

LESBIAN NEWS

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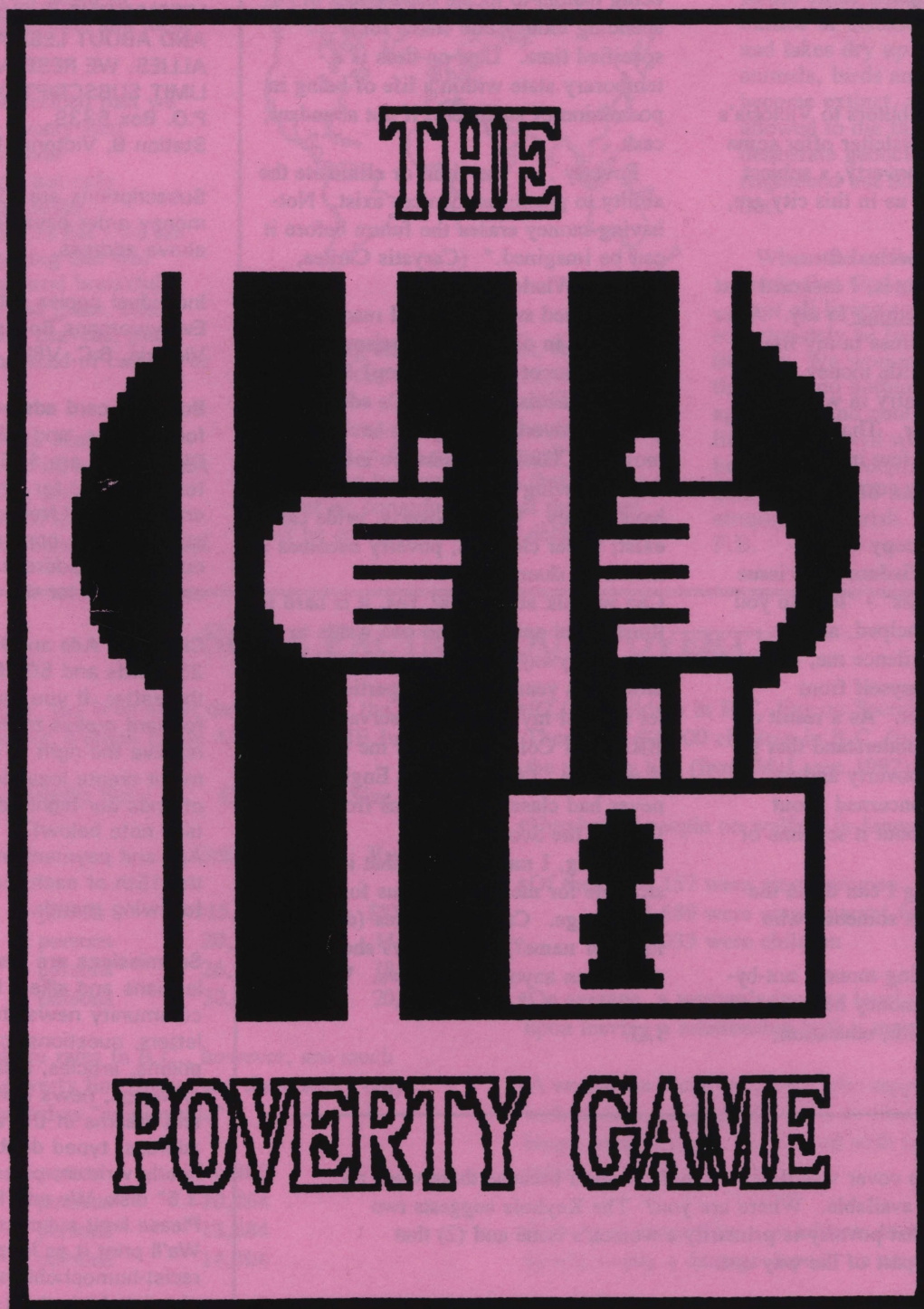
VANCOUVER ISLAND'S MONTHLY LESBIAN FEMINIST NEWSLETTER

VOL. 4 ISSUE 1

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EDITORIAL

This month the contributors to Victoria's Lesbian Feminist Newsletter offer some of their thoughts on poverty, a subject about which many of us in this city are, at best, ill-informed.

As the deadline approached for submitting editorial notes, I assumed that I would think of something to say. After all, there have been times in my life when I've had very little money, and I did grow up in a country in which 90% of the people are poor. That should qualify me to offer a few informed, empathetic (politically correct, of course) comments.

My lover gave me a copy of the periodical *Sinister Wisdom* - the issue on "Lesbians and Class" - "to help you along", she said. It helped, alright. That is, it helped to silence me, except to say that I disqualify myself from commenting altogether. As a result of reading that book, I understand that I know nothing about poverty and, furthermore, to be concerned about wanting to be P.C. about it screams of privilege.

The most honest thing I can do in the circumstances is to let someone who knows, speak:

"Poverty is not-having-money, not-by-choice. Not-having-money has an impact on one's growth, health, education;

not-having-money limits access to food, clothes, beds and bedding, health care, transportation.

Being broke is not poverty. It is only being unable to locate the amount of spending money one wants for a specified time. Low-on-cash is a temporary state within a life of being in possession of sufficient, if not abundant, cash.

