that if God had wanted Ladies off their pedestals he would not have made them shorter than their husbands.

Fred Shrapnel of the men's auxiliary made an appearance as a representative of NAGO, the National Association of Grenade Owners. He advocated the carrying of grenades for hunting, fishing and self-defence. And Colonel Beauregard Bullrun Lee of the Lt. Calley Academy for Boys lectured the male members of the audience on how to stop being wimps, how to "put the bounce back in your balls" and become "real men, rough as burlap."

The Lady of the Year award was presented to Phyllis LeShaft who thanked her father, minister, husband and four sons for allowing her to appear. She expounded on the dangers of a gender-free society—"Nothing should be free!"

We were treated to a fashion show of endangered accessories such as the leopardskin hat, the snakeskin purse, the baby harp seal fur stole, and of course a large South African diamond to complete the international ensemble. Strains of "Born Free" provided antithetical background music.

We were urged to "Adopt a Missile," with the promises of a special Foster Missile Kit, and a choice of which country your missile is based in and which country it is aimed at.

Then it was time for "Cooking with Cholesterol." Virginia gave us tips on Sweet and Sour Fruitloops, and demonstrated Twinkies from Scratch, on an ironing board. Virginia, who believes that "originality is a sin," recommended making Twinkies from such wholesale products as supermarket pound cake and Coolwhip. The recipe was dedicated to President Reagan, that great believer in white sugar, white flour, and white power.

The Ladies are big on bake sales, and set them up whenever and wherever possible, on the street. They showed slides of their summer vacation in Texas where they set up a bake table outside the Republican convention headquarters. Their opinion is that, "Reagan should get a life term—he deserves it." Plutonium Players, which was formed in 1977

and springs from a tradition of satirical street theatre, led a campaign in 1980—Reagan for Shah—and the Ladies Against Women movement is sprouting "street action chapters" all over the USA.

The Ladies keep their show up to date with topical and local references. Mrs. T. Bill Banks read some letters she had received: one from 'Bitter in Bitberg' complaining about the Senate's cut in defence spending; one from 'Hassled at the Hague' (the Pope didn't know there were dykes in Holland); and a special letter from 'Mistrusting the Mrs. in Missis-sauga.' This gentleman was a CBC reject who suspected his wife of cavorting on the U of T campus. The Ladies' advice was to install in his loved on an intra-uterine detector and cervical cop, obtainable from the Federal Bureau of Infidelity.

Virginia Cholesterol, far from a one issue lady, called for abolition of the environment, to be replaced with features which would make it easier to take care of. Take Lake Ontario for instance, she said. No wonder it's polluted with all that loose grit on the shore. Mrs. Cholesterol recommends carpeting all beaches, then ladies can spend their vacations walking their vacuum cleaners along the shore. Sport Vacuuming, she calls it. "Who says nature abhors a vacuum?"

Mrs. T. Bill banks bemoaned her fate as a member of a special minority group—filthy rich landlords. She doesn't mind renting to poor people as long as they have enough pride to pay her ridiculous rents.

Candy Cotton, the gum chewing cheerleader, kept order during question period by insisting that members of the audience raise their hands before speaking. But when asked what advice the Ladies could offer to lesbians, Candy dropped her pom-poms in horror and hid behind Mrs. Cholesterol, who denied all knowledge of the word. Mrs. Banks, a more experienced woman, said she thought it was too late for the lesbians. But she urged the real ladies to keep the boys in blue diapers and the girls in pink, to avoid that lavender area.

On the dot of ten, Mrs. Banks decided to wrap up the evening so that all the unescorted ladies in the audience could hurry home to their husbands. After a closing benediction from the Right, Right, Right Reverend Gerry Fallout, who warned us against feeding the starving millions at the expense of God's chosen few, we were issued with pink graduation cards as members of LAW Consciousness Lowering. "Your cards will be valid when signed by your husbands," we were told.

Unfortunately the Ladies were only in Toronto for a week. There's a whole continent of women out there who need their consciousness lowered. The Ladies have their work cut out. ●

Singing Gospel Truths

by Ingrid MacDonald

Coinciding with the April launching of a black women and women of colour press were two evenings of American grass roots singers. Jane Sapp of Georgia, and Casselberry-Duprée of New York celebrated both the mandate and the spirit of the new Sister Vision Press when they performed music that comes directly from their experience as black women sojourning to establish an international vision of sisterhood.

Casselberry-Duprée came to Toronto to sing, to demonstrate exactly what the phrase "musical journalism" means, and to baptise the Sister Vision Press by performing at the Sister Vision launch. Their music, which is more strong than pretty, reflects roots in reggae and gospel, and is presented in a manner that is direct, inspiring, and to stay with words that used to belong only to the church, revivalist.

Musical journalism is not what Casselberry-Duprée talked about, but it is what they did. What they talked about between songs—talk about travelling anywhere as two black women musicians, talk about South Africa, talk about living in New York—was a way of presenting world events in a way that people can hear. This means using the stage for more than pleasantries, although to say that it is not



Casselberry and Duprée

pleasurable would not be accurate. Duprée at one moment, when the audience had come ecstatically to its feet, made the association between the act of singing and that of preaching: "In my father's church it would be at this time that the baskets would be passed a second time." Casselberry introduced their

song to Jah, "Sisters Chant," by describing the kind of courage needed to accept spirituality. "If you gotta come out of the closet about everything else, you can come out about that too."

