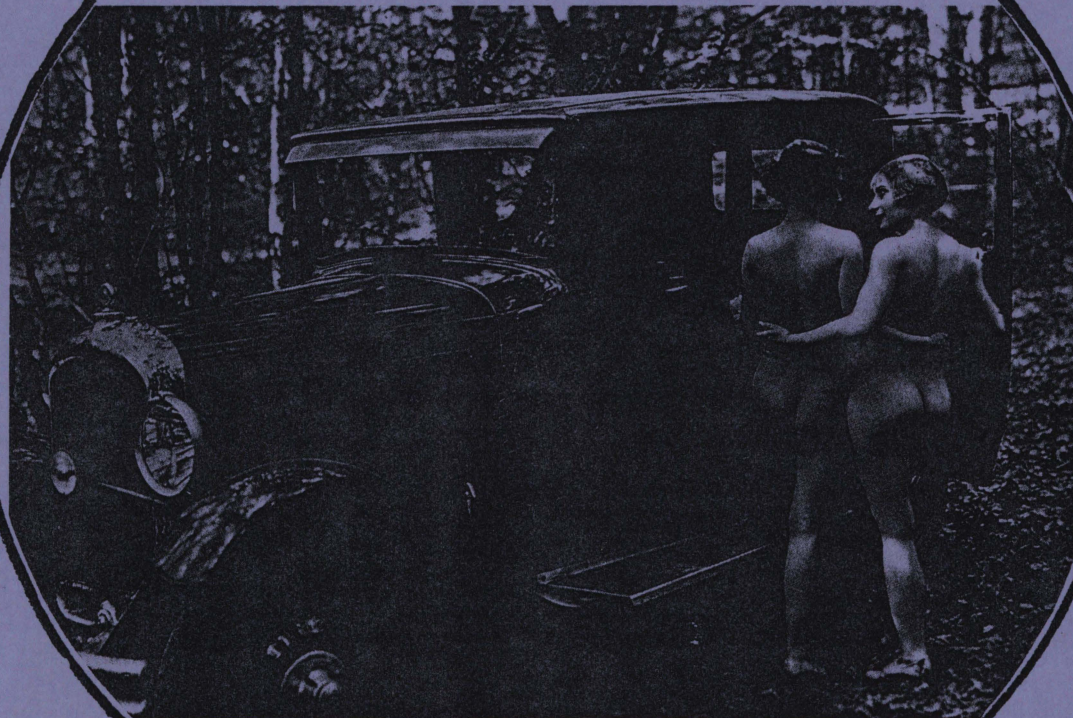


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the open door



A NEWSLETTER FOR RURAL FEMINISTS AND LESBIANS

Published at Sky Ranch

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WINTER SOLSTICE 1997

EDITORIAL

Happy belated Solstice! First of all I must apologize for the lateness of this issue. I could blame it on Canada Post (it's true I was waiting for some submissions that were held up by the strike). But mostly I must confess that I really didn't feel up to producing an issue just before the Yuletide season this year. The El Nino effect maybe fooled me into thinking that it was still autumn. And all my writing efforts were going into typing up letters for Immigration Canada to support the application of my German girlfriend! If all goes well, Sky Ranch should have a new resident by next summer. Well that's the good news. The bad news is now winter has finally arrived, and I have discovered that the block heater in the newly-rebuilt engine of my truck doesn't work. Oh, the joys of living 100 km. from a mechanic! If that's the worst that this winter offers, though, I can't complain.

You may have noticed from the last few issues, and this one, the astounding increase in political activity in the North. It's quite wonderful. If you have been considering relocating to a less urban area, northern B.C. is the place to be. Lots of energy and excitement as lesbians and gays break new ground - and such virgin ground it has been. I think this would be a good time to recognize the efforts of a number of women who have been in this area for a long time, holding the torch for all of us and persevering in the belief that a lesbian, or gay, or feminist presence could be felt in the political hinterland. Maureen Bostock and Elizabeth Snyder, in the Terrace area, started The Open Door, and Northern Lesbians in the early 1980s, and have remained as invaluable contacts for lesbians in the north. Also women such as Linda Anderson in Prince George who has worked hard in support of of GALA North, nurturing its growth from a small support network to a major political force. Thankyou to them and to all the other women who have been mothers and midwives to

the rural women's movement and rural gay rights movements. The Open Door would love to hear more about the women who have been movers and shakers in YOUR area. This New Year, why not make it a resolution to share your herstories through The Open Door? It would be wonderful to publish an issue devoted to these stories.

Another issue that is near and dear to all our hearts is...FOOD! I'm asking for articles about Food- what we eat and why. How we make decisions about food-political decisions, health decisions, emotional attachments, the food industry, are we what we eat? (Well, lesbians can answer that one in the affirmative). Maybe also include some favorite recipes, yes? Food poems and food art as well. So fire up your various writing tools, and send your work in for future issues.

