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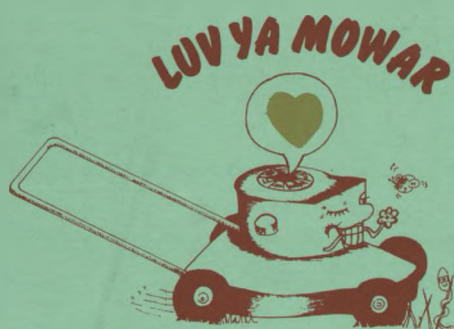
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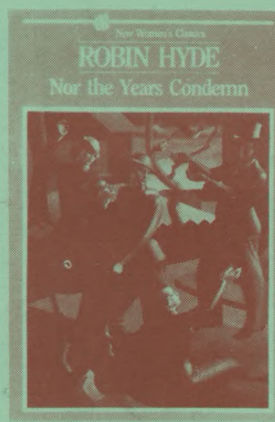
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LETTERS



SUPPORTING MARY O'REGAN

Dear Broadsheet,
As New Zealand's feminist magazine, I should have thought that you would be over the moon with delight that a feminist has been appointed secretary for Women's Affairs. The significance of having a feminist as the head of the ministry is phenomenal — especially when, let's face it, most of us thought that "they" would play safe and put a conservative or middle-of-the-road woman in that job.

So where is the whoop of delight from Broadsheet? Where is even the *mention* of the appointment? Totally absent in the July/August and September issues, the only mentions of the ministry being in a somewhat garbled review of the forum reports and a full-page denunciation of the proposed Maori secretariat.

Remember that we feminists once had an old-fashioned idea that we should support one another? The well-organised moral minority are poised to see how they can pounce on Mary O'Regan and the ministry at the first opportunity, and the National opposition, in the form of Ruth Richardson, has already begun putting Mary through the mill. She needs all the support she can get from the feminist community. That Broadsheet did not see fit to raise an immediate cheer for Mary's appointment is sickening. Yours in shamed sisterhood,
Caroline Herschel
Wellington

MUDDLE CLASS

Dear Broadsheet,
I found Christine Bird's article in the September issue useful and thought-provoking.

Unlike Britain where classes are as clearly visible as ethnic groups, here there has been more prosperity and more social mobility to obscure who works for who. Despite the last 15 years, the prevailing ideology still says that class doesn't happen here — like racism. Yet we all know Maori women

aren't Remuera ladies.

It's particularly hard for women to see class among women. I do agree that feminism needs to be relevant to working class women, yet the low income/working class distinction is blurred. Nearly all women do work that is illpaid, dull, futureless and for somebody else. Especially housework.

We'll skip defining our class by husband's or father's occupation, thank you. As a friend says, all women at home with dependent children should know they are a short walk away from the DPB — it's the walk he takes to get cigarettes, and decides to go for Australian ones. I just mentally checked myself and my sister against a few socio-economic criteria and, in Christine's terms, we come up in different classes. The root difference: she has kids.

Part of my middle classness is my indulgence in feminism and politics. Yes, feminism does seem a middleclass activity. Because thinking like Christine's is clearly needed, and also because of the kinds of success that have been gained. Middle class liberal women do have more access to power and change in a conservative/liberal social structure. Short term sticking plaster solutions are easier to push through male middleclass political systems than radical real-change ones, obviously. Yet it's natural to work for what you think you can get rather than waiting till NZ is ready for revolution. No, it's not enough, but it is worth the bother. Ask my mother. After 18 years of middleclass marriage, she left with £80 and a "stolen" sewing machine. She couldn't earn enough to take us kids with her. She thinks sticking plaster reforms are wonderful.

Alison Jones' work is fascinating. Although she talks about class, as far as I understand from your article and the *Women's Studies Journal*, the division she discusses is along race lines. She doesn't say what definitions of class she uses. The pakehas seem to be assumed to be middle class.

I would very much like to see some more ideas on the subject, not necessarily in response to these thoughts.

Linda Hill
Auckland

UNBATTERED ARMY WIFE

Dear Broadsheet,

In reference to the article in your October issue concerning wife battering soldiers, I would like to reply to give what I believe to be the general consensus of Army wives.

Yes I do believe wife battering does exist in the Army establishments *but* no more than anywhere else in civilian society. Overall I would say that less cases would be existent in military circles due to the fact that every soldier knows what disciplinary action would be taken upon him in such circumstances.

Having lived in both Waiouru and Wellington for a number of years, every case I have heard about a wife being molested or beaten has not always been caused by the husband. Most of these women have provoked attack, through abusive language and actions *under the influence of alcohol*, and not every assault has been committed by a military person.

In regards to the other statements regarding housing, clubs and activities around Waiouru in particular, all I have to say about that is "rubbish". Presently in Waiouru there are approximately 155 clubs in action. Surely if the women who are complaining about lack of clubs and facilities cannot find one club they are interested in, then they are not really looking to become involved in the community. In response to the claims that it was extremely difficult to organise Women's groups because there was nowhere to hold meetings, I believe these women never really tried to find a venue. There are plenty of sports halls and clubs around Waiouru that are not used every night, and especially during the day. I feel that ninety percent of the reason these clubs have never got off the ground is that nobody is

willing to organise them and that there is little response to these anyway.

Housing in Waiouru is admittedly not a millionaire's dream of luxury but the houses have adequate facilities and more than enough room for any family. The Army does not distribute houses without thought and a family with three children would be allocated a three bedroomed house. This is in some cases better than our counterparts in civilian street and we are not even paying a quarter of the rent they have to. Again, Army houses are re-decorated every seven years which is more often than on the outside in many cases.

Lastly I would like to refer to the statement quote "Some women with higher ranked neighbours worried that if their children were noisy when they played at home, it might have repercussions on their husbands at work" end of quote. This is ridiculous and never have I come across anything like this in my whole career of being a non-commissioned Army wife. All complaints are dealt with fairly by the Army and are thoroughly investigated. If there was just cause for the complaint then the accused would be reprimanded accordingly.

No I am not anti-feminist or pro-male. I just want to say what I feel to be the truth.

Pamela Jones
Auckland.

We at Broadsheet believe that male violence to women in the home is *never* the woman's fault — Eds.

OBITUARY

Mary Thomas died on October 10, 1985.

I first met Mary when we were both members of the Hawke's Bay branch of the NZ Women Writers Association. We clicked immediately. Mary wrote from a working class, feminist perspective, her active participation in socialist politics lasted all her life. Mary was a believer in reform within the system (although she understood the frustration of those who held opposite

views), and was always ready to challenge those in power when they forgot or ignored the principles they were elected to implement.

Mary donated money to many women's causes and organisations, as well as individuals. She knew what it was to be poor and she never forgot the bitter lessons of the 30s when her own unwanted pregnancies made fertility control a personal issue. She worked both in England and in this country to help establish family planning, was an active anti-fascist, and during and after World War 2 became involved in the Trade Union Movement.

She was active in Hastings Abortion Law Reform Association, New Zealand (ALRANZ) but when Women's National Abortion Action Committee (WONAAC) became very much the frontline feminist group still demanding the right to choose but increasingly disheartened by lack of money and support she got them going again. She was neither well, nor well-off but she gave WONAAC \$1,000. Her doctor concluded she was "too busy to die". She fought all her life for social justice for women and children, and suffering from terminal cancer did not stop her.

Mary made several other donations to WONAAC, and other organisations like *Broadsheet*. Whenever she heard of a women's group needing money she gave what she could. As well, during the last few years, she made dona-

tions to individuals. She joked with me once in a letter, where she said that after all her struggles in the working class area it was strange to see herself becoming a patron of the arts!

Her love and support, her encouragement and money,

She was librarian for many years at Hastings City Library and wrote articles for *School Publications*, *The Listener* and book reviews for the *Herald Tribune*. She wrote short stories which showed her concern for women and

wrote to me about my tendency to say "um" in an interview with Sharon Crosby and another friend told me that Mary's friends felt that her constant pushing brought many of them to do public activities and to gain a lot of faith in themselves. Some of them admitted that they sometimes did things after a rollicking from Mary, just to show her they could.

Mary would have been 79 in December and to me and to many young women she was a sister, meeting us on equal terms, sharing her wisdom and stubbornness, and encouraging us to spend many hours thrashing out the world and all the bastards in it.

All her adult life Mary had known that all the conflicts and absurdities so apparent around us could only be ended by deep and fundamental changes to the structure of society. All that happened in her life, two world wars, and all the others, periods of mass unemployment, and now the approaching nuclear holocaust, have confirmed the truth of her analysis. For many years she had thought that only women could put an end to this chaos and stop one lot of people from destroying another.

Mary Thomas never gave up fighting despite increasing pain and fatigue. Those of us who knew and loved her will be sad, but proud we knew her. I wish that every woman had a Mary Thomas in their lives.

Renee, with thanks for contributions from Di Cleary, Lesley Redgrave and Cliff Davey.



Mary Thomas

ment so much to so many people that it's impossible to list them. Her donation put WONAAC on the map again. meant they were able to produce a leaflet for schools, the condom poster, and took away their worry about immediate returns.

what happens to them because of their oppression in our society. She was a longtime member of the NZ Labour Party and one of their sternest critics.

Mary was forthright about her desire for women to achieve all their potential. She

generous discounts for contract ads of 5 months or more.

OOPS!

Some captions and pictures on pages 46 and 47 of the November issue went wrong. The 1973 Women's Video group should have been on page 46 with the caption "Photo from Up From Under" and the graphic on page 46 should have been on page 47 with the caption "Graphic from Women's Studies A New Zealand Handbook".

STUFFING

Stuffing of the Jan-Feb issue will be on Saturday 21 December. We really appreciated all the help stuffing the last issue. look forward to seeing

you all again.

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POETRY

No more, please. We have more than we can ever hope to publish.

FRONTING UP

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Deadline for Jan/Feb is 9 Nov and for March, 9 Dec.

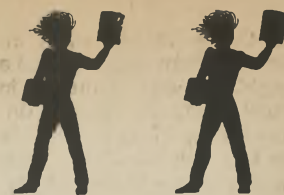
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Some of our long-time subscribers cannot afford to renew. Women who are financially better off may like to fund those subs — any women interested please write to us. It helps if readers subscribe, or buy from *Broadsheet* Bookshop, as we have to sell the magazine to other bookshops at a loss. Women who find \$27 too much to pay at once can subscribe for six months at a time. Another possibility is to share a sub. with a friend.

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BEHIND THE NEWS



(NOT) GETTING ABORTIONS IN CHRISTCHURCH

Karen Brown explains why South Island women are finding it harder to get an abortion.