Poverty . . . can limit or eliminate the ability to grasp that choices exist. Not-having-money erases the future before it can be imagined." (Caryatis Cardea, *Sinister Wisdom*, No. 5)

On a related subject, would readers be interested in discussing classism in a future issue or in a workshop? In the words of *Sinister Wisdom's* editorial group, "Poverty is only not-having-money. Classism is how we are treated for not-having-money by those who do have money. Under poverty, pride can exist; under classism, poverty becomes a matter of shame."

Can we talk about this? Yes, it is hard to think about and, yes, no one wants to hear it anyway. But it goes on and on around us year after year, particularly, let me add my personal observation, in *BRITISH Columbia*. Call me Britishist, if you like. (Actually, I'm Englishist; never had classist put downs from the Irish or the Scots.)

In closing, I must confess that it is a struggle for me to be serious for an entire page. Caryatis Cardea (don't you love her name?) herself says she laughs more than anyone she knows. Whew!

J.G.

WHO ARE WE?

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Business card ads are \$8 per issue, \$30 for 5 issues, and \$50 for 10 issues.
Display ads are \$15 for 1/4 page, \$25 for 1/2 page; for larger sizes, please enquire with LNews for costs. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is 15th of each month for the following month.

Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 25 words and 50c for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward replies to Personals, add \$2. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities (see note below).

Ads and payment must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion the following month.

Submissions are welcome from all lesbians and allies; this is an open community newsletter. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, and dreams of the week to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible 3.5" disk. We edit for space and clarity. Please limit submissions to 800 words. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-classist-ablebodyist-personal attackist or boringist.

Cover: This month's cover was designed by Kelevelyn because there were no other artists available. Where are you? The Keyhole suggests two things: (1) that poverty is primarily a women's issue and (2) that feminism is part of the way out.

A Legacy of Poverty

In writing about poverty many issues must be confronted because poverty is a symptom of a multitude of conditions.

Throughout patriarchal history there have always been "rich" and "poor" where the more "powerful" ruled over the "powerless". Other synonyms which describe these opposites help to put things into proper perspective: "influential/ineffectual", "wealthy/humble" boil down to "those who are born to rule and those born to obey".

With the above prescribed past we have arrived at the twenty-first century in a state of total bereavement. We are not only wanting for food and water - immediate necessities of life - we are now bereft of everything that was once called Holy: natural beautiful surroundings, trees and grass, clean lakes and rivers, blue heavens, pure atmosphere, and any kind of cultural or agricultural values.

It seems that Western Man, who is supposedly endowed with a tremendous capacity for reasoning and ability to penetrate every field of learning, has finally reached all corners of our round

earth and, in doing so, has brought us to the brink of extinction. Our waters are polluted, forests decimated, ozone layer destroyed, atmosphere contaminated; it is no wonder there is famine/starvation, drought/thirst over much of the planet. Moreover, when men declare war on one another and go on a rampage, destroying and



murdering all in their wake, they don't consider the women and children who then suffer malnutrition, lack of water and extreme want. Why should we be surprised at this phenomenon? Patriarchy has taught men that women are of no consequence, that they need not be consulted, and that decisions are

only in the hands of those who have been created in the "image of God", none other than men.

Am I frightened? I'm terrified because it is obvious to me that in less than 10,000 years of patriarchal reign men have succeeded in destroying that which had lasted almost a million years. In only fifty years with technology we have seen the rain forests destroyed, fertile lands become arid, forests burned or diseased, oceans, rivers and lakes dry up or become polluted, animals, birds and fish almost become extinct, women and children allowed to die through neglect or deliberate genocide. Yes, I'm frightened but not too scared to speak out!

When the scribes in Genesis 1:26 wrote that God gave Man dominion over all living creatures and nature, unfortunately he (men) took them literally. We women must recognize that if we do nothing to stop men's aggression and control in every area of life not only will we starve physically but we will be deprived spiritually, emotionally, and mentally until we atrophy and perish.
F.B.

SOME FACTS ABOUT POVERTY

- The "poverty line" has been set at these levels by the National Council of Welfare (from ACTION LINE June 1992):

	Family Sizes	Community Size
	Urban	Rural
1 person	\$15,426	\$10,502
2 persons	20,910	14,237
3 persons	26,579	18,096
4 persons	30,548	20,834

- The annual welfare rates in B.C., however, are much lower than the poverty line limits, and these apply only to people designated as "employable":

1 person	\$ 6,300
2 persons	10,464
3 persons	12,684
4 persons	14,304

- 92,000 children in B.C. live on Social Assistance. Therefore, 92,000 children in B.C. live at 40% BELOW the poverty line (from McLaren 1992)

