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Lesbiannews

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CONSENSUS:

Myths, Monsters and Motherhood

By Zorya Alexandra Plaskin

Sometimes an idea is so powerful — or so badly needed because of the evils it appears to vanquish — that we embrace it wholeheartedly, and blindly. We refuse to see that, despite its merits, it is not a universal panacea. And in that denial we risk creating a new monster, all the more powerful because of our inability to recognize that, like all things in the universe, it blends both good and bad, exists on a Cosmic spectrum where there cannot be Light without the Dark.

History is replete with examples: miracle drugs, scientific inventions, philosophical theories. While it may be anathema to most feminists, the concept of consensus also belongs on this list. For in spite of its merits, in spite of its black-and-white political correctness, consensus is not the mythical cure-all we think we need and which we fool ourselves into believing is unconditionally and universally appropriate.

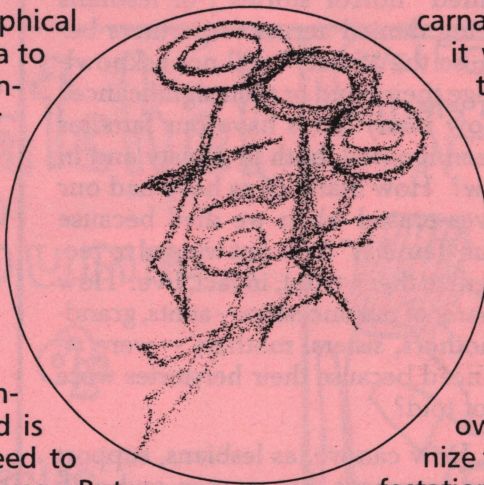
Consensus is most definitely a concept whose time has come, indeed is over-due. And there is a real need to promote consensus, to expand its use. But there is, too a need to recognize its inherent limitations. And our own limitations which, initially, hinder our effort to utilize the positive aspects of consensus.

In some respects, it is our own limitations which most restrict our ability to understand the process of consensus and apply it effectively in appropriate scenarios. For one thing, too few of us understand the process sufficiently or have yet acquired the experience required to use it creatively. This limitation is waning, but gradually. It will likely take at least another generation or two before this hurdle is completely dismantled by women who have matured in

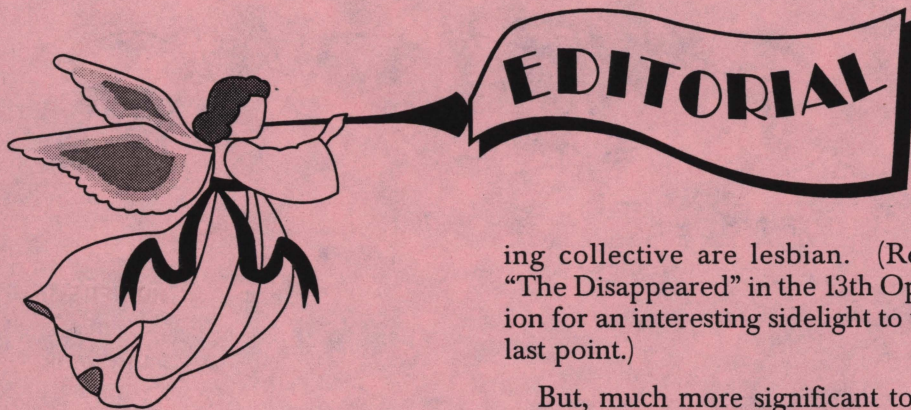
a socio-political environment in which they have not only studied feminist theory, but also seen its principles — like consensus — at work in their world.

Another challenge is that too many of us are still, and may always be, dysfunctional to some degree. Because we were, most of us, raised in dysfunctional patriarchal family networks, and because, no matter how much we might think we have raised consciousness or expanded awareness, our initial social conditioning has damaged our spirit to an extent where we will live the rest of our current incarnation in a process of recovery. Again, it will take generations to overcome the damage of patriarchy. As we heal, we provide our children with a healthier environment. And having lived their lives in an increasingly healthier environment, they will be able to help their own children distance themselves yet further from their families' dysfunctional roots.

Some of us are also limited by our own spiritual denial. We fail to recognize that the nature of the human manifestation of life is a blend of conscious, sub-conscious and Cosmic energies; that the best of us can make some progress in plumbing our subconscious depths, but are still — even with the best of conscious intentions, or the most experienced and most expensive therapists in all the land — still subject to subconscious motivations and unconscious compulsions; that awareness of the totality of our psyche, the full scope of the subconscious aspects of our spirit, is available to us only in insanity or in death. It is perhaps this segment of our community which is most prone to blindly supporting consensus as a motherhood-and-apple pie sanctity, and the most



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This issue of *LesbiaNews* covers a wide range of issues and subjects. We have everything from an essay on the concept of consensus to erotic poetry as well as the usual columnists – SportsDyke and Brainfever. Some of the most interesting copy appears in the 13th Opinion column.

Much of what appears in this issue relates either directly or indirectly to controversy and dissent within the feminist and lesbian community around the last December 6th vigil. A lot of *LesbiaNews* readers may wonder what the fuss was about and what it had or has to do with them as lesbians.

As a lesbian and as one who was directly involved, I feel the controversy, some of the issues raised and the outcome of the SWAG/Purple Moon Sisters vigil fiasco has a great deal to do with lesbians.

For a brief run-down of what exactly happened read the essay "Old Wounds, New Wounds" on page three. The main point of contention was the decision to read aloud the names of women and children murdered in B.C. over the past five years.

What has this got to do with lesbians? Well, to begin with, the main characters in the drama were lesbian. All three members of the SWAG violence committee who resigned and then went on to organize the vigil are lesbian. The SWAG staff coordinator who resigned, in part, over how SWAG handled the issue is lesbian. The SWAG member who objected most strenuously to the idea of reading names is lesbian. And, the majority of the current SWAG coordinat-

ing collective are lesbian. (Read "The Disappeared" in the 13th Opinion for an interesting sidelight to this last point.)