Blending Casselberry's low, soft voice with Duprée's voice which is so strong as to be explosive, the singers used their remarkably direct and engaging stage presence to make cover tunes like Neil Young's "Southern Man" and the reggae hit "Stir It Up," unique and relevant. The range of expressions that crossed Duprée's face—anger, anguish, radiance—set off the music with a pitch of emotional interpretation.

Jane Sapp, singer and cultural worker, in Toronto for a conference about popular educators, also took time to perform her music. Rooted in the traditions of gospel with songs like "I've Got Jesus) That's Enough" or "Go Tell It on the Mountain," Sapp, a piano player with a powerful clear voice, sees music as a collective phenomenon: "Think of the evening not as my singing to you, but of all of us bringing our experience together."

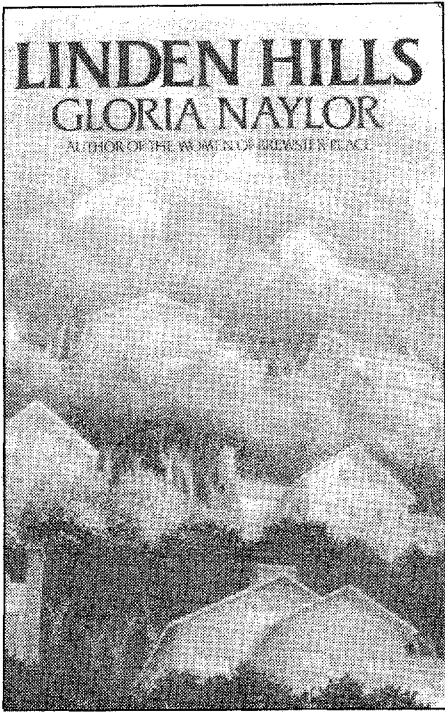
Describing her work in Tennessee as helping people "to organize themselves in their own image," Sapp talked about the similarity that exists for her between her work in retrieving black and poor people's culture in America, and the experience of struggling people

elsewhere. Nicaragua, which she had recently visited, was for her "as profound an experience as growing up in Alabama." Since the 1950s, Sapp commented, black Americans have been struggling with a "different kind of racist oppression," presumably a subtler form.

Musically Sapp presented a friendly show, talking anecdotally often, and with amusing asides: "I've got to stop talking about my kids or I don't know what people will think," and a politicized rendition of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"—"I always hated this song, so I changed it." She shared with Casselberry-Duprée a globalist vision: her description of her rage over the Bophal, India disaster, recalled what Casselberry had to say of apartheid in South Africa: "What you do here affects the world directly, remember that."

Sister Vision, a press established in 1984 for black women and women of colour, took part in presenting Jane Sapp as well as bringing Casselberry-Duprée to their launch. Sister Vision's objective is to realize a global feminism by publishing works related to women's oral history, creative writing, books for children, and feminist theory. They are launching their first book this May, Ahndri Zhina Mandiela's *Speshal Rikwes*. As well, they are distributing Afua Pam Cooper's first book of poetry, *Breaking Chains!* ●

A Descent into Hell



Linden Hills. by Gloria Naylor. New York: Ticknor & Fields 1985, 304 pages.

Reviewed by Sarah Eliot

Midway along the journey of our life
I woke to find myself in some
dark woods,
for I had wandered off from the straight
path,

How I entered there I cannot truly say,
I had become so sleepy at the moment
when I first strayed. . .
(Dante's *Inferno*, Canto I; 1-3, 10-12)

In her first novel, *Women of Brewster Place*, Gloria Naylor explored life in a black slum where the female inhabitants were "hard-edged, soft-centred, brutally demanding and easily pleased." In her new book, *Linden Hills*, she depicts life in hell. Operating in tandem with her first book, where the omnipresence of poverty and oppression seem hellish, she now holds up a mirror to the black, successful populace in Linden Hills and finds no reflection.

Each novel opens with an almost obsessively

precise account of its locale's geographic and physical origins. Brewster Place is firmly rooted in a one-way alley in the city's dead end zone, an arrangement concocted by corrupt municipal politicians. Linden Hills is the brainchild of Luther Nedeed, who bought a worthless piece of land from Wayne County in the mid 1800s. But here the geography becomes multi-dimensional as Naylor boldly appropriates Dante's symbolic landscape of hell and plunks it down on a V-shaped wedge on the north face of a plateau for Nedeed to transform into his own vision. The standard symbols of hell are seamlessly woven into Luther's suburban creation. The first Luther parodies the creation myth: after buying the worthless land, he could be seen sitting for six days, and on the seventh he smiled. Shortly afterwards he set up an undertaking business, "ferrying" the dead to the cemetery bordering his property. For the nine circles of hell, we look to the second and third generation Luthers who establish the eight crescent shaped drives of Linden Hills culminating in Luther's own moat-surrounded house at the bottom of the hill, as one character remarks, up is down in Linden Hills. Finally, there is Luther himself: "short, squat, dark, and with an immobile face" which is passed on unchanged to each generation - Lucifer reincarnated.

But Naylor does more than invoke the literary tradition of hell, she translates and restates it as a modern, defiantly black version. What colour is hell? For thousands of years we have been raised on a sacrosanct system of colour imagery to reflect moral values. Goodness is white, bright and beautiful; evil is black, dark and ugly. It is a caucasian colour spectrum; the other is to be shunned and feared. Accordingly, we are so introduced to Luther: an ugly, dark, black man, despised and feared by his white neighbours.