- Number of people on welfare in January: 278,172

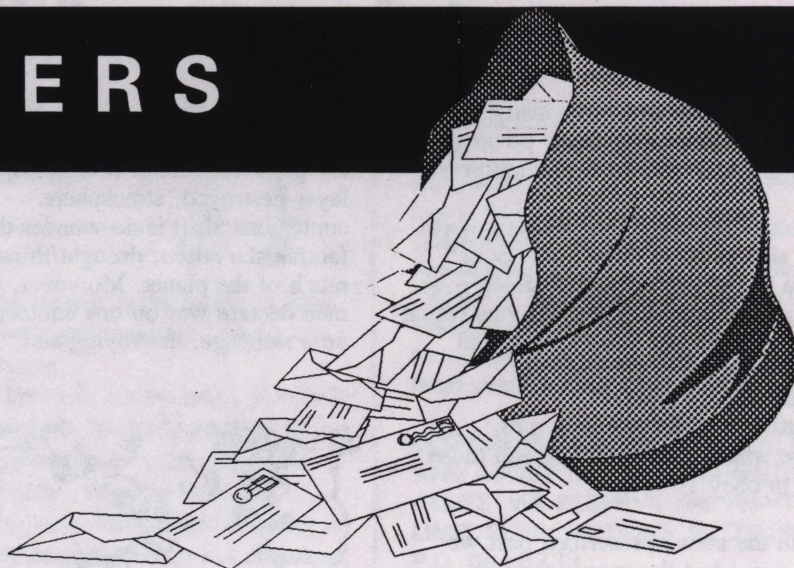
- Of these, 24,157 were single women
39,689 were single parent families
92,033 were children

- On average, a woman's income level drops by 1/2 to 1/3 upon leaving a relationship with a man

- A woman on social assistance who supplements her income with undeclared earnings (such as from babysitting or bingo winnings) can be charged with fraud and be subjected to criminal charges

- You must already have an address to apply for GAIN money to pay a damage deposit on an apartment

LETTERS



Dear LNews;

The past few months have been quite intense for me - having finally come out to those whom I love.

My main reason for writing is to also express my anger and frustration at the process we lesbians sometimes go through when **WE DO** come out. (I suppose this letter is a carbon copy of many you receive from lesbians like me). Too bad for us, and the other lesbians who will follow, that there isn't a "how-to" manual on "How to Come Out and Still Remain Intact" - gawd; it would be a best seller!! That constant fear of rejection lingered right up 'til the day "I did it". Too bad we don't have strong role models whose footsteps we can follow. Please, wake up you lesbians in positions of influence, and help out your sisters by being "publicly" out yourselves. Stop the oppression we continually keep ourselves in!

Chris Ash

Dear LNews;

I think there are a lot of dykes out there who are "closet" romantic and/or erotica writers. Slowly, these individuals are emerging and taking up pen names. Given time, and your editors' many shameless pleas for submissions to the newsletter, LNews may become The WestCoast Journal of Lesbian Romance and Erotica.

I say: Dykes unite, and tell it like it is - or as you wish it were - or whatever! Let's entertain each other.

Let's produce Lesbian pop-culture. Surely you too are a little queasy at the thought of reading another sociological study of Lesbian life. The only time one of those has made me "hot" was when I read it in the bathtub. Come on - grab those pens and keyboards! Let's start something.

J.J.
(Here's a contribution:)

To Jennifer - In Dedication

STUDENTS HAVE COME AND GONE ALL DAY
SILLY QUESTIONS OBVIOUS ANSWERS
IF SHE CAME
SHE WOULD NOT ASK THE MUNDANE
OR FOR THE MEANING OF HER LIFE
SHE WOULD ASK ME TO ACCOMPANY HER
TO DINNER
AND THE SHEER AUDACITY OF IT
THE LOGIC OF THE LUST IN HER EYES
WOULD CONVINCE ME TO GO.

Dear LesbiaNews;

I am writing on behalf of Friends of Carmanah/Walbran, a local organization attempting to save the intact watersheds of Vancouver Island, including the Walbran, Carmanah, Tsitika, Clayquot Sound and other watersheds. As well we are in support of and trying to learn

more about the sovereign and traditional First Nations of Vancouver Island in their fights for sovereignty.

It is with these causes in mind that we are attempting to build a large broad-based civil disobedience action in September at the Provincial Legislature. We hope to use our bodies in non-violent action to demand a change to the current system of corporate control of the forests.

Our intention is to create a community of resistance towards the pre-mentioned systems. I and F.O.C./W feel that your input is vital. As a group working on progressive causes in other areas you may have concerns we have not adequately addressed.

Any replies or questions concerning this correspondence can be addressed to me, John Harter at Apt.#J 1054 Pandora Ave., Victoria, V8V 3P5. Or feel free to call me at 382-5065. I look forward to hearing from your group, and hope that we can find ways to support the goals of each of our groups.

Sincerely,
John Henry Harter
Friends of Carmanah/Walbran

P'd Rather Have a Running Vehicle Than Therapy

by Terri Fredlund

(Reprinted from **Sinister Wisdom**, Number 45, Winter 1991/92,
Available from Everywoman's Books, \$6.50)

Driving
through soft hills
a valley outstretched
revives me
I'm grateful
to be here
"Privileged" I almost say,

being one accustomed
to scarcity

"Healing"
privileged wimmin say
"Is a matter of priorities.
You must choose
to commit time, energy,
money."
Don't they know eating
is not a matter of choice?