But, much more significant to all lesbian readers are some of the arguments raised in opposition to the speaking of names. In particular – and one which this lesbian found profoundly disturbing as it came from the mouths of other lesbians – was the argument that no names should be read without having acquired prior consent from the families of the victims.

How long and how hard have we struggled to break down the barriers between "private" and "public?" And how many of us have heard stories (so common they can hardly be called "horror stories") of lesbians being denied access to partners because the "family" will not acknowledge their bond or their significance? How many times have our families been ignored, both in society and in law? How many of us have had our lives erased when we died because our "families" have not wanted to recognize that we did, in fact, live. How many of our ancestors – aunts, grandmothers, sisters, mothers – were silenced because their herstories were not told?

How can we, as lesbians, support the argument that women and children who have been murdered should not have their names spoken unless the family gives consent? Wouldn't a lot of us wind up forgotten if that was how we made our decisions?

This is definitely an issue of concern to lesbians. It is definitely something which should be discussed, argued about and debated in a much wider forum than this issue of this magazine can provide.

LesbiaNews was founded September 1988. It is staffed entirely by volunteers as follows:

Editors: Shelagh Plunkett, Karey Perks

Artists: Shannon Olliffe, Barb Csinos

Production Co-ordinators: Barb Csinos, Marti Carr-Harris

Desktop Publishers: Susan, Bee and Toni

Advertising Sales and Subscriptions: B. McLaughlin

Treasurer: Sally Hamill

LesbiaNews is published 10 times per year and serves lesbians, bisexuals and allies primarily on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Its goal is to celebrate all aspects of lesbian life. We encourage all lesbian writers, artists, designers to contribute. Copy deadline is the 13th of the month prior to publication. Copy on floppy disk or typed double-spaced preferred. **Let us know of your interest in covering local events.** We reserve the right to edit for space and readability.

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Classified Ads and Notices are \$5/month for up to 25 words and .50 for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward personal ad replies, add \$2. We run non-commercial notices, free of charge. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities. We reserve advertising space for lesbians and allies only.

Gift Certificates: Available for those wanting to present *LNews* as a gift to discerning friends. Call Barbara for ads or certificates at 479-2445 up to 7 p.m. Messages will be returned.

SP

December 6th Vigil

Old Wounds, New Wounds

The scope and quality of December 6th vigils in Victoria was irrevocably altered this winter with the ritualized memorial performance, at the Metropolitan United Church, organized by Purple Moon Sisters. The women-and-children only vigil also set off an emotional and political controversy which promises, as well, to have an unavoidable impact on Victoria's women's community, its organizations, and the feminist principles which guide them.

Vigils have been held across Canada every year, to remember the 14 women killed in the December 6, 1989, Montreal Massacre and to denounce violence against women and children. For the first time in Victoria, last December's vigil expanded the scope of the national day of mourning by also remembering other women and children slain across British Columbia since 1989. This is a practice which had already begun in other Canadian cities. And, although the concept of remembering other victims was originally part of the plan for the ritual which eventually became a PMS production, vigils at Camosun and UVic also commemorated local victims of violence.

More than 200 women attended the Purple Moon Sisters vigil, which was one of four held in Greater

Victoria and the only one where attendance was restricted to women and children. The memorial began with a candlelight vigil in the Metropolitan Church courtyard. Members of Mosaic took part, singing a number of songs.

The women and children were then led by drummers in a candle-lit procession into the church building, and upstairs to the hall for the performance part of the memorial service. As the names of the 14 victims of the Montreal Massacre and the names of more than 50 women and children slain since then across B.C. were read aloud, 12 women and two children emerged, one by one, from behind Paula Hill's Mask Flag. Each of the women and children represented the spirit of one of the victims

of the Montreal Massacre and a number of the local victims.

After the reading of the names, and a moment of silence, 14 positive actions to stop the violence were read out, each dedicated to the memory of the slain women and children. The vigil then concluded with a coffee house.

Nearly all the women who attended this vigil were emotionally moved by the powerful energy it generated. Many commented, too, on how impressed they were by the respectful nature of the ritual performance. The comments were pertinent, given the controversy behind the ceremony, a controversy which very nearly prevented the vigil from hap-

Continued on page 13



The

The Disappeared

Dear Editor:

The Victoria Status of Women Action Group (SWAG) is beginning to seem like the Bermuda Triangle these days. Within the past six months, two coordinators have gone missing under suspicious circumstances. Ask SWAG for the story and you'll get some pretty vague answers. (Gee, I think I'll apply for that job!)

SWAG has also moved into a posh new space at 506 Fort St. Check it out! Did they just win the lottery or get a funding increase? Well, no. They're hoping to raise substantial sums of money from the membership over the next three years to cover the rent. And if they can't pull that off? Seems they're locked into a lease without a lot of escape clauses.

I hate to ask, but is this a sinking ship? I think that lesbian/feminists in Victoria need to give some serious and immediate thought to SWAG's future. Do we want to get involved in rescue efforts or let it go and build an alternative?

Here are my suggestions:

1. Take out a SWAG membership or renew yours if it has lapsed. Do this NOW. There are rumors in the wind of a Special General Meeting to be called shortly. Get out to the meeting and ask questions. Vote.

2. If you have more time and energy, consider volunteering for the SWAG Steering Committee. A number of the elected members may be on their way out. We need to set a new direction for SWAG, but it could also be important to maintain a strong lesbian

presence. When others run for office, don't forget to ask them where they stand on men's involvement in SWAG and the issue of whether SWAG is "too lesbian." Also check out their politics around racism, access for women with disabilities, collective structure, the role of staff and so on.

3. Isn't it time we started a Lesbian Centre in Victoria? Vancouver's Lesbian Centre now has funding from the Ministry of Women's Equality. As lesbians, our perspectives and priorities are sometimes so different from those of heterosexual feminists that there's no real basis of unity. Time to put energy into our own com-

munity. But let's not be naive about how difficult it can be to work with each other. Let's learn from SWAG's mistakes by creating solid processes for dealing with abusive behaviour, partners on Collective and personal power trips.