However, a funny thing happens on the way to hell - Linden Hills becomes a suburban success story where only the brightest and the best black families live. Linden Hills becomes the cynosure of all eyes, for the colour of money transcends even black and white. No longer a threat or embarrassment to its white neighbours, Linden Hills has arrived. But what colour do we associate with hell for blacks? Gradually, new imagery is insinuated. Norman, a gentle man, is subject to bi-annual attacks of the "pinks"; slimy, pink globules crawl all over him, ripping him apart

until he can be hospitalized for the duration. Later, when another character escorts a white woman to a society wedding, she is referred to as a "pink job." Other, similar images crystallize: the white, suffocating snow that blankets Linden Hills throughout the novel, and the high society wedding in this frozen diamond elegance, call into question our stereotyped colour associations.

What Naylor carefully etches, finally, is neither an evil which is black nor one that is white, but the ultimate hell - the colourless, faceless motionless void at the "heart" of Linden Hills. Folklore has it that once within the ambit of a linden tree you come under its spell and fall fast asleep until (or unless) you are rescued. Brewster Place, for all that it represents the cutting edge of misery, vibrates with tactile, pulsing life. Sweat pours off the inhabitants, sex is transitory but felt, pain is raw fire eating through Ciel's eyes and even rumour is a sour tasting presence. Brewster Place resounds with humanity crying.

But Linden Hills is cultivated, well-behaved and sleepwalks through its misery. Monumental feasts are described but not tasted, sex is discussed but not experienced and Maxwell Smyth, ground-breaking executive at GM has shit that doesn't smell. Our "eyes" for this experience are Willie, the young poet-narrator from the slums, who, sucked into the vortex of Linden Hills, stands amazed at a roomful of "niggers who don't even sweat."

Naylor uses Willie - as he cleans out their basements, chauffeurs the high-class alcoholic preacher, shovels walks and is strangely followed by Luther Nedeed - to explore this world where no one can or will reach out a hand to save the damned. As with Dante's poet who did not know how he entered hell, so sleepy had he become, here we meet those whose journey to hell is likewise shrouded.

It is not the quality of life but the quality of being that distinguished the women in Brewster Place from those in Linden Hills. In Brewster Place, Ciel Turner is rocked back from the edge of dying by Mattie:

And she rocked. . . And somewhere from
the bowels of her being came a moan from
Ciel. . . and the splinter gave way. . . it
would heal.

In Linden Hills, Laurel, so much more "successful" and "accomplished," cannot be

saved by her grandmother. The grandmother is spirit sister to Mattie but Laurel has gone beyond the edge of pain to oblivion:

The emptiness. . . finally expanded the
waiting void to the top of her skull. . . A
tiny bubble formed by the pressure began to
balloon at the remaining tip of her mind.

Ciel's pain burns, tears and rips, leaving her free. Laurel's misery bubbles, expands through softness till she rests, faceless at the bottom of her ice-covered pool. From where comes the void?

In its most striking incarnation we trace the hollow centre through four generations of Mrs. Nedeeds (never known in Linden Hills by any other name). The last Mrs., Willa, has been locked in the basement of her husband's house for producing a pale son, not born in his father's image. There she discovers herself in the faded records of her predecessors. Mrs. Luwana Nedeed, bought by the first Luther but never freed, writes in her diary, "There can be no God." Her writings are secreted amongst the passages of the Bible, her son is taken from her, her duties removed and finally even speech becomes unnecessary. Then Mrs. Evelyn, who leaves a record of recipes, herbal aphrodisiacs and skin toners to entice an indifferent and estranged spouse, and huge quantities of food, prepared to fill an empty life. Eventually she starves herself to death in a carefully-calculated system of bulimic gorgings and purgings. Mrs. Priscilla, who exists in a series of stored photographs beside her immutable husband and son, always twists or turns some special way so each photo reveals a difference. As Willa flips through she is excited by the show of independence until she notices with growing horror, that the son's shadow (her own husband) gradually obscures more and more of Priscilla's face, until in the last picture there is only a smeared blot above her neck.

Generations of women are held in faceless subservience, dwelling with men in the grip of colourless obsession, living on an empty hill where nothing else grows. The cry that ululates from Willa Nedeed's throat stretches out unheard by Linden Hills, lost in the soundlessness of humanity dying.

The purging rain that cleanses and communalizes at the conclusion of *Brewster Place* finds an empty reflection in the fire that leaves ashes and solitude in *Linden Hills*. *Linden Hills* does not have the warm, rooted power of *Brewster Place* because it does not deal in hope or even perseverance. It is a colder lament that sounds the strains of the damned. It does not touch the heart because that essence is gone from Linden Hills. The memory of an existence beyond shadow does not viscerally command our attention; a sense of loss does not compel as does loss itself. The souls, the inhabitants of hell are asleep under the linden trees.

Sarah Eliot is a Toronto civil servant with a classical education.

Landscape Artistry

Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful, by Alice Walker. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1984. Pp. xvi, 80. \$14.95

Reviewed by Jean Wilson

Alice Walker has to be one of the sanest, loveliest, most articulate people writing in North America today. She is also sensuous, gutsy, and so politically and socially acute that she astounds by her insight and versatility. Added to all that, she communicates wonderfully, both through prose, as in *The Color Purple* and *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, and through poetry, as in this recent new collection. Even if you don't ordinarily read poetry, read this book. Alice Walker and Adrienne Rich write for all of us, and as they use it, the form of poetry is no barrier to understanding and enjoyment.

