

# swag STATUS OF WOMEN NEWS

	<h2>LIFE &amp; WORK</h2> <p>of the</p> <h2>Single Parent</h2> <p>80% are female*</p>	
<p><b>Item: Average Wages</b> Single female parent earned \$6,462 that year. Single male parent earned \$20,676.</p>		<p><b>Item: 1977 Statistics</b> 44.7% of families supported by women lived on less than \$7,000 that year. 8.2% of families supported by men lived under the poverty line of \$7,300.</p>

\* 1976 & 1977 Statistics from Status of Women  
Publication "Towards Equality for Women"

The Victoria Status of Women Action Group was formed in 1971 in order to work for the implementation of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women; to foster public knowledge of the rights and status of women to promote full participation of women in social economic and political life.

SWAG is a voluntary group, registered as a society with an executive elected annually.

**Address:** P.O. Box 6296, Stn. C, or 1045 Linden Avenue  
Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5      Victoria, B.C.  
381-1012

### Working Groups

Each of the Contact Persons has a particular area of interest in women's issues. Members who share that interest or, have a concern or problem in that area are encouraged to make contact.

### Contact Women

B.C.F.W.	Sylvia Watson 382-3914 Stella Lord 595-2542
Family Law	Gwen Bavin 383-2502
Education	Elizabeth Azmier-Stewart 642-3678
Human Rights	Norrie Preston 598-1390
Health	Susan Moger 592-4215
Labour	Stella Lord 595-2542
Feminist Study Group	Alice Albert 382-1536
Social Services	Elizabeth Hamlet 595-2569
Newsletter Editorial Board	Stella Lord - Editor 595-2542 Alice Albert - Layout Avis Rasmussen - Cover 598-3188

### Co-ordinators

February	— Laurie Lawson
March	— Diana Butler
April	— Josephine Payne-O'Conner
May	— Catherine Winter
June	— Alice Albert
July	— Gwen Bavin
August	— Alice Albert
September	— Avis Rasmussen
October	— Stella Lord
November	— Stella Lord
December-January	— Lois Vickery

### Media Co-ordinator

Josephine Payne-O'Conner  
#1 - 1205 Bay St.,  
Victoria, B.C.  
389-0745

### Conference Co-ordinator

Judith Barrett-Lennard  
#109 - 575 Marifield Ave.,  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1N3  
382-5930

### Recorder

Laurie Lawson  
#2440 Foul Bay Rd.,  
Victoria, B.C. V8R 5A9  
595-1564

### NAC Contact

Shirley Avril  
386-4467

### Membership Co-ordinator

Catherine Winter  
389-2959

### Treasurer

Diana Butler  
2149 Granite  
Victoria, B.C.  
598-6964

### Correspondent

**MEMBERSHIP** Entitles you to a subscription to SWAG NEWS (\$10.00 per year) — a completely volunteer effort dependent upon your contributions... poems, articles, opinions, reports. **All feminist material welcome.**

**Meetings/Workshops** SWAG meetings are held the fourth Monday of each month (except when it falls on a holiday) at the Women's Building, 760 Yates, 7:30 p.m.



# WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?

## swag

Part Time Coordinator Required for SWAG Office. Position will be posted in the SWAG office next week. Please phone or drop in the office for further details.

### Friday, February 18 - Saturday 19

SWAG Retreat. Pacific Centre. / Phone the office for details.

### Sunday, February 27

Feminist Study Group, 435 Moss Street, 3.00.p.m. (see announcement section)

### Sunday, March 6

International Women's Day Celebration. University of Victoria, Sub Building. 12.00.-5.00. Workshops on Women, Work and the Recession; Women and Militarism; Women in Trades. Film on Nicaragua and Guest speaker Marta Tores, labour lawyer from Guatemala. Free

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### Wednesday, February 16

6.00 Business and Professional Women monthly dinner meeting. Speaker: Buncy Pagely on "Women's Unity Through Diversity".

7.30.p.m. James Bay Community Centre. Film: "Up from the bargain basement" and discussion of the working conditions of retail store clerks. Sponsored by the Committee of the Unemployed.

### Friday, February 18-Saturday 19

Menopause Workshop. Open to women of all ages. Friday 7.30.-9.30. Saturday 10.00-4.00. Registration information from Susan Mosher 592-4215 Fee \$40.

### Saturday February 19

Wimmins Dance to celebrate St. Valentine's Day. All wimmin are invited. White Eagle Hall, 90 Dock St., 8.00-1.00 \$3.00 donation at the door.

### Saturday, February 19

Business and Professional Women. International Banquet Night. Royal Oak Inn, Skylight Room, 6.00.p.m. for 7.00. Phone Doris Vernon for details.

### Tuesday, February 22

Victoria Jaycettes, Woman of the Year Award. Speaker: Rosemary Brown. Crystal Gardens. Noon.

### Wednesday, February 23

Women in Math and Science: Where are they? Speaker: Professor Norma Mickelson, Department of Education, U.Vic. 7.30.p.m. Oak Bay Secondary (West Bldg)

### Thursday, February 24-Saturday 26

National Association of Women and the Law Conference, Empress Hotel, Victoria. Details from Conference Office, U.Vic.

### Saturday, February 26

Women's Emotional Release and Healing Workshop 9.00-5.00 Sliding scale fee Information: Sara Joy David 385-2954

### Tuesday, March 8

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY. Peace March organized by women's collective for peace. 12.00-1.30 march from Centennial Square to Inner Harbour 1.30-3.00 Films at National Film Board Offices, (c/o Wharf and Government)

### Tuesday, March 8

The Film "Julia" is being shown at U.Vic Cinecenter to honour IWD 7.00 and 9.00. A benefit - proceeds will go to defray costs of IWD week at U.Vic.