And let's be honest and open about everything that goes on, shall we? No closed door meetings or behind the scenes negotiations. If we lose volunteers or staff, let's question ourselves, not them. Let's worry about our political integrity and our credibility among our membership rather than public image or what our funders think.

A Fly on the Wall

Apology Demanded

I would sincerely like to thank the women who organized the December 6 Vigil at the Metropolitan United Church. It was the most moving remembrance ceremony I've attended since the vigils were started several years ago.

The naming of women and children killed throughout BC in recent years was a powerful reminder that the war against us is everywhere. I recognized many of the names from reading the accounts of their murders in the news. I always felt horrified and isolated as I read those reports. My closest friend was

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YEARS

Thirteenth Opinion

murdered many years ago and each new death I read about opens old wounds. It was good to know on December 6 that other feminists shared my grief. I strongly believe those of us who are alive owe it to victims to remember their names and publicly honour them.

Unfortunately, my experience of the vigil was marred by subsequent discoveries. The Victoria Status of Women

Action Group (SWAG) decided at the last minute not to sponsor the event. However, following the vigil, I learned that a member of the Coordinating Collective of SWAG, Jacque Denage, had decided to attend the vigil for the purpose of finding out was said. Apparently this decision was discussed with SWAG members Hallie Walsh, Morag Martin and Chair, Sandy McLellan. Jacque followed

the actions of individual women at the vigil without their knowledge and reported back to SWAG.

As a publicly funded "feminist" organization, what is SWAG doing spying on women at a remembrance ceremony? This was a profound violation of my privacy and that of all the other women who attended the vigil for the purpose of mourning. I have been in a rage ever since I learned about this and it has completely spoiled my memory of the event. I demand to see a formal apology from SWAG to all of us in the next issue of *LesbiaNews*.

Name Withheld

Stalking

Dear Editor:

"Criminal harassment," popularly known as "stalking," is a indictable offense and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years. Perhaps some of us see this as only a heterosexual issue but, unfortunately, this kind of behaviour goes on in Lesbian and Gay communities. Some examples of stalking include: repeated phone calls and messages left on answering machines, often late at night;

drive by sightings to determine if the other (ex-partner) is at home, questioning known acquaintances and friends, frequenting local establishments (hardly avoidable in this case), notes left on windshields of cars and the list goes on.


After discussing this issue with some of my friends, I was disturbed to learn that this kind of harassment is more common than I anticipated.

I began to question the motivation behind this type of behavior and searched into the archives of my own past relationships. What I found was I as well have been guilty of the same. My reluctance to let go of a failing relationship, believing that I alone was some how at fault, believing that only this person could meet my needs, that I would never find love or good sex again, and my own desperation to prove that I was loveable, drove me to act in ways I could only now realize were intimidating, disruptive, painful and, not to forget, against the law.

I am now in the process of learning my own self worth and have since been on both sides of the fence and can appreciate the effects of this kind of behaviour. As I have asked myself to take responsibility for my feelings and actions, I am asking you as a community to do the same and, remember, if you don't get the results you as a person are entitled to, the law is on your side.

Connie Hunt

*more
on page 13*



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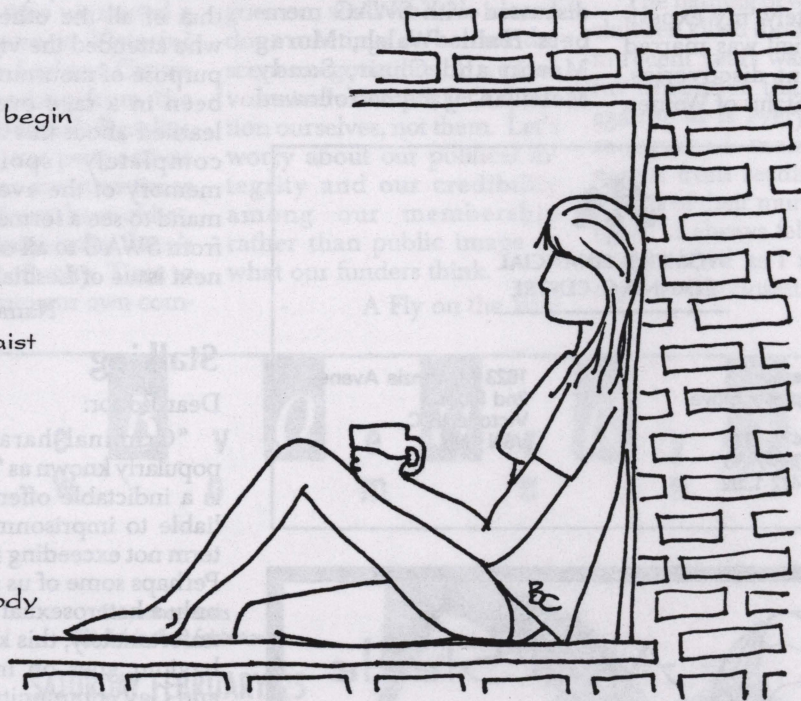
By G. Powell

I move to her — an invitation to come in
we stand
thighs touching eyes speaking
my hand rests on her arm
then both arms are around her
stroking
gently
our breath begins to match
my exhale becomes audible
with one hand on her upper back
the other — lower
I pull her sharply to me
and she comes
without resistance
her lips...
her lips find my neck
I look up close my eyes and our bodies begin
to dance hips to hips
belly to belly lips to lips
leaning on each other pushing pulling
my hands slide down to clutch
her beautiful ass
I pick her up
she — wrapping her legs around my waist
kissing hard now — moving up
moving down
I carry her to bed
lay her down beside me
pulling clothes away from skin
they fall to the floor
and in ceremonial acceptance
fingers trace symbols on each other's body
I move
to be on top breast to breast
and onto
her back to my breast
she loves when I fuck her
in this position
and so
do I
we roll over and under
in and around
under and in
sitting between her legs
she on her back
I put her legs over my
shoulders
and raise her belly
up to meet my mouth
eye to eye not blinking
night slips into early morning
we are still loving
and
on and on.

