



VICTORIA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION GROUP

Office: 320-620 View St., Victoria, V8W 1J6, (604) 381-1012

NEWS

AUG. 1988 Vol. 15, No. 2

THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

With a new board in place, and a new membership year starting in September, its time to reconsider our priorities, develop new plans and find out what our membership wants us to focus on.

This is especially important in the newsletter. We want the newsletter to reflect the interests of our membership.

There is a new newsletter committee, but we are always looking for volunteers who would like to help. If you are interested in working on the newsletter we would really appreciate the help. We now have a computer in the office so we should be able to make use of it to make our work easier.

Anyone interested in submitting articles or material for the newsletter? This could be articles on issues, book reviews, poetry, artwork or upcoming events. Please type columns over 200 words in a 4 1/2" column, single spaced. Under 200 words in a 2 3/4" column, single spaced. Deadline for the next newsletter is September 15th.

We would like feedback from our members on what they would like to see in the newsletters. Send us your comments on your concerns, criticisms, and appreciations. This issue was coordinated by Debbie Burgess with help from Debby Gregory.



REUNION AT THE FEMINIST BOOK FAIR

by Brigitte Sutherland

Books and the company of women from around the world are all that could have persuaded me to head east. After two years of making my home in Victoria, thoroughly enjoying the gardening lust this climate has aroused in me, I do miss the community of women that I had been part of over many years in Winnipeg. As the plane banks sharply, leaving behind the Gulf Islands, I head for the Third International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal with anticipation.

At Montreal's Dorval airport, four Winnipeg friends gleefully jump out from behind a pillar to embrace me. Jahnet and Margot have just arrived in their bookmobile after many publicity stops to promote the Fair. The Book Womb is a travelling women's bookstore that services rural Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Beth and Justine are now firmly ensconced in Montreal's feminist culture.

Early next morning, after a great breakfast at Dusty's Restaurant, we head to the sports centre of the University of Montreal. All the doors are locked up tight. When finally a side door gives way, I walk slowly down the three long aisles between booths holding thousands of books. Books by women, Feminist books. The sight of them makes my heart swell and my eyes teary. They come to focus on Virago Press from England, publishers of 83 titles over the past 12 years. There I find Lantana Lane, a novel by Eleanor Dark about life in Queensland. This will make a fine gift for my Vancouver friend, Marlyn, who is heading for Australia in a month's time. Over here is Kali for Women where I stop to buy Women in Moslem Paradise and learn they are the only feminist press on the whole subcontinent of India. After days of determined browsing, I have a 15 page wishlist.

On the list is Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women 1910-1940 which details the literary deeds of these women-including H.D., Dorothy Richardson, Amy Lowell, Djuna Barnes-who discussed, wrote, read, published. Above all, they supported each others creative lifeforce. Here we are again, doing the same; now numbering in the thousands.

It wasn't long before I spotted more faces in the crowd from my Winnipeg community of women, Heidi and Pat, with whom I worked publishing Horizons, show their excitement at being here. Heidi takes us to see the visual art she has contributed to the mail-in art display lining the hall of the sports centre. We encounter Anne, manager of Bold Print bookstore in Winnipeg. She is happily weighed down with pounds of distributor's catalogues just gathered up from the booths. We are all clutching our thick registration kits.

Authors from over 50 countries are listed in the kit. Workshops are scheduled three to a time slot for six hectic days. On day one and two we concentrate on how better to facilitate the publication and distribution of our printed words. Heated discussion is generated by the topic of bookstore ethics. Among the intent faces I pick out the familiar ones of Debby and Donna, members of Everywomans Books in Victoria where I've just been accepted into the collective and where likely this debate will continue upon our return. The next four days of dialogue centre on Memory, Power, and Strategies of Feminist Thought simultaneously available in English and French and at times, Spanish. If they bestowed the name of Modernists on those early 20th century writers, maybe they'll have to call us, Globalists.