-Judith Quinlan

COVER PHOTO; is called "Ladies and Automobile" and was made in 1930, by an anonymous photographer. As we all know, "anonymous" was a woman!



Happy New Year

DEMYSTIFYING APEC

by Dr. Jane Kelsey

(reprinted from Canadian Perspectives)

APEC (the Asia Pacific Cooperation forum) is hard to get a grip on. It has no institutional or bureaucratic structure, nor even a set of binding agreements of the kind the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) does. Instead, it operates through a secretive annual cycle of ministerial meetings. The agenda, deliberations and outcomes of those meetings are visible only to those with privileged access, either as representatives of the member 'economies' or as official observers. The latter are limited to the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), APEC's Business Advisory Council and the South Pacific Forum.

The 18 members of APEC are Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Phillipines, Indonesia, Brunei, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Korea and the United States.

APEC has always been market driven and is heavily influenced by big business. It mainly relies for research on a tripartate think tank of business representatives, academics and officials who operate through specific task groups, forums and sponsored studies.

FALLACIES ABOUT APEC

To see beyond APEC's propaganda wall, a number of common fallacies need to be exposed:

1. The APEC model pretends that all the players in the global economy will play by the rules to which they have agreed. The track record of powerful governments shows they are highly selective about what rules they are prepared to obey. The U.S., in particular, insists on its sovereign right to use unilateral sanctions against anyone it considers is behaving unfairly towards it - at the same time as demanding that all other countries subordinate their sovereign rights to international trade rules.

2. APEC is not simply about trade. APEC promotes a package deal of economic policies which include:

* minimal controls on big business and

unrestricted foreign investment.

* unlimited export of profits.

* privatization of state assets, utilities and services.

* privately-funded and owned infrastructure (roads, rail, electricity, telephones, water etc.).

* privatization of social services like health and education.

* low-wage and "deunionized" workforces.

* rampant exploitation of natural resources.

3. APEC is not simply about economic policies. APEC has serious non-economic effects, including:

* increased inequality and poverty, especially for indigenous peoples, women, children and the elderly.

* unstable, low-quality and low-paid employment.

* tax benefits and high incomes for corporations and the rich, alongside income and welfare cuts for the poor.

* problems of access to, affordability and quality of essential services.

* control by private, often foreign-owned, conglomerates over the country's financial, transportation, communications and media infrastructure.

* sale to private owners of natural resources.

* pressure to minimize environmental protections.

4. Decisions being made at APEC are designed to set this model in concrete. The architects of APEC want to pressure present governments to adopt the free trade and investment agenda and make it impossible for future governments to change tack. Consequently, if the economic theory doesn't work, if the social, environmental and cultural costs are too great, if the power it delivers to big business, foreign institutions and private actors is unacceptable, and if citizens simply want to try a different way, there will be nothing they can do.

5. APEC is fundamentally anti-democratic. Because the signing of international treaties is considered an act of state by many governments, these agreements do not require ratification by the legislature and can therefore

be signed without any debate, let alone a formal vote. This secrecy gives officials and ministers, who hold office only in the short-term, enormous power that extends and enables them to lock future governments into pursuing the global free market goal.

THE REAL ENEMY

It is important for us to remember that APEC is not the enemy in itself. It is a relatively transitory vehicle through which the global interests of transnational corporations are currently pursued. Even if it fails, the networks which feed it will continue operating and perhaps take on another form.

For labour and social movements, therefore, mobilization and strategies to address the core issues of economic, social, and popular justice around the world need to remain the focus.

(Jane Kelsey is an associate professor of law at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and the author of *Economic Fundamentalism: The New Zealand Experiment* published by Auckland University Press.)

U.S. REALITIES

Reprinted from BC Voice

- Each year, 24,000 Americans - an average of 65 a day - are killed with handguns, and the U.S. spends over \$1 billion annually to treat fire-arm injuries. (Handgun Control Inc.)
- Since 1970, arrests for violent crimes by U.S. youths have jumped 91 percent (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency).
- The number of guns in America increased from 54 million in 1950 to 201 million in 1990. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)
- During every 100 hours on inner city streets, three times more young American men lose their lives in gunfire than were killed during the 100 hours of Operation Desert Storm. (U.S. Bureau of the Census)
- In 1992, handguns were used in the murders of 33 people in Britain, 36 in Sweden, 97 in Switzerland, 128 in Canada, 13 in Australia, 60 in Japan, and 13,220 in the United States. (New York Times)

DEAR OPEN DOOR:

I want to express my offense to your reference in the last issue "In this issue you will find no mention of a certain deceased Royal Bimbo". I do not support woman-bashing in any of its forms. Diana followed the class and gender socialization of her culture to seek to marry a prince. I know of radical feminist lesbians who can trace their personal journeys back to a time when they believed and followed a similar socialization. Would you have written them off similarly? She was a woman who suffered in an oppressive marriage and institution and courageously spoke of her suffering and criticized the institution. I would have liked to see TOD critique the institution of royalty rather than take the easy way out and toss slurs at an individual woman who prior to her death was just coming into her own personal power.