Building Society Update

The Victoria Women's Building Society and Blind Date Productions are selling raffle tickets for the "Women's Space" basket. The basket will feature merchandise and gift certificates donated by local women's businesses and entrepreneurs. If you would like to make a donation to the basket, please call Lou (Blind Date) at 589-9060 or Jodie (VWBS) at 388-7920.

The Victoria Women's Building Society will be publishing its first newsletter in March. If you are interested in receiving a copy, or in becoming a member, please contact Jodie by February 17 at 388-7920. VWBS will be having its first General Meeting on Monday, April 3, (6 to 8:00 p.m.) at W.I.N.'s Discovery House, 1119 North Park. Mark this date on your calendar and attend!



WOMEN'S NIGHT EVERY THIRD FRIDAY

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She heard the familiar buzzing in her head: Doctor Schmeleng is Packleader. He locks the door; you go into the machine. That she had changed the Order gave her a sense of vertigo. She had pushed him in instead and latched the door. All by herself, she had changed the Order.

The inside of her head buzzed like a nest of wasps hit by a tennis ball. Schmeleng called that Thinking. She could hear him banging on the door of the ride machine, shouting, "Open the door this instant!" His voice rang with the authority of Packleader. It was the voice of Order. Instinctively she spun the wheel and retracted the two interior pins that secured the heavy metal door at top and bottom.

"Good girl, Flossie," Schmeleng said. "Now you must slide back the bolt." His voice came from behind, from everywhere. Clever Schmeleng, to leave his voice in a box on the wall. Maybe she would send the box on a ride too. After she sent Schmeleng.

"Flossie, slide back the bolt." She knew better than to trust that voice he used when he wanted her to do something she didn't want to do. She spun the wheel down tight again.

"What are you doing, you stupid dog!" Schmeleng yelled. "Bad! Bad, bad dog!"

"Bad dog you," Flossie said, experimentally. She wasn't sure if she still was a dog. Maybe Schmeleng was. After the last ride in the machine, he had pronounced her no longer a dog but he continued to call her one when he was angry, like now. She was sure about angry. It meant biting if you had the chance. Flossie was angry, but she wasn't going to let Schmeleng out just so she could bite him. She wasn't stupid. Stupid was yapping your head off at somebody when you wanted them to do you a favor.

"Stupid you, Schmeleng!" She shouted at the machine and left him trapped inside it while she went to the other side of the lab, where the controls were.

"I didn't mean it! You're a good girl, Flossie. A very good girl."

Her eyebrows went up at the sharp edge of trickery hidden in his words. Didn't he know she could hear them? She heard everything he said, always, like: you're

not a dog any more so don't touch anything. Now she ran her hands along the forbidden racks of instruments, studying things which she had not been able to see from the floor from this new perspective. She bent close to sniff out the path her hands should take, filling in the gaps in her visual memory of Schmeleng's operating procedures. First this and then that. The ride machine hummed into life.

"What are you doing? Flossie, don't touch anything, please! You must open the door before I run out of air!"

Her hands followed the sequence to its end and stopped. He whined fearfully, begging her to free him. It made her uneasy, knowing that soon would come the droning that threatened to tear a body apart bone by bone and the glaring lights that burned even into eyes that were squeezed shut. But not to her. Not this time.

Schmeleng battered the door of the ride machine with a force that rocked it on its pedestal and made his voice cut in and out. Flossie felt the shock of his blows even through the thick, cold metal.

Packleader.

She had defied Schmeleng and she had defied the Order, and that terrified her, as much as the snarling violence he flung against her in his fight for survival. She knew he would destroy her if he got out. But he was Packleader. Deep currents stirred in her, made her reach for the wheel. She could still spin it open; there wasn't a cell in her strangely-altered body that didn't know exactly how much time there was left.

She let it run out with her hand resting motionless on the wheel. The last shard of Schmeleng's voice came out of the box on the wall. The pounding stopped after that. A beep sounded, regular and insistent. Flossie waited as Schmeleng would have. She looked at the places in the racks where he would have looked, flicked switches and set dials as he would have. After a time, when the racks were quiet and the ride machine had quit humming, she opened the door and saw that it was empty.

The buzzing inside her head was gone, too, or at least reduced from an angry swarm of wasps to something more like a workaday migration of honeybees. One flitted at the edge of her awareness, landed unexpectedly, and stung.

Getting an idea, Flossie called it. ♀♀

By Karey Perks



THANK THE GOVERNMENT – SEND IN EXTRA MONEY

by Tanya Anderson (*Account Representative, Women's Financial Planning Centre*)

Thousands of women love the government so much they plan to send in extra money with their 1994 tax returns. Now isn't that a bizarre scenario! But that's exactly what we do when we don't put as much as we can into our RSPs. We hand over money that should be ours to keep. If you are filing a tax return but don't have the funds to maximize your RSP contribution, consider borrowing. The reduction in taxes paid will offset the interest and help pay back the loan. If you have to forfeit this tax deferral opportunity for 1994, consider a "financial fitness" program for '95. Each month pay the most important bill first: pay yourself 10% of whatever you earned the month before. Chant your new financial mantra as you move that money out of your chequing account. "Ten per cent of all I earn is mine to keep." That 10% can go into an RSP on a monthly basis. It may be hard at first but it's an exercise that's critical for your future financial well-being. Attend free financial seminars. Get books on basic financial planning from the library. You worked for that money so start sending it ahead to yourself so it will be there when you reach retirement. Wouldn't it be great to have a pension so you could live at the Vita Sackville-West Les-

bian Residence and share cat care with your buddies? Sort of like Golden Girls but in comfortable shoes. The hair-raising prospect is that there may not be Old Age Security and Canada Pension as they exist today when we reach retirement. The major part of our income may be only what we have managed to create for ourselves. If so, will you have a plan in place? ♀♀

Same-Sex Immigration Facilitated

An important change has occurred in Canada's immigration policy with respect to same-sex couples. In June 1994 a telex was sent to Immigration Officers in all foreign posts advising them to seriously consider the existence of a same-sex relationship as humanitarian and compassionate grounds for allowing someone to immigrate. A number of gay and lesbian Canadians have since taken advantage of this provision and have successfully brought their partners to Canada.