Global is the outrage encompassed in the fierce, unending scream generated by Cathie Dunsford, a Maori from Aetearoa, after a Mohawk woman describes the recent invasion of her reserve by 200 heavily armed RCMP: Cathie's tribal yell rouses us out of our helplessness and leads all of us at the Fair into action against this violence. In a workshop that I seek out the next day, this Maori is joined by Jeannette Armstrong, a Native author. These two indigenous women strongly remind us that their tradition is oral and that many more women need to be a part of these gatherings. Facing up to our differences becomes as important as what we have to share. Audre Lorde replies to one participant who wants to know what she can do about racism: "Read my book, Sister Outsider, and then meet us face to face without objectification and without guilt."

This international meeting extends to Montreal's women's bookstores, l'Essentielle on rue Rachel and l'Androgyne on rue St. Laurent, where women gather whenever they can find time. At l'Androgyne, I select the book Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action 1968-1996. Luckily its author, Charlotte Buchn, just happens to walk in and dedicates my copy. When I eventually read this activist's recollections, I will recall my participation in this movement and will add her insights to mine.

Before leaving the store, who should happen in? Regina, one of my partners in struggle. Now living in Ottawa, she is working on a genetic plant engineering degree with a view to undermining those multinational seed patenters. This woman and friend has always remembered "bread and roses" in her drive for justice.

As the Fair progresses we listen, we debate, we learn, we teach and all the while, we also EAT, Montreal, wilting in a heatwave, fortunately offers cassis



(blackcurrant) sorbet, my grandmother's favourite. Around the corner from my billet on Duluth, is Schwartz' where I find the fixin's for "Winnipeg-style" corned beef sandwiches. Besides the vegie paté I plan to bring home, I stuff Turning the Tables: Recipes and Reflections From Women into my bag. This cookbook mixes food and politics with the personal ruminations of over 50 women as they recall childhood, migration, guilt, and sensuality. Passion is the main ingredient of the day-by-day events of the Book Fair.

As the Fair comes to a close, this wonderful tribe of women will disperse into many different directions clutching newly acquired memories to be shared and savoured later. Some of us will safely return into the feminist fold of our home. For others, going home can mean heading into hostility and persecution. We will have to be vigilant for these women who, like Miriam Tlali of South Africa, have left us inspired by their brave words.

Brigitte Sutherland is a past editor of Horizons and now a collective member of Everwomans Books. The books mentioned in the article are, or soon will be, in stock at the store.

WOMEN AND DRUGS

Women and Drugs is a new newsletter published in Vancouver by the Health Promotion Directorate, Health Services and Promotion Branch, Health and Welfare Canada.

It is published in English and French and contains articles, reviews of articles, books, thesis, journals, videos and film.

There is a copy in SWAG's office or you can order it free from:

Western Regional Office
Health Promotion Directorate
#425-750 Cambie Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4V5



**HOW WILL THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD
AFFECT WOMEN?**

By Elizabeth Loughran

Canadian women are on the verge of losing full and complete protection of our constitutional Charter Rights. Since 1982, thanks to a small group of hard working women across the country, we have had our rights and freedoms fully entrenched and affirmative action programs safeguarded from reverse discrimination by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which became part of our Constitution at that time.

Currently, however, with the looming ratification of the government's Meech Lake accord, such rights representing fifty-one percent of Canada's population are being placed in a precarious position. If this accord passes through Parliament as it is, women's rights may very well become subject to a position of lower priority in the courts, while the rights of other groups could be interpreted as more important. In effect, many legal experts are saying, a hierarchy of rights is being established with Meech Lake and no group, least of all women, should stand for it.

The crux lies with Meech Lake's main purpose - to bring Quebec into the Constitution once and for all, and in so doing, providing a distinct society clause that will protect Quebec's culture and the linguistic rights of Canadian Francophones. In the somewhat complicated legal jargon of the accord (though never too complicated for concerned laypeople), organizations such as the Women's Legal Education Action Fund (LEAF), are pointing to a hand-full of clauses which could easily be doctored to protect women without endangering any distinct society. Currently, these clauses acknowledge aboriginal and linguist rights of the 1982 Charter, yet do not also reinforce the rights of women written in the Charter. This could lead to courts interpreting women's rights as being secondary to the rights of groups which are mentioned both in the Charter and in the new accord.