The very source of the book's title hints at the ironic touch that Walker administers so well. Lame Deer Seeker of Visions, in describing how the Indians in North America acquired the horse, had this to say: "We had no word for the strange animal we got from the white man - the horse. So we called it sunka wakan, 'holy dog.' For bringing us the horse we could almost forgive you for bringing us whiskey. Horses make a landscape look more beautiful." Alice Walker has a lot to say that's equally apt.

She talks about many things: love and friendship, racism, hunger, injustice, writing poetry. And she has a way with irony that I like a lot and can be downright laugh-out-loud funny as well. Take "Every Morning" for example, all you diet- and exercise-conscious freaks:

Every morning I exercise
my body.
It complains

"Why are you doing this to me?"

I give it a plié
in response.
I heave my legs
off the floor
and feel my stomach muscles
rebel:
they are mutinous
there are rumblings
of dissent.

I have other things
to show,
but mostly, my body.
"Don't you see that person
staring at you?" I ask my breasts,
which are still capable
of staring back.
"If I didn't exercise
you couldn't look up
that far.
Your life would be nothing
but shoes."
"Let us at least say we're doing it
for ourselves";
my fingers are eloquent;
they never sweat.

Then again, listen to this stubborn black woman's voice in "Mississippi Winter IV":

My father and mother both
used to warn me
that "a whistling woman and a crowing
hen would surely come to
no good end." And perhaps I should
have listened to them.
But even at the time I knew
that though my end probably might
not
be good
I must whistle
like a woman undaunted
until I reached it.

and listen to the simple eloquence of this poem about love ("Love Is Not Concerned"):

love is not concerned
with whom you pray
or where you slept
the night you ran away
from home
love is concerned
that the beating of your heart
should kill no one.

In my world, Alice Walker's writing makes my inner landscape more beautiful. She might very well do the same for you.

Jean Wilson is a former Broadside collective member, currently working with Room of One's Own in Vancouver.

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Pleasure and Danger Runs Hot and Cold



Pleasure and danger; exploring female sexuality. Ed. by Carole Vance. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Reviewed by Sherrill Cheda

Proceeding from Emma Goldman's *The Traffic in Women* and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, *Pleasure and Danger* breaks new ground and is one of the most thought-provoking anthologies since *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1971). Carole Vance, in her thoughtful and comprehensive introduction, asks difficult questions about female sexuality and urges us to keep asking these questions. Neither pop psychology nor a sociological text, the articles, first presented at the Scholar and Feminist IX conference held at Barnard College in New York in 1982, have excellent notes.

Contrary to what previous reviewers have led us to believe, this collection is not a study of pornography. It is, however, about the erotic in women's lives. The book eschews an analysis of women's traditionally dangerous efforts to gain pleasure—such as marriage, adultery, pick-ups in bars, dating clubs or placing classified advertisements. Instead, *Pleasure and Danger* explores butch-fem, top and bottom, fat, fantasy, fear as a form of

self-censorship, Hispanic and Black women's experience, assumptions about disabled women and sex manuals as conservative information. There are no Ann Landers cuddles here.

Beginning with "Seeking ecstasy on the battlefield," Ellen Carol Dubois and Linda Gordon try to connect contemporary anti-pornography feminists to 19th century social purity politicians. In "The taming of the Id: Feminist sexual politics, 1968-83," Alice Echols suggests that all anti-pornography women are anti-sex and all anti-censorship women are pro-sex. While Echols' points may be more true for the States, in Canada, as Lynda Hurst noted in the *Toronto Star* (April 30, 1985), "The Fraser Committee clearly saw through the current myth that feminism and traditional conservatism coincide." The anti-porn group in Canada includes women from various backgrounds, as does the anti-censorship group. Echols uses pornography as an all inclusive word with no definition and no distinction made for violence and hate literature against women. Rather than being anti-sex (pleasure), the anti-porn women I know are convinced that women can experience no pleasure when being raped, genitally mutilated, or drawn and quartered. The

distance between danger and violence is a wide gap. Violence against women is not erotic. To be against violence against women is not to be anti-erotic.

Echols confuses a lot of issues, overstates her case and blurs lines:

"Although cultural feminists blame the sexual revolution for destroying the old sexual order, radical feminists' attack on marriage, romantic love, puritan morality, and respect certainly hastened its downfall."

Wait a minute. How did "respect" get into that sentence? Respect for whom or what? She overlooks the fact that radical feminism is a method of analyzing reality from a political point of view. Marriage, romantic love, *et al.* were already in great disarray before the second wave of feminism. Her efforts to connect the anti-abortion movement to the anti-pornography movement ultimately fail because most anti-porn feminists are pro-choice.

Other major contributions are "everything they always wanted you to know: the ideology of popular sex literature" by Meryl Altman, "Above and beyond politics," a sensitive and sensible approach to sex education by Mary Calderone, and "Politically correct? Politically incorrect?" by Muriel Dimen. And it is good to see a familiar radical feminist name such as Kate Millet writing about children and sexuality from a power politics point of view.

Esther Newton and Shirley Wallton make a valiant effort to present a more precise sexual vocabulary but end up with some sweeping generalizations, spurious arguments and confusing statements.

"Cunnilingus was satisfying, but since fellatio had been implicitly (sic) condemned by feminism, Shirley had almost no sex life."

"'Egalitarian sex' assumes functionally interchangeable partners and acts."

"Thinking sex: notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality" by Gayle Rubin represents the 'erotic-tastes-are-like-gastronomic-tastes' school of thought. And the fallacy that sex with children is somehow in the forefront of sexual thought creeps into this contribution to the point that the author attempts to link lack of sympathy with boy-lovers to right-wing anti-communism. The term "intergenerational sex" should receive the Euphemism of the Year award.