This directive applies only to people living outside Canada who want to immigrate. For more information, contact LEGIT at PO Box 384, Vancouver, BC V6C 2N2.

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\$12 (if available) at door

(some available free for women in need - at SWAG)

A fundraiser for the Lesbian Seniors Care Society

Call Jacquie 386-8380 for information

Lesbian Outdoor Group Forming

By Simone Troutman

Are you interested in bicycling, birding, kayaking, hiking, walking, weight training, meeting women?

We hoped you'd feel that way.

We'd like to bring women together (a beautiful idea, don't you think) so we're initiating an outdoors group for women interested in getting together on this. Our idea is to develop a wide network of women who can meet on a regular basis to enjoy outdoor/indoor activities in a non-competitive atmosphere. We want to have fun, learn new skills, build confidence and keep fit.

There is a women's outdoor club in Vancouver which is well-developed, and we'd like to start something similar here in Victoria. We suggest our group meet on the first Wednesday of every month (this can be changed if it doesn't suit most people). At meetings, women who have a particular interest in an activity can offer to organize and lead something that

they'd like to see happen. Once the group gets happening, activities can be planned a few months in advance. The more people, the better.

It will take some time to formally set up a club (to get insurance and other legal details in place) so we'd like the organization to be informal to start. We say this so that no one person or group is liable for anything during outings. If we can stir enough interest, keep up and, in general, have a good time, we could then set up committees, finances, equipment, newsletters, etc.

So, you're still interested? You like the action? Well, here's the event:

Lesbian Outdoor Group potluck dinner meeting, Wednesday, March 1, 1995, 6:30 p.m., 625 Niagara Street. Business will follow dinner. We really want you to be there. For more information, call Semone or Michele at 360-1975. ♀♀



Will be on Saltspring Island

FRIDAY, FEB. 10/95

at the Activity Centre

(with Jami Sieberg from "Rumors of the Big Wave")

8:30 p.m. (Doors at 8:00)

TICKETS \$15.00

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LITTLE LEZZIE FLASHES

Okay girls, this is it. You can display your talents and your assets nationally by taking part in the first annual **Jennifer Waelti-Walters** and associates Calendar.

Send your 8 X 10 glossies in black and white or colour, but sharp and clear, to Ms. Waelti-Walters at 1934 Crescent Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 2H1. The purpose is to be a feature photo on any one of 12 months of a fully, totally and absolutely Lesbian calendar of one-event...the bath. It can be indoor, outdoor, nautical, naughty, typical, solo, together, record-setting. Suggested themes: Women Who Bathe Too Much; Women Who Run With Their Taps; Forever Wet!; Dirty Bathing. **Marti Carr-Harris**, we owe it all to you. Or your bathroom.

Christmas events included: Kamikaze Skating with comedy's answer to the Sportsdyke, **Jan Trainor**, **Nancy** and **Laurie** and **Shelley** and **Judy** - eeerrrrp!! Only one of us needed a Vee-shaped skater support. Guess who? Groan! Easier to sit in a hot tub and get serene on Ladies Day, eh, Jan? Recommended therapy. Get stuff off your muscles, your chest. You don't have to make a commitment to being a lady—just a commitment. Swimming is good for you. So is laughing. So is remembering your underpants. Do what you want. But if you play pool after remember the purple ball is the killer. Before Christmas **Jannit Rabinovitch** broke her ankle. We haven't noticed it has stopped her. In fact she seems to be busier than ever. We hope you aren't plastered for too much longer, Jannit. Cheers.



Jacquie and **Sandy** opened their spacious apartment to Christmas Open House-ing and many of the gorgeous grey hairs we saw at the Old Timers Dance were there. 'Nother one coming in March. **Rebecca Van Sciver** has had her work accepted to Women In Focus Art Show. **Blind Date** is giving the Women's Building Society a leg up with a concert. Check ad this issue. This is one aspiring writer who had the nerve to quit her day job. Not even published yet. However, maybe the answer lies in a course **Marsha Mildon** is offering—Lesbian Creative Writing. See ad this issue. Marsha's successes include a winner of the Alberta Playwrights competition, 12 won the seniors writing competition for the Alberta Seniors Games. A lot of us have good stories floating around and just need the edge and leadership someone like Martha can give us. Whatever takes your fancy for this wonderful New Year, 1995, enjoy it. Until next time...BMCL.

Rowena Hunnisett M.A.

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LESBIANTICS NEEDS YOUR BODY

LesbiAntics is planning two new events. The first is a not quite specified event for May 1995 (the annual LesbiAntics festival) and the second is a Dyke Art Show in the fall of 1995. We are in a place where for these events to happen we need some Dyke/lesbian bodies and hearts that are able to do some work, have some fun, create community and herstory. If we cannot recruit enough of us to put the May event on, we will be letting it go for this year. What we need for both or for either event are lesbians with energy, commitment, ideas and any amount of time that are willing to work with a collective approach to community building. Right now the idea for the annual May event is a day centred around what some call lesbian sex and identity (ie: What is butch/femme? How do we flirt? How do we do sex?) But that, too, is open to change if someone brings another idea. If you want to see it happen, if you want to make it happen, if you have time, energy, or ideas, give us a call at 595-7179 or attend the next LesbiAntics meeting, Monday, February 13 at the offices of Monday Magazine, 1609 Blanshard at Fisgard, 7:00 p.m. We would love to hear from you for either event.

Lahl for LesbiAntics



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Consensus

Continued from page 1

ready to react to any criticism of consensus as anti-feminist.

The scenario which evolved around the 1994 women-only December 6 Vigil, and the manner in which it was treated within the Victoria Status of Women Action Group, highlight all the potential pitfalls of consensus within current society as we know it. SWAG's approach — that the controversy over its anti-violence committee's plans for a vigil could be resolved through consensus — demonstrated the inability to recognize the inherent limitations of consensus, the impossibility of applying the process to all situations unconditionally.