It's hard to say exactly what could happen. Generally speaking, it is possible that a legal environment could be established where discrimination against women could be justified in situations where an ethnic, aboriginal or linguistic group can prove such treatment to be in line with their cultural status quo.

There is also another danger with this constitutional amendment pertaining to the

granting of additional powers to each province. This greater decentralization of power will leave Ottawa with less influence. Universal protection for women concerning sexual harassment, discrimination, maternity leave, pension plans, child care, family law and other issues, could well become inconsistent throughout the country as each province gains more jurisdiction over social services. (Considering the political climate, think of where that could leave us in B.C.!)

These arguments have put into question whether or not the Charter Rights are protecting women as a group from structural discrimination of large political, economic or social systems - as it does with the other groups mentioned - or if court interpretation will reduce the power of these rights, negate women as a group and implement sexual equality rights only in reference to the individual.

Many legal experts believe all that is necessary to correct these problems are a few insertions within the accord that will echo women's rights as it does so already with the aboriginal and linguistic rights. Yet the government has maintained its position of non-cooperation, for fear, they say, of opening the whole accord up for debate and losing the distinct society clause all together. This is not an acceptable reason for the government to so steadfastly refuse to consider such minor alterations which would secure Charter Rights for so many Canadians in the future.

Why, indeed, should we trust key spokespersons for the accord, such a Senator Lowell Murray, who, after hearing women legal experts address this issue at the Special Joint Committee on the 1987 Constitutional accord, was recorded as saying, "Now we've heard from the women, let's hear from the experts." It is clear that a grass-roots movement of concerned humanists are needed to insist that the government cooperates, as it obviously has no intentions of doing so on its own steam.

What Victoria needs is education on this topic, and as all the necessary documents are available, small, informal meetings could be established for this purpose. For those with the extra time and energy, the option of lobbying our local officials through visits, phone calls and petitions is always available. If anyone is interested in either of these suggestions, please call Elizabeth at 598-8034.



From Vicki Simmons
Campbell River Women's Centre

Vancouver Women's Health Collective is doing a 2½-hour workshop in Port Hardy on Tuesday, November 15. More information available in the Fall.

The Vancouver Women's Health Collective is also doing a 2-day workshop to train women as facilitators for women's health workshops. This is for women all over Vancouver Island and will take place in Campbell River November 16-17.

On November 18, they will do a 2½-hour workshop on miscarriage. Again, all women are invited.

The 2½-hour workshops are to impart information on health issues. In the 2-day facilitator training workshops, the collective wants to teach women to lead future workshops. They especially want to train women who work with women on low income; from a variety of community organizations; and who are committed to continuing health care work among women. They suggest attending the workshop in pairs, and working together in your own community.

Vicki will have all the details in the Fall. There will be only a tiny amount of money available for travel and child care subsidies, and women will have to be billeted in homes rather than motels.

All women interested in women's health issues will find these workshops of great value.



WHAT PEOPLE ARE CALLING PMS

A FILM ABOUT PREMENSTRUAL CHANGES

What People Are Calling PMS is a timely documentary that helps to counter the misinformation and confusion about premenstrual difficulties experienced by many women. Featured in the film are several women who describe with honesty and humour the spectrum of emotional and physical changes they undergo during the premenstrual phase.

They discuss the largely negative images that society presents of premenstrual women and explore the possible benefits of the phase between ovulation and menstruation. Some women in the film say that for them the increased emotional sensitivity forces them to confront issues and feelings they would otherwise ignore. Others report increased creativity and a heightened sense of their own needs.

