

SWAG:

STATUS of WOMEN NEWS

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Politics of State Is Feminist Business

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by Jerri Lee

Political scientist Jill Vickers speaking at a SWAG Sunday Brunch in April told Victoria women that feminists have had too little interest in the politics of state, always assuming that politics is personal.

"We have developed no feminist theories relative to the way we relate to the state," she said.

Feminists lobby from time to time but are otherwise curiously silent. "We refuse to recognize the power the state has to shape our daughters' world." she said.

Vickers, president of the Canadian Institute

for the Advancement of Women and a political science professor at Carleton University, Ottawa, said she is concerned about the feminist reaction to the new right. "We must try to understand the views of the right wing women rather than assume they have been manipulated."

She said the new right in Canada is relatively small. She said it is much more difficult to dismantle social welfare programs in Canada than in the States. They are larger and more complex (including medicare). She said seniors were successful in protesting federal proposals but "on the baby bonus where was the women's movement?"

Vickers said Mulroney has a good reason to avoid fringe thinking that he "wants to occupy the critical centre long enough to get his party re-elected."

She said the time has arrived for political discussion and political action. "Not acting can be damaging. We must act politically. Our not being responsible on the baby bonus was a signal."

The feminist movement should "look in terms of mobilizing new right women not alienating them. Gender politics is the most important politics this century." she said.

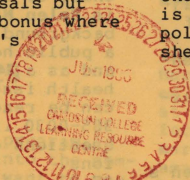
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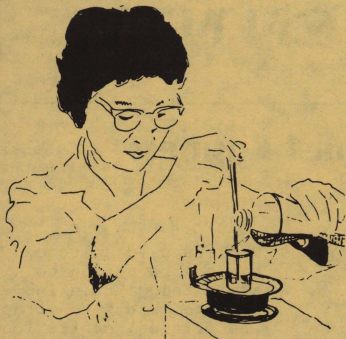
by Judy Liefschultz

At the recent Despair and Empowerment workshop facilitated by Shannon Turner and Brenda Rudko, counsellors doing peace work, I had come for action, for the ability to move past the "psychic numbness" Helen Caldicott named so

aptly. By the end of the day, I realized more action was only part of the answer. Allowing ourselves to feel the despair, fear and sadness, the love of life we have for the planet is an answer in itself. I left understanding how important it is to have a safe place to feel

these feelings with each other; that activity is sometimes a substitute for the despair we have not let surface and pass through us. For information on these workshops, call Shannon Turner at 385-1180.





Lobby Educate Support

Poverty Profile

Since 1980, the number of low-income Canadians has increased by 874,000. Half the one-parent families headed by women are poor; four in 10 unattached women are poor, as are 50 per cent of both unattached young people below the age of 25 and of the unattached elderly. More than one child in five was poor in 1984.

Women's Health Consumer Action Group

by **Connie MacDonald**

Dr. Susan Penfold, chair of Women's Studies, Simon Fraser University, in a lecture earlier this year reminded Victoria women that there are no practicing women gynecologists or psychiatrists in the city. The 10 gynecologists and 25 psychiatrists practicing are men. Given that women comprise the majority of consumers of health and social services, they are concerned about the implications of the existing situation.

The result is the formation of the Women's Health Consumer Action Group which to date has had three meetings with between eight and 22 women of various life experiences and professions taking part. The next meeting will be held June '84 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of **Sara David**, 1165 Fairfield Rd.

It has been evident from the start that the group has a dual purpose, one a lobby/social action which will concern itself with issues such as the need for female health specialists and the other, an educative/supportive group aimed at women's health education.

Chair of the new group is **Helen Martin**, who has background experience as a public health nurse and as a lobbyist in health issues. Helen can be reached at 385-0030 if you have questions or suggestions.

Women interested in health issues are invited to attend the June 24 meeting and should come prepared to work on a needs assessment questionnaire. The

questionnaire should accurately reflect women's perceptions of how their psychological and/or gynecological needs have been served. The group wants your input so please give the subject thought beforehand.

Volunteers are needed for our task committees, particularly the lobby/action group and the education/support group. A Dalcon shield claims group, a women's resource/support group for cancer patients, a committee to inform governing agencies on women's issues and needs, and a fertility support group are areas of interest expressed so far.