The laughter of friends
I travel far to see
my kitty's company
a womon's touch
campfire all night
drumming
Nebraska buttes
enjoying community
teaching wimmin
self defense
creating change
These are my healing

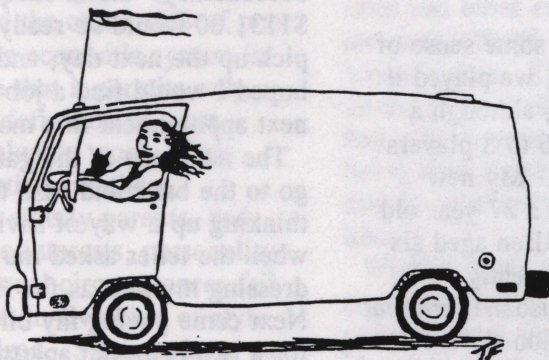
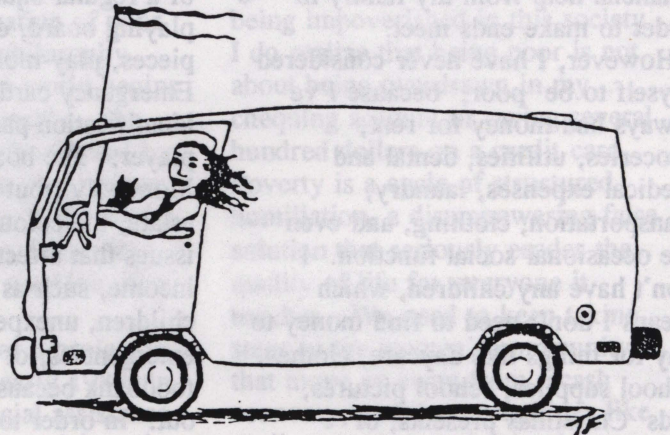
Submit to a professional's
speculation
manipulation
attitudes;
choose this over a sunset?
But seeker prevails,
the search begins
for a womon
competent, trustworthy
affordable
I commit time, energy
"Forty dollars minimum"
see some therapists twice,
before I am cured
of gambling
such large wagers
on long shots.

One quarter the cost
of her van wasted,
the poor womon
reevaluates her priorities.

"Positive attitude
can help carry us
to our dreams."
Until then
what are your ways,
when being poor
and surviving
are against the rules?
Let's share our secrets.

How do you juggle
limited choices
which needs
do you trade
for which freedoms;
how have you escaped
running mazes
integrity intact?
I want to know.

Healing, travel,
shoes that fit,
food, music,
shelter, fun
Shall we share our
"secrets?"
Were it not
a matter of priorities
we would choose
them all.



*(The author dedicates this poem to all wimmin, who,
when there's nothing else, run on courage.)*

THE POVERTY GAME™

by Kelevelyn Hurley

Being a fulltime student for the past 8 years has meant depending on student loans, part time minimum-waged work as a teaching assistant, a small scholarship, and a lot of financial help from my family in order to make ends meet.

However, I have never considered myself to be 'poor,' because I've always had money for rent, groceries, utilities, dental and medical expenses, laundry, transportation, clothing, and even the occasional social function. I don't have any children, which means I don't need to find money to pay for things like daycare, clothes, school supplies, school pictures, kids' Christmas presents, or Halloween costumes. I am not illiterate. I don't have dyslexia or other learning disabilities. I'm in my early thirties and physically able to do most kinds of work. English is my first language, I come from a middle-class background, I'm a WASP. And if my thesis is accepted, I will soon hold two university degrees in the social sciences. All of this contributes to the likelihood that I will find a job that will pay an annual wage well above the poverty line. Quite frankly, the issues involved in being poor were, until recently, only theoretical to me.

However, at the International Women's Day potluck last March, a woman, Silvia Vilches, told us about something called The Poverty Game™. I became increasingly intrigued as she explained how a committee affiliated with TAPS (Together Against Poverty Society) were using a board game to educate people about what it's like to be a woman living on social assistance in Victoria. I recently interviewed her about the game itself, her work as a game facilitator, and her

involvement in other non-profit organizations which address women's poverty.

We began the interview with Silvia setting up the game, which consists of a regular square laminated playing board, dice and game pieces, play money, Chance and Emergency cards, and an identification package for each player. The board design is like Monopoly®, but instead of real estate, the coloured squares are issues that affect women on a fixed income, such as buying clothing for children, unexpected medical emergencies, or going to the foodbank because the money has run out. In order to simulate real

Although I knew this was just a game, I felt very anxious and embarrassed. . .

situations that women on fixed incomes face, the game also sets up a time frame which declares it to be October, one month after school has started and around the time of Halloween.

So that I would get some sense of how the game works, we played it for about 20 minutes, although a complete game with 6 to 8 players can last much longer. My new identity was Jane A., a 27 year old smoker with two children aged six and two and a half, recently separated from my husband, without a car, money or any job skills that could secure me a job that paid better than minimum wage.

Although usually the game is played with 3 facilitators, this time Silvia stood in as my FAW (Family

Assistance Worker) and the 'marketplace' - a combination of banker, landlady, telephone company, grocer, and all other places where money is paid out.

The first thing I had to do as Jane was to apply for Social Assistance at the Ministry of Social Services. I had to fill out a long and complicated form called a 'GAIN' application (Guaranteed Available Income for Need). I struggled with the form because I didn't understand the language, and my 'worker' told me to correct some of the answers I'd given. Silvia said that had we been playing in a larger group, I would now be at the back of the line because I had taken so long on the

form. She also said that it is usual in the Ministry office for women to struggle with the forms without any assistance, even if they cannot read English, or if they are functionally illiterate.