Susan Armstrong

Dear Susan:

I must apologize to you and any other readers who found my reference offensive. It's true- I should have been clearer in what was, in my defence, meant to be a criticism of the institution of royalty. Also of the media hype that surrounded Diana's death. The phrase "Royal Bimbo" was not intended as a personal criticism of Diana - I know very little of her personal life. It was more of a 'job description'. I think it is an apt description of what her role was actually meant to be. To look pretty, keep quiet, and produce 'an heir and a spare'. If she personally managed to transcend this role, all power to her. But I still suspect that most of the people who participated in the orgy of sentimentality that surrounded her death were mourning the loss of their fairy-tale princess, not the death of an incipient feminist. And that's something I didn't want The Open Door participating in. Okay. It was insensitive, but not, I think, woman-bashing. Does anyone else want to add to this? All letters, critical or otherwise are welcomed.

SAME-SEX PARTNER IMMIGRATION

This fall, LEGIT (Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force) held a series of workshops on Gay Immigration issues. I was able to attend the one in Prince George, and was very impressed by the clarity of the information provided and the impressive work that LEGIT has done on this issue. Whether it affects us personally or not, I think this is an important issue for lesbians to be concerned about. Here is a personal report from one of the workshop participants, and some information provided by LEGIT.

By Taryn:

This past Sunday I found myself getting out of bed at 8:00 am for a day long workshop on an issue that really did not pertain to me - Lesbian and Gay Immigration. After all my partner was born in Canada, and so was I. Honestly I was only going because we don't live in an urban Mecca where queer workshops are so common you have a choice of three, any given weekend. I was going simply because it had to do with queers!

I did have some reservations about attending, I thought the presenters would be talking in abstract governmental policy jargon, which I only would have been compelled to figure out if I actually had a vested interest in the topic. I also thought 9 to 4 was way too long for me to sit through a boring lecture. (have I mentioned the fact that I hate to get up before 11?)

Well, let me say, I could not have been more wrong! Not only did these two women speak in a language that was entirely accessible, but they also had me thinking I was an expert on 'queer' immigration by the end of the morning session. Yes it was long, but it was also very worth-while. They were able to make me think of an issue that I had never given much thought to before, and I realized that immigration is MY issue because it deals with discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation - something I care passionately about! The only disappoint-

ment of the day was due to the small turnout, only a few of us braved the early morning and the cold.
(reprinted from GALA's Rainbow Review)

DOES CANADIAN LAW SUPPORT US?

In January 1992, Christine Morrissey and Bridget Coll started a law suit against Canadian immigration laws seeking equality. If they had been a married heterosexual couple, Christine could have sponsored Bridget. But they were two women. Later that year Anna Carrott and Andrea Underwood began their case. After threats and delays and uncertainty, Canada immigration caved in on both cases. They granted permanent residency to the non-Canadian partners, insisting that the cases be handled as individual applications. Neither case ever went to court.

In 1993 twenty same-sex couples filed complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. What would Canada do now? Immigration began handling individual applications by non-Canadians who were in same-sex relationships with Canadians, waiving the normal immigration selection criteria on "humanitarian and compassionate" grounds. The humanitarian grounds were the "undue hardship" that would result if the couple were separated. This new procedure was formalized in June, 1994, when Immigration Canada sent telex ORD 0.150 to program managers in embassies and consulates outside Canada. As soon as the telex had been issued, Immigration Canada submitted it to the Canadian Human Rights Commission as its response to the complaints of discrimination that had been filed in 1993.

Since 1994 hundreds of individuals have gained residency in Canada on the basis of their same-sex relationships with Canadians. Yet we, the Canadians in these dual-national relationships, cannot invoke "family class" sponsorship. Our partner's applications are discretionary in a way that the applications of heterosexuals are not. The federal government has never promised us equality in immigration. No Minister has ever made a statement that a procedure exists for same-sex partners.

On the one hand our partners are getting residency rights. On the other

hand same-sex partner immigration only exists in an odd kind of closet. How do we explain this paradoxical situation? Is the glass half empty or half full? Are we on the road to equality or stuck half way? (from LEGIT pamphlet by Prof. Douglas Sanders, Nov. 1997)

In April, 1997, LEGIT presented a Brief to the Immigration Legislative Review Advisory Group, and will soon be meeting with representatives of this group. It presents a history of same-sex immigration initiatives in Canada, an overview of same-sex immigration policies in other countries. (Presently 11 countries recognize same-sex partnerships to some extent). It presents a number of arguments about how the present policy is deficient. And it makes recommendations for changes in the policy. As follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations will strengthen Canada's commitment to the objectives of Canadian Immigration policy:

1. Canadian immigration law would include a category of 'intimate partners' within a broader category of 'relationships of emotional interdependency.'
2. All Canadians and permanent residents in relationships of interdependency with an intimate partner, have the right to sponsor that partner and dependent children.
3. All categories of applicants, refugees, etc. have the right to include intimate partners and dependent children with their application.
4. Intimate partners of people who make successful work/student or other visa applications to Canada, must have the right to accompany their partners and be issued with work/student or other visas.
5. All intimate partners applying for permanent residence in Canada, would be considered using the same criteria. Applicants could be expected to meet three of the following:
 - a) sworn affidavits by the parties concerning their relationship.

b) documentary evidence may include one of the following:

- * a marriage certificate
 - * evidence of a registered partnership
 - * a document from a commitment ceremony
 - * documentation in which the partner has been recognized for the purposes of "spousal" benefits.
- c) evidence of joint care, custody or adoption of children
- d) evidence of cohabitation or of maintaining a relationship
- e) letters of recognition of the relationship from family members, friends, members of the community, work colleagues employers etc.
- f) evidence of economic interdependency: past support and/or willingness to share resources.

6. To the maximum extent possible, applications for intimate partners would be handled on the basis of written documentation (in line with current policies on "spouses"). Interviews would be waived except in situations where there is concern with the bona fides of the relationship.

7. An Amnesty provision be available for intimate partners of Canadians and permanent residents who have resided in Canada without status because there have been no regulatory provisions that recognize their relationships. People who are out of status in Canada must be able to make inland applications without being removed from Canada pending the outcome of the application.

LEGIT NEEDS YOUR HELP. If these recommendations are to be taken seriously by our legislators, public support for them is necessary. Write letters saying that you support the recommendations of the Brief to the Immigration Legislative Review Advisory Group, from the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force to:

Hon. Lucienne Robillard
Minister of Immigration
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Send a copy to your local MP, same address.

(no postage is necessary)

AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...

is a report on support systems created by lesbian and bisexual women in the Central Interior. It was researched and written by Sue Sorrell and Janet Watson, and was funded by Status of Women B.C./Yukon Region, and coordinated by the University of Northern B.C. Women's Centre.

This report is a very thorough examination of the situation and needs of lesbian and bisexual women from Williams Lake to Terrace, B.C. It includes sections on many areas of life, such as health care, friends, recreation and social, work, personal safety, the media, political action, coming out, discrimination, self-sufficiency, children and more. It includes personal interviews, results of questionnaires sent out to lesbian and bisexual women and also to various community agencies, and poetry and cartoons! There is a breakdown of the demographics of the interviewees, and easily-read charts and graphs describing us and the responses given.

At the core of this report is a series of recommendations generated by the women interviewed that provide a snapshot of what is and is not available to us, and what we can do about it.

This report is well-written and could become a model for similar research projects in other areas of the province. It is always very difficult to organize, especially in remote areas, without the facts and statistics to support our efforts. It certainly should have a place in every women's centre library and would be of interest to any gay or women's groups organizing in rural or semi-rural areas.

Copies of the report can be obtained for a nominal fee from:

University of Northern B.C.
Women's Centre
3333 University Way
Prince George, B.C.
V2Z 4Z9

ph: (250) 960-5632
fax: (250) 960-5617
c/o Women's Centre

WE WANT YOU! Tell us your stories! As part of a project on Lesbian Health Care in the North, we invite you to send us your stories on audio tapes or written stories. And- if you'd rather talk in person we will be around in your area. We can talk in groups, in pairs or one on one. If you're in Prince George we can meet. Please send us your stories or requests for interviews. Or just contact us if you want more information.

Northern Health Project
c/o Northern Secretariat
BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
UNBC
3333 University Way
Prince George
V2N 4Z9
message or fax: (250) 562-9168



CONNECTIONS

I'm wondering if some of the readers of The Open Door would be interested in meeting other women through email or letter writing? Would it be possible to start a section of The Open Door that carried such information?

Joy I. Lennox
2804 Kalum Street
Terrace, B.C.
V8G 2M5
email: jlennox@kermode.net

Yes, Joy. And here it is.

Lesbian looking for same age from 37-50. I'm 44 working single romantic quiet lifestyle. Non-smoker. Hobbies are fishing, camping and computer nut. Live in the Prince George area. Friendship. Possibly leading to a relationship if chemistry is right. I love country music some soft rock. Oh, and I love to cook, so let's cook up a storm together and cuddle in front of a roaring fireplace.
Jane
email: jaype@rocketmail.com

LESBIAN SUICIDES COMMON IN THE MOST LITERATE STATE OF INDIA

-Murali

Kerala, the state that claims to have attained 100% literacy and whose developmental model is internationally acclaimed, also has the dubious distinction of the highest suicide rate in the country. According to a recent survey, 27.3 out of every one lakh people in Kerala end up killing themselves, while the national rate of suicide is less than 9.2 per lakh. This is in addition to the large number of suicide attempts that fail or go unreported. The matter has, in recent times, been causing great concern, and researchers, psychologists and social workers are busy analyzing its reasons. A number of factors such as increasing competition, anxieties regarding education and economic future, marital discord, problems created by the Gulf boom, poverty, discomforts caused by the nuclear family system and dowry are recognized as the main causes that persuade the Malayalis to seek refuge in death.