Nevertheless, Rubin raises many important issues about sexuality as social construct. She rightly points out that sexual acts are burdened with an excess of significance. She doesn't suggest that the reasons for this could be because of the vulnerability of intimacy, risk of pregnancy, responsibility, jealousy, or even, one of the themes of this book, danger. She does define a democratic morality:

"A democratic morality should judge sex acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide. Whether sex acts are gay or straight, coupled or in groups, naked or in underwear, commercial or free, with or without video, should not be ethical concerns."

One of the best written articles in the collection is Sharon Thompson's "Search for tomorrow; on feminism and the reconstruction of teen romance," which is based on fifty life histories and the author's wise analysis of the quest for romance, juxtaposed against the reality of teenage sexual experience. The bargains girls can strike have changed and they are left even more powerless than when sex equalled marriage.

An underlying theme in the articles by Echols, Rubin and Thompson is that radical feminists did not change the world as they promised they would, and unfortunately made way for cultural feminists, those anti-sex women, mostly lesbian separatists, who now bring you censorship. The motif that feminism has failed runs underground throughout this book; some authors go so far as to blame feminism for their lack of sexual fulfillment.

Generally speaking, according to this collection, there are no misogynists, pimps, pornographers, wife abusers or rapists. Women seem to exist almost by themselves on a planet where violence has been scooped out of the landscape—in its own way, a separatist space. If women are occasionally victims, it is of unknown assailants.

Many of the writing styles seem exaggerated but perhaps this is because the selections were first verbal presentations, surrounded by controversy. The controversy continues and reading this book is guaranteed to stretch your mind.

Sherrill Cheda is a Toronto arts administrator.

Varied Verse

Red shoes in the rain by Jan E. Conn. Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1984. **A Nun's Diary** by Anne McLean. Montreal: Signal Editions/Véhicule Press, 1984. **Anyone skating on that middle ground** by Robyn Sarah. Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1984.

Reviewed by Betsy Nuse

The young women poets of Canada continue to offer extraordinary bouquets to their readers. Imagine—three fine books have vied for my attention this month; I hope they will capture your imagination.

First, Jan Conn's long-awaited first solo book, *Red shoes in the rain*. Generous and polished, it contains four sections of short poems, grouped by theme, mood or setting. Conn's vision—her sense of composition, colour and detail—is the most pleasing common element for me. One section describes "views" from a trip to Japan, but the poems in other sections describe other "foreign" places and periods: past time, people once cared for, places once visited which may have changed but are not forgotten. Conn's sense of composition almost disguises the emotional intensity of her work, but clear, sure language reveals her strength:

we stand and wave; put back on

our separate lives that wait like a pair of red shoes left out all night in the rain. it's no good. they've shrunk. they'll never fit the same way again.

To open *A Nun's Diary* by Anne McLean is to enter an entirely different world. Two large compositions dominate this book: the first, the diary of the title, the second, a macabre cowboy story. McLean's vision is unflinching and her language direct. Like some new films or videos, her poems struggle with horrifying and bizarre images; they held me in a giddy combination of fascination and revulsion. To retell McLean's plots (each long suite does tell a story) would be unfair; her work is true composition in which story, image and language combine to create a whole much greater in effect than any part. *A Nun's Diary* is not for the squeamish, the easily shocked, or those who prefer a story to settle more problems than it raises. McLean works with familiar images, like the convent and the outlaw, but the result is hardly familiar, reassuring or even optimistic. It is unforgettable.

By comparison, Robyn Sarah's most recent book, *Anyone skating on that middle ground*, seems understated and unassuming. But one soon discovers what an impressive collection it is. Sarah is a master of her craft; in the all-too-short span of fifty pages, her

style can be sinewy ("Like a blade"), expansive ("On my son's birthday"), her language charged with emotion ("Meridian") or intellectually patterned ("Tone Row"). Her words are rooted in wonderful imagery—not alien or pretentious, but well-observed and exact. My favourite verbal picture is "Little Prelude," which describes summer rain on a city street with the extraordinarily apt phrase

Oh summer's big quilted winds
bolstering scent!

Urban objects like bus-stops, boot marks by the door, "clumps of dust under the peeling rads" are as familiar to Sarah as natural ones—bars of sunlight, dry weedstalks, a black walnut saved through the winter—and offer sweet contrast from poem to poem. In the classic romantic tradition befitting her polished skill, Sarah's poetry considers the present moment—and the sad tension between it and other moments. The seasons turn, love changes, but Sarah finds freedom in writing poetry, and fortunately we readers can enjoy her wonderful

words

set to go off, like birds on a clothesline,
at the first touch of the reel.

Betsy Nuse is proprietor of Boudicca Books.

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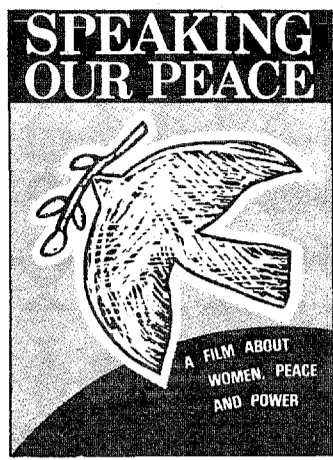
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Violet Trefusis
a biography by Philippe Jullian and John Phillips including correspondence with Vita Sackville-West \$13.95

Week of June 1

● **Saturday, June 1:** B and D Express (Boo Watson, Deb Parent and Joanne Parks) New Trojan Horse, 179 Danforth Ave. Info: 461-8367.