Although I knew this was just a game, I felt very anxious and embarrassed as my worker, who called me 'Jean' instead of Jane, asked pointed

questions about my marital and financial status. She told me that she was worker number 113 -so we were both depersonalized by the bureaucracy - that a cheque for \$1131.00 would be ready for me to pick up the next day, and that she hoped I would find a job before our next appointment in a month's time.

The next step of the game was to go to the bank and cash the cheque, thinking up a way of saving face when the teller asked me what I was dressing my kids as for Halloween. Next came paying my bills - \$700 for a two bedroom apartment, a weekly pay-out of \$91 for groceries and \$90 for utilities, \$16 for laundry, \$2 for transportation -

(continued on page 7)

leaving me with \$232 to last until my \$70 family allowance cheque came the third week of the month. I could see how smoking was a habit I could not afford to have. Silvia said that usually people's money runs out before the third week, and the players (and people actually on social assistance) start to get 'creative' at this point (for example, doing babysitting or keeping bingo winnings and not declaring the income) in order to feed their kids.

Down to \$232, the game now began in earnest - I had to roll the die and take a chance of landing on squares that could wipe me out financially immediately. My level of panic rose and a kind of numbness began to settle in as I imagined having to live this way day in and day out, month after month, even year after year. I was very relieved when Silvia suggested we stop playing the game and move on to something else!

I asked her "Why are people poor?" Drawing on her extensive experience as a volunteer and advocate for impoverished women, Silvia estimated that about 60% of poor people are unemployable because of alcoholism, drug use and/or mental handicaps, which are in turn often connected to severely dysfunctional family backgrounds. She attributed the other 40% of poor to the way the economic system is structured, in that it permits only a very narrow definition of what constitutes valuable work. This means that artists, mothers, caregivers to elderly parents, and anyone whose interests, personality type, or personal circumstances fail to meet a nine-to-five kind of style are marginalized. Silvia pointed out that there are many people who are 'working poor' - meaning they have waged jobs but still live below the poverty line - and who therefore don't show up in the poverty statistics.

I now had some limited understanding of the scope of the problems and wanted to know about possible solutions. I asked Silvia about potential actions to change and improve conditions for poor women. She identified the Poverty Game as part of the solution in addressing the feminization of poverty and criminalization of poor women, her personal philosophy being that changing the world begins with changing people inside. She has seen people strongly affected by playing this game, past participants including future FAWs, UVic social work students, workers from City Hall, and members of the Unitarian Church.

The game grew out of a project in Dawson Creek in the early 1980s in which 6 women on social assistance collaborated with three social work

drink, cigarettes, a pair of jeans or shoes, earrings, transportation, babysitting, and juggle it against the risk that this money might suddenly be needed tomorrow for something vital. I'm glad I met Silvia and played the game, although I think I learned enough to realize how ignorant I am of the realities of being impoverished in this society. I do realize that being poor is not about being overdrawn in my chequing account or owing several hundred dollars on a credit card. Poverty is a cycle of structured humiliation, a disempowering false solution that seriously erodes the quality of life for everyone it touches. We need to keep taking steps in the women's community that move us away from a cash economy, and do more things like trading services and using barter, holding rummage sales, providing free daycare at workshops, subsidizing fees and entertainment costs.

We need to keep taking steps in the women's community that move us away from a cash economy. . .

professionals to devise this teaching tool. In keeping with the focus of making the game rooted in women's realities as much as possible, rental rates and other expenses are based on current listed costs in the Victoria area. Silvia also said that all the game facilitators must have had some personal experience with being impoverished and on assistance at some point in their history.

Women in the lesbian community constitute part of the poor, particularly if they have children. A night's entertainment which I take for granted presents a real economic challenge to a mother trying to cope on the meagre amount of GAIN. With a fixed income, she has to consider the cost of a ticket, a

Readers interested in learning more about women's economic issues can contact TAPS or WES (Women for Economic Survival). There is also a free forum, lunch and childcare provided, entitled "Justice Not Charity," on Saturday

26 September, 0930 to 230 pm at George Jay Elementary, 1118 Princess Street, sponsored in part by TAPS. See also Cindy McLaren's article "Charity is a Bandaid Solution" in the August 1992 SWAG Times-Feminist, and the newsletters of ELP (End Legislated Poverty) available at the TAPS office. Scholarly references include The Double Ghetto (1982) by Pat and Hugh Armstrong; The Liberation of Women (1978) by Roberta Hamilton; Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers (1989) edited by Jesse Vorst; and Women, Class and the Feminist Imagination (1990) edited by Karen Hansen and Ilene Philipson.

NB My thanks to Silvia Vilches for being so generous to me with her time and her insights. Any errors or omissions in content or concept are purely my own.



WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S HOT IN LESBIAN LITERATURE



by *Jahnet Hewsick*

member of The Everywomans Bookstore Collective

1. **Rusty - How Me and Her Went to Colorado And Everything Except Not Really.** Garbo, Big Breakfast Publishing. \$14.25.

A long title for a great read. A novel about the friendship between two lesbians, one alcoholic, the other (you guessed it) codependent. Working-class fiction - no yuppie lesbian characters in this book.

2. **Inversions: Writings by Dykes, Queers and Lesbians.** Betsy Warland (ed.), Press Gang. \$15.95.