Harassment by anti-abortion groups and political manoeuvring within the Canterbury Hospital Board hierarchy have placed Christchurch women with unwanted pregnancies in a situation reminiscent of the 1930s. An acute shortage of staff since May of this year has meant a drop in the number of abortions here, an arbitrary cut off point of ten weeks has been established by the hospital board, and women from outside Christchurch are being turned away.

Over the last two months, The Health Alternatives for Women (THAW) has sent twenty women to other centres for terminations: seventeen of them to the AMAC clinic in Auckland, and three to Australia.

Christchurch's Family Planning Association (FPA) and individual doctors have also been referring women elsewhere. Because of the large numbers of women being forced to seek terminations outside of Christchurch, places like AMAC now have a three week waiting list. In fact, most South Island women can expect to spend a lot of time sitting in waiting rooms in their attempt to get through the system. Once a woman has made it through the maze of GPs and consultants and obtained all the pieces of paper necessary to gain a legal abortion in New Zealand — there are still no guarantees that she will receive the service she is legally entitled to.

THAW and other pro-choice organisations in Christchurch are continually being contacted by women experiencing delays, often caused by doctors unwilling to refer them or give early pregnancy tests, and by a general lack of

correct information about the current situation. Certifying consultants are referring women to THAW because they can't get them on the operating lists at Christchurch Women's Hospital, says Christine Bird, a worker at THAW. Those are the lucky ones, others are simply being dumped by consultants who refuse to refer them to other centres or even on for counselling. Women are also being misinformed, once again by doctors opposed to abortion, and also by local counselling groups with an anti-abortion bias. Five women wanting to take action against the Pregnancy Counselling organisation for supplying them with information that was obviously untrue have been in touch with THAW, and abortion counsellors at Christchurch Women's have heard a number of similar complaints.

Some who have been unable to get terminations in Christchurch and who can't afford to travel to Auckland or Australia are considering more desperate means of ending their unwanted pregnancies. THAW knew of one woman who had taken a hundred contraceptive pills in an unsuccessful attempt to abort her pregnancy and had considered using a knitting needle on herself, before finally being accepted at Christchurch Women's Hospital.

The result of all this has been to make it almost unbearably difficult for South Island women to get a termination in the South Island. Only those women who are emotionally strong enough to persist in demanding their legal right to an abortion, those who are lucky enough to discover their pregnancy early on and

those who have the money and contacts to enable them to get abortions elsewhere will make it. The process has become a test of a woman's endurance rather than of her legal right to have her pregnancy terminated.

Some of the problems which have caused this crisis are within the system. In May 1985, the only full time operating consultant performing terminations at Christchurch Women's Hospital, Mr George Louisson, retired. At the time of Louisson's retirement, the proposed clinic at Lyndhurst was not ready to open — mainly because the hospital board was having difficulty obtaining staff.

The fee an operating consultant receives for a termination of pregnancy is between \$6 and \$10, depending on how quickly the operation is performed. A certifying consultant receives \$37 for giving consent to one woman. (The Abortion Supervisory Committee is considering making all doctors certifying consultants).

Medical superintendent-in-chief, Ross Fairgray, claimed at a hospital board meeting that nursing staff and doctors did not wish to work at Lyndhurst. This statement is contradicted by approaches THAW has received from registrars and hospital board staff stating that they would be prepared to work at Lyndhurst if there were no risk of harassment, or of pressure being applied by certain members of the hospital hierarchy.

Currently there are four doctors being trained to work at Lyndhurst as operating consultants. These doctors approached the board to offer their services as part time sur-

geons after being contacted by members of the Abortion Action Alliance (AAA) and encouraged to do so. This followed rather apathetic attempts by the hospital board to find doctors willing to work at Lyndhurst. (The AAA is a coalition of local pro-choice groups set up to push for an adequate abortion service for Christchurch women.)

Other problems are due to harassment. In January 1985, a letter was circulated to all local certifying consultants by the Christchurch Right to Life Association, stating that members of this organisation felt compelled to act to "protect our community". The letter said the group intended to publicise the names of any operating consultants employed by the hospital board, and to set up "passive, legal vigils" outside doctor's surgeries.

In May and July 1985, arson attacks were made on Lyndhurst. The first was a molotov cocktail hurled at the building, the second fire resulted from a grate being stuffed full of paper and set alight. It caused \$2000 worth of damage. In response to claims that the actions of anti-abortion groups were behind security at Lyndhurst being stepped up, a spokesman for Christchurch SPUC said that such claims were misleading and that anti-abortion groups provided no threat to security.

One male doctor who performed abortions for a period of two weeks had his surgery painted with anti-abortion slogans, had concrete dumped on his lawn and threats were made that his children would be harassed at school.

A woman doctor, working in a temporary position as a part time operating consultant was subjected to harassment by anti-abortion groups who picketed her home and the FPA rooms where she was working. Leaflets were dropped into mailboxes in this doctor's community by the Pro-Life Ac-

tion Group. These leaflets "informed" them that they had a neighbour who "indulges in brutal killing of helpless unborn babies". This was despite the fact that the group knew the doctor would only be performing abortions until September 24 (about two weeks after the leafletting took place).

Joseph Scheidler, a Chicago anti-abortionist, visited Christchurch mid-1985. He named on air the woman doctor who was currently performing abortions here and advised local anti-abortion groups on how to step up their

protests against her. Scheidler advocates breaking the law if necessary in order to obey a "higher" law.

The combination of harassment and the Canterbury Hospital Board's delaying tactics has created an impossible situation for South Island women seeking abortions. The main hope for the future is the opening of Lyndhurst as a clinic, now being promised for the end of the year, but that holds no guarantees that the problems will stop. Until then, South Island women are being denied a service they are entitled to. □

NOT JUST TELLERS

Alison McCulloch interviewed Bank officers' Union women's coordinator Patricia Sarr to discover what's ahead for women in banking.

Tellers, ledgers, proofing, tellers, ledgers, proofing — that's how too many women in banking spend their time, and according to the Bank Officers' Union (BOU) only one trading bank is making any substantial effort to treat women employees fairly.

The union has been working on women's lot in banks (ANZ, BNZ, National and Westpac) for about five years. A Human Rights Commission (HRC) report agreed with earlier BOU research that women were discriminated against in banking. The HRC then ordered the banks to "put their houses in order" by setting up working parties with the union and the HRC and developing affirmative action programmes.

The union then organised a series of seminars throughout the country for women to say what they wanted. 'We figured they were the best experts for what ought to happen for women in banking, and we had some 300 women come along and say what they wanted and what they thought was wrong,' said Patricia Sarr.

The three main priorities set by the women were longer leave when a woman has or adopts a child; facilities for good quality childcare; and an

advertised vacancy system, which is an industry specific issue.

The union, through the working parties, tried to gain ground in these three areas and to get real affirmative action programmes set up in each bank. It's been ten months since that original HRC directive, but little headway has been made with most of the banks.

The union has recently released a clear and simple outline of progress so far. Top of the class is Westpac. 'They've done a very credible job of reviewing and overhauling personnel policy and practice and on the key three items they've either come up with very good programmes or we are discussing details of programmes. We're very optimistic that we've got a good affirmative action programme in Westpac,' Patricia said.

'It means literally hundreds of small changes and some big ones. One of the big ones in Westpac's case is what they call "career planning", and it means the woman gets consulted about her career, and she and the bank both sign an agreement about what's going to happen. That's put on a computer so they can check whether women and men are

getting the same deal. They can check that in quite some detail, and since discrimination is complicated and subtle, as well as obvious and brutal, that's a real improvement.

'Little things, but still important, include making training courses non residential, since women can't get away from home as easily as men; and allowing time in work for studying, since women don't have time at home. Men can say 'Make tea dear, I've got to study', but most women simply don't have that choice. They should, of course, but the fact is they don't.'

The next bank down the list is the BNZ. Patricia reports its action is "more show than substance". 'They made a showy start with their Equal Opportunities Management Plan and have introduced a couple of good new programmes, but have so far failed to come through with any fundamental change'.

All four banks have introduced a maternity leave programme modelled on the public service, providing a year's leave after one year's employment, and up to five additional years of absence for "childcare responsibilities". The big hitch is that none of this is binding — instead it's dependent on goodwill and consistency on the part of the banks.

Third is the National Bank. Patricia describes its efforts as "uneven". A memorandum, required by the HRC, was sent to all staff from the National Bank's general manager reading: "The National Bank affirms its commitment to... equal opportunities for all". But it was the covering letter, Patricia says, which held the key: "Managers will appreciate that this statement does not

represent any change..."

The bank more recently announced a new programme called "Gateway", aimed at promoting equal opportunity for women employees. There is a manager with special responsibility for coordinating the programme and seminars will be held for women employees, but it remains to be seen how effective it will be.

The ANZ "will not change a system which discriminates against women employees; that's something we've got to change", Patricia says. The working party with the ANZ has broken down. Patricia Sarr reports there was "no indication that they intended to undertake careful research, no willingness to make fundamental changes, and no interest in the three priority areas nominated by women".

The union's report says: "Perhaps the very first meeting should have given a warning. The meeting was held in the ANZ board of director's room, after offers of the BOU's premises as a venue were turned down. 'A senior management man opened the meeting by telling the union members that he knew they would be 'feeling a little bit over-awed, sitting in the same seats as the board of directors. Don't feel that way' he assured the group, 'use this room as your own'. He then added, in what we could only hope was an attempt at humour, 'just don't vandalise the place'".

After reporting such a mixed response to affirmative action, Patricia explained just what affirmative action is looking for. "'Why do you want more women in managers' offices', is what the sisters throw at me," Patricia said. "But affirmative action is much more than that. It is really about

At 18 seminars, like this one in Whangarei, women union members suggested the changes they want to give them equality in the banks.



looking at the industry and saying it was designed for men over a hundred years ago, it was designed for men who had women and children at home. Now the industry has got women in it and the industry has got to adjust to women's lives. Women have got to be recognised and val-

ued on an equal basis with men, and that means re-examining every bit of personnel policy and practice so that women actually get a fair go and so the industry itself is responsive to women's needs."

The union and the banks were to go back to the HRC in October, but the bank officers'

strike during the last week of that month caused the meeting to be cancelled. No new date had been set when **Broadsheet** went to press. Patricia Sarr says by the time the meetings do take place she hopes the banks will be taking this "much more seriously". □

DALKON SHIELD DEADLINE

Time is running out for New Zealand women says SANDRA CONEY of Fertility Action in this update on the controversial IUD.

New Zealand women have only until the end of this month to lodge a claim for injuries against the makers of the Dalkon Shield, A.H. Robins.