The media also have been giving the matter serious attention. Reports of mothers killing their children before committing suicide or a family choosing to die together, always become important news, with the newspapers giving detailed stories and photos.

But instances of lesbian lovers killing themselves never get a similar exposure nor cause any type of concern. In a social setup which assumes a girl child as a liability to be conveniently disposed of through marriage, the suicide of a girl (or girls) is mostly dealt with meaningful silences. Yet the reports do come: mostly as stories not longer than 5 or 6 lines. Some such reports, bashful of explicit terms, attempt a moralist bashing of the 'perversions' that misguide such girls. Some others try to colour such cases as spicy sensations to spruce up an otherwise eventless day's edition. None has so far made any effort to call attention to the pathetic and, at the same time, easily avoidable nature of these deaths. A mother who kills herself and her

children is immediately narrativized to the glory of a helpless victim of the cruel society, but a pair of lesbian lovers, even after death, remain ridiculous anomalies evoking nothing but amused silence.



-image of an ancient cave-painting in India. From the book "Ecologies of Desires" by Giti Thadani. Published by Cassells (London).

One does not have a record of the similar suicides taking place in the other parts of India. Yet there is reason enough to believe that the phenomenon of lesbian suicides is in many ways unique in Kerala. The women in Kerala have greater freedom of mobility than their counterparts in other regions of India. The girls here get more or less the same educational opportunities as the boys and the ratio of girls to boys in co-educational colleges is often 6:4 or even 7:3. The percentage of working women is quite high. Irrespective of the urban/rural division, these conditions prevail almost all over Kerala. Thus the girls here get enough opportunities to move outside their houses though this mobility is strictly restricted to the daytime. The circumstances are favourable for these girls to find partners of the same sex if they have such an orientation. But the relative freedom enjoyed by these girls is suddenly curbed when they cross 20, which is considered the marriageable age for women. Soon they find themselves forced into heterosexual wedlock from which the only escape seems to be through death.

Most of the recent lesbian suicides in Kerala appear to have been prompted by the enforced marriage of one of the girls. This is evident even in the case reported here. The girls, Gita and Saija, decided to elope after Gita was (perhaps) forced into a heterosexual marriage. They disappeared on a Monday and were discovered in a critical state only on Thursday. During these three days the duo seem to have wandered a lot, perhaps in a desperate attempt to cling on to life. But what chances of survival did these two "unprotected" women have in a rigidly sexist society that cannot even tolerate the sight of a lone woman in a public space after 6 o'clock in the evening?

Projects are being charted out of Kerala to fight manic depression, anxiety and other suicidal tendencies through counselling and psychiatric aid. But nobody seems bothered with lesbian suicides. All that

they need is a little bit of fresh air and freedom to exercise the right to have a partner of their choice. It appears as if the lesbians in Kerala will have to wait for a long time before they are allowed this fundamental human right. One does not know how many more such suicides are going to take place before the moral conscience of the most literate society in India wakes up towards the realities. Even the big brother West, which has been ever alert towards the "violation of human rights" in the "third world" seems to be blind towards the lesbian suicides in Kerala.



THE GIRL IN THE SWING

At the White Sands Hotel
the girl in the swing
in deep conversation
sometimes would sing
She talked on and on
into thin air
to a just-pretend friend.
Nobody was there.

Young Anne and Emily
of whom schoolgirls read
made friends of the wind
and the silver birch trees.
In Montgomery's novels
it's charming and fey
but in real life
it causes dismay.

Is it schizophrenia
or artistic mind?
Should I have spoken
and tried to be kind?
I hesitated.
Timid of me?
Yes, but the real world
is not Avonlea.

-Ruth Latta

write, see
if she wants
books

Catalogue

A reminder that the lending library of The Open Door continues to expand and as of December contains 57 pages of books, periodicals and videos that are available for borrowing. If you are interested in organic farming, do-it-yourself projects, erotica, First Nations history, goddess or wiccan spirituality, feminist analysis or lesbian herstory, this library is for you! Contact Susan Armstrong at Site 14, Comp 8, R.R. 7, Vernon, B.C. V1T 7Z3 for information and a catalogue of the library.

CENSUS 2001

Make your voice heard

EGALE is calling for lesbians, gays and bisexuals across Canada to involve themselves in CENSUS 2001:

A project to ensure our voices are heard when the next Canadian census is held. WRITE IN AND BE COUNTED!

The 1996 Census was the largest ever conducted by Statistics Canada. It was designed to create a profile of Canada and its people. BUT, in 1996:

- * There was no mention of gays, lesbians, or bisexuals.
- * There was no mention of same-sex families.
- * Those in same-sex relationships had no choice but to indicate their marital status as "single."

YOU can help change that!