Twenty-four North American writers explore questions of sexual identity and politics, creativity, cultural community and literary theory. Contributors include Judy Grahn, Chrystos, Jane Rule, Anne Cameron, Nicole Brossard.

3. **Bushfire: Stories of Lesbian Desire.** Karen Barber (ed.), Lace Publications. \$11.65.

For girls who take their sex seriously and insist on it being fun. Take this book and your girlfriend to bed. If you don't have a girlfriend, take yourself to bed. Immediately!

4. **Stolen Glances - Lesbians Take Photographs.** Tessa Boffin, Jean Fraser (eds.), Pandora. \$24.95.

Thirty lesbian photographers and writers from North America and Britain explore the representation of lesbianism in thought-provoking and sometimes confrontational ways. Political, with a touch of polemics and a dash of sex.

5. **Miss X or the Wolfman.** Christine Crow, The Women's Press/U.K. \$14.25.

Gripping, multi-level novel about a schoolgirl's intense relationship with her headmistress. Serious and playful, witty and moving.

6. **Boomer - Railroad Memoirs.** Linda Nieman, Cleis. \$16.85.

An "on the road" spiritual autobiography. The blurb on the back states this is a lesbian adventure of the American West, however the author had relationships

with men and women. Decide for yourself - a well-written and interesting story of personal transformation.

7. **The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader.** Joan Nestle (ed.), Alyson. \$19.45.

Through personal essays, short fiction, poetry, interviews, and photographs, some eighty women explore femme-butuh identities in the lesbian community. Joan Nestle dedicates this "to all women who sent in the stories of their desire and who took the risk of self-disclosure and the journeys back to painful places".

8. **Legal Tender.** Marion Foster, Firebrand. \$12.95.

Someone wants Harriet Fordham Croft dead. Is it her newly discovered lesbianism, her switch from corporate to criminal practice, or some long-standing personal debt that has triggered the danger? This hard-driving mystery moves between a remote island in the Canadian bush and Toronto's run-down east side.

9. **Piece of My Heart - A Lesbian of Color Anthology.** Makeda Silvera (ed.), Sister Vision Press. \$19.95.

Stories, poetry, essays, interviews and photographs by lesbians of color from both sides of the border. Humorous, angry, confrontational, erotic and celebratory in its style. Contributors include Cheryl Clarke, Terri L. Jewell, Chrystos, Beth Brant. A great read.

10. **Love, Zena Beth.** Diane Salvatore, Naiad, \$20.95.

This book is attracting a lot of attention. It is being billed as the most talked about lesbian novel of the nineties and has been selected for Book of the Month Club. Erotic depiction of a young woman's affair with a world-famous lesbian writer on the rebound from her own affair with a world-famous lesbian sports star. (fictitious or not?).

*(Editor's Note: These books will become available in our public libraries if we request them. For those who can afford to purchase books, why not consider donating them afterwards to the **LesbiaNews** library which is available to our lesbian community by contacting any of the women on the **LesbiaNews** Collective?)*

UPCOMING ISSUES

OCTOBER: *Strange Bedmates* - Can we create alliances within our diversities?

(Lesbians come in all shapes, sizes, colours, persuasions, ages and stages. Can we build alliances for strength while retaining our individual identities? Give us your thoughts/experiences on this subject - or any other topic that you feel needs airing.)

NOVEMBER: *Sex* - What do you like, how do you like it, when do you like it? (We dare you to write to us!)

DECEMBER/JANUARY: *Harassment* - Sticks and stones can break my bones and words can really hurt me.

IN THE NEWS

(Excerpts from Kinesis, July, 1992)

BC Human Rights Act

June 9th the NDP government introduced long-awaited amendments to BC's Human Rights Act...the first step in this province towards protection for lesbians and single moms from discrimination in the areas of, among others, tenancy, employment, membership in trade unions, wages, purchase of property, public facilities and housing.

Discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, physical or mental ability, sex, age and criminal conviction are presently protected areas under the law. The amendments add family status and sexual orientation to prohibited grounds.

Another change will expand the definition of age. The age under protection is currently 45 to 65 years old. This will be broadened to include those between 19 and 65 years. The amendments also remove the maximum limit for damages - previously \$2,000 - and allow for class actions and remedies.

Yet....Legal actions can be expensive, time consuming, and emotionally exhausting and, while legal aid is available for those wishing to file a complaint under the Act, cases can take up to 36 months to be resolved. In most cases, the complainant usually wins.

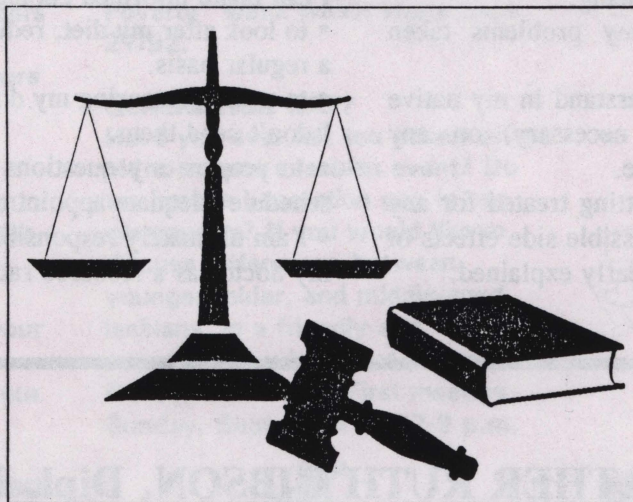
Because the amendments are not all-inclusive, they may sometimes fail to provide protection to the very groups they are designed to help. For example, nothing in the amendments prevents discrimination based on income. Many single parents and their children live below the poverty line....