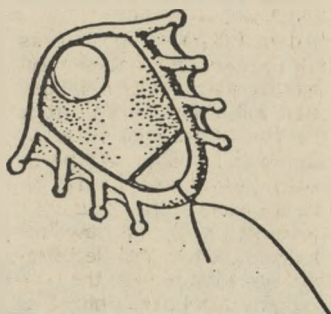
Robins has used a number of obstructive and delaying tactics to try and impede the process of some 5,500 claims against it, with another possible 20,000 yet to be filed. In August, Robins filed for a Chapter 11 Reorganisation under the Federal Bankruptcy Code. This does not mean that Robins has run out of money. It is estimated that Robins, with its approximately 20 subsidiaries, is worth around US\$500 million. Robins' profits for 1984 were approx US\$120 million and they were expected to increase by 18 percent in the next year. There is \$30 million remaining in insurance.

A committee to represent creditors has been appointed by the Bankruptcy Court. The court has set a Bar date of December 30, 1985, after which women will not be able to claim for damages. Moves are being made in the US to extend this date in the interests of women who do not know they can claim, or who might suffer damage in the future, but the success of such moves is uncertain.

Only a handful of countries has even run a removal campaign such as the one run in July in New Zealand (and we probably only got one because of the very high rate of claims from New Zealand). In Britain the Department of Health and Social Security de-

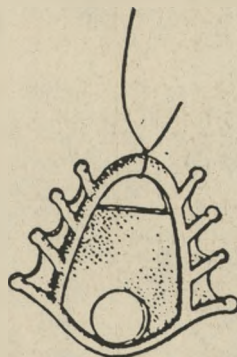
cided such a campaign was unnecessary. Needless to say, women in Third World countries, where tens of thousands of unsterilised Dalkon Shields were dumped when the IUD was taken off the US market, have so far been given no opportunity to lodge a claim.

In New Zealand, where there has been a great deal of media attention to the issue, nearly 30 women had come forward for Shield removals between July and mid-August (the Department of Health has so far declined to provide me with more up-to-date figures despite a request on 22 September). There must be thousands of women in Third World countries who are still wearing this potentially life-threatening device.



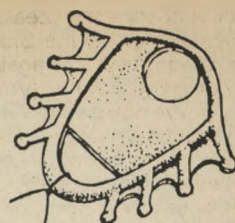
Around 25,000 Dalkon Shields came into New Zealand. So far over 230 women have contacted Fertility Action and other women's groups working on the issue, and over 100 completed files have been sent to the US. New Zealand has the greatest number of cases of any country outside North America. Credit for this must go to the efficiency of

feminist networks and media willingness to publicise the issue. When women are asked to name where they learned they could claim, they list **Broadsheet** (September 1984), the *Woman's Weekly* article in June and the *Close Up* television programme in May.



A number of patterns have emerged in the experience women have had with the Dalkon Shield.

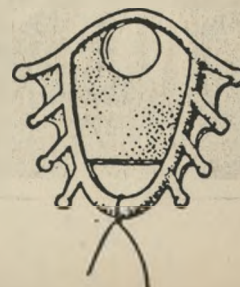
- Doctors have not told women of the risks of using IUDs — infection, loss of pelvic organs, infertility, migration, embedding, septic abortion to name some;
- Doctors have not listened to women's reports of ill effects, have not properly investigated problems or made correct diagnoses. Very often women give up visiting the doctor because they feel they were not listened to (they are quite correct);
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) can be a "sleeping disease" giving no marked symptoms. Often the woman will only have a general feeling



of being off-colour, tired, flu-like symptoms, pelvic pain, heavier periods and a smelly discharge. Thorough investigation (usually ultimately a laparoscopy where the organs are actually viewed) often reveals extensive pelvic damage, pus, scarring, adhesions, and cysts;

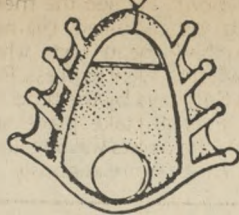
- PID cannot always be cured, as infection becomes trapped behind scar tissue and can flare up at any time, especially when the woman is under stress;
- acute, life-threatening attacks of PID can erupt seemingly out of the blue;
- PID and other gynaecological disorders are not always traced to the IUD, so the IUD may be left in place after the infection is treated. There will almost certainly be a recurrence!
- Doctors frequently put infection down to sexually transmitted diseases, (an example of this was Auckland gynaecologist Jennifer Wilson in the *NZ Times* 27/10/85) and blame the woman for her illness.

If IUD complications are so often misdiagnosed and undiagnosed in New Zealand, it is terrible to imagine the situation in Third World countries. A number of New Zealand Dalkon Shield victims would have died were it not for the medical technology available here — ultrasound scans, intravenous antibiotics, diagnostic laboratories, blood transfusion services. Third World women would simply drop in the fields and die in agony far from medical care and the researchers who calculate mortality rates of contraception.



Some of the New Zealand women injured by the Shield do not want to claim against the company. Unlike Americans, we are not used to taking such actions. In addition, quite a number have been discouraged by doctors, probably anxious about their own performance, who deny the link between the IUD and the injury, or who think women must live with the consequences of medical technology (which they fail to tell you about before you use it).

Fertility Action has urged Dr Bassett, Minister of Health, to make public statements informing New Zealand women of the urgency in making a claim. The Health Department's performance of the Dalkon Shield is woeful. It allowed the IUD to be sold in



New Zealand for nine months after it was taken off the US market and has done nothing for women damaged by the Shield, many of whom would have been spared had the department acted responsibly. It remains to be seen whether the Minister will at last speak out, or remain as he has done so far, mute. □

Fertility Action, PO Box 46148, Auckland. Phone 764893

CHARLOTTE WATERLOW

Charlotte Waterlow, an English peace activist, teacher and author, gave the annual peace lecture for the New Zealand Foundation for Peace Studies recently. She talked

about the confrontation between industrialised and Third World countries, militarisation and the forces pushing for a new world order. Photo by Gil Hanly.



THE BILL IN THE HOUSE

Sodomy obsesses MPs in the debate about the Homosexual Law Reform Bill. Sue Fitchett reports.

The Homosexual Law Reform Bill continues to be debated in Parliament during its second reading. The MP's speeches are somewhat predictable although even after all these months and reams of select committee findings it is still startling to hear some of the gross inaccuracies about homosexuality (lesbian is a non-existent word) paraded by opponents to the Bill.

Exact figures on who supports what after two debating Wednesday nights is walled around by parliamentary privilege. Rumours suggest the first part of the Bill (amendment to the Crimes Act) will pass at age 18 and three more labour MPs have agreed to vote for the Bill in its entirety.

It is unlikely any National MP will vote for the second part of the Bill, which is the Human Rights Act section. If the debate continues when you receive your *Broadsheet* you should listen for (or note from the paper) those MPs who do not yet support the Human Rights and lobby them by telegram. Maybe by the time you receive your *Broadsheet* it will be all over — or will it?

If the Bill passes at 18 years but the Human Rights section fails to get a majority, older gay men will at last be free from the fear of criminal prosecution and lesbians will be in much the same position as always, except the country's governing body will have definitively stated that lesbians and gay men remain the only minority groups not entitled to human rights. The Bill has been important because it has been used by the "moral right" as a testing ground and the failure of the second part should leave ripples of ill-ease throughout lesbian and gay communities and all peoples of political consciousness.

It has been interesting to read lesbian-feminist theorist Marilyn Frye at this time, in her book *The Politics of Reality*:

Essays in Feminist Theory. Her premise that gay men break the one "honour among thieves" rule, that the penis has free access to everything in the world except other men, appears confirmed as I listen to the parliamentary debate and male speaker after male speaker seems obsessed with 'sodomy'. One male MP even brought photographs of vagina's and rectums into the house to prove anal intercourse was 'risky' (unhealthy) but the vagina was "just made" for penetration.

What a 'lesbian' is, is not to be found in the dictionary (i.e. relating to other women) and the word did not pass the lips of any male MP (of those I heard) speaking on the Homosexual Law Reform Bill.

Newspapers continue to ignore most of the public statements in favour of homosexual law reform. The New Zealand Self Defence Teachers' Association (SDTA) press release was no exception. "The SDTA sees a connection between violence against women and the hatred of lesbians and gay men being expressed by extremists in Aotearoa. We see that male fears of their own feelings are at the base of many attacks against women, as well as attacks against lesbians and gay men. We see that some men fear that any kind of intimacy and expression of caring, or of feelings, between men, will be labelled homosexual. In order to be seen as 'normal' some males believe they must behave in a super-masculine, aggressive manner.

Accusations of lesbianism and man-hating are also used to discredit the efforts of women who are working to combat violence. We strongly believe that self-defence for women is primarily concerned with giving ourselves, as women, the choice to live our lives as we please, without fear of violence and that this in-

cludes the choice to be lesbian.

We endorse the statement of other organisations working with victims of rape, battering, child-rape and molestation in Aotearoa that the evidence points over-whelmingly to heterosexual males as the main offenders. Eighty-seven

percent of child-molesting men are known to the child.

Passing the Homosexual Law Reform Bill represents a strong affirmation that the community will not tolerate violence against lesbians, gay men, children and by implication, women." □

BANNED GAY BOOKS

**Censorship of lesbian books is alive and well.
Jenny Rankine reports.**

Lesbians and feminists take for granted the rows of lesbian books in women's bookshops, our freedom to read and buy (when we can afford them) the latest lesbian releases from overseas on sexuality, debates about pornography, relationships and aspects of lesbian lifestyles.

But this freedom is illusory. Despite improved awareness of lesbian rights, despite liberal distaste for censorship, imported lesbian and gay books are still being seized by customs and judged indecent by the Indecent Publications Tribunal.

Benton Ross, the country's largest importer of lesbian and gay books, has had about 34 books seized by customs since the middle of 1984. The first was *Flame, a Life on the Game*. This supposedly autobiographical novel about a gay male hustler is not explicit about sex. The Tribunal rules that it was "honest in its presentation although... it could give offence, therefore it is indecent in the hands of persons under the age of 18."

Then in August 1984 Benton Ross' first shipment of books from Alyson, an east coast American gay and lesbian publishing group, arrived at the Auckland docks. About 20 titles were seized and held. Fourteen were returned in dribs and drabs, but four were sent to the Tribunal. These were *Coming to Power*, writings and graphics on lesbian sadomasochism (S/M), edited by members of SAMOIS (A San Francisco lesbian feminist S/M group); *A Different Love*, a gay male romance by Clay Larkin; *I Once*

Had a Master, one man's journey through the S/M world, by John Preston; and *Coming Out Right*, a handbook for the gay male by Wes Muchmore and William Hanson.