Indeed, there was no recognition of the fact that free consensus was impossible before the discussions even began. Consensus was blocked from the start by an intractable position that there could, in an alleged true spirit of feminism, be only one single response to the SWAG committee's vigil plans. Consensus was theoretically possible, but only if it amounted to unanimous support of a pre-ordained position. There was no room for discussion of where that dictated position was rooted, how it was motivated. There was only room for rejection of alternate perspectives, denial of diversity. The SWAG coordinating collective's treatment of the December 6 Vigil plan was less than the empowering process consensus is supposed to be. Rather, it was a my-way-or-the-highway approach which exemplified the power-over politics of patriarchy.

Part of the mythos of consensus is that it can be used in all and any situations. The fact of the matter is that this is an erroneous tenet,

and not one which is universally supported by feminists. Consider, for example, the perspective of Starhawk, an ardent feminist and one of the staunchest supporters of consensus. One of the misconceptions about consensus is that it's simply a decision-making process. In fact, according to Starhawk, it is a "thinking process of the group mind," a way to consider problems at a community level while affirming "each member's value above the importance of any single issue." In this definition, when one member of the group approaches this process with a closed mind, with only one acceptable outcome, only those who support that outcome are valued; the "group mind" is a dictated reality, not a process of consensus.

In Truth or Dare, Starhawk boldly points out that consensus is not a universal, unconditional panacea. And she specifically outlines five conditions in which consensus is not an appropriate approach:

when there is no group mind, because of deep divisions within the group "or when members don't value the group's bonding over their individual desires";

when there are no good choices, only an either/or choice between two evils;

in emergency situations where immediate decisions are required, without time to explore a group mind thinking process;

when the group does not have enough information about the issue under consideration to reach a balanced perspective; or,

when the issue is trivial and the group might as well just flip a coin.

♀♀

Encore Très Bonne

By G. Powell

I want to close my eyes
remember our insatiable times
think of you pressing me there
with your body on top
underneath or
in front of me...

in front of me
pushing me up against that tree
telling me to be quiet
'cause someone was walking their
dog
just over three

so I hushed for a moment
before you resumed
I was so hot for you
just off the dance floor

outside in the freezing night air
no coats
clothes unzipped
unbuttoned or untucked
silk skirt, stockings and garters
what a pair up there
'gainst that big 'ol tree
you making me cum and me
breathing hard
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13th Opinion

continued from page five

Infusion, Not Appropriation

Dear Editor:

Joyce Pate was not "speaking for people of colour" as your editorial stated.

Joyce Pate speaks of her own pain, passion, love and humour. Her words are totally from her heart. If she chose to speak in Swahili or Arabic these would still be her truths. I'm surprised at the call of racism regarding her work. To take a style, put her voice to it and have it come out so powerfully is a credit to who she is as a performer. To limit the style of "jive" to only blacks is autocratic. Isn't a white that "knows how to jive" (pg. 6 LNews same issue) also "appropriating" another's culture? Are we not allowed as whites to jive or sing the blues? So where do we draw the line and who is going to draw it? Joyce was not speaking for a black person's reality but of her own truth.

I think our planet and the segregation of cultures is shrinking every day. To be able to draw from another culture and blend it with your own reality is what we have to come to on this fragile path we're walking. To be a separatist is to make my life smaller. Like Joyce, I grew up with a different culture close at hand, mine Chicano. This infusion is part of who I am and although a line can be drawn I don't want to, nor can I give up this part of my experience. I do not speak for Mexicans, as Joyce does not speak for blacks, but if I do share, understand, or use some of their culture as my own it is because it is part of "my own complex self-identity."

To take a hardline stand that "white equals privilege" negates the individual's story and therefore perpetuates more stereotypes of all people. There is such a wide range of privilege in the white culture alone that some would hardly consider their skin colour a privilege.

The fact that our entire world civilization is based on "might makes right" and racism is just a subtext of this fact. This does not apologize for whites or minimize our responsibility for the way things are. In every culture the weak and powerless are at the bottom. This almost always means women and children.

Racism is not limited to one race but seems to be a human condition. At some level each of us is a racist. We need to be able to see it in ourselves and have a look at how much smaller it makes our lives, where our limits are and where to go from there, hopefully making the gaps smaller.

I was one of the loud and raucous cheering white lesbians. I think Joyce has one ton of courage to get up and take the risk of sharing her path with everyone. I love her bold, in-your-face saying of it. It fits her. It's real. To say the power and energy of her style is titillation and "add-

Continued on page 14

Old wounds, new wounds

Continued from page 3

pening. Many of the women in attendance were unaware of the challenges involved. A large portion of the women's community has still not heard of the story behind the vigil, since the mainstream media has completely ignored it. Until now, the details were known only to those involved, and those who may have heard parts of the story by word of mouth.

The Metropolitan Church vigil was initially planned by SWAG's new committee to stop violence against women and children. But SWAG abandoned those plans only a week before December 6 because of the committee's intention to publicly read the names of local victims. SWAG's coordinating collective had initially accepted the vigil plans. That acceptance disappeared, however, once the violence committee produced an actual list of names.

The daughter of one of those victims objected to the reading of her

mother's name, and argued that no names – including the names of the 14 women killed in Montreal – should be read because of the pain and re-traumatization it could cause her and other survivors. It was argued that respect for an individual woman's or family's emotional need outweighed the principle of breaking silence.

The ensuing debate became extremely heated, and heavily laced with emotional energy, including personalized attacks on some of the women involved in planning the vigil. In the end, SWAG did not organize a vigil, as it had in every previous year. Most of the members of the violence committee resigned. The coordinating collective has lost at least two members; there are likely to be further resignations. And, SWAG's staff coordinator resigned her post. The vigil itself was held under the auspices of Purple Moon Sisters, with financial assistance from

the Women In Need Society and a number of individual women.