# STATUS OF WOMEN NEWS

This month, the SWAG Newsletter's theme is the single mother. Many SWAG members and several active members, are single parents. The reality of life for a woman as a single parent is described by Josephine Payne-O'Connor. The experience she outlines here is common to many women in Victoria. If you have anything to add, or can relate other experiences or interpretations of what it means to be a single mother today, please drop us a line.

The debate on the nature of SWAG (middle class do-gooders or revolutionaries) and its role as a feminist organization and the role of government funding (in dampening/enhancing feminism) continues. Please feel free to add your two cents worth if you feel inclined, because it is an important debate and one which has many members of SWAG as possible ought to have a say.

We're glad to see that the NDP is finally getting its act together on women's liberation issues. A paper prepared for the Regina Convention next July advocates that people should have "the right of choice in reproductive matters". The NDP has cautiously avoided taking a stand on the abortion issue and this change of policy (if indeed it

becomes policy at the Regina Convention) is a welcome change. The NDP is also taking seriously women's stand on the pornography issue. It is reported that Rosemary Brown has resigned from the Civil Liberties Association because of its refusal to take a stand on the issue. The issue of pornography is also going to be discussed in detail this week by the NDP Women's Committee in Vancouver.

March 8 is International Women's Day and will be celebrated by a Peace March at noon from Centennial Square. On Sunday, March 6, The International Women's Day Committee, a coalition of women's groups is organizing events at U.Vic from 12.00 to 5.00 (see announcements on these events in the Calendar). Still on a celebratory note, SWAG in conjunction with the Women's Building Society and the Sexual Assault Centre is organizing a fundraising event for April 16 with singer Connie Kaldor. Plan to be there.

Please also note the petition at the end of the Newsletter. We would like to collect as many signatures of concerned women as possible. Thank you.

## Letters



Canadian Advisory Council  
on the Status of Women

January 15, 1983.

Lois Vickery,  
Coordinating Committee,  
Status of Women Action Group

Dear Ms. Vickery:

We are in receipt of a copy of your letter to Mr. Allan Williams, Attorney General, and thank you for including us.

The list of current research into the correlation of pornography and violence is an invaluable reference source and much time and effort must have gone into compiling it. Do you have most of this reference material in your files? If you do, I would be interested in obtaining copies of the last three references on your list, namely, Dr. Susan Penfold,

September, 1982-address to the meeting of the Canadian Psychiatric Association; Dr. N. Shainess, May 1982- address to the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association; and Gladys Denny Shultz, What Sex Offenders Say About Pornography, July 1971- Reader's Digest.

If you do not, could you please let me know so that I can do my own research to obtain them? If you do have them to hand, I would appreciate receiving a copy of each.

Thank you again for keeping the Advisory Council abreast of your activities and we wish you much energy in your endeavours.

Yours,

Danelle Laidlaw,  
Secretary to Eileen Hendry,  
Vice-President, CACSW, Western Region.



January, 1983.

Josephine Payne-O'Connor Ph.D.  
Status of Women Action Group.

The Editor,  
Times-Colonist.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Recent contributors (January 30th) to the pornography debate defend the distribution of porn on the basis of free speech and the sanctity of the home. One writer finds anti-porn women distinctly fascist! As anti-porn women, we offer the following arguments to all liberals.

Hard-core porn (most of what's available now) is sadistic, constituting hate propaganda against women and children. It is not so much obscene as it is dangerous. We offer a comparison with the Nazi anti-Jewish films which preceded and accompanied the holocaust. In our view, these kinds of films cannot be defended on the grounds of "free speech", but must be banned as hate propaganda because they endanger human lives. Our comparison is not fanciful. Rape and incest (affecting one in four young Canadian women) and battery (affecting one in ten Canadian wives) are epidemic and increasing. This is the brutal reality women face--a reality which porn celebrates and condones.

Clearly, pornography alone does not create this violence. Millions of men do. Porn used to be promoted as a safe way to short-circuit sexual violence. It certainly didn't do that. Now it's considered harmless. Our education system and advertising industry, however, are based on the premise that our behavior is shaped by the values promoted in what we read and view. How can pornography be an exception?

We are not surprised that some contributors to the debate cannot identify hate propaganda. Millions of people enjoy Westerns without recognizing that they celebrate the slaughter of Native peoples. Hate propaganda works when it masquerades as "family fun".

The liberal defence of the sanctity of the home and our rights to choice of entertainment therein is a popular theme in the pro-porn position. To thousands and thousands of sexually abused children, battered and murdered wives, and rape victims, this is all a very hollow joke. Your privacy means our abuse. Most women do not have any choice about what goes on in our homes. We want safety before privacy.

When the right to free speech means that the voices and concerns of women are heard, and when the privacy of the home means we are safe there, then we will support the liberal position. But we anti-porn women are refusing to pay for these fancy male privileges with our blood.

Ombudsman, Legislative  
Assembly, Victoria.

January 17, 1983.

Miss W. Ackinclose.

Dear Miss Ackinclose:

Thank you for your recent letter to the office of the Ombudsman. I note that you are concerned that many stores in Victoria display in full view, magazines which portray women in an offensive manner.

At the moment, the jurisdiction of this office only extends to Provincial Government Ministries, Crown Corporations, boards and agencies in which the majority of Directors are appointed by the Provincial Government or are in some way responsible to the Provincial Government. Therefore, the Ombudsman cannot comment on the way in which private stores display their goods.

I note that you have sent a copy of your letter to other groups. You may receive some direct information from them about a past ruling on the subject of displaying of pornography. The City of Victoria and other municipalities have bylaws which you may wish to examine for their content. The administration or an Alderman could be contacted to help you with this.

I am enclosing an office of the Ombudsman brochure for your information.

Yours sincerely,  
Rick Cooper  
Director of Investigations.