In August this year, Benton Ross heard that all the books had been declared indecent. The Tribunal said about *Coming to Power* that "some of the stories are well written but many are crude and lacking in any redeeming features." The gay male books were indecent simply because they "glamorise homosexuality".

WRITINGS AND GRAPHICS ON LESBIAN S/M

COMING TO POWER



Edited by members of SAMOIS, a lesbian feminist S/M organisation

Customs officers came to Benton Ross' warehouse and took all the copies of the books, but Helen Ross says they have decided to appeal the judgement to the High Court. This can take a year or more and is very expensive. They will appeal about *A Different Love* and *Coming Out Right*, because "it's harder to appeal about S/M books. Our philosophy," she says, "is that homosexual literature shouldn't be subjected to any



greater scrutiny than heterosexual literature, and shouldn't be discriminated against. We're not appealing for commercial reasons, because any of these books would only sell to a very limited market in New Zealand."

While this was happening, in February 1985, customs officers went through Benton Ross' first shipment from Naiad Press, an American lesbian publisher best known for its lesbian romances. Thirteen titles were seized, as well as *Lesbian Sex*, from Spinsters Ink. Two of them, *Yantras of Womanlove*, a book of photographs of women making love by Tee Corinne, and *Curious Wine*, a lesbian romance by Katherine Forrest, were sent to the Tribunal. The other 12 were returned. The Tribunal decided the books were not indecent, but its written decision is interesting: "The Controller (of Customs) submitted that although *Curious Wine* was a well written novel, the frequency of sexual activity was enough to warrant an age restriction... We feel that the (Customs) Department's concern may arise not so much with the content of the publication, ... but by the fact that the story concerns a lesbian relationship between two women, and the book has been published by what appears to be a group associated with women's interests."

About *Yantras of Womanlove*, the Tribunal said: "Al-

though some of the photographs are very frank, it does not appear to us that they are designed to cater to any prurient interest... On at least two previous occasions the Tribunal has held that an impressionistic or fantastic presentation of nudity could lessen the effect of a sexual display which in other modes of presentation could be indecent... The only difficulty we had with (*Yantras*) was whether or not an age restriction should be placed on it. The Controller (of Customs) urged us to do so on the ground that although there was an abstract presentation, the subject matter of women indulging in lesbian acts was still obvious... We do not think the book is likely to appeal to young readers because of the manner of presentation. The likelihood of corruption is small if no restriction is placed on it."

Obviously the indecency laws are male controlled and heterosexual — they assume that heterosexuality is the only norm and lesbian and gay sexuality is, in itself, perverted. This will continue to restrict our choice of imported books, and deny us access to books, like *Coming to Power*, that are controversial in the US lesbian communities.

Similar heterosexual censorship is happening in England, where eight directors and one staff member of London's Gay's the Word bookshop will stand trial next year for conspiring to import "indecent or obscene" material from Giovanni's Room, a Philadelphia-based distributor of gay books.

In April 1984, 15 customs officers raided the bookshop and carted off more lists. In other seizures the number of impounded books reached 3,000. The shop staff face two years in prison and fines for this "offence". Homosexuality and lesbianism are specifically mentioned in customs guidelines in England for determining materials that might be deemed pornographic. Literary observers see this trial as a landmark test case for literary censorship, and public feeling has been largely in favour of the bookshop.

Distributors and bookshops in New Zealand committed to lesbian and gay books may have to fight a similar battle for our right to decide for ourselves what is oppressive and liberating for us. □

LESBIAN SEX



JoAnn Loulan

APARTHEID IN NAMIBIA

Ann Burrridge went to a UN symposium about this occupied land.

Namibia is a vast, semi-arid, mineral-rich territory in southern Africa. After WWI in 1920, Namibia (then South West Africa) became a League of Nations mandate under South African administration. In 1966 the United Nations decided to revoke South Africa's mandate and to place South West Africa under direct responsibility of the UN. South Africa has continued its illegal occupation of Namibia in contravention of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, and an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The economy is controlled exclusively by the South African occupation regime along with foreign investors. The majority of black Namibians make their livelihood from subsistence agriculture, by contract labour in the mines and work in the urban areas. Namibia is rich in uranium, diamonds and copper and other minerals but the Namibian people receive no benefit from the huge profits.

The illegal South African regime has long enforced its apartheid policy by law. In the health sector, there are separate and inferior facilities for black Namibians. Fifty per cent of children die before reaching the age of five years, and life expectancy is 31 years for women and 33 years for men. Social security is non-existent. There is one doctor to every 30,000 blacks compared with an average for whites of 900 to every doctor. Malaria and tuberculosis are rife.

Namibian women are used as guinea pigs by Western drug multi-nationals, and drugs like depo-provera are administered by the authorities. There are numerous cases of forced sterilisation and Namibian women are often not told that these dangerous contraceptive methods are being forced on them.

Educational opportunities are few for blacks in Namibia and women are worst off because parents are often unable to afford the inadequate schooling that is available —

and women are seen as being least likely to gain employment with financial rewards. A 1980 South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) Women's Council survey in one of the refugee settlements showed an illiteracy rate of over 99% for women in the 35-60 age group.

South Africa is trying to eliminate all opposition in Namibia, and anyone supporting SWAPO or resisting the racist regime's policies is likely

Over 100,000 soldiers terrorise the 1,000,000 black population, burning villages, raping women and killing civilians. Thousands of youths are fleeing across the border rather than be forced to join the brutal war against their own people.

Racist oppression is such that national liberation is an urgent necessity. In the militarised, male dominated society of Namibia black women are struggling against colonialism and racial discrimi-



to be arrested, detained without trial or imprisoned. In the Bantustans, women are often tortured by South African soldiers to get information about SWAPO. "The South African soldiers based in the operational areas are raping women as old as 70 years and taking school girls by force," said a SWAPO woman activist.

The dominant reality of life in Namibia today is that it is a country at war. The police, numbering over 10,000, are a law unto themselves, women are victimised for any transgression of the pass laws, continually harassed for being in "white" areas and interrogated, tortured and imprisoned for any suspected involvement in the national liberation struggle.

nation as well as their oppression as women.

The war of national liberation makes unconventional demands on Namibian women. Apart from their involvement in political resistance inside Namibia, many women are among the 100,000 who flee their own country to live in the refugee camps in Angola and Zambia. In these refugee camps (or liberation settlements), the new Namibia is being built. Literacy programmes, health and para-medical services, nutrition education and cooperative child care centres are being set up.

Resources are scarce and here New Zealand women can help in a very practical way. As individuals, or as groups you

can send sanitary towels, tampons, underwear, blankets, cooking utensils, exercise books, pencils, or you can send cash.

SWAPO women have repeatedly called on the women of the world to support the Namibian women's struggle. If they get funds the above projects can be put into effect. You can also help by writing to the South African prime minister: T.W. Botha, Prime Minister, Union Building, Pretoria, South Africa insisting that South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia must cease and Namibian political prisoners be released.

I went to a symposium on the immediate independence of Namibia in Singapore in May this year, representing HART and the Aotearoa anti-apartheid movement. I became aware that the practical assistance for women and children in the liberation settlements, and in Namibia itself needed to be given by women the world over. Men in the United Nations and at governmental level will continue to think that their words alone will bring about change. For decades now, South Africa, with support from America, England and others has ignored the pleas of the international community.

Women were in the minority at the symposium — six of us and over 60 men. It frustrated and angered me to be the butt of sexual harassment from a number of male delegates. My complaint to the chairman brought laughter and excuses for the men — "They would not have seen a simple country woman from New Zealand before and you should take it as a compliment." Cultural and religious differences only exacerbated the problem, and with only three other women delegates staying at the hotel, social times became a nightmare which I avoided. At a cost of well over \$NZ 500,000, I feel the symposium was hardly more than a south east Asian holiday for the boys.

Women everywhere, our sisters in Namibia and South Africa are dying, old women in their twenties and thirties — are you going to continue to ignore their cries?

Donations of goods or money can be sent to Susan Nghidinwa, c/- Swapo Women's Council, Box 30577, Lusaka, Zambia.

SIS



FEMINISTS UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

New Plymouth Women's Centre celebrated its tenth year in July. Jenny Rankine, a member in 1979, looks back.

The beginnings of the New Plymouth Women's Centre go back to November 1974. It was then that Margaret Scott and Jill Woodd, calling themselves Women's Action Group, organised a public meeting in New Plymouth to protest against Gerald Wall's bill, which aimed to restrict abortions to public hospitals. Sixty people came, and interested women present went to the first meeting of Women's Action Group (WAG) a week later. The group decided to act as "a base for activities that will assist women to achieve independence."

The group met fortnightly in members' homes, holding discussions, organising a petition against the Wall bill, raising money and researching the need for a halfway house in the town. In April 1975, it asked the city council for an old unused two storey house to open a women's centre. They moved in in May, rostering the hours to keep it open from 10am to 3pm on weekdays.

Because of its pro-choice and other political activities, WAG became labelled as a radical feminist pro abortion lobby, and members felt this label would alienate some of the women they were attempting to reach. In August 1975, the Women's Action Committee decided to form the Women's Centre Project Committee to administer the centre. The centre became the New Plymouth International Women's Year project, and received the grand total

On a fine day, you can see Taranaki from Paritutu, a volcanic cone on New Plymouth's foreshore, where this banner flew on May 24, 1983. Photo by Taranaki Newspapers.



of \$750 in January 1976. The separation was so successful that the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child made the afternoon tea for the official opening of the centre.

Women's Action Group

In 1975 WAG commemorated suffrage day — 20 women marched through New Plymouth streets. "That was a good year!" says Elaine Gill, who has been involved with WAG and the centre for eight years. "The next year three of us with two children in pushchairs marched up and down Devon St with a ghetto blaster belting out Helen Reddy. It was a really good demo to get nine people out.

"When the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act was passed a backstreet abortionist came to New Plymouth. A policewoman made out she was pregnant, the woman was arrested and we held a three-day demo outside the courtroom calling for a woman's right to choose.

"In 1977 the Director of Social Welfare in New Plymouth locked himself in his office when he heard we were sending a deputation to protest the Minister of Social Welfare Bert Walker's smear campaign against solo mothers.

"WAG took stances on political issues. Women in the women's centre had very diverse views, from National voters to marxist feminists. There's always been that tension. Were we to promote the feminist movement or was it just a place women should feel comfortable?"

1975

- November — Because the land under the first house was going to be made into a carpark, the centre moved next door to an old house which cost \$184 a quarter in rates. From then on members continuously organised raffles, pledges, gala days, auctions, cake stalls, street day appeals, house cleaning and catering to keep the centre free from debt.