However, most women's groups are hoping that the legislation "is only the beginning and that there is still a long way to go," as Barbara Findlay, of the group Working With Lesbians puts it.

Coming Out

Perhaps the single most important event for any lesbian is that of coming out. Visibility as a lesbian, or whether or not one 'is out' tends to have a lot to do with the range of choices one has in life.

In a precedent-setting case before the courts in BC, Carol Nielsen is fighting for her right to equal recognition of her lesbian family...Nielsen, an East Vancouver resident, lodged a complaint with BC's Human Rights Commission in 1989 when her employer refused to allow dental insurance coverage for her female partner and her partner's



children. Nielsen's case is being sponsored by the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) who is arguing discrimination on the basis of marital status, family status, sex and sexual orientation.

Says Nielsen, "We are slowly learning how to react against discrimination. If we don't experience equality, we CAN do something about it."

Another Vancouver lesbian asked her local insurance company for a tenancy policy for herself and her partner in order to get a break on the insurance premium as spouses. When the insurance agent refused, she told him it was "illegal in BC for insurance companies to treat lesbian partners differently than heterosexual partners."

She said, "at that point, the agent suddenly remembered the name of a company that sold those kind of policies. Because I know my rights, I got the insurance."

There has never been a more critical time for feminist and lesbian activists to develop a focused approach to demanding their basic human rights.

The upcoming **OUTRIGHTS/LES DROITS VISIBLE CONFERENCE** invites the entire lesbian community to attend "to find out about the gains we've already made and how to win on every front." The Conference runs from Friday, Oct. 9 to Sunday, Oct. 11. Conference fees are \$25 to \$250, on a sliding scale. Credit hours will also be given for volunteer work. Upon registration, participants will be given a Lay Person's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada, an information package about issues being addressed and an assessment of where we currently stand in the law. **TO RECEIVE A REGISTRATION PACKAGE, CALL 251-4356 IN VANCOUVER.**

Canadian Labour Congress
The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) convention was held in Vancouver in early June. Among other issues, delegates talked about ending violence against women, taking affirmative action to recognize visible minorities, and protecting lesbian and gay rights.

The CLC delegates resolved to:

- lobby for legislative changes and administrative practices that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation;
- actively encourage its affiliated unions to negotiate no-discrimination clauses including sexual orientation; and
- encourage its unions to negotiate contracts expanding the definition of spouse to include lesbian and gay relationships.

A Woman's Health Bill of Rights

Theoretically, the socialist system of health care in B.C. and Canada provides access to services for all. Yet, many of us have experienced discrimination in delivery of health services: if we are on social assistance, single parents, non-white, differently-abled, drug or alcohol-addicted, unemployed, employed in "unacceptable" occupations, non-English speaking, aged, widowed, or just look different!

The following list of "rights" and "responsibilities" is included here as encouragement to all women to begin taking back our power, whatever our status. Let's not let the system control what we think, our attitudes, or how we care for our bodies.

I Have a Right

- to be treated as an equal human being.
- to be listened to and have my problems taken seriously.
- to an explanation that I can understand in my native language (using a translator if necessary) on any questions concerning my health care.
- to know the choices I face in getting treated for any health problem, and to have the possible side effects of any drugs or surgical treatments clearly explained.

- to choose the types of treatment I prefer from among the options offered to me by my doctor.
- for normal events in my life, such as pregnancy and menopause, not to be treated as diseases requiring treatment.
- to choose natural therapies and not be ridiculed for doing so.
- to request a second opinion on any major surgery or health decision.
- to refuse any drug or surgical treatment.

I Have a Responsibility

- to become knowledgeable about my body and how it works.
- to learn as much as possible about my health problems so I can make informed choices.
- to look after my diet, reduce stress, exercise and relax on a regular basis.
- to avoid pressuring my doctor into giving me drugs when I don't need them.
- to prepare my questions for my doctor beforehand and schedule adequate appointment time to discuss them.
- I am ultimately responsible for my own healthcare, using my doctor as a resource rather than an authority.

HEATHER RUTH GIBSON, Dipl. T. October 12, 1955 - August 25, 1992

The Lesbian community of Victoria mourns the sudden death of Heather Gibson. Heather was the god-damndest carpenter, tree pruner and joke teller around. She had the foulest mouth and the fullest laugh, and wrote the world's only gardening column for LesbiansNews. She was a profusely profane wood chucker, a top student, a patient and willing teacher, a kind and generous friend, a gifted storyteller and philosopher extraordinaire. She was inventive, stubborn, cynical and hilarious, hugely intelligent and creative, a lover of plants, women, fishing, song and a good rant. Heather was an inspired cook, horticulturist, bullshit artist and smooth operator. Talented and full of contradictions, down-to-earth, with a flair for wild abundance. *AND* a combative feminist, a sister and mentor. She was the epitome of "everything" and she meant something special to each of us. We all miss her and wish she were still with us. We feel as though a bright light has gone out.