SWAG, Victoria.

January 17, 1983.

Francis Fox,  
Minister of Communications,  
Journal Tower North,  
300 Slater Street,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Mr. Fox:

I write on behalf of the Status of Women, Victoria, to protest those recommendations of the Applebaum/Hebert Committee Report on cultural policy which concern the National Film Board.

We are shocked and angered that the recommendation that the NFB be "transformed into a centre for research and training..." could be taken seriously even for a moment.

The NFB has long been an innovator and leader in Canadian film-making. Not only do the films produced through the NFB make valuable cultural contributions but they also provide powerful social commentary. The NFB is known and respected world-wide for the superb quality of their films, their powerful documentaries and unsurpassed animation.

In particular, our concern is with Studio D which, of course, is the course of a number of excellent films on subjects of concern to women. Among these is "Not a Love Story". This film has had a tremendous impact on the attitudes of Canadians on the subject of pornography. It continues to be a heavy demand, and to provoke passionate debate everywhere it is shown.

Surely this is the role of a cultural institution such as the NFB...to inform, to entertain, to inspire. The fact that 500,000 films are borrowed from the NFB each year indicates clearly that the NFB is continuing to meet the cultural needs of Canadians.

The recommendation that CBC News and public affairs programming can replace the NFB is absurd. In obtaining films from the NFB, Canadians are able to match the subject-matter and the timing to their own personal needs. TV viewers, however, must adapt to the needs and commercialism of television. Not only are they inundated with advertising, but quality programming and Canadian content are relatively rare.

The NFB, moreover, has been a potent vehicle for the self-expression of many Canadian minority groups, such as francophones, Native people, women (in effect, a minority groups), etc. It has helped us to know more about and to better understand each other.

In recommending that the NFB be handed over to the private sector, Applebaum/Hebert appear to be grossly unaware of the commercial considerations which motivate private sector film-making.

The NFB is an integral part of Canada's cultural identity. They continue to produce the highest quality film in the world. They distribute in over 100 countries and in 60 languages. And they continue to inform, to entertain, and to inspire. The elimination of this bastion of Canadian culture would be a tragic loss for us all.

Indeed, the timely news that Canadian Pay-TV will carry American "Playboy" programming and, I am informed, a wide selection of hardcore pornography leads one to seriously question the cultural and ethical values of those elected to represent the Canadian people.

Sincerely,

Pam Blackstone  
for the Coordinating Committee.

Victoria, B.C.

January 17, 1983.

Victoria Cablevision

First Choice Playboy station? Big deal! What about women; how about a Playgirl station?

My film watching whether it be on television or at the pictures has decreased immensely, because of what some of these programs consist of (degrading women, sexual objects, etc.) has caused me to be choosy.

It would certainly show some progress in the film industry if they were to increase (or start) producing films for the mature adult rather than the young teenage male. Excluding of course, kiddies films. There is nothing unpopular about teenager (meaning male and female) films which are decent and have an interesting story to them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wendy Ackinclose (Miss)

cc. Status of Women Action Group

Rosemary Brown MLA  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria.

January 18, 1983.

Ms. Lois Vickery,  
SWAG.

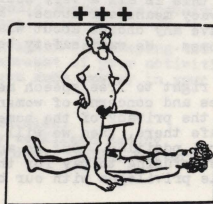
Dear Lois,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the material SWAG sent to Allan Williams concerning the proliferation of violent hard-core pornography in British Columbia.

As you know, I completely support your stand on the growth and availability of pornographic material. At the moment, I await the outcome of the Attorney-General's confiscation of the material from Red Hot Video.

Yours truly,

Rosemary Brown, MLA  
(Burnaby-Edmonds)





SWAG, Victoria.  
January 20, 1983.

Victoria, B.C.  
January 26, 1983.

Mr. Richard Achtem,  
Crown Counsel,  
852 Fort Street,  
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Mr. Achtem:

In light of the government's decision to proceed with the prosecution against Red Hot Video under section 159 of the Criminal Code, I am forwarding the enclosed material which I hope will be of use and interest to you.

The bibliography has been recently compiled, and already there are more studies which could be added to it. While Dennis Murray has told us it would be virtually impossible to argue an obscenity case in court on the grounds that evidence exists implicating porn in violence against women, we believe this evidence could strengthen crown counsel's case. It is noteworthy that any contrary evidence which the defense could come up with pre-dates 1970.

Because the defense will also argue community standards are not being exceeded (by virtue of the demand for RHV's product), we are enclosing the results of a public opinion poll we conducted in downtown Victoria in June, 1982. This is a small sampling and by no means scientific, but the results are interesting. We also ask you to keep in mind that the Union of B.C. municipalities unanimously passed Resolution B-48, expressing the clear intolerance of the community leaders of this province.

Sincerely,  
Pam Blackstone.

Ottawa, January 20.

Status of Women Action Group,  
Women Against Pornography.

I thank you for your telex expressing concern over the inclusion of potentially obscene or degrading programming on Canadian Pay-television.

I have met yesterday with the Chairman of the CRTC, Dr. John Meisel, to discuss this issue and have been informed that the CRTC will meet this week with representatives of First Choice to examine this issue. A statement by the CRTC is expected to be made shortly following the meeting with First Choice.

I have, therefore, taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your comments to Dr. Meisel for his consideration prior to that meeting and have asked him to reply to you directly.

Francis Fox,  
Minister of Communications  
Ottawa.

Status of Women Action Group.

#### Re. Personal Feminine Advertising.

I have written many letters in the past to companies who make and advertise sanitary napkins and tampons publicly. One company wrote me a letter stating they do not advertise their product on television, nor in everyday magazines. The company is the Scott Paper Ltd., P.O. Box 3600, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3Y7, Manager: Peter Andrews. Their product is called 'Confidets' (pads) which are narrowly tapered toward the back for more comfort and are extremely absorbent. I highly recommend them. I have noted this address because I think we should get together and support this company who has shown its' buyers consideration.