1976

- After the usual long discussions about structure beloved of feminists, the centre was incorporated.
- The committee obtained a temporary permit from the Social Welfare Department for a shoppers' creche over the holiday period, after boarding the verandah and some windows. A permanent permit was refused because struc-

tural changes would be needed which the centre could not afford.

● Throughout 1976 and 77, the committee and rosterers felt the centre was still underused as a drop in and tried to publicise it more. Bumper stickers — The Women's Centre Cares — were printed and a campaign of sponsored advertising in newspapers was started. Newsletters were sent out, and centre speakers talked to kindergarten mothers' clubs, Women's Division of Federated Farmers, and polytechnic students. Small ads went into the newspaper personal columns.

Radical Feminist or not?

Whether the centre is or should be a radical feminist organisation remained a topic for (sometimes heated) debate. When there have been conflict and resignations, it's been over radical feminism. The majority resigned because the centre wasn't feminist enough.

WAG is now defunct and few of its members are still active in the centre. In July 1981, the centre adopted a feminist perspective, based on that of the 1978 United Women's Convention organising committee. The actual day to day running of the centre, however, changed very little.

"I don't like the dichotomy of feminist versus non-feminist," said centre coordinator Karen Johns. "Immediately there's that suspicion. It's so easy to scare women away — I put women off because I use big words. I want to provide feminist-based support for women that's not just one-off counselling or problem-solving.

"If we wanted to be totally safe for all women, we wouldn't be at all political. And if we were an effective political group, women wouldn't drop in so much. At the moment it's finely balanced; we get 90-100 calls and visits a week and do some political work.

"I think we're offering qualitatively different support from traditional women's groups. We offer women choices and support changes they make. We get involved in changing the conditions women live under in New Plymouth from time to time, depending on the number of women willing to be active. This can only work well when the centre has an identity and a community of women who use it and could support any campaign. It's more successful that way than a group of four or five women with no connections who act in isolation.

"The women's centre has perhaps acted as a kind of maternalistic organisation, locked into a welfare mentality, rather than an action for change mentality. There has always been debate about whether it is feminist or not, but I believe that's the wrong question. The question is how best do we put feminist principles to work? How do we carry out our service to Taranaki women in a feminist way? My answer is to provide an atmosphere of acceptance, warmth and support for women, rather than asking them to measure themselves against a feminist yardstick before they can join."

"Overall the centre tries to take on the impossible and almost makes it. We manage to give support to an incredible number of women."

● **Broadsheet's** Womanvision photo display was mounted in the centre, and a women's theatre group visited from Auckland. Courses were held on yoga and



Jan Eggleton (top) and Lesley Olly with several other women turned their hands to scaffolding for the Taranaki Women's Music festival.

health.

● Rosterers began visiting court sessions and bringing the children of defendants and witnesses to the centre while their mothers were in court.

1977

● October — to make way for an extension to the carpark, the centre had to move again to their present rent-free self-contained flat in the centre of town, next to the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

1978

● An afternoon women's group called Forum was started in Bell Block, a suburb with lots of new housing, but few facilities. The centre advertised the group, looked after children and provided speakers for the first few meetings. The members took over and Forum flourished until the hall they were using was moved to a different site, too far from the creche.

● The centre organised a series of lectures on women and mental health. Topics like depression, relaxation and sexuality were covered by women professionals, and the response was overwhelming. Around 150 women came to each session, the most successful course the centre has ever run.

● Film and poetry evenings and an assertiveness training course were also organised.

1979

● New Outlooks for women course, about unemployment, law, education and assertiveness.

- Coping with the Disabled course
- Forty women came to a seminar on women and health, and a women's health group started meeting. Members helped start a Home Birth Association in New Plymouth.
- Forty women attended a menopause course run by a woman doctor.
- The centre employed its first paid worker, Marea Pedder, under the Temporary Employment Scheme. The number of women visiting the centre increased dramatically during her three months there.

Paid workers

"Sometimes I wonder if we should have a paid worker," said Karen. "If there's a collective of volunteers, everyone feels they're equally pulling their weight. They get strength from battling to survive, although morale can get really low. With a paid worker, there's a different dynamic. You get more things done, but there's a reliance on them rather than on the collective. That's a danger."

"I was a paid worker here when some of the present rosterers and unpaid collective members first joined. It was really hard for me to step down and say you're my employers, and for them to take responsibility for my job."

"I first got involved in a slow period," said Kathy, a volunteer, "when there was no one around, just Karen, I thought Karen was the women's centre. After a lot of committee meetings, I worked out what my role was. At that time, nobody definitely got asked to do things. As I got more and more involved in the day to day business, I started to feel I had the right to query what was going on. I had put the paid workers on a pedestal and didn't want to bother them."

1980/81

- A student was employed for the summer holidays to correlate written material.
- In June 1981 Iris Murray started her year as coordinator for the centre.
- Elaine Gill was employed to write a history of the centre and survey the needs of New Plymouth women.
- Take-A-Break sessions for mothers at home were first organised. So many women and pre-schoolers turned up that two groups started. They were renamed Womenrave, and continue to hold discussions, invite speakers, and arrange activities from jazzercise to scrabble. There is a creche for children.

1982.

- Rosterers rang 200 women in New Plymouth to find out how well known the centre was and plan the year's programme. They found that more than 60% of the women contacted knew of the centre and that the best way to get word of mouth advertising and bring women to the centre was to run courses. The most popular course ideas were slimming, assertiveness training and women and health.
- A weekend seminar on sexual violence was facilitated by Hamilton Rape Crisis women, and Sue Lytollis demonstrated self defence. As a result a group of women did some public speaking about sexual violence.

1983

- In February, a weekend women's music festival was held on Mountain Road, Lepperton. Women built scaffolding,

Rosterers

The majority of volunteers who fill the women's centre roster are married women raising pre-school children full-time at home. They come to the centre for company. Few enjoy helping to look after other women's children at the centre, because they spend their days doing that anyway. "We need someone permanently on the staff to look after kids," said Kathy. "At least twice a week there are too many kids in the place and no one can communicate. It was brought up at the AGM and we're starting creches for meetings."

The rosterers provide information and a non-directive listener for women who come in or ring the centre. By far the largest number of queries are about marriages — separation, domestic violence, divorce, custody and maintenance. Other common issues are housing, children, legal queries and health.

Ideally two women are rostered on at the same time, for social contact and practicality. One can mind children, make coffee and answer the phone while the other assists women who visit the centre. If there is only one woman on roster for any length of time, the number of volunteers decreases still further, because women miss the company and worry about their ability to handle anything that comes up.

When the first paid worker was employed, some rosterers felt superfluous, as most women came to the centre just to speak to her. So they left and worked in other community groups. The centre has since tried to make sure that paid workers don't take over the rosterers' jobs.

"The centre is like a stepping stone for a lot of women," said Robbie, who was a paid worker. "There's so much new information for them to use. Working there gives some women the confidence to apply for jobs they wouldn't have thought of before." "Women's lives are changed by being here in a women's environment," said Karen. "There's lots of good discussions here during the day." "The most exciting year of my life was in 1975 when I joined the centre," says Joy, a founder member. "I was doing completely new things there. There were all these little old ladies putting on our cashmere sweaters and pearls and going out lobbying and politicking."

The collective meeting used to report decisions to the rosterers, but now rosterers discuss the agenda before collective meetings and what they feel is brought up by the rosterers' representative.

folding, shifted pianos, dug loos, played and sang. The event was enriched by the unexpected performance of the American black women's reggae group Isis, which happened to be performing locally.

- To mark International Women's Day for Disarmament in May, the centre organised a well attended rally in the city mall.
- Karen Johns started work as coordinator, funded by Social Welfare Family Service and Lottery Board grants.

1984

- The centre's annual street day appeal turned into a Women's Centre Awareness Week, including videos, films and speakers, culminating in a Saturday seminar at which Sonja Davies spoke.

- Karen Johns ran three successful self esteem for women courses, one in the Urenui Hotel.
- The centre helped establish Taranaki's first independent women's refuge.

1985

- The centre employed three full-time paid workers on Labour Department schemes.
- Five seminars were run on the sexual abuse of women and children. Over 60 women came each time, and as a result a rape survivors group has been meeting regularly. Ngaire Smith, mother of a sexually abused daughter, spoke to more than 60 groups and helped make a video about the issue. The seminars improved the links between the police, hospital social workers, the Accident Compensation Corporation and the centre.
- A lesbian support group started meeting fortnightly at the centre, and producing its own newsletter.
- Women's centre members started women's studies courses at the Taranaki Polytechnic, following a training weekend with an Auckland women's studies tutor. New Plymouth will host the 1986 women's studies conference, only the second non-university town to do so.
- To celebrate surviving a decade, the centre held a dinner and dance in July for past members and supporters. More than 50 women had a good feed and an enjoyable evening.
- Since the August AGM — the centre has networked more with other community groups, and members recently went to a community workers' hui in Rotorua.

Women discussed racism at five Womenrave sessions.

- The centre changed from operating as a committee with elected office holders, to a collective making consensus decisions.

Consensus and Collective

"Everyone found consensus decisions hard to deal with at first, coming from a background of voting or having no say," said Kathy. "We often spent half an hour deciding on something, then scrapped it in the last five minutes. Or we'd decide something because we were too tired to discuss it any more. But since the AGM we've had job descriptions for each collective member. The collective is smaller and the same people come to meetings, and it's working really well."

"When we changed from a committee to a collective, every task became open slather for anyone," said Robbie. "It's given some women a lot more confidence. If they're daunted by facilitating or something, and don't think they can do it alone, they'll do it with someone else the first time, so there are more women working together of jobs now. There's less from each meeting left for the paid workers to do."

- In 1984, the centre was told it had to move again, to make way for a tax building. The centre is part of a trust raising money for a new community house, which they hope to occupy in 1986.□

Contact the centre at 66 Brougham St, P.O. Box 4030, New Plymouth, ph. 84957.

WOMEN'S PRESS

Authors Include:

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HODDER & STOUGHTON

WORK FOR CANTERBURY WOMEN

**Angela Yeoman, with help from Jan Andrews,
writes about the Christchurch Women's
Employment Trust.**

Last year a group of about fourteen women got together to discuss the problems associated with employment for women. As all members of the group work in areas to do with, or touching upon, the issue of unemployment, they began to realise that there were gaps that needed to be filled. They began a trust, itself as an affirmative action group, calling for alternative training options for women (both state and independently funded), as well as being a voice for women in employment. This, however, has quickly evolved to encompass much more.

There is need for an education programme about women in employment. This means public speaking as well as making submissions to the government calling for legislative changes where appropriate (The budget '85 task force, Access—a Labour government employment scheme, and school curriculum reform). Through a long term education process we hope to help raise the status of women's work. There needs to be widespread recognition of the fact that *all* women work, often doing one or two paid jobs on top of a full-time and demanding unpaid job within the home. It is also invariably women that provide essential community services on a voluntary and unpaid basis.