● **Sunday, June 2:** Toronto Premiere of 'Speaking Our Peace,' NFB Studio D's new hour-long documentary on women and peace. Bloor Cinema, 2:30 pm. Free. Info: 369-4094.

● **Sunday, June 2:** Ravenwing; The course. Ritual, meditation, tarot, crystals and spiritual healing. Info: Janice Canning, 626-5465 or 533-2738.

● **Monday, June 3:** "Passion and Pictures," a new reading group concerned with feminism, sexuality and representation. Four week programme. 7:30 pm. 455 Spadina Avenue, Room 215. \$10. Info: 593-0058.

● **Tuesday, June 4:** Lesbian Phone Line meeting. Interested women, prospective volunteers welcome. Info and location: 533-6120.

● **Tuesday, June 4:** Lesbian Phone line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30-10:30 pm. 533-6120. Also Tuesdays, June 12, 19 and 26.

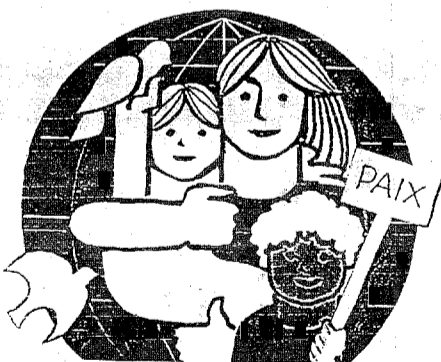
● **Thursday, June 6:** 'The Times of Harvey Milk,' a special screening. A benefit for the AIDS Committee of Toronto. 9:30 pm. Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor W. \$4. Info: 926-1625.

● **Thursday, June 6:** Bratty and the Babysitters. Cameron House. 408 Queen St. West. Info: 364-0811.

● **Thursday, June 6:** "Moving On" by Louise Azzarello. Winchester Street Theatre, 80 Winchester Street. 8 pm. Tickets \$6/\$5. Info: 533-8437. To June 8.

● **Thursday, June 6:** Lesbian Phone Line open tonight for calls from women. 7:30-10:30 pm. 533-6120. Also Thursdays, June 13, 20 and 27.

● **Saturday, June 8:** Marie-Lynn Hammond, New Trojan Horse, 179 Danforth Ave. Info: 461-8367.



● **Sunday, June 9:** International Children's Day concert to celebrate children's right to friendship, peace and happiness. 1-3 pm. Harbourfront: Shipdeck Stage. Info: 699-9920 (evenings).

● **Sunday, June 9:** Open Forum, Grace Petrask President of R.E.A.L. Women of Canada debates radical Catholic feminist Laurie Bell on the topic: "The role of women in society: different Christian perspectives." 7:30 pm. St. Edward Church, 4935 Yonge Street. Free. Info: 622-8376.

Week of June 10

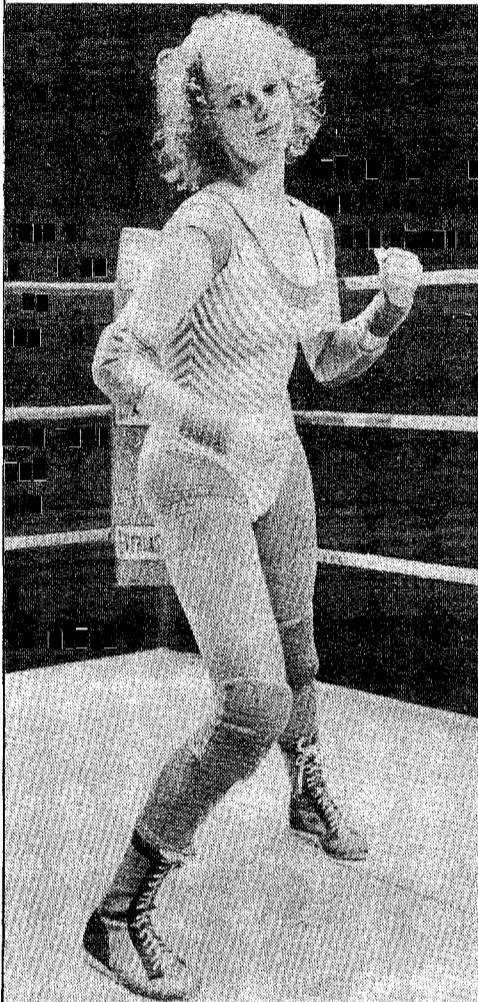
● **Tuesday, June 11:** Discussion with artist Kim Fullerton, about her new work, "Five Steps to the Inquiry," 7 pm. Gallery 940, 940 Queen St. East. Info: 593-0058.

OUTSIDE BROADSIDE

TORONTO WOMEN'S EVENTS CALENDAR
JUNE 1985

Compiled by Catherine Maunsell

● **Wednesday, June 12:** OCAC Benefit, at the Rivoli, BamBoo, Cameron House and Horseshoe Tavern. One admission price to all locations. Info: 593-5771.



Trafford Tanzi

● **Thursday, June 13:** Bratty and the Babysitters. Downstairs at the El Mocambo. 464 Spadina Ave. Info: 961-2558. To Saturday, June 15.

● **Friday, June 14:** Women's Music/Women's Culture. Featuring Libby Scheier, poet, Faith Nolan, Susan Howlett, Kiki Misumi. 8:30 pm, New Trojan Horse Cafe, 179 Danforth. \$4. Info: 461-8367.