I and many others (male and female) express loathing for this personal advertising. Our views are that these ads belong in women's magazines, of which there are many. They may be tastefully done on television but are extremely unnecessary and embarrassing in mixed company (especially for men). In male and female oriented magazines (people, TV Guide, Readers Digest etc.) they have pictures. We know what we need and we also know what they look like. I would rather watch cigarette and alcohol commercials and I don't smoke. What I have done with radio and television is change the station at that time.

#### Recommendation

That men and women voice their opinions (verbally and written) to the companies who advertise, the magazines that public and the CRTC in Ottawa telling them we will cease to buy their product and their magazine. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Wendy Ackinlose.

Victoria, B.C..  
January 27, 1983.

SWAG

Re my letter to the Ombudsman of December 23, 1982 and an answer from the Ombudsman's office dated January 17, 1983 (I forwarded copies to your office, also my letter was in the most recent SWAG news).

Please note that CFAX radio has a program in the a.m. with Bev Sinclair. I called in and expressed my thoughts on the offensive photo displays on magazine covers in stores. They gave me the best answer.

To tell the merchants how I feel

about their display and tell them to please do something with them to have them out of the way, or I will not shop there any more, and don't.

Also, what I do, is express my agreement, when they do show consideration of their customers.

Yours truly,  
Wendy Ackincklose.

House of Commons,  
Ottawa.  
January 27, 1983.

Ms. Blackstone,  
SWAG.

Dear Ms. Blackstone,

Thank you for your letter expressing your concern about the "Applebert" recommendations as they apply to the future of the National Film Board.

I share your concern and completely agree with you that we must preserve the National Film Board's film production capability. The report has now been referred to the Standing Committee on Culture and Communications, of which I am a member. I can assure you that I will support the retention of a 'productive' National Film Board throughout our deliberations.

Enclosed is a press release, written some two hours after the Applebert report was released, which outlines my immediate response to the report.\*

Yours truly,  
Mark W. Rose, M.P.  
Mission-Port Moody.

\* Available in the office.

SWAG, Victoria.  
January 28, 1983.

B.C. Medical Association,  
1807 W. 10th Ave.,  
Vancouver B.C.

Attention Dr. William Jory

Dear Sir:

We object to the wording of your seat-belt awareness campaign. Whether intentional or not, this wording plays on connotations of child abuse. Please find a more direct way to urge parents to have their children use seat belts.

Yours sincerely,  
Pam Blackstone,  
for Coordinating Committee.

## \*\*\*\*\* Announcements \*\*\*\*\*

### FEMINIST HISTORY/STUDY GROUP

meets next on Sunday Feb 27 at 3.00pm at Alice's (453 Moss St., upstairs) to discuss the 'new' focus of this group: What is/should be our focus? Should we broaden our 'mandate'? Are we discouraging participation due to our present meeting time?? These questions, and more, demand our attention. Do you wish to be involved in a group proposing to become more dynamic? Come to the meeting. Q Q Q Q Q

### RADIO PROGRAMMES OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

CBC's IDEAS series has a number of programmes that might be of interest to a number of women. I have selected a few and hope that some will be interesting. CBC's IDEAS series is on FM 105.7 each week night from 8.00pm to 9.00pm.

MONDAYS Feb 28 through Mar 21:  
Emma Goldman: A Life of Anarchy\*\*\*\*

TUESDAYS Mar 1 through Mar 22:  
FEMINISM IN THE POLITICAL ARENA. Despite their impact on millions of people over the past 15 years, many of feminism's programs and policies are being challenged within the context of a long economic crisis and political polarization. Through the eyes of major feminist leaders and opponents in the U.S., Britain, English Canada and Quebec, various feminist strategies for affecting change in the political arena, and the opposition to these strategies - past, present, and future - are examined.\*\*\*\*

WEDNESDAYS Mar 2 through 23:  
The World of the Child. This series enters the world of children, charting their development in a society that seems in conflict with their real needs.



Mar 30 through Apr 20:  
Brothers and Sisters: The Other  
Selves. The series looks at sib-  
ling rivalry in an attempt to shed  
light on basic aspects of this  
special similarity -- the extreme  
case of twins; love and incest;  
rivalry and guilt.

THURSDAYS MAR 3 THROUGH Mar 17:  
Pharmaceutical Control. The  
evolution of this industry is  
charted from research to corporate  
structure.

Mar 24 through Apr 7:  
The Microchip Battleground. The  
series examines the conflicting  
hopes and fears surrounding the  
wholesale introduction of micro-  
technology in the Canadian work-  
place.\*\*\*

\*\*\*\* a must  
\*\*\* probably of great interest

#### WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

"Affirmative Action and Parental Benefits"

The National Association of Women and  
the Law will host its fifth biennial  
national conference February 23rd through  
February 26th at Victoria's Empress  
Hotel. Topics for discussion include:

Affirmative Action, Parental Benefits,  
Pension Reforms, and Rights and Freedoms  
under the Law. Noted speakers include  
the Honorable Judy Erola, Minister Res-  
ponsible for the Status of Women, Shelagh  
Day, Director of the Saskatchewan Human  
Rights Commission, ending with a special  
musical performance by singer/songwriter  
Heather Bishop.

Lynn Kaye, an Ottawa Lawyer, will present  
the keynote address on parental benefits  
Thursday, Feb. 24th. Pension reform will  
also be discussed Feb. 24th in a workshop  
conducted by Louise Dulude and Elizabeth  
Atcheson, two Ontario lawyers.