The issue of women's employment is extremely complex due to social constraints such as lack of readily available (and cheap!) child-care and, in many instances, a lack of flexible hours. Women often take work to fit in with school hours, or they work nights. Part-time work is often menial, repetitive and poorly paid as well as being insecure and with few prospects of advancement. If there are any cut-backs within a work place then part-timers get the chop first.

From this it seems that women have specific needs in relation to paid employment; needs largely related to their position in the family as principal child-carers. While women continue to fill this role without widely available child-care facilities and without recognition from, or the changing attitudes of, men they will need assistance to enable them to participate in the paid work force equally with (and alongside of) men.

How does the Trust go about giving this assistance? Its aims or objectives are centred around four main areas.

The first is the belief that more training opportunities should be available for women in non-traditional areas, such as the introduction to trades course available at the Christchurch Polytechnic. Courses such as these would help change the imbalance of opportunity in all areas of employment for women. We are also looking at setting up a garage/workshop. This is very much in the pipeline, but we'd be over the moon to hear from any unemployed women who are interested in learning mechanics. We are looking at a pre-apprenticeship course that would give women an edge when going into apprenticeships. Perhaps there are even some trained female mechanics out there who may have some old tools they could donate!

The second issue is that of providing support for women in all areas of employment and unemployment, about sexual harassment within the work place, racism, problems with pay and tax, and problems even with job definition and boundaries. If we don't have the information ourselves we can put women in touch with the right people to help. A vast network of people and organisations concerned with employment has been established within the Christchurch area. We hope to make our rooms open to unemployed/unwaged women who would like to meet, talk and drink coffee within a supportive environment. From my own experiences of being out of work I can really feel the depression of many of the women who ring the trust; that endless downer that kicks self-confi-

dence, enthusiasm and belief out from under your feet. I can feel how dark and lonely that time can be. So if anyone is interested, please get in touch.

Unfortunately, the majority of women who ring us think we have jobs to offer them. We don't. And that is heart-breaking. It feels wonderful to be pushing non-traditional areas of work for women, but that excludes the vast majority of women for whom the thought of fighting their way into new domains is frightening, daunting, and may be completely dismissed. It is so hard. It requires a change in attitudes of, and towards, men, women, institutions and families. Many of the women who ring want a job in an area of work traditionally defined as women's work; cleaning, clerical, serving in shops, sewing, factory work, light gardening, waitressing. From this, I believe that a job referral scheme for women would be invaluable. This would involve approaching employers who may have temporary work and then advertising for women to be involved as workers.

The third objective is to work with women to produce a more creative approach to employment and to encourage women to develop self-sufficiency skills. All over New Zealand groups of women and men are job-sharing and are forming co-operatives and collectives. These *are* working, though lack of funds can make this difficult. To me this seems a particularly viable way for women to provide their own support systems; to share child-care and to work the hours that suit their needs, life styles and capabilities. Right now we have an organic vegetable farm project starting up, using the Government Work Skills Development Programme. It is hoped that even-

tually the government scheme can be phased out, giving the women working there an opportunity to form their own co-operative.

The last aim is to share ideas and problems with women and to help make information on schemes, benefits, support groups, creches, unemployment centres and so on, more available.

A group of women in Christchurch are getting together at the moment to get a Women's Centre off the ground. This will hopefully provide a library, creche, relaxation room and the space for courses, as well as housing services such as Rape Crisis, women's employment and women's health.

The trust is presently working on a 1986 calendar showing women in non-traditional areas of work, and a newsletter about our activities is just being sent out. If anyone would like to order either, please let me know.

The trust and other women are also compiling a directory of women's services in all the trades and professions in Christchurch. We hope the directory will help women financially support other women, as well as offer information on training in the various trades and professions represented. We've decided to call the directory "Pink Pages".

I feel very excited about working with the Women's Employment Trust but am aware that the support I receive through my work is very often not available for women. The women that *do* hear about us and get in touch are usually confident enough (with a bit of support) to create or find work that is meaningful to them within a variety of traditional and untraditional frameworks. It is the women that *don't* hear about us, and probably wouldn't feel happy about calling in even if they did, that may find some strength or ideas from the support and assistance that we can offer. I don't profess, however, to have any knowledge about how to go about this.

Any women interested in sharing ideas, information or just wishing to talk can drop into or write to The Canterbury Women's Employment Trust, Chilton House, Hagley High School, PO Box 3084, Christchurch or phone Angela on 61-818.□

INVENTING the Family



Wedding, 1911

Margot Roth writes about King the myth-maker, breeding our sort, absentee fathers and other family matters.

The New Zealand family is a tricky subject to deal with, mainly because of the problems created by the lovely picture of The Family we carry in our heads. The portrait doesn't necessarily compute with the facts or with our own daily experiences as family members — as runaways from parental and/or marital constraints and as moral support for physically and emotionally battered members of other families. Often, we hear The Family described as the foundation or corner stone of society but, just as often, our own immediate version has a difficult shape that seems as solid as marshmallow. So, for much of our lives, many of us act as if we are trying to fit a very awkward piece into the wrong jig-saw.

Yet, contrary to what we hear, more people today, for in-

stance, are living in family households than was the case in 1926. And we need to be very clear about the constantly misleading references to the Good Old (pakeha) Days when The Family reigned supreme. The earliest colonisers could hardly wait to undermine, with moral homilies and legislation, the centuries' old Maori kinship system — in fact, the only truly "traditional" family in New Zealand.

An enthusiastic correspondent to the *New Zealand Herald* recently gave a rave review to a large article about five women with large families, the children numbering respectively seven, eleven, a preliminary five, eight and ten. In endorsing "family-sized families" the letter-writer quickly registered the nitty-gritty in hoping "... that this signifies a society awakening ... to the stark reality of the need



to provide a human race for the future."

Well, on the one hand, yes. But for New Zealand on the other hand, well, yes in a *way*. The point of encouraging bigger and better Happy Families has always been, basically, that we want lots more people of Our Sort and not too many of the Other Lot who breed without encouragement anyway. From last century the public tut-tutting noises about selfish small families have usually emanated from the better off pakeha family men who have dominated our society since they began arriving last century. Mind you, when you add up the hours they actually spend with members of their families, jointly and severally, their claims to the centrality of family and family life begin to sound hollow. Have you noticed that the "good family man" is regarded as a bonus for his lucky appendages, while there is no such creature as the "good family woman" because females don't have independent existences outside the family? Not if they're Real Women they don't — especially as government and private employers and welfare agencies would have to spend more if the female majority of the population (52%) were genuinely regarded as socially grown-up, rather than as inferior cheap labour plus a source of free upkeep of both family and non-family members.

And, of course, the more caretaking the merrier, as the *Herald* revealed in its big family article showing Super Mums having Fun Fun Fun. (Incidentally, I truly admire — and deeply envy — prolific mothers who cope so well and emerge smiling). They were all coupled mothers, as the *Herald* probably prefers not to report that the single parent family is the fastest growing family type (5% annual increase between 1976-1981) while over the last five year census period the married couple plus children household (the Real Thing) has declined to 39% of all private households. In the article four of the five were relatively comfortably off (as regards income and status) pakeha women. All have adult children, although Lady Beattie, wife of the departing Governor-General, still has one (boarding) schoolchild as well.

I suppose one could award Brownie points to the *Herald* reporter for including a 28 year old Maori woman with a low income and five offspring under the age of eight (with more planned), but it would have been much more telling and more logical to have sought out a Maori mother of a large family in the same sixtyish age group as the others, and to have compared the conditions in which she reared her children. But that might have introduced some non-*Herald* type questions about how class and income and race affect family members' health and survival rates; and how secure the privacy and sanctity of the family home is when the per capita income is low.

Actually we all know that the proper Kiwi family is best described in the following authoritative terms: "One can imagine a young family under the blue skies of the north,

playing on a crescent sweep of sand reddened by pohutukawa flowers . . . (or) in a comfortable farm home, with all the advantages of country life, yet never being too far from school, doctor or shopping centre. Thousands of families build a 'bach' or a 'crib', as a seaside or lakeside holiday retreat, and recreate themselves in the sun during the generous summer holidays. Most fathers are adaptable and are willing to take the head off the car, to pour concrete, to hang a door, or to wash the dishes. New Zealand mothers grow the flowers before arranging them. They bring in the sheep, or paint the cottage, play hostess to a dinner party, or cook scones on a primus stove."

I have called this fairy-tale authoritative because it comes from Dr Neil Begg, author of the 1970 revised version of the Plunket Society's handbook on child-rearing: *The Child and His Family*. Begg apologises for talking about the child as "he" all the time — it's merely to distinguish the infant from "she" who is of course his mother. Luckily, Father's "he" remains unconfused because he keeps his distance except to "encourage," to "help" or for "constant reassurance"(!) or to make it obvious "that, despite the new circumstances (i.e. the wee one) his love for his wife has never been greater." Aw gee Doc, *honest*? Mind you, the good doctor has a very pursed lips approach to contraception and deplores the availability of the pill to the unmarried.

Or even, really, the married: "... a sacred and intimate act of procreation is being divorced from its productive purpose, and without this it is not specifically, nor necessarily, a part of married life ..." So when you rise from your chaste couch for the 2am feed, run that idea up the nearest flagpole (or bedpost) and see how it flutters.

In this relatively brief article I'm actually using the Plunket perspective as shorthand for prevailing pakeha images of The New Zealand Family which turn women into a-sexual baby containers, canteens and caretakers. Plunket-type mothers were the vogue well before Dr (later Sir) Truby King hit the headlines by getting the wife of the then Governor-General in 1907 to be a patron of his new organisation aimed at saving the babies by helping (i.e. controlling) the mothers.

For example, a visiting French traveller whose reminiscences were published in 1866, praised a German missionary family who all suffered from the harsh cruelty of the husband/father. In her *Hell and High Water* Sheila Natusch translates his nauseating impression: "...we made the acquaintance of our host's family ... Scrupulous observer of the sacred rules of matrimony, he has seen himself reborn in the shape of ... seven sons and two daughters ... With ... (his wife) any qualities of brilliance effaced themselves before those of utility; quite content to occupy second place ... as nature decrees in the case of the wife, she was obliging in such a good-humoured way that her very obedience seemed her pleasure. Add to her



other virtues that of fecundity, and we have the very image of a model wife in a new country, supremely adaptable, that the home may run smoothly."