Commentary

Feminism, A Definition

by **Connie MacDonald**

Research in history, theology, medicine, virtually most fields of knowledge, reveals that women have indeed been active and powerful in the history of humankind, but have been rendered largely invisible in the historical recording of this knowledge. The body of literature, much of it academic, which has been written in the last 25 years by women in an effort to examine and change our status is astounding. The creativity which has generated such multi-levelled examination of the status quo is enormous and continues to draw from the wellspring of female experience, emotion and intellect.

Feminism is an analytical framework from which to view the world. It is radical in that it cuts to the root, in its examination, of the very structures which we have internalized of our world order, our reality--that which history, science, authority, has posited as truth. It topples our existing schemata of the way things are. In its seeking of human liberation and mutuality, it is a fundamental revolution.

Feminist analysis must not, will not, accept traditional, simple explanations of things, or a sentimental romanticized world view. The analysis must rather be an active, disciplined

intellectual, emotional and unrelenting one as we repeatedly examine the patriarchal double standard of our oppression.

Feminism is also a process, personal, political and cynical. It begins with one's consciousness of one's own oppression (usually via emotions or social relationships). Then come periods of agonizing, questioning, clarity and resolution. One is never the same again. There is a final transformation. The next stage is action, political or Political. One cannot act. The process repeats itself for the individual in the cycle of her liberation, as she continues to confront life.

**Dr. Josephine Hart
Honored by UVIC**

An outstanding woman of science **Dr. Josephine Hart** of Victoria received an honorary doctorate at the UVIC convocation for outstanding work in marine biology. In a small laboratory in her home, Hart observed the complex developments in the life histories of decapod crustaceans--an accomplishment which has stymied scientists with access to sophisticated seawater systems. She has been recognized as an expert by the Provincial Museum, the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Smithsonian.

SFU Gets \$400,000 For Women's Studies

Good news from **Simon Fraser University**. The daughters of pioneer **Ruth Wynn Woodward** have donated \$400,000 to help endow the chair in women's studies.

Mary Twigg White and **Elizabeth Russ** donated the money because, as Mrs. Russ puts it: "There are a lot of women out there who need help. I like the fact that the

Simon Fraser program is getting out into the community and I want to see a much more sensible approach to women's issues and problems."

The Woodward chair is now only \$75,000 short of the \$1 million needed to permanent funding. SWAG has benefited by the SFU outreach through guest speakers.

Trades Program Being Cut

The Trades Immersion Program For Women at Camosun College, an important bridge for women considering entrance in a non-traditional occupation, is threatened with closure.

In a letter from the **Victoria Women in Trades Society**, Leona Blake has asked members of SWAG for support. Please write to R. Rockburn, Manager of C.E.I.C., 810 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3A9 and send a copy of your letter to Brent Tolmie, Director of Trades Training, Camosun College, 4461 Interurban Road, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3X1.

NFB Films Examine Needs of Battered Wives

On the average, a woman is beaten 35 times before she calls for help.

Over one million women are battered each year by their partner.

There are only 228 transition houses in Canada trying to meet the needs of over one million women each year.

These are some of the facts about wife battering as presented in **The Next Step: A User's Guide** for a series of three NFB films examining the urgent needs of battered women. The films, produced by Studio D, are available at the local NFB office.

Fighting Equal Pay

Equal pay legislation is "unnecessary and redundant," according to the Personnel Association of Ontario. Women's work tends to be less demanding than work men do, and that is why employers often do not pay them as well as men, said the PAO in its bid to stop equal-pay legislation in Ontario.

New Women's Centre

A group of women in 100 Mile House is forming a Women's Centre and would like information and suggestions from others.

Judith Quinlan of that group also informs us that Zone Three Women's Campground will be operating this year from June 1 to Sept. 15. Phone (604) 395-4721 or write 100 Mile House Women's Centre Library, c/o J. Quinlan, C-44, Imperial Ranchettes, RR#1, 100 Mile House, B.C. V0K 2E0.

Politics: Our Gain

Women in politics cannot lose. Even if our candidate is unsuccessful, the women who work on the campaign gain experience, knowledge, insight and exposure. The woman candidate, regardless of the outcome at the polls, polishes her political skills for the next time. Now is the time to become active. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

The Status of Women News

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Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Send to:

Status of Women Action Group

P.O. Box 6296, Stn. C

Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5

(604) 381-1012

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