Affirmative Action, the highlight of the  
four-day conference, will be examined  
in-depth Saturday, Feb. 26th and a variety  
of highly qualified speakers will be  
available for seminars and informal  
discussion. Other speakers include:  
Quebec Human Rights Commissioner Marie  
Murphy, Canada Employment Commissioner  
Elizabeth McAllister, legal lobbyists  
Beth Symes and MaryvEberts, and Vancouver  
consultant Reva Dexter.

A banquet Saturday, Feb. 26th wraps up  
the conference, and delegates will hear  
the Honorable Judy Erola address the  
subject of Affirmative Action.

For more information and media contacts  
call Mary Ransberry 721-8465.

## ❁ FEATURE ❁

#### SINGLE MOTHERS AND CRISIS

Life as a single mother is difficult;  
at the best of times, but it severely  
complicates every other kind of crisis  
in a woman's life. Single mothers, in  
emotional turmoil, must count in the  
feelings of our children with equal  
priority. Single mothers go through  
the pain of separation, divorce, custody,  
widowhood, feeling desperately in need of  
solitude, company, tender loving care,  
a shoulder to lean on, professional  
advice, while at the very same time we  
are expected to provide just these  
services to our children, who desperately  
need our attention, and the sense of  
security only our strength can provide.  
Single mothers may be dealing with the  
havoc wrought by incest, or battery,  
and again must serve the needs of both  
herself and her children. Single mothers  
suffer added discrimination in renting

accommodation and in getting paid work.  
Single mothers who are also Native Indian,  
Minority, older handicapped, speakers  
of a minority language, suffer even more  
painfully. Victoria women are providing  
excellent services to support single  
mothers. We include some of them here.  
But more needs to be done, and existing  
services need our continuing support.

#### Resources for Single Mothers

Parents in Crisis  
Transition House 385-6611  
Single Parent Resource Centre. 385-1114

#### SINGLE MOTHERS: A NEW MATRIARCHY

By Josephine Payne-O'Connor

In a world where everyone is single or  
part of a couple, the single mother does  
not fit. While there are more and more  
of us, we each begin by feeling single.

but not quite; a family, but not quite. Like so many single mothers, I did not plan to be one. I did chose to have my children, but I contemplated motherhood as part of a two parent/two career/non-sexist/middle class nuclear family. Sounds familiar, huh? I became a single mother in a state of shock, of determination to do well, and with a profound, underlying sense of inadequacy. I was determined, especially for the sake of my two children, aged one and two, to carry on as normal: keep my job, my baby-sitter, stay in the neighbourhood, sail through custody and maintenance and divorce, unscarred, and keep our new family afloat. After one year, I finally admitted defeat and sat down to analyze my situation/condition as a single mother. I was beat...it was just too hard. So in 1981 I quit full-time paid work, and wrote the following: all single mothers are different, and so are our children. But there are many common themes to our lives.

#### 1. The reality of the single mother is not discussed.

When I tried to talk to other women about single motherhood, our conversations seemed to dry up. This used to upset me, but now I am more honest I can see that all of us women have our reasons for not wanting to hear about single motherhood, or even motherhood. Mothers, married or single, who have served their time, do not want to be reminded of the overwhelming burdens and the lack of recognition mothers endure. Childfree women assume at least mothers have the support and validation of mainstream society. They are very wrong. And mothers resent the supposed joy of freedom childless women must be enjoying. We are very wrong. This mutual blindness is another barrier. In our feminist struggle to support roles for women beyond the home the very subject of diapers or babysitters, like loving men, can appear horribly reactionary. It's almost as though babies are not politically correct! And beyond all this, our attitudes to motherhood are highly emotionally charged with all sorts of deeply personal stuff: feelings about our own mothers, our unresolved abortions, our struggles to conceive, our desperate need to believe that we can each plan and control successful motherhood!

#### 2. The Single Mother is Alone

It is very hard to convey the depth of the loneliness of the single mother. There is the physical loneliness of not being able to afford adult company (see poverty) and not being able to afford to leave the home. There is the strange psychological isolation of constantly being with young children (bad enough for married mothers, far worse for single

ones). But most isolating of all is carrying sole responsibility for the present and future (next twenty years) responsibility for ones children. We carry alone the total responsibility for financing and running a home, on a daily basis, for every family crisis, for paying every bill, for plumbing, for car repair and maintenance, for medical treatment and for income, clothing and education. We can never set aside any of those burdens. Nor our responsibilities for identifying and meeting the long range needs of our individual children.

#### 3. The Single Mother is Exhausted

I actually work fourteen hours per day, seven days a week, and every night I am on call. I cannot stop for crises, for sickness, for celebration, for earthquake, or storm. Everything I do in those repeated 14 hours has to be done, and now! I look for and feed the children, change diapers, teach them, discipline them, drive them about, read stories, play, bath them, change their clothes, settle their arguments, tidy-up after them. It is back-breaking work; endless repetitive, monotonous, dirty and very noisy. It numbs the spirit, provides no time for thought, for reading or writing, or anything that does not relate to the very young. It is an alien life for an adult. It is done alone because of this. Friends who used to drop by, find they cannot complete a decent conversation or keep clean and stop visiting. Visits to friends are too exhausting because then conversation is swamped by caring for the children in a non-childproofed home. Taking the children to places of interest on weekends is like planning and executing a battle: a whole new set of dangers. And I work too. My job is perilously dependent on babysitters and my car. It means five days a week when 7:00-9:00 a.m. and 4:30-7:00 p.m. is utterly indescribable. If I forget to get milk; then we all have to go; and without a car, we all have to walk (crawl). If one child is critically sick in the night, we all have to go to Emergency, asleep or not. Even simple tasks become exhausting.