About half a century later Dr King was reproducing these sentiments as New Thought. He believed that girls needed to be trained for "... motherhood and domesticity and boys for mental and martial pursuits. That was the natural way ... and medical science had swiftly revealed the truth." Funny that — how all kinds of science and scientists have always tended to reveal the truth most likely to uphold the status of themselves and the quo. Dr K. and his colleague, prominent obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Ferdinand Batchelor, were true men of science who totally opposed higher education for women, especially those (cheeky things!) aspiring to be doctors. Apart from the scientifically proven fact of their inadequacy as students, all the intellectual activity was likely to ruin their reproductive organs.

Little change to the true Plunket Mum and The Family seems to have occurred by 1970 when Begg (yet another male medical expert) produced the official line, which was reprinted in 1972 and again in 1974 — so it's hardly antique. The image is definitely non-Maori — "When a friend asked me if I had included a special section for the Maori or Island mother and child I was horrified" wrote Begg in his foreword. "Race and colour are irrelevant." Obviously, when "Maori or Island" are lumped together into an un-specific mass of non-Pakeha nationalities; and when a scientific medical man blithely ignores the higher infant mortality, shorter life expectancy and poorer health of the Maori compared with the non-Maori. So did everyone else: Maori statistics were not included in with our vital statistics until the 1960s, to make the official version of our population whiter than white.

The biddable pakeha Plunket Mum has a visible husband, although a respectable widow is marginally acceptable. We should remember to give credit to individual Plunket nurses who have provided lifelines for inexperienced, isolated mothers; however, we should also note that the principles which underlie Plunket regimes were based on the need to raise healthy soldiers, obedient to authority, with domesticated camp followers getting in behind. The gold-braided officer class who gave the orders consisted of King and his ilk, with devoted female lieutenants jostling for places at prestigious Plunket balls while the nurse sergeants imposed the orders on the Other Ranks. None had a very clear idea of the realities of cultural differences, poverty, rotten housing and domestic violence facing many mothers, who were blamed for not following the instructions.

Like so many culture-bearers, Begg chirped away about Mummy the Moron, dependent on Father like the other children, for whom he "... becomes the main interpreter of matters beyond the immediate horizons of the

family." The Plunket view was widespread, as shown by the 1950s decision of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children (founded in 1893) to offer, instead, Protection of Home and Family. Returned soldiers, obviously, had earned a haven in the strengthened home and family. They and their jobs deserved protection from any unwomanly behaviour on the part of returned, restless Rosie the Riveters who might need a bit of knocking back into shape to fit their frilly pinnies.

Increasing emphasis on the importance of home and family inevitably raised the profile of their head and his activities. The cheery Plunket assumption that all fathers participate fully in child-rearing and helpful housework — research shows this is the exception rather than the rule — has, over the years, been translated into the term "parenting." This conceals the reality of women's responsibility for family welfare and repeats the myth that proper women have co-operative heads of households who support them economically and emotionally (from Miss Right to Mrs Right)

"Parenting" or the ideology of equal marital responsibility has gradually become accepted as fact, then turned into a form of reality through social policy. For instance, the government's latest proposal for the Family Care package says that where there are two parents, each will get half the package on the grounds that parents share responsibility for children equally. Yes Minister

Now while this equality may ensure that Father is not deprived of his fair share it doesn't really displace the Plunket dogma that for a woman, any task is less important than "that of wife, homemaker and mother." This stems from another favourite Plunket fantasy about the "traditional" pakeha family which never really existed — from 1840 onwards there were always lots of one-parent families and ex-nuptial conceptions, just as there are today.

But the picture of the unwaged wife, h. and m., prettily arranging flowers on the sheep's back is a narrative of privilege. Following is a description of a "traditional" Dunedin family which the secretary of the Operative Tailors' Society gave to the 1878 Commission of Enquiry into the Employment of Females Act "I know of one case in which the mother works at a factory, her husband in a brewery, the eldest son also out at work, while two or three young ones, the youngest five or six years, are left to take care of themselves. The husband is a most inveterate drunkard, and I have known him to turn his wife out into the street after she has been working hard all day for the support of the family."

One of the worst aspects of the family myth-makers is the way they have co-opted history by claiming that large families with Big Daddies and fertile Little Mummies at home were always the happy norm. We need to reclaim the real lives and labour of our forebears. □

MOTHERHOOD

HATING IT AND LOVING IT



We have all, as women, translated the fantasy ideas about the family that Margot writes about into expectations of ourselves — as she shows, it is a woman's responsibility to make The Family a lovely place to be. Trying to make the reality — what actually happens, how we behave and how we feel about it — mesh with our own and other peoples' expectations is a familiar struggle to many of us.

*Every woman we spoke to talked about the joys of being a mother. And about the tiredness, the guilt, the frustrations. We became aware of the contradiction between women's positive feelings about relationships with their children and the demands of the task of mothering. We became aware, too, that some mothers **have** to see their work as fulfilling, otherwise their whole lives are denied.*

Mothers are not a homogenous group. Differences in race, class and sexual orientation affect their experiences. So do personal circumstances, temperament (their own and their children's) and their beliefs and expectations. The women speak only for themselves and there are many more whose experience will be different. We hope to do a future article on alternative families.

Peta Joyce and Pat Rosier

New Mother Support Groups began in Well-

ington in 1979. Trish Dempsey, Fay Habib, and Ann Mowbray started New Mother Support Groups in Auckland about two years ago; now there are two paid workers and about seventy trained facilitators who are able to run groups in different areas of Auckland. Focussing on women with children under two, each group has two facilitators, both mothers who have had a short training in group skills and organisation. A creche is run at the same time. Groups meet for eight weeks, choosing from a list of discussion topics such as birth experiences, changes in relationships, no longer being part of the paid workforce, body image, and sexuality. Women often continue to meet afterwards for mutual support.

Trish Dempsey says of the groups; "What is unique is that the focus is on the *mothers'* feelings, not about the baby. Women don't realise that a lot of their feelings are

universal, they get into this panic state of 'I'm the only one, and I'm not doing it properly'. It's only through mothers coming together and actually talking about their experiences that we can get another type of consciousness".

The groups provide a listening and caring environment, there are no "shoulds" or judgments. Having the choice of a creche says to mothers that it's okay to leave their babies. Trish sees other issues arising too; "We go into motherhood untrained, we assume we have a choice, but do we when we don't know what's involved? It's 24 hours of unpaid work — we have very little energy left to look after ourselves.

"In the groups we do a media exercise where we look at the difference between how we are portrayed — as beautiful white middle class women with neat and tidy homes and kids, always cooking wonderful meals with all the latest appliances — and how we are. It's no wonder that so many women lose so much confidence after having children and take so long to regain it. Then there's the new image of the career women. There's this incredible pressure to be "supermum".

We're always thinking about how we can't cope with all the demands, feeling inadequate, instead of questioning who *could* cope with demands for 24 hours a day. The groups really need to be neighbourhood based — I'm constantly surprised at how few women with young children have access to cars during the day when they need them most. I would like to see more support groups here in South Auckland but it is a white middle class concept to be part of such groups.

"Society has this attitude of 'you've made your bed, now lie on it'. There's a certain amount we can do in groups and for each other and ourselves, but until society changes, until children are seen as something positive to put energy into, and that everyone can do it rather than just mothers, it's going to be like that."

Contact Trish Dempsey or Fay Habib in 788672, or write to New Mothers Support Groups Inc, PO Box 39074, Auckland West. Women from any part of New Zealand who would like to start a group can get a kit from Wellington P.O. Box 9600, Ph 847-163.

Anna Green lives in West Auckland and works and

studies at Auckland University.

"Until I turned thirty I didn't think much at all about having children; then, suddenly, it seemed to become a

biological imperative and I can't explain why. It was not to be an easy process: my first baby was stillborn, the second arrived premature but alive and well in 1982, my daughter Polly.

"One thing I remember very clearly was the quite divergent response of many friends and acquaintances. Those without children ignored the event and subsequently showed no interest at all. More generally, though, the re-

"WHAT MEANING DOES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HAVE WHEN WOMEN WITH CHILDREN CANNOT MEET CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO JOBS?"

sponse was the opposite. Whatever or whoever I had been before Polly's birth, whatever aspirations I might have had for myself, vanished like the confusion of an early morning mist in the clear sunlight of motherhood; they no longer had any relevance at all. The assumptions were that I would stay at home, join playcentre, and find my social group with other mothers. Much as I like the company of women, other mothers were often ten years younger and we had little else but the babies in common. I found it all horribly stifling, and felt bereft in the middle of these two extremes.

"There had never been much doubt in my mind that I would go on working on the post-graduate degree I had already begun, and this year I have been teaching half time as well. But I was privileged in that I had a scholarship which enabled me to continue, and pay for child care. It would have been virtually impossible to do so without it. At the time I remember feeling very optimistic, that the combination of study and having Polly would be interesting and fun. And despite the subsequent hassles I have never regretted having a child; Polly has been a joy, and has opened up the whole world of childhood to me.

"For the past three years Polly has been going to the university creche for four or five hours a day, the maximum allowed as it is an hourly creche. Her father and I share the care of her outside these hours, and at times it feels like the perfect arrangement. At others, when the demands of research, writing and teaching are pressing upon me, I feel frustrated knowing that I simply still do not have enough hours to do all my work. What would have helped would have been a wider range of child care facilities at the university, and to try to achieve this I became active in a student group pressuring for more and varied child care on campus. In conjunction with members of the Association of University Teachers this has been reasonably successful, and we hope by the middle of next year to have doubled the number of hourly places, and perhaps have a full day care centre too.

"The existing university creche is a wonderful place, and I have been incredibly fortunate in being able to place my daughter in such a good environment. She has always loved it, and has acquired social skills and had stimulating experiences I doubt I could ever have provided. Not only have we both benefitted, but the creche has been my touchstone of support for child-rearing. I have nothing but

gratitude and affection for the women staff there who put in so much for comparatively little financial reward.

"Along with the practical assistance of good child care, a massive shift in attitudes is needed. The demands of work and child-rearing are often in sharp conflict, and until job requirements are more flexible I really believe equal opportunity will remain a myth for most women. What real meaning does equality of opportunity have when women with children frequently cannot meet the conditions attached to jobs? As it is, the choice for many women is still one of decent paid employment or motherhood. I suppose that I am trying to challenge that, but I still don't know if I can succeed.



Anna Green

Trish Dempsey is a lesbian, and mother of a two year old daughter.

"I always wanted to have a child. I had a vague plan about having a child when I was about thirty, but when I was twenty five I found myself thinking and talking about it more and more and it felt like the time was right. When she was small, I was lucky I had a job where I could take her with me. It has been very stressful to be working and mothering at the same time. But it felt important to me as a single mother to get that input, and I could see she was getting positives from the social contact. Still I often felt guilty and stressed about combining her needs with working; for example, waking her up from a sleep when I had to go to work.