Although the controversy was not common knowledge until now, it continues to simmer away. And, while the debate has been primarily restricted to SWAG's inner circles, it's expected to take on a public profile before this summer. A number of women involved in the process are concerned about the divisive effect it's had on SWAG and the community, and they are anxious to repair the rifts. There is also some concern about the apparent conflict between the concept of breaking silence and other feminist principles. A public forum on the latter is likely to take place within the next few months: both SWAG and the Take Back the Night Committee (which has been an independent body since 1992) are considering, separately, organizing such a forum. ♀

13th Opinion

ing a little spice" is an insult to Joyce and belittling to what I want from life. I want things that move me. I want passion. I want truth and honesty. I want it big.

Telling Joyce "she doesn't need to be black to be good" would be like telling me I don't need to be butch to be lesbian. I know, but it's part of who I am.

I also have a different take on Lahl speaking out. I more than defend her right to do so but I have a problem with the way she did it. Style again. Coming from a sport background it looked like a cheap shot to me. Lahl came with an agenda, a set-up. I could feel better about it if she let Joyce speak and then stood up and faced her. In my eyes it looked cowardly to 1. interrupt; 2. sit down to say something so strong and planned; 3. dump it and walk out. After all, Joyce was standing on the line face to face with each and everyone of us.

I am not political, I'd rather speak of 2x4s and motorcycles. I do not know Lahl, Nicola or Joyce and do not want to polarize this issue. I feel we need to speak up at all times when we see cruelty, sexism, racism or any injustices, but these things need to be based in reality or we dilute our energies. I think Joyce's performance is as far away from "appropriating" black culture as a lesbian is from "appropriating" manhood by using a dildo.

Sue Tate-Ondre

CHRA Amendments Coming Soon

Justice Minister Allan Rock is expected to introduce amendments to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* soon. There will not be a free vote in the legislation. Reformers and Tory MP Elsie Wayne oppose the legislation. There are also several dozen Liberal MPs who have formed their own version of the Tory "family caucus" to organize against lesbian and gay rights. Over the last six months, hundreds of petitions have been introduced in the House of Commons opposing the codification of equal rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual Canadians.

What you can do: Get your friends, family and co-workers to sign a petition or write a letter. We need to get as many MPs as possible involved. So, make an appointment to see your MP or write her or him a letter. Explain to them why this amendment is so important. Give them a petition and ask them to present it in the House of Commons.

MPs may present petitions even if they do not agree with the content. Each MP must have enough petition so that the total number of signatures is at least twenty-five. ☐

The Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) prohibits discrimination in federally regulated employment (the federal civil service, airlines, banks, etc.), housing, public services and facilities. The CHRA does not explicitly include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination. If it were not for the Ontario Court of Appeal decision in the Haig & Birch case, which read sexual orientation into the CHRA, it would still be legal to fire a civil servant or bank employee because she or he is lesbian or gay.

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By Corinne Devison

THE 'MIGHTY DYKES' — HOCKEY IS ALIVE AND, WELL...



Are you suffering from hockey withdrawal along with the rest of Canada? Miss watching your local sports dykes in action? If you're into how ice hockey should be played, check out your local Mighty Dykes. Every Sunday at Esquimalt arena, you can catch the Victoria Stingers practice and scrimmage from 10:30 to 11:50 a.m. The Stingers are a recreational hockey team that takes to the ice up Island and occasionally down south and to the mainland.

The team comprises of slightly over 40 women, with experience ranging from one to more than 25 years. The sovereign commander of the team, Mrs. Hockey herself is Teri Cotton.

Teri is the team's Mother-of-all-organizers, acting as player, assistant coach, president of Women's Hockey BC, while all the while raising five kids. The veteran of 25 plus years on the ice, she has seen many highs and lows in the sport yours truly also loves to play.

From the early 70s to the 80s, hockey was booming in Victoria with 10 to 15 teams and two to three divisions. The declining economic and political climate, or conservative feminist backlash of the mid-80s saw drastic cuts in the number of players and coaches. The 90s have brought three world cup victories for our national women's

team, a professional female goalie, and more open and visible lesbian hockey players.

Presently Victoria offers opportunities for more competitive players to play in the Vancouver league with a Saanich team, or with Sooke or Cowichan in a boys' house league. The Stingers will play anyone with ice time but usually stick to recreational teams such as Mill Bay, Comox, Fuller Lake and Port Alberni. The competitiveness of a team and the number of games played are factors typically used in deciding who will play in a game. Unlike competitive teams, equal ice time is strived for with the Stingers.

While winning is important on the team, it's how much fun you can possibly squeeze into one night that counts.

Our team motto is more like "pass me a beer" than "pass me a puck." Despite a few late nights and lengthy travel time, the Stingers have managed to utilize developing and experienced players into two second place finishes from tourneys in Hope and Gold River.

Warning: if you are looking for cheap shots, fist fights and body crushing hip-checks, you'd better just keep you toes crossed for the NHL next year. Our local mighty dykes are lovers not fighters. Most of our games are "almost" penalty

free. I jokingly call the Stingers the "mighty dykes." Actually, 50 per cent of the entire team is gay, with a core group of lesbians making up the majority of most games. The sheer number of us hockey babes makes the dressing room decidedly dyke friendly. Unless you spot a purse or stray hubby or boyfriend half of the straights are hard to pick out.

A final note or hockey gossip: A Mill Bay, supposedly straight player (has boyfriend), joked about her own team of "Mighty Dykes." Could she have been stung by the lesbian world of our home girl stingers? The reality is her team has one lonely dyke with the rest leaving for greener and gayer pastures. Yes, it's hard to believe a women's hockey team with no dykes. Ahhh! I painfully found this out in Hope. I lost my heart to a Seattle player. I later found out the Yankee team possessed one dyke and she wasn't the one. Heavy sigh. I digress from this most serious subject. Hockey, women, lesbian sweat, come see us or join the team.