The 2001 Census Consultation Project is now under way and Statistics Canada would like your input. If you would like to get involved, submit your written comments no later than 31 March 1998 to:

Pamela White, manager
2001 Census Content Determination Project
Statistics Canada, 3-B4, Jean Talon Building, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6
Telephone: (613) 951-6994
or Fax: (613) 951-9300
Internet: consultation2001@statcan.ca



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DEAR FUCKING GOOD:

I think that there is something wrong with my current lover. No matter what great moves I do she doesn't get wet. She insists that she is sexually aroused but I think she must be saying that to make me feel better since she's still as dry as can be. I don't want to have to use KY if I can avoid it and besides, if she isn't wet, I figure she really isn't into sex anyhow. Any suggestions?

Signed, Dry as a Desert.

DEAR DRY:

Usually, we'd launch into a recommendation for a sexual product to assist you in your quest but we think a little attitude adjustment is in order first. You seem to be striving to 'perform' for your lover yet you aren't listening to her at all. If she says she is sexually aroused, why not believe her? She is certainly the one in the position to speak for her physical response. *Good sex starts with communication, not 'great moves'* (though we'd certainly be interested in hearing more details if you've got something you'd like to share with the class).

Don't fall for the myth that 'if you are really turned on you won't need a lubricant'. Everyone is different in terms of how much lubrication their body produces on its own. We womyn of "Womyns' Ware" think there is nothing sexual you are doing that won't be improved with lube. Aside from the obvious uses, it reduces the chafing of trimmed pubic hairs and reduces the frequency of broken latex. Putting lube in as well as on latex will increase the sensitivity through the latex. Add lube to oral sex and instead of just a slippery tongue you now have a slippery chin too. For vaginal penetration, lube means whatever you're doing you can do it longer without dryness as a woman's natural lubrication can dry up as arousal increases. Also, the body's natural lubrication changes with the time of the month and with age. And the safest rule of thumb for any anal penetration is: use more lube than you think you need, add a little more and you're on the right track! Add lube

and whatever you're doing, you can do it longer because you won't be stopping due to chafing or wear and tear.

We don't generally recommend lubes such as KY because they are pharmaceutical lubes. This means that they are designed to assist with a single insertion of something into a body cavity. They are not designed for sex play where you may have no insertion at all but repetitive stroking and if you do have penetration, it's a lot more than once. Sex play lubes are designed for sex. There are some excellent brands on the market that are latex safe, water soluble, with or without taste depending on your preference, wonderful consistency/texture for sex, non-staining, and they stay wet a long long time. You'll probably have to check with a store that specializes in sexual products to find these lubes since drug stores tend to just stock products for sick genitals, *not for happy fucking ones. One last thing; some lubes have the spermicide nonoxynol-9 included. We don't recommend it as many people have reactions and irritation to this harsh detergent. If you have any more questions about a particular lube, drop us a line. (see Womyns' Ware ad).*

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by Judith Quinlan

MATRILINEAGE/PATRILINEAGE

Patrilineage is a system of naming and inheritance based on the male line. It is an essential feature of the patriarchal paradigm and exists primarily for the distribution of property. Like all social developments, patrilineage did not emerge, fully-formed, at the beginning of patriarchal time. Remnants of matrilineage still exist within some of the oldest patriarchal cultures (in Iceland women are named after their mothers, men after their fathers). Many of the newest patriarchies had patrilineage imposed on them by their colonial invaders, and remnants of their matrilineal roots persist (many First Nations peoples in North America inherit their clan designations through the female line).

It was not possible to develop a patrilineal system without first developing the concept of private property. Private property is not the same thing as personal property. All cultures have personal property - these are the things that each group or individual needs to maintain itself. What this minimum is varies, but can include such things as clothing, tools, shelter, ornaments, spiritual objects, household goods, tokens of honour etc. Private property is property that represents accumulated wealth beyond these things. To develop private property it is first necessary to have such an excess. Subsistence living doesn't lend itself to the development of patrilineage. In non-patriarchal cultures, excess wealth becomes the collective property of the group, for trade or distribution. To develop patrilineage it is first necessary to overcome this collective mind-set that would not conceive of the idea of one person accumulating wealth while another goes hungry.

There is a lot of power and status associated with the concept of private property. A person with accumulated wealth is safer than a person without - he can weather hard times more successfully. Also a person with accumulated

wealth is in a position to bargain with his wealth to gain control over others. But wealth of this measure can take generations to accumulate. In a matrilineal system, where the mother-child bond takes primacy, this wealth is dissipated among the children of each generation, so there is no huge advantage to individual wealth. In a patrilineal system, where the father-son bond dominates, and primogeniture limits inheritance to the first-born male, it becomes possible to "fix" the advantages of wealth through time, to pass on power.