#### 4. The Single Mother is Poor

I am working and the children's father contributes. His maintenance pays the rent (not utilities). I earn \$800 per month and \$400 goes directly to the babysitter. I cannot afford a car that runs, and, frequently, I cannot afford to run my car. I cannot afford food at the end of the month and never food that the children don't eat. I can't afford the babysitting money to go out, and 'going out' to the single mother is a basic necessity (a) just for the adult human contact (b) because we do not have the money to make our homes interesting or or beautiful (c) just to get away from the four walls and the work. Real poverty



is when you can't afford human contact, exercise solitude. (When I finally organized a weekly afternoon off, I was too agoraphobic to venture down town. It still is a problem for me.) I would like to call my mother long-distance, have a camera to take pictures of my children before they are grown up, take them to see beyond Victoria, rent a television. But there is never the money. Window shopping is too painful.

#### 5. The Single Mother Lives in Fear

The Single mother lives constantly with the fear that some day, inevitably, she will crack up (from the strain) or drop dead (from the exhaustion) and then she will lose her children. The sheer weight of her burdens pretty much guarantee this. We are all, to some extent, affected by the cultural myth that says 'children need a father' which translates as 'a woman cannot do this job on her own'. We are expected to fail, so we put every last ounce of strength into being super mom and super dad, and bravely (and desperately) put on a middle class family performance. For single mothers the fear of losing our children is very real: I was not at all surprised to learn that the women most likely to be hospitalized for mental/emotional disorders is the single mother of two! When we crack either M.H.R. or the father steps in and we must start the battle to get our children back against mounting odds. Because this fear is so real and so painful, we maintain our facades, and sadly this cuts us off from reaching out for help in coping. The fear of losing my children was far worse, for me, than the more common fears women live with in patriarchy (e.g., about rape, etc.) I think this fear is an important source of patriarchal power. It can make even the most radical feminist think twice before she does anything mildly militant. It really does force us to keep shuffling for the man! For many women the shortest way to deal with this fear is give up the children and get it over with. For a tragic few the solution has been to destroy the children, and themselves.

#### 6. The Single Mother and Her Child

Becoming a single mother meant a great many adjustments in my life. The obvious ones are the new poverty, the exhaustion, the responsibilities, the change in plans and dreams for the future. I expected to experience a certain degree of trauma leaving my husband and re-establishing a new relationship with him as a visiting parent. What I did not expect was how the change in our family composition and dynamic would affect my own relationship with my children. The children were born into an established couple relationship, when that was gone, the children

seemed alien and unreal and somehow 'pointless' to me. It was easy for me to fill that emotional vacuum with very negative things: my children seemed just burdens, problems, chains, work and more work to me. I began to realize that developing the relationship single-mother to child is a whole new dynamic of human life, and I realized that, like any other personal dynamic, it needs social supports to grow strong and positive. If women can develop a positive and strong relationship to her child which is socially validated, we have a very strong basis for ending patriarchy. Single motherhood has revolutionary potential.

#### Single Mothers and the Liberation of Women

Up until a century ago, when children worked and produced income, fathers had custody. Now children are, so to speak, a luxury, mothers get custody. Women carry the burdens of work and blame for social ills, while ex-fathers enjoy 'head-of-household' levels of inflated income. The pathetic income of single mothers is controlled by welfare (the public patriarch) or by the absent father (the private patriarch). The price single mothers pay for revolt, or for 'inadequacy' is the loss of children (and often the total loss of income). Poverty and loss of children serve to ensure that all the effort we may put into raising our children in new and liberating ways will be derided by the children.

Single mothers raise children in the absence of a live-in patriarch. Such mothers have enormous freedom to create feminist children. This is short-circuited if children grow up to reject their single mothers because of their poverty...which in our society means failure. To support the revolutionary work of single mothers, we need to work on all fronts (a) to secure the custody single mothers have; (b) to increase the income of single mothers; (c) to affirm in every possible way that we recognize single parent families as genuine and legitimate. The work of creating a positive single parent family needs community support; let's make that feminist support. Let's get involved in the work single mothers do, and let's make sure our children hear from the community that their mothers are wonderful.

*Josephine*

# ARTICLES

## SINGLE PARENT RESOURCE CENTRE

The Single Parent Centre was founded by Madeleine Shields in May 1978. It grew out of Madeleine's "Life Skills" program and after a survey had been done of more than 80 single parents as well as most government and community agencies in Victoria.

The survey pointed out that the major problems encountered by single parents were isolation, difficulties raising children on their own, and lack of knowledge about services available for support. The Single Parent Centre has developed to meet some of these needs. We keep an up-to-date resource file so that we can provide information about the community. We provide group programs aimed at bringing single parents together to make friendships, learn from each other, and gain practical skills in the areas of communication and parenting. Finally, individual counselling and problem solving is provided as required.

Our goals in order of priority include:

1. Emotional support in times of crisis and ongoing support after the crisis is over. The most difficult period of adjustment in a single parent's life comes immediately after the separation and this is often the time when the family is most isolated. The parent retaining responsibility for the children is not only facing practical problems such as assuming full responsibility for a family unit normally supported by two adults and making major decisions about the future, such as whether to work or not, but is also going through a major emotional adjustment. The feelings the person experiences as they go through the grieving process are often intensified by continued legal negotiations with the absent spouse, guilt over the children's unhappiness and feelings of failure because of the marriage breakdown. In these cases the Single Parent Centre often acts as the person's major support system. The support we offer is

geared to meet the emotional needs of empathetic information about what is happening to them, understanding, caring, and having enough time for each individual as they make the adjustment to a new lifestyle. Some individuals require one counselling session, resource information and the knowledge that we are there if needed. Others have used individual counselling for weeks before feeling confident enough to move into groups. In both individual and group sessions information about the grieving process is provided to help the individual understand that they are going through a healing process and headed for eventual recovery.