The film also examines how women have been discouraged from expressing these needs and feelings. **What People Are Calling PMS** looks at historical attitudes underlying our society's definition of appropriate female behaviour and its apprehensions about the female reproductive cycle. A series of archival drawings and advertisements depicting premenstrual women as out of control and disturbingly emotional reflect prevailing attitudes: angry and assertive behaviour is unfeminine; a woman should be happy and acquiescent at all times.

Straightforward and practical information about the menstrual cycle is provided through interviews with doctors. These health professionals question the use of potentially harmful prescription drugs to reduce premenstrual symptoms. They stress that women can exert some measure of control and be in charge of their bodies.



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of Canada

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- \$6.00 Low Income • \$25.00 Sustaining

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NEW MEMBER RENEWAL FOR A FRIEND



**VICTORIA STATUS OF WOMEN
ACTION GROUP**

Box 6296, Station C, Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5
Office: 320-620 View St., Victoria, V8W 1J6, (604) 381-1012

Donation \$ _____

SWAGgerins' . .

DEBBY GREGORY

It's good to be back at my desk. Summer seems to be the only time I can keep control of the paperwork. I hope you are all able to spend some time just relaxing during these lovely long days.

SWAG member Carol King came in with some good news last week. It seems she was wiping dry the rain-soaked chairs at Folkfest. A pair of tourists, noticing how hard she was working, asked Carol who she was working for. "The Status of Women Action Group" was her reply, and the people gave her a \$2 donation for SWAG.

Many thanks to Doris Bergbusch, Connie Carter, Alex Zacharias, Eileen Henry, and Georgia Welles for keeping the office open in June while I was away. Joan Pennie has had to give up her Thursday morning, as she now has a full-time job. Mavis Petch has been coming in and going through the filing cabinet, culling outdated material. Jodi Lundgren spent a morning updating our referral files. This office depends on the volunteer efforts of an enormous number of women, and it is quite inspirational to see how well such a diverse group work together.

Speaking of diverse... I had a marvelous time at the 3rd International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal (see Brigitte's article) and also at the Vancouver Folk Festival; where a number of outstanding women performed. Some of the cultural contributions initiated by the feminist movement and now taken for granted by the mainstream community were strikingly apparent in both the literary and musical environments. 'Women's writing' and 'Women's music' are both at the forefront of exciting, groundbreaking work all over the world.



We are planning a number of educational, social, and political programmes for the Fall. If you would like to be part of the planning and organizing of any of these programmes, please let us know: by post, by phone, or in person. I can't be too specific at this point, because I'm frankly not quite sure what the Coordinating Committee have up their collective sleeve, but I'm sure it will include something for every feminist's diary, so keep in touch.

One event I do know about for sure is GALS Night Out. GALS stands for Gala Appreciation for Lesbians Supper. This will be a dinner and dance, Saturday, October 15th, at the Crystal Gardens. All women are invited to attend, as we publicly acknowledge the contributions of lesbians to the community. Just as women have been the mainstay of organizations working for social justice, most often with no credit or recognition, so have lesbians been the mainstay of many women's organizations. We hope many women will attend and celebrate this GALS Night Out.

Have a delightful Summer and come back from your holidays refreshed and rarin' to go.



All Women are invited to:
GALS* NIGHT OUT: The Lesbian Social Event
Of The Year

*Gala Appreciation for Lesbians Supper

A dinner-dance extravaganza, this is your opportunity to "Put on the Ritz" as we celebrate the achievements of lesbians throughout the ages, across the country and in our community.

Saturday night, October 15th
Crystal Garden Ballroom, 713 Douglas St.

Doors Open 6pm. No Host Bar
Elegant Buffet Dinner 7pm.
Entertainment by Victoria Women's
Historical Society 8pm.

Dance 9:30 pm. - 1:00 am. \$25
Dance only - \$8, \$10door

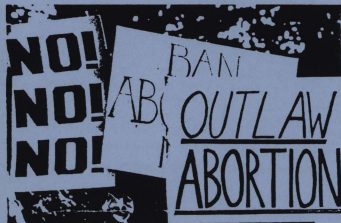
WHAT YOU CAN DO

Legislation on abortion is now being formulated. A series of motions will be introduced into the House of Commons that will fill the void left by the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down the abortion legislation.