Week of June 17

● **Monday, June 17:** Women's Cultural Network open forum. Themes: publicity, promotion and process. 7:30 pm. 455 Spadina Avenue, Room 215. Info: 593-0058.

● **Wednesday, June 19:** Women's Music Coffeehouse. 519 Church Street, 7:30-10:30 pm. Admission by donation. Info: Tamie, 923-2778.

● **Wednesday, June 19:** 'Trafford Tanzi', a play by Claire Luckham. Toronto Free Theatre. 26 Berkeley St. Info: 368-7601. Indefinite run.

● **Thursday, June 20:** Panel Discussion on Violence Against Women with Susan G. Cole, Michelle Dore and speakers from the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and Emily Stowe Shelter. Warden Woods Community Centre, 74 Fir Valley. 7 pm. \$10. Info: 264-4357.

● **Thursday, June 20:** Reproductive Rights. Movement and Struggle for Abortion Clinics. A socialist feminist-perspective. Room 107, Cody Hall, 50 St. George St. 8 pm. Donation \$3.

● **Friday, June 21:** Application deadline for two week study tour of Nicaragua, sponsored by Canadian Action for Nicaragua. \$1600 inclusive. Info: 534-1766 or 533-0819 (Laura).

● **Friday, June 21:** Ravenwing: Celebration of Summer Picnic and Ritual in High Park, 7 pm. Info: Janice Canning 626-5465 or 533-2738.

● **Friday, June 21:** Northwind II: Making Waves. A folk festival on the Toronto Islands, featuring Heather Bishop, Jane Siberry, Sabia and much more. Weekend pass \$32, Friday \$12, Saturday and Sunday \$15. Tickets available at Toronto Women's Bookstore. Info: 865-1397. To June 23.

● **Saturday, June 22:** Solstice Celebration Dance, benefit dance for "Coming Together: a Women's Sexuality Conference." 1087 Queen St. West (at Dovercourt). 8:30 pm. Tickets: \$5 advance at Toronto Women's Bookstore, \$7 at the door. All women welcome. Info and childcare: 537-6076.

Week of June 24

● **Tuesday, June 25:** Singer Mariane Girard performs at the BamBoo, 312 Queen St. West. 9 pm. \$4. Info: 593-5771.

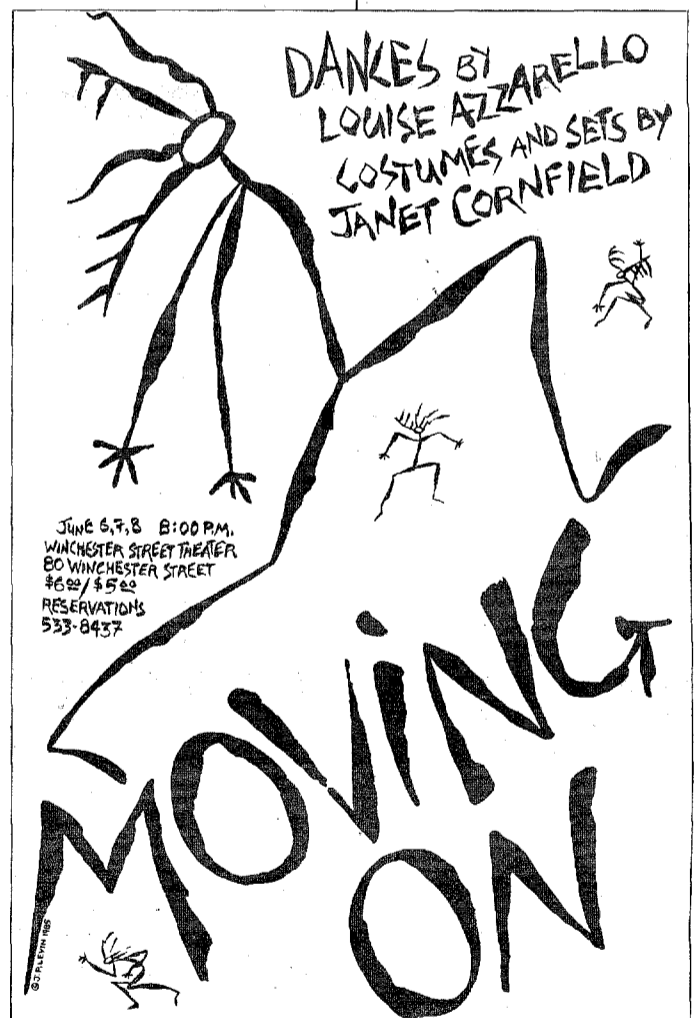
● **Wednesday, June 26:** 'Dad's House, Mom's House', a film on divorced couples and custody problems. NFB Theatre, 1 Lombard Street, 12:15 pm. Info: 369-4093.

● **Friday, June 28:** Women's Independent Thoughtz (WITZ). A seminar/discussion group for the exchange of ideas and creative endeavours in art, literature, philosophy and political thought. Topic: Alternative Education. 7 pm. Info: 536-3162 or 766-9496.

● **Friday, June 28:** Art for Chile. Show and sale of works donated by Canadian Artists. 12 to 6 pm. Studio 620, 620 Richmond Street West (at Bathurst). Info: 368-4207. To June 1.

● **Saturday, June 29:** "Coming Together," dance sponsored by GCDC. Women DJs Ilona Laney and Barb Droese. 9 pm to 5 am. Concert Hall, 888 Yonge St. Tickets \$7.50 advance, \$8.50 door (\$5 after 1:30 am).