Next up – a tourney to Banff and organizing a trip to Gay Games '98 in Amsterdam. Unfortunately the Stingers have no set schedule. For week to week game times and hockey information you can call the Sports Dyke at 380-0994. P.S. Kudos to Rumours – one of our hockey sponsors. ♀

ADS AND NOTICES

Items for this column must be submitted by the 13th of the month to appear in the following month's issue. Items mailed to us at P.O. Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, V8R 6S4. Paid Ads call Barbara, 479-2445.

CALENDAR

LESBIAN 5-PIN BOWLING LEAGUE: Fridays, 6:30 to 8:30, Town and Country Lanes. Spares needed. Beginners Welcome. Call Dawn, 384-2061.

LESBIANTICS COMMITTEE: Needs volunteers. Community building your thing? 2nd Mondays of the month at Monday Magazine Board Room on Blanshard Street. Fun committee and there's enough work to share around. Call Nancy Poole at 370-1197 or Jannit Rabinovitch at 388-0161. Could be a spring big thing!!

MUSAIC: Victoria's 65-member lesbian, gay and allies chorus meets Wednesdays at Church of Truth, end of Superior Street. If you love to sing, come join us. Concert just over so join now and learn the new music with the rest of the gang. No musical background or audition required. For further info, call Helen, 383-8613.

LESBIANS WRITING ON LESBIANS: Small, informal group playing with writing. No experience necessary: simply the desire to explore through writing. Weekly meeting, Thursday evenings. For more info call Kim, 385-8292.

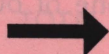
The Status of Women Action Group's **LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE:** meets every other Friday at 1 PM at the SWAG Office. Call 383-7322 to confirm dates and times. Note: SWAG offices now at 506 Fort St. Ste 200.

SERIOUS DYKE WRITERS WANTED: For writer's group. Call Lahl at 595-7179. Meeting date to be determined by group.

OLD TIMERS DANCE AGAIN: We survived the first one and eager for the next. Call Jacquie or Sandy 386-8380 'cause you want to volunteer for door, decorating, set-up, take-down, sales and fun. Next dance March 18. Call now and volunteer for cheer.

SOME VERY NICE DYKES: New contact is Laurie 384-6335. Meets every 2nd Tues and Thursday for coffee, conversation, fun, support. Mini groups form for various interests. All ages welcome.

If you have a purple sticker in this spot, then your subscription is up with this issue!



ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADS

HURRY HURRY FEB. 3: Suzanne Westenhoefer, the most talked-about, sought-after comedian today, will be performing at Vancouver East Cultural Centre at 8 p.m. A hot ticket and worth it if you can get there. Tickets with credit card at VECC 254-9578.

NOT JUST ANOTHER COFFEE HOUSE: Feb. 11, 7:30, at James Bay Community Centre, 140 Oswego Street. Benefit for Women's Building Society and Blind Date Productions. There will be 8 performance acts, wonderful prizes and good cause. \$10 or \$5.

QUEER AWARENESS WEEK: The Lesbian, Gay & Bi-sexual Alliance of the University of Victoria is hosting "Queer Awareness Week '95", from Monday Feb. 13 to Fri, Feb. 17. Included are workshops, guest speakers, movies, erotic videos, performance art, socials, a wrap-up celebration dance on Friday and more. Contact Lisa (604)721-3083 or Christie (604)920-7442 for information.

FEMINIST?: Maybe not all of us are feminists. If you *aren't*, 4th year womens studies' student wants to talk to you to get some material for her research paper on the topic of women/lesbians who aren't feminists. If you want a place to state your case, help a student, aid research, be part of a good cause - call Michelle at 480-1446 before March ends.

PHYLLIS SEROTA: Presents her 3rd Annual Studio Show and Sale Feb. 19, 1 to 5 p.m. at 128 Montreal Street. Everyone Welcome. 385-6933 for info. Older Work at Reduced Prices. See Ad this issue.

SWAG OPEN HOUSE: Thursday February 23, 4 to 7 p.m. #200, 506 Fort Street (above Coffee Stains and Three's Company and same building as India Curry Restaurant. Refreshments and Everyone is Welcome. If you need more, call 383-7322. SWAG office is now open on Saturdays.

SHIATSU: Take a break from the stresses of daily life with Japanese finger-pressure body work. \$35/hour. Gift Certificates available. Lynn Kirk, CST. For appointment call 480-1560.

LESBIAN WRITING COURSE: Published author, university lecturer, editor, Marsha Mildon offers 10 3-hour sessions in creative writing for lesbians. Thursdays, 7 to

10. \$150. Call Marsha, 721-4194 to register. Starts March/April.

DESKTOP PUBLISHING: Brochures, business cards, posters, tickets, signs, resumés, covering letters. One-on-one Computer Training. Geneva Jones Group — 727-8681.

DYKE HOUSING: Looking for lesbian-folk interested in creating Dyke/Lesbian Housing (i.e. co-op, co-housing, condo, apartment building, row housing etc.) Call Rebecca at 595-7179 if you are interested, and we will set up a meeting to share ideas.

SERVICES

University of Victoria: Jenny Waelti-Waters heads Women's Studies Department. She can arrange meeting rooms under banner of Women's Studies. Call the secretary, 721-6157.

Some Very Nice Dykes: Laurie 384-6335

Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Trainers: Alison Anderson, 598-8184

Lesbian/Gay Provincial Employees Assoc: or funding via Women's Equality Ministry. Anne R., 953-4511.

Unitarian Church: welcomes openly gay/lesbian. Call Lisa at 388-4910

SWAG: Status of Women Action Group has a lesbian issues committee. Call, 381-1012

LesbiaNews: P.O. Box 5339 Station B, Victoria. V8R 6S4

P-FLAG: Information # is 642-5171 for those who are interested in Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Bowling: Dawn H., 384-2061

Lesbian Seniors Housing: Jacquie Denage 386-8380

Blind Date Productions: Gwyneth Powell, 598-2327

**Note: SWAG is setting up a special calendar of events, a list of granting agencies and women and dyke services - a more inclusive list than above. Please let them know what's up at 383-7322. It's called Feminist Activist Network. It is *inclusively* lesbian.

Procrastinators Anonymous Meeting has again been postponed