But patrilineage creates a dilemma for men. How is it possible to identify one's own children among the various offspring of the group? The only way to guarantee paternity is to guarantee that the mother of a particular child only had intercourse with a particular male. For the first few thousand years of patriarchal culture this was a major concern among lawmakers - to enforce women's "fidelity". At first they were pretty heavy-handed about it. Laws tended to mete out harsh punishments to women who resisted monogamy - the death penalty was not unusual. They had to be, because women were not in the habit of being the exclusive sexual partner of one man and naturally resisted this limit on their freedom. Gradually, the institution of monogamy (for women) became an accepted norm, and now paternity is more a legal matter than a biological one. Patrilineage is so well-ingrained that men can even afford to accept other men's children as their own. Also, these days, women do not have much property to pass on to their children - 6000 years of patriarchy have left women relatively impoverished. Once an idea becomes accepted in the collective mind it is no longer necessary to employ draconian measures to enforce it. This doesn't mean that women were more "oppressed" in ancient times, nor does it mean that modern women are more "submissive". All it means is that the institution of patrilineage has become ingrained over time. This institution, like others, is now weakening.

Patrilineage, although it is mainly a system for the passing on of property,

has many ancillary effects. One is the effect on identity among men and women. In patrilineal societies, women are named and identified according to the men they are related to- fathers and husbands. The combined effect of forced monogamy and patrilineage is that a property relationship developed between men and women. Not only women's issue, but women's wombs, women's bodies and eventually women themselves became part of the private property of individual males. This is most evident when we examine the history of rape laws. Rape of an unmarried woman was not originally a crime against the woman, but against the property of the family of that woman. A raped woman is no longer as marriageable as a virgin would be. Many early rape laws required the rapist to either marry the woman or to pay reparation to her father. Rape within marriage was not, until recently, considered a crime. How could a man steal what was already his? And rape of a prostitute was equally unthinkable. How can you steal what is freely given? Even today it is difficult to obtain a rape conviction if the victim is "morally loose", or has had a sexual relationship with her rapist. Rape laws were never intended to protect a woman's right to control over her own body, but a man's right to control over her reproductive potential.

In similar ways, marriage laws, property laws, suffrage laws and many others, reflected the view that women were subject to male authority, that men had an inherent right to control the activities of women. Matrilineage does not, in the same way, create a property relationship of women over men. For a woman to identify her own offspring doesn't require any sort of controls or restrictions on the activities of men. In matrilineal societies men are not required to be cut off from their lineage, and naming can be a much looser tradition. Often names would change as a child grew to adulthood. Given names may not reflect the child's lineage at all, but might describe some circumstance surrounding the birth, some characteristic of the child, might be an honorific name belonging to the tribe or clan, or an inherited name from a deceased ancestor. Names in non-patriarchal cultures are often not even gender-specific.

Another effect of patrilineage is how it determines a society's relationship ranking. Within a patrilineal culture, the primary relationship is the father-son bond. This becomes the prototype relationship on which all other social connections are built.

Within primate groupings, the father-son relationship is the weakest, the most competitive and the most aggressive of all the connections within the band. The alpha males, previously characterized as "lords and masters" of their harems, we now know are largely selected by the breeding females- particularly the females who have the most experience and success in child-rearing. Alpha male selection is not merely a matter of size and strength, but is also based on many factors that maximize his genetic desirability - adaptability, cleverness, food-finding skills, temperament etc. Young males are the most expendable members of the primate group. They are the first line of defence against predators. Alpha males seldom risk their lives in serious combat, but like modern-day generals, they remain in the safety of the group's centre while their sons risk their lives in battle. Young males are the first to be driven away in times of hardship. It is from this pool of expendable young males that future breeding males are selected. Part of this selection process involves displays of courage and strength, mock battles, and confrontations with the alpha males. So in primate groups, the sons of the fathers represent a threat and a challenge to the alpha males. This threat is mediated and controlled by the mandates of reproduction - the primacy of the mother-child bond.

While it is not sensible to make too many direct inferences to human societies from the social relationships of our closest relatives, we can safely infer that early human societies developed out of the social habits that preceded them. We ignore genetic imperatives at our own risk, and the race memory of humans contains this knowledge that the father-son bond is the weakest and most aggressive of all human bonds. It is a tension-fraught connection



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EL

Come and celebrate with Emma Joy Crone She will be 70 in January, 1998, but plans to engage in festivities with those who wish to come and share on the weekend of APRIL 25/26, when the weather will be more amenable to outdoor jollity, and we can enjoy the beaches and trails of HORNBY ISLAND. Let Annie Kelleher know if you want to join us. Bring poetry, musical instruments and be ready to share your many talents, or just enjoy all of the above.