Both the Honourable Ray Hnatyshyn, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Honourable Jake Epp, Minister of National Health and Welfare, are responsible for drafting these motions that will be tabled in the House of Commons this year. It is speculated that legislation may take the form of a free vote before the next federal election. In such a case an MP can vote according to his/her conscience, regardless of official party policy.

Consultations with provincial health ministers and attorney generals have been held to solicit opinions from each province. However, there has not, as of yet, been a formal process set up by the federal government to solicit response from non-governmental agencies and the general public.

ONE WAY THAT WON'T WORK



Public opinion polls have recently shown that a majority of Canadians favour preserving safe, legal abortions, but there is still a vocal minority which does not. They want to make abortion a crime, robbing women of the right to decide for themselves when or whether to have children. Lately, some of these people have been accusing those who enter abortion clinics. This will not succeed in preventing abortions. If they were really concerned about preventing abortion, they would be out there putting their money, their time and energy into prevention so that unintended pregnancies do not occur in the first place. Whenever women feel abortion is absolutely necessary, for whatever personal reasons, they have them, even if they are illegal, even in circumstances that are dangerous, expensive and humiliating. Our society will never return to those dark days when government could force women to choose between compulsory pregnancy or dangerous, back-alley abortions. But there is something we can do about reducing the need for abortion. Planned Parenthood has always worked toward that goal. You can too.

Groups, organizations and individuals who believe in choice have not been heard. It is imperative that Members of Parliament be contacted so that any decisions made are based on the opinions of all Canadians.

The following are summary points of principles adopted by the CACSW and presented to the federal government:

- * The Canada Health Act which forms the basis of our health care policies, includes two key directives:
 - to protect, promote and restore physical and mental well-being of Canadians;
 - to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial barriers.

The CACSW, therefore, believes that these directives clearly address guidelines for access to abortion and, therefore, no new legislation is needed.

- * The CACSW concurs with the position taken by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba and the British Columbia Medical Association that abortion is a surgical procedure that need not be performed in a hospital.

- * The decision to have an abortion should be made between the woman and her physician without the threat of intervention or obstruction by a third party.

- * Clinics should be set up throughout Canada that include all forms of reproductive health care including information, resources, and services to support family planning and birth control; sex education; and access to abortion. Such clinics should be easily accessible, and be completely funded by provincial health care insurance plans.

Please encourage your group's membership and other concerned individuals to write **IMMEDIATELY** to the Attorney General and Health Minister in your province as well as to your Member of Parliament, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0A6, as well as:

- * The Honourable Ramon Hnatyshyn
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0A6
- * The Honourable Jake Epp
Minister of National Health & Welfare
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0A6
(No postage necessary when mailed to The House of Commons)

Canadian
Advisory Council
on the Status of Women



220 4th Avenue S.E. Suite 270
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Calgary, Alberta T2P 2G1 (403) 292 6008



Coming soon to a bedroom near you...
G.A.L.S. night out!!
 a Gala Appreciation of Lorin Ann Sipple
 October 15, 1988
 more information available at SW16.

GREATER VICTORIA WOMEN'S SHELTER SOCIETY

The Greater Victoria Women's Shelter Society today announced plans to open a new women's shelter in Victoria. The shelter, Margaret Laurence House, will provide transitional housing for women leaving psychiatric facilities. These women may have been victims of abuse, family breakdown or other crises, and need supportive housing for 3 months to a year to stabilize their lives..

Housing for women leaving psychiatric facilities is in acute demand. The women served by Margaret Laurence House will be those who are learning to live independently and whose major need is for housing and counselling services. They are not women who need long term psychiatric care.

The Society's goal for their fundraising campaign this summer is \$75,000 for a down payment on a 7 - 10 unit building or building site in Greater Victoria.