● **Sunday, June 30:** Coming Together: Lesbian and Gay Pride Day '85. Cawthra Square (Church Street). 1 pm. Entertainment. Info: 923-GAYS



'Outside Broadside' is a monthly feature of the paper. To help make it as comprehensive as possible, let us know when you are planning an event. In explaining your event (see coupon), keep it short — max. 25 words. Copy that is too long, or with incomplete information will not be printed. We need to know well in advance: two weeks before the month your event's happening. Fill in the coupon below and send it to *Broadside*

Calendar Information

What: (type of event) _____

Who: (sponsor, telephone) _____

Where: _____

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Cost: _____

Broadside CLASSIFIEDS

TORONTO WOMEN'S HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE: Wanted! Women identified women with or without kids. Living at "The Béguinage" means co-operatively owning your own home in downtown Toronto, without a down payment. Monthly housing charges \$430-\$700 plus utilities. An exciting community of women working together to make a home that is more than just a place to live. Call (416) 925-2475, ext. 330.

SUBLET July 1 - August 15. Quiet, furnished one bedroom. Dovercourt/College. \$325/month. Women only. Call Brenda (416) 537-1935.

FEMINIST SEEKS SAME to share renovated two bedroom apartment. June - September. College/Crawford area, rent negotiable. TTC nearby. Call (416) 530-4088.

FEMINIST WOMEN'S HOUSEHOLD seeks one or two women to share lovely, spacious home. Large third floor room, or room with study available. Backyard, garden, steps from TTC. Non-smoking. College/Dovercourt area. Call (416) 536-0478.

HOUSEMATE SEEKS A HOME for July 1 or August 1. I am a 34 year old PhD student looking for a harmonious, mixed, non-sexist household of people in their late 20s or older, non-smoking or light smoking with communal cooking and close to U of T. Please call Linda at (416) 977-8473.

WANTED apartment suitable for one person and cat, or to share a two bedroom apartment. Annex Area. Beginning August 1st or September 1st. Please call (416) 924-8819.

HOUSESITTING PLUS painting, papering. While you're away on vacation. Avoid the smell. Avoid the mess. Call Jan, (416) 485-8543.

STUDIO - 300 square feet in shared space, \$165/month, Landsdowne/Bloor, (416) 532-0379.

WOMEN WANTED for co-operative problem-solving support group. Interested women need to be over 30, lesbian, and have had at least a year of therapy. This is not a therapy group. (N.B. last month wrong number was listed.) Phone Linda at (416) 466-0966.

FEMINIST GROUPS AND FUNDRAISING. I am doing research over the summer on the issues, ethics, and achievements of feminist fundraising. If you or your group are also interested in the politics of funding, please contact me. Dianne Kinnon, 522 McLeod Street, Ottawa, K1R 5R1; (613) 234-8483.

LESBIANS IN VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS: are you now or have you ever in the past, been hit, beaten, physically restrained, threatened with weapons or other objects by your lover? I have, and I'd like to start a group for information sharing and mutual support. Even if it only happened once, it still counts. Confidentiality guaranteed. Call Education Wife Assault, (416) 968-3422, and leave a message for Persephone. (This is a contact number only.)

SETH READERS (Jane Roberts): Women eager to discuss/exchange views regarding Seth concepts. Call Jayy or Grace, 1-416-786-2684, or write Box 73, Newtonville, LOA 1J0.

STEPPING OUT OF LINE - a great new Canadian book on lesbianism and feminism. Check your local bookstore or order directly from Press Gang, Dept. J, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1H2. \$12.95 plus \$1.25 handling.

FRENCH LESBIAN AND FEMINIST books by mail. Send \$2 for three book bulletin/year, fourth issue free. Librairie l'Androgyne, 3642 boul. St-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2V4.

WOMEN'S INFORMATION LINE: Services, events, groups call (416) 926-8700. Don't miss the feminist quote of the week.

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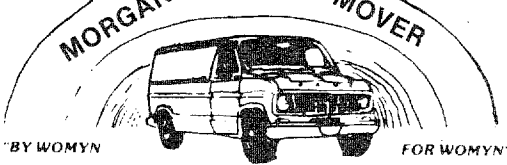
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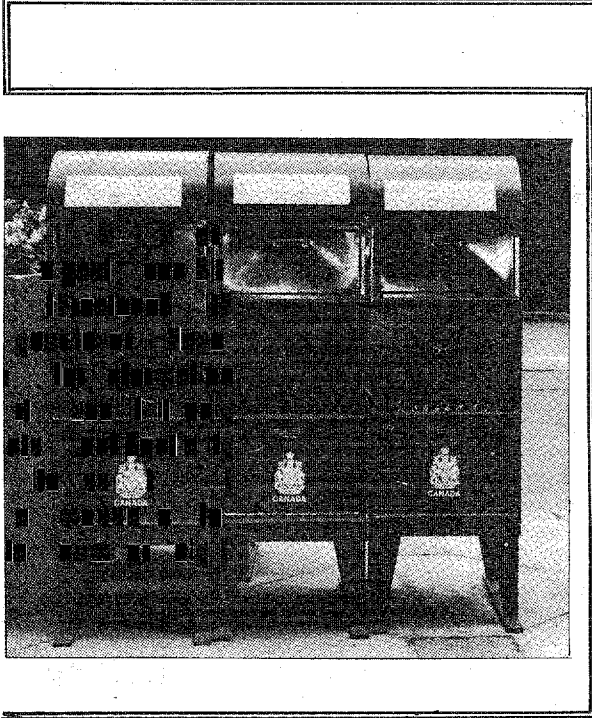
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