ADS & NOTICES

PERSONS WITH AIDS SOCIETY (PWA), VICTORIA BRANCH

Wednesday nights are for HIV and AIDS Positive Women only!
Set your own agenda in an informal setting. Offer each other support. Make use of the services provided by the PWA Society. For more information and/or to sign up call SWAG.

COURT MONITORING PROGRAM

Attend court and take notes. Monitor sexual assault and sexual abuse trials wearing a SWAG button. Help protect our communities from sexual offenders and the unfair sentences some judges give. Let's put the pressure on! Call SWAG 381-1012.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Become an active educator on issues of concern to women. Talk to a high school class, to a Government Ministry, to a Community Group. Speak on your own areas of interest and/or expertise. Call SWAG to add your name to the List of Speakers.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY AUDIT

How safe are the streets of Victoria? Join SWAG in this study of our community. Tasks include: the "walk-a-bouts", volunteer coordination, meetings, report writing, etc. Call Now. 381-1012

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!

All Women Welcome.
September 18, 1992. Centennial Square, 8 p.m. Info. 381-1012.

SHARED ACCOMMODATION

2-Bedroom, top, corner, quiet suite. \$300 includes hydro, heat, cable, parking, phone, storage, balcony, indoor heated pool, sauna, hot-tub, table-tennis, universal gym, raquetball court-indoor tennis court. Available September 1, 1992. Jane Rema. 360-1047.

JUSTICE NOT CHARITY!

September 26, Fourth Annual Child Poverty Forum, Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Featuring: education, workshops, action, focussing on income, health, housing and food. Lunch and childcare provided. Usual admission \$10, no charge for anyone who has low income. George Jay Elementary School, 1118 Princess Street, Victoria. Sponsored by Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS), City of Victoria, and School District #61. The forum is part of the 2nd Annual "Let's Beat Poverty" week which starts Sept 21/92.

GENERATION GAP?

Have you ever felt too young or too old to attend a lesbian event? Do we have a generation gap in our community? If you would like to discuss differences between younger, older, and middle-aged lesbians, in a friendly and supportive environment, phone Debby, 598-9634. First meeting Sunday, September 13, 7-9 p.m.



LESBIANS AND ALLIES CHORAL GROUP SEEK MUSICAL DIRECTOR

We, Karey and Rowena, are the nucleus of a women's performance choir, to begin singing this fall. We are searching for a woman to lead us. We need somebody with energy and enthusiasm who is committed to the fun and work of building an out and celebratory choir. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Karey 380-7562 or Rowena 384-2833.

LESBIAN WRITERS RETREAT

For beginning to advanced writers of all genres, led by author and editor Betsy Warland, Sept. 25-27, Saltspring Island, \$150 (includes lunch), lodging additional, camping free. Information and registration (by Sept. 18) 537-9917.

WOMEN POETS WORKSHOP

For beginning to advanced writers, led by author and editor Betsy Warland, Sept. 15-Oct. 20. Fernwood Comm. Centre, \$125. Information and registration (by Sept. 8) - 537-9917.



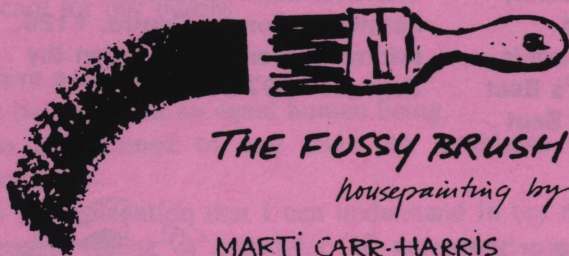
WOMEN, LOOK!

On the calendar -- just after the turn of the year -- it's **MIDWINTER MOON MADNESS!** That time when cooped-up, no-vacation-or-major-holiday and major-stress-at-work-school-home-whatever women get so crazy they just want to...Sing? Dance? Put on a show? Come to the organisational meeting for **MIDWINTER MOON MADNESS**, a festival of creativity on September 10, 7 p.m. at #8-2009 Oak Bay Avenue. Call 598-8346 for further details.

ADS & NOTICES



DOVETAIL ent.
Home Improvements
727-0968
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THE FUSSY BRUSH
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MARTI CARR-HARRIS
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The BODYMIND WORKSHOP

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FULFORD 653-2046

THE BODYMIND WORKSHOP PRESENTS: CONSCIOUS LIVING AN AIDS WORKSHOP and BENEFIT...

Saturday, October 24

on Salt Spring Island at the Activities Center

FREE EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP 2-5 pm

- * Medical and Educational Speakers panel
- * Question and Answer Period
- * Video Presentation
- * Audio Tapes
- * Printed Information Available

CONTINUING at 8:30 pm with an evening of

ENTERTAINMENT + REFRESHMENT.

Featuring: **BARB and KEVIN WILKIE**
KATE BRAGG and IAN VAN WYCK
THEY SAID DANCE \$14.00
~ 2nd special guest ~
FERRON

Ticket outlets to be announced.
Door opens 8:00 pm

All proceeds going to AIDS Organizations ~ CALL 604/653-2046 for more info.

EARTH FRIENDLY GARDENING

Lawn & Property Maintenance
Lawn-mowing, edging, dethatching,
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Autumn &/or Spring clean-ups.
Karen Partridge 592-1029.

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