For more information, please call Carmela Vezza at 385-6611 (work) or 382-5208 (home).

SHOCKING PINK PAPER RELEASED

IN ANTICIPATION OF A FEDERAL ELECTION

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has recently published its 1988 version of the Shocking Pink Paper.

For the fourth election in a row, the C.A.C.S.W. is distributing this pocket-sized guide to women across Canada. The pamphlet provides a succinct overview of issues and specific questions to ask political candidates. The 13 issues contained in the Shocking Pink Paper range from family violence, child care, pornography, reproductive health, to tax reform and pensions. Each of those concerns has been addressed by the Council in the past year through its research and recommendations.

A wide distribution of this guide will help to ensure that issues of concern to women are a priority for this election. Enclosed please find a copy of the pamphlet.

Free copies of the Shocking Pink Paper are available from:

C.A.C.S.W.
 600-269 Main Street
 Winnipeg, MB
 R3C 1B2

**POLITICAL ACTION
 YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

**SHOCKING
 PINK
 PAPER**

1988

Women want more than promises

More than 50% of one-parent families headed by women in Canada are poor, compared to 9% of one-parent families headed by men. One million children under age 16 and 50% of elderly women live in poverty.

The facts speak for themselves. Get commitments from candidates before you elect them... Here are some questions to ask.



D A T E L I N E S

BOOK SIGNING AND SALE

Everywomans Books at
641 Johnston, Victoria

Come meet the authors on
Saturday, August 20
1 PM - 3 PM

Their new book Alive and Well: A Lesbian Health Guide by Cuca Hepburn and Bonnie Gutierrez has just been released.

There will also be a 10% off on all the books in Lesbian category on that day only.

MONTHLY

SWAG MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Drop in, have some coffee/tea, and chat, read, browse. Invite new friends you've made. INFORMAL*SOCIAL*DISCUSSION every LAST Saturday morning!

G.A.L.S. NIGHT OUT

Gala Appreciation for
Lesbians Supper

A dinner-dance extravaganza

October 15, 1988
Crystal Garden Ballroom
713 Douglas Street

Doors Open 6pm. No Host Bar
Elegant Buffet Dinner 7pm.
Entertainment 8pm.
Dance 9:30

Wheelchair Accessible
Display & Sale of Lesbian
books by Everywomans Books
Portrait Photography

All women welcome

Advance Tickets only for
Dinner-Dance \$25
Dance only \$8 advance
\$10 door

Tickets available:
SWAG-#320-620 View St.
Everywomans Books -
641 Johnson Street
Hot Flashes Coffee House -
106 Superior, Aug.26&Sept.30
Make cheques payable to SWAG

Co-sponsored by Victoria
Status of Women Action Group
and Hot Flashes Coffee House

Spectrum Community School

WOMEN'S FORUM

A weekly series devoted to discussion of important issues facing women in our community. Fees \$1 per session or \$5 for all 6 sessions.

September 28 - November 2nd
Wed. 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

Series includes:

Introduction to Feminism
(Debby Gregory)

Younger Women in Politics
(Debbie Burgess)

Feminist Science-Fiction
(Catherine Joyce)

Language and Power
(Monika Smith)

Reproductive Technology
(Debby Gregory)

Older Women and Feminism
(Joan McHardy)

For more information contact SWAG.

REMINDER: Memberships are due in September. Membership renewal form on page 4.



FRIDAY - AUGUST 26th

8 - 11 pm. 106 Superior
Street

Tantalizing Desserts

Fresh Coffee

\$2.00

GIANT GARAGE SALE

Coming up in September

Donations of household items needed. Clothes, Books, Toys, Small Furniture items, etc.

If you have donations call SWAG 381-101?

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LOUISE ESCALLIER & JANE STARK
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Experience

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Entertainment, Coffee & Goodies

All
Women
Welcome

Advance tickets at SWAG
or at the door

\$6