2. The Centre provides an opportunity for personal and life skills development through a series of programs and workshops that have been researched and organized to the point where most of the work to do with groups is the actual facilitation. Our group programs are being well attended and we have waiting lists for all of them. Group programs we presently offer include:

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting - a parenting skills course adapted for single parent families.

Support Group - an eight-week group designed to help the new or lonely single parent to come to grips with various issues and develop networks with each other. There are a variety of topics of which the women choose seven at the beginning of the group.

Assertiveness Training - an eight-week course about communication, taking more responsibility for relationships and getting your point across.

Besides the structured eight-week programs we have also offered on an ongoing basis:

Morning Open House - a weekly informal and popular gathering Wednesday mornings.

Evening Open House - once a month, an informal evening drop-in.



As the need arises, we also offer two-hour workshops on topics such as Financial Management, Stress, Grieving, Assertiveness, Lullabies and Laughter, Family Court, and Dream Interpretation.

3. The Centre provides information for single parents and the community through extensive resource files and has an active referral system to and from other agencies in the community such as the Law Centre, Integrated Services, MHR District Offices, the Housing Registry, Divorce Lifeline, New Parent Discussion Groups and varied other community groups.

4. The Centre promotes understanding of the single parent situation and comments on issues which affect single parents. Staff members have encouraged community education by addressing specific issues on radio talk shows, informational presentations on Channel 10, and by speaking to community groups such as MHR, EOW, and the YM/YW Conference on Single Parents. As well we submit articles to local newspapers and newsletters, and support other agencies trying to start up new programs that would be of benefit to single parents, such as the B.C. Council for the Family's program, LINKS.

We have noticed the effect of the current economic situation on the families we serve. Financial pressure decreases the one adult's ability to deal with emotions and children and adds stress to an already overburdened family.

Most of our parents receive income assistance from the Ministry of Human Resources because they are women whose function it has been to remain at home with growing children. Recently, the Ministry of Human Resources suspended funding for all programs aimed at training these women in skills needed to reenter the community and job market. Even women who have received the training are often unable to find employment which leads to feelings of hopelessness and despair. There have also been cutbacks in the services offered by the Legal Aid Society and Family Court. Low income working single parents have had to go into debt to hire a Lawyer for custody cases. Women have had to fight their own battles in Family Court to attempt to receive main-

tenance from their husbands. Because of the increasing pressure many women feel hopeless about taking control of their lives or making plans for the future. This affects the wellbeing of the whole family and is a practical problem that can only be solved by concrete support from the community through job availability, training programs, commitment to the principle that both parents are responsible for the children, and more realistic direct financial support.

Information provided by Peggy Faulds, Director, Single Parent Resource Centre. Mailing Address: 1611 Quadra Street, Victoria B.C. V8W 2L5, Tel. 385-1114. Street Address: 910 Mason Street, Victoria.

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#### TRANSITION HOUSE

Transition House is a crisis shelter for battered\* women. We provide a 24-hour counselling service for women who need to talk over the phone, or in person, about their situation; or who need shelter in order to get away from their husband or commonlaw spouse. Mothers are always encouraged to bring their children with them - we have two childcare counsellors on staff. Residents are eligible to live in the house for up to one month. We have room for twelve people at a time.

We do not give advice, but rather lend our support for the direction a woman wishes to take with her life. Any information shared by her is kept in strict confidence. We provide information about services in the community which may be relevant to the woman's needs. We also provide follow-up support when appropriate.

\*Battered" includes both physical and psychological abuse. This abuse occurs on a regular basis, and usually gets worse over time. We have more information about this. If you're interested give us a call at 385-6611.

♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

## IN RESPONSE

### The Debate Continues...

Unlike Catherine and Deborah, I am sure I will offend everyone with my contribution. But then I'm anti-nice.

### On Government Funding

Since "government money" comes out of the pockets of women (from our unpaid work and our taxes) I regard it as our money, and I want us to reclaim it. Any revolutionary social movement needs money, and any money we can get comes from manipulating the man. We have to tart ourselves up and fake it to get money from our bosses, our union leaders, our husbands, our social workers or clients. That's reality. So what makes it so different when we get it from our government? We have to learn the controls, fake accountability and play the games each source requires. In a world where women do 70% of the productive work for 10% of the wages and ownership of 1% of the resources, I do not think we can afford to wait for the untainted funds of independently wealthy women.

### On Government Control

O.K. "The government does not want to fund a revolution"; its funds are obviously designed to buy us. But that is the intent behind all the money we make. The Liberation Movement, is surely based on our breaking free from the psychological grip of our learned concern with what The Man wants. Since, morally speaking, the money is ours, we play the games to keep it coming, and then use it for the revolution. Simple! In reality the government is dependent on the power we cede it (on our vote and our compliance). It has no moral authority over what we do. It's so easy for us to make 'the government' a scapegoat for our own 'niceness'. And please lets remember there are more and more women in government ready to fund, and actually working for, the revolution. Let's support them in covering up.

"Faking it" to get money, may strike some as an ugly and reformist phrase. I feel the same about the middle class fantasy that we can achieve anything by ripping off the masks and going down in martyrdom. We owe it to five million women burned alive as witches to keep going while we win this one. Too many women are starving, losing children, homes, sanity, health, for me to see any advantage in turning down any money women, by our own valiant political efforts have won for us. By the same token I find many of us are too concerned with our status to engage in effective passionate action. When we are so concerned

with our "good names" that we always march in rallies on the correct side of the road, I cannot see us happily burning or looting. I cannot see us replacing government funding with a 'Women's Bank Robbery Collective'. I may be wrong??? Concern with government funding, as I see it, comes down to our complicity in patriarchy and to the price we are prepared to pay for liberation.