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ELC

Web of Crone

Luann
-edited by Emma Joy Crone
RR #1, Hornby Island, B.C.
VOR 1Z0

I AM THE CRONE

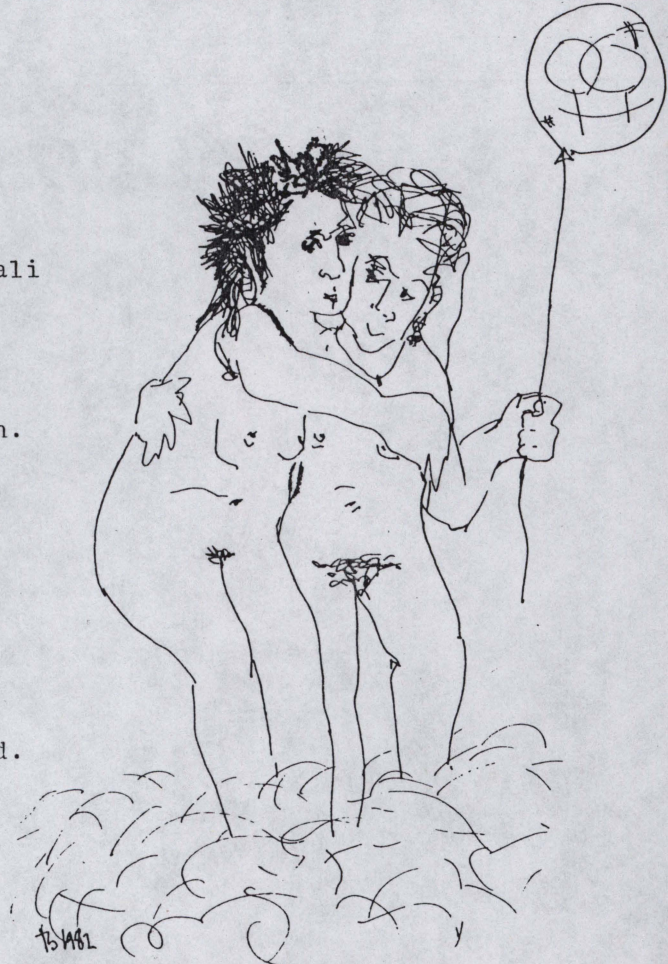
I am an eighty two year old orgasmic female.
I always wanted to say that
Preferably at a church picnic.
The planet is my garden, all nature
Calls my name, I am one with the Badger,
Destroyer of Nests, Happy Wanderer
I have lived beyond all my pretensions.
I am myself atlast without apology
A Pagan poet who lives to learn
The wisdom of the body. The passion of the soul
The power of the mind and the mystery
Of the spirit that energizes my life.
I am a spiritual anarchist
My natural habitat chaos, I understand
The danger inherent in order
If the foundation is intolerant and materialistic.
Order and authority has no female principle
There are no role models for us
In the man's book of holy writ, no room
For the dance of life, the magic circle.
We must go back to the Mother to learn from Demeter
Why we are such fierce mothers, to Hestia
To understand our nest building instincts, and to Kali
The Goddess of both our creative and destroying
Instincts, she is my role model
The still point of detachment that removes
Me from all fear, I am a surrendered realist
The stick and the carrot do not play in my game plan.
I shall go back to the Mother, the happy dust
Of which I was formed to find my own shadow
Needs my ashes to sweeten the ground where I lie.
The wheel turns slowly, the motor falters
But still the spirit energizes me
To take the next breath, to defend my position.
Somewhere in the past the female lost her nerve
When the boys in the desert who stole our skirts
And invested the powers inherent in the female
In the jealous and vengeful castrate they called God.
Where did Kali go, perhaps it is She
Who paces the golden streets, bidding her time
For us to resurrect Her history
A lesbian super femme, we should be so lucky.

-Gert Beadle

FOR THE GODDESS HESTIA

Hestia you old housekeeper
You lit the fire in that
stone cavern of my heart and
Lo these many years you
kept the draft open.
I depend on you to place
your thumb upon the candle's
dying light
And in my ashes write
This warrior sister loved the heat.
The little fires she set
may not burn freely yet
but in the future when
the frozen see the flame
they may carry off
a burning cinder in her name.

-Gert Beadle



ANAGRAM POEM

There is no other time,
There is me, no other It.
There it is: No other me,
No mother. It is there,
The other. Enorm* it is.

-Martina Zechendorf
(*enorm is German for enormous)

ANAGRAM CHALLENGE: Try your own
anagram poem on a phrase containing
the words "The Open Door" and I will
publish it in The Open Door.

O, this poor Eden
is on the droop.
Pride shone, too -
The Door is Open

ALL SHE WAS
There was a wandering woman
She knew all, BUT couldn't find IT.
And learning to look inward,
she became HERSELF.
And learning not to look away,
she became what she SAW
And becoming what she SAW,
and becoming HERSELF
she saw HERSELF in ALL.
After all she was ALL.
BEFORE ALL SHE WAS.

-Michelle de Luca

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The Open Door is published quarterly, on the solstices and equinoxes. Submission deadline is the 1st of the month of publication (Dec., Mar., June & Sept.) All materials of interest to rural feminists or lesbians are welcome, as long as they aren't sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise discriminate against any group of women. The Open Door encourages diverse views and opinions. Send submissions and subscriptions to:

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