### Reform and Revolution

Sandra Harding, in "Feminism: Reform and Revolution" examines SIX common ways of making the distinction and concludes you can never tell in advance which actions fall into which category. I agree. Any 'revolution' takes massive, overwhelming determination, over the long and short haul. If any of our actions helps generate this groundswell of determination, it is revolutionary. Abortion or affirmative action might work far better than murdering patriarchs...who can tell! Let's try whatever mobilizes women's support.

### Looking at SWAG.

Last year some of us talked in very tough terms to the then Minister of Labour and presented the 'work brief'. This gave grassroots clout to Isabel Kelly, vis a vis her boss, and continuing input to her means more jobs/training. We also want to hear the concerns of Native women on the Cole Bay reservation. There we learned how our privilege rests on their oppression: I saw how much more I can afford to lose in the feminist struggle against racism. Keeping these lines open is revolutionary, in my own view. It's counter-productive when a power block in the old Rape Coalition puts all emergent Rape Centres on TWO years probation until they all agree to a 25 point 'basis of unity'. That 'more feminist than thou' elitism (just like "Daddy knows best" in drag) is the ugly side of the classical, dramatic, image of "revolutionary".

### Professionalism and Service

If the goal of our movement is to mutually empower women, then professionalism (as storing, hoarding and selling knowledge necessary for survival) has no place in it. I am angry at patriarchy, that I came out of high school ignorant of law, medicine, income tax systems, high finance, car maintenance, and electrical work. I want the movement to empower us by sharing all this. (Robin Morgan: Going Too Far has some other great suggestions). If the goal of the movement is to mutually empower women, then there is no place for



service. We need all the rage we can muster: the rage of battered women, of rape survivors, of welfare mothers, of unemployed or harassed or underpaid workers. We do not need help: and if we think we can help women to settle comfortably into patriarchy, then we are anti-movement.

#### Present realities

Letting in the light: We talk issues among ourselves, where it is 'safe', but how often do we take these issues to, or find them in, supermarkets, laundromats, banks, church, rec-centres, day care, schools, bars?

Letting out the heat: We are typically a very nice, rather solemn lot with our Sunday-go-to-revolution faces. Where are our tears, our anger, our passions and our lusts, our drunkenness, our exhaustion, our confusion, our longings and despair. In our emotional vacuum, how can we nurture rage?

Cutting the price: We are the designer jeans, pot-luck haute cuisine, heritage home gang. Can women afford us, can they relate to us? I have felt for a long time that I don't fit with all this; with my patches and poverty. I stay because I want a revolution and in SWAG we can make that happen.

Josephine Payne O'Connor

Dear Catherine Winter,

I read with interest your review of Ehrenreich and English's book *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts Advice for Women* (SWAG Newsletter, January 1983). I am not unfamiliar with this work as it was the basis of an IDEAS series--The Experts Advice to Women--recently repeated on CBC AM (I hope to request the return of this series).

Having digressed I will get to the point of this response. I agree with your assessment of the distinction between Professionals, such as doctors, lawyers and accountants and professionals such as librarians, nurses and social workers. Incidentally, teachers are not classified as Professionals but as professionals.

Apart from the 'supposed' special skills acquired by Professionals, the screening out of undesirables is more pervasive in the, for example, Medical Profession. (It is being argued that there is a surplus of doctors and lawyers. This may be the case, but these surpluses exist only in desirable urban areas. It is hardly due to a breakdown in the screening process).

An American sociologist (male) identified teaching, nursing and social work--I would also add librarians--as semi-professionals. He argued that because women make up greater numbers in each of these occupations and had little or not control over entry they 'deserve' to be classified as semi-professional. In addition, these occupations are poorly organized and not in a position to bargain effectively for better money and conditions unlike the BCMA.

Also Catherine I'd like to point out that, for example, teachers hardly could be considered experts. In fact few teachers would presume to an expertise in all areas of education. Persons, like the present Minister of Education, are presumptuous enough to believe that anyone who has gone through the educational system can speak with some degree of expertise!

Until we, women, in the semi-professions become stronger and more political we will continue to allow men to assume positions of responsibility and authority out of all proportion to their numbers in these occupations--this is the case in teaching. Further, Catherine, we will continue to question our own educational achievements and ability to act upon the expertise gained over the years of formal and informal training.

I hope my rambling comments have some form of coherence.

In Sisterhood.  
Alice Albert.

P.S. University Professors hold a prestigious position in our society. It is a Profession that is not monetarily rewarded to the same extent as the medical Profession.

\* my emphasis/interpretation.

*PERSONAL*

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I would like to purchase good quality, second-hand maternity clothing, particularly a swimsuit, slacks and jumpers. Size 12-14. Call Charlotte 382-8862 after 5.00.p.m.

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# PETITION

We, the undersigned residents of British Columbia hereby petition the courts to recognize that our community standards are being exceeded by the material which Red Hot Video merchandises. Because a small minority of people in this province want access to this violent and dehumanizing material, in no way justifies its open sale in defiance of Section 159 of the Criminal Code. We urge the courts to impose the severest penalty possible.

NAME

ADDRESS

Rtn. to: S.W.A.G.: Box 6296, Stn. C, Victoria, V8P 5L5  
by April 15, 1983. (Copy as needed)



SWAG RETREAT-PACIFIC CENTRE

Friday and Saturday, 18th &  
19th February. No charge.

Phone the office (381-1012) for  
details. This is an opportunity  
to get to know each other better,  
to discuss issues in the women's  
movement and to formulate a  
program and goals for SWAG for  
the coming year.

From: Box 6296, Stn C.,  
Victoria B.C. V8P 5L5  
or 1045 Linden Ave.,  
Victoria.

Learning Resources Centre,  
Camosun College,  
3100 Foul Bay Rd.,  
Victoria, B.C.  
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