"That first year was particularly difficult, with friendships changing as well as financial and other pressures. A lot of that has been resolved, or at least become clearer in the last year. I hadn't realised how big an impact being a mother would have on my lifestyle. I no longer had the time and energy to maintain either the social contacts or the more intense one-to-one — relationships I'd had before.

"Now I find that a lot of the difficulties of that first year have eased, and friendships feel more relaxed. Spending time with other mothers has been important, validating my feelings as a mother, that I'm doing it "okay". Sometimes it's tough having to make all the decisions by yourself.

"I've enjoyed seeing other women who love her build special relationships with her; that's something I really enjoy about being a lesbian mother outside of the nuclear family set-up. However the issue of lack of support has been an ongoing one. I've often felt angry and frustrated about that, both because of feeling let down, and because of not always being able to ask for what I needed. I've had

"I SOMETIMES FEEL INCREDIBLE PRESSURE TO BE 'SUPERMUM'"

to change my expectations a lot.

"But I've always really enjoyed her, watching her developing her own personality, one I really like, her love of life, her independence, her enthusiasm. It's exciting to be around. She's given my life another focus, brought new dimensions.

Marie Hibbs with Marama
Photo by Gil Hanly



Marie Hibbs married Les at 19. They were young

and innocent and found it hard to adjust to being married. When Marie's father died it left a big gap in her life and her marriage so, at 22, she decided to have a child.

"When Marama was born my life changed. In Maori families the first child born is believed to take on the attributes of the person who died. Because Marama was so important in my family, we could focus on her, and our marriage got better. She brought both families closer too. She was a good baby, she didn't sleep much, she was always alert and bright, but she didn't cry much. She slept with us, did everything with us. It was all new and exciting, and I never really grew out of that with her. I took the first year off work, and Les took the second year off. I enjoyed going back to work, but discovered that things were happening with Marama that I wasn't really part of — I worried I'd grow apart from her.

"The third year I became pregnant with Tui and we went to live in the country. I had to devote all my time to the children — it was lonely and desolate stuck inside all the time, I only went outside for walks. After my first year in the country I started to make friends, and I decided it was stupid being a mother and nothing else, so I started correspondence courses in Maori. I also started a rural preschool. It was not only for the kids but the mothers too, we taught each other skills like weaving. I really need creativity, to express myself in some way.

"When we came back to the city I was lonely again be-

cause there were few families with small children. I was told that Mission Bay kindergarten was full — I'm sure some racism was involved — they looked at me and said where do you come from, shouldn't you be at Orakei? So I went to Orakei kindergarten and used that to make friends. There were too few facilities and too many of us at home, so I did voluntary community work again. Then I had to go back to paid work. I wish I didn't have to; full time work is too demanding, and I feel guilty. It concerns me that through me working, the children could be put at risk.

"In my work I see so little respect for people and things, respect in the way you approach a stranger, treat a friend. I'm sensitive towards that with my children. I wish I had heaps of money so I didn't have to work. I can't do things like study, or varsity — that bugs me. I would love to have time to be creative. I like helping in the community, I could be my own boss with voluntary work.

"I wanted to have my family before I was 25 — I wanted to be young so that I could do things with them. We've always taken the children with us, never excluded them from weddings, funerals, hui. We took them on the Land March too, and to live at Bastion Point. Les (he's pakeha) has helped me to carry on family traditions, if he wasn't like he is, there would be conflict in this family. Pakeha mothers are allowed to get uptight and have suburban neurosis, but Maori mothers are supposed to be wonderful mothers and have large families — what an image to live up to.

Lee Woolsey with John Arthur
and Sonny Bill
Photo by Gil Hanly



Lee Woolsey was 22 and living in Australia when

she had John Arthur. She returned to New Zealand to be closer to her family, and found it a real financial struggle. "Every cent counts, you really appreciate having a roof over your head and food on the table; life's really hard in New Zealand.

In Australia I was sick of going out, the night life, so I stayed at home and wanted something more to fulfill my life. I thought it would be nice to have a baby, to see something I'd created myself. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be, I was excited about dressing the baby up, but there was a lot more to it than that. Sometimes I get so mad and frustrated, I could smack him 24 hours a day, but it makes no difference. You have to have a lot of patience

— anyone who says motherhood is wonderful is talking rubbish. I wanted a brother or sister for John Arthur; Sonny Bill came too soon really, but perhaps if I'd waited another five years I couldn't have handled it.

**"ANYONE WHO SAYS
MOTHERHOOD IS
WONDERFUL IS TALKING
RUBBISH."**

It's going to be harder to bring up boys, because I want them to be able to cook and clean, I don't want them to go from one Mummy to another. More people are thinking like this, but it's hard because of the influence of television, and other people. My partner John is Samoan. He cooks and provides for me, he's fair and quite gentle to the kids; he's a good influence for the boys. I'd like them to learn to speak to their grandmother in Samoan, they should be able to learn Maori and Samoan in school. Samoan children all have to help in the family — I like that. John's family is so helpful, there's thirteen of them, the children are there to help, especially when I was pregnant, I was treated really special. My life's a bit too fulfilled now. If I were single I'd have trendy clothes, sit back and be cool and collected, but when you're a mother you've got no choice, you've got apple or drink spilt over you. There's still a part of me that I know is me, and I've got my own personality. You can't devote your whole life to them, or you'd go mad. I work 24 hours a day because I've got kids — it's probably harder work than a lot of men do.

I'd like to have had a good education, maybe I'll go to night school later. Things should be shared, more men should wake up and grow up and share responsibility with women, even working outside the home. I want John Arthur to help me when he grows older, but I don't want to take his childhood away from him. There's no way in the world that I'd ever regret having them, they're part of me — how could you not love something that's part of you?

**Jill Hodgson is a Christian,
and was studying for a**

law degree in England when she married and started her family straight away, at 21. "When we got married, I wanted to have his children, that was the most important thing to me. I didn't think about motherhood, it was a fulfilment of our love, not to create another person.

"I found law wasn't for me, it was what my family wanted for me, so I went nursing. I was on night duty and pregnant, it wasn't good for me or the baby, so I asked to change to days, but I was refused. It wasn't approved of that I was married or pregnant, so I left. That was the beginning of motherhood for me, I realised that it was really precious. I enjoyed pregnancy, and I had nice little babies that popped out easily, like shelling peas. But I was totally unprepared — because I was a nurse, I was constantly expecting the babies to be ill — I didn't know what a healthy baby was.

"Suddenly having to think about two people, to give away so much of what you'd always accepted was hard. There was a lot of joy too, but other times when I felt like

murdering them. I was so tired, having to do everything for the baby, I felt really pressured and at the end of my tether. My mother had brain tumours and used to hit us, it warned me not to abuse the kids, so I would just put them down and go out of the room. I had a wonderful mother-in-law, and my husband was supportive too. I found I really loved children, sometimes I prefer being with children to adults, they're so open and honest. Then came a time when my husband was unable to work, so I realised I'd have to do something to support us, so I went into kindergarten training.

"We became Christians at that time too. It was a wonderful time, it helped me to take my mind off myself and learn to help others. It made me use my mind academically. I did interesting things at college that the children enjoyed too. I used to get up at five in the morning to study, it was really hard for them when I was tired, but we all grew through it. Then I went teaching — it was exhausting, I couldn't cope with being a teacher and a mother, and my family suffered. I was able to use my faith in a practical way and work part time at the church kindergarten. And then I felt I was to stop doing that — I was shocked — god was saying to me "you love this, can you do without it?" I found it very hard to be at home alone, but it's been a good learning experience. Now I have peace, and trust that god will show me the way.

"Before I was a Christian my family had to fit in, but now they are more important. What's right for me has to be right for all of us. I have a new love for my husband and children. As I'm doing things for my children I'm doing it for god — it's the most precious job he can give me. I would dearly have loved to have been a Christian all my marriage — I really need god's help, as a mother. All those hassles of hopelessness at certain times need never have been, Self was on the throne then."

**Lynn Summerville's two
older children were aged**

two and a half years and five months when she lost her sight due to detachment of the retina. Newly blind people can attend a three month residential rehabilitation course at Homai College. This is seldom practical for mothers and it wasn't for Lynn, — who had already been away from her children for two months while she was in hospital for eye surgery. Most blind mothers therefore have no help at all — they're just left to get on with it. Lynn had home help (paid for by the department of social welfare and the blind foundation) for three months, but only because her surgeon ordered it as her eye was haemorrhaging, and she was unable to bend her head down. She spoke to Susan Grimsdell.

"When I lost my sight it was the fact that I had children that gave me the motivation to keep going. I knew I was important to them and needed by them. Many people, particularly men who have to give up their careers, become very depressed and feel they have lost everything, but for me having the children helped me through those first weeks and months. I was forced to become resourceful, to devise ways of managing all the tasks I had to do, and the success that I had gave me a sense of achievement and self-worth.

"I had two more children after I became blind. The birth of my third child was not a good experience. She had to be

left in intensive care at National Women's Hospital for ten days after she was born. I was in a room by myself on the second floor and had to make my way to her on a different floor several times a day to feed her. This used to take me a long time because I had to find someone to take me there, someone to help me with feeding and someone to take me back. The nurses were always so busy that I ended up waiting around for ages. People seemed to forget I was there. I had nothing to do in my hospital room — I couldn't read and there was no one to talk to. I felt so isolated. It was like being in prison.

"People seem surprised when I say I have children. They seem to think that because I'm blind I can't possibly cope as a mother. There are some things that are hard for me. Instead of just glancing up to check up on the children I have to go over to them and feel what they're doing. It distresses me that I can't admire their paintings, or respond when they see something that excites them. They have to describe everything so that I can share their experiences. I don't think this bothers them, but it does me.

"My feeling about motherhood is that it's the most important and fulfilling thing in the world. I think that raising human beings is the most important work of all."



Robin Tulloch with Ben

Robin Tulloch was 35 when she had Ben, who

is now ten months old. She had been a dental nurse, working at Grey Lynn Primary School, and active in the Public Service Association and the Labour Party. Robin lives in Grey Lynn with Ben and his father.

She says of discovering she was pregnant that it was "a terrible shock" because she had not planned it. The pregnancy was well advanced before she knew of it, as the stress of being a candidate in the July '84 general election had affected her menstruation pattern. But it meant that she felt she had a three-month pregnancy and that was a "wonderful physical and mental experience, I had such good health."

"I'm surprised at how well I've coped. I knew that the biology — the experience of birth and breastfeeding — would look after me tuning into a baby. There is the bitter and sweet of the experience. Child rearing has made me feel very frustrated, angry and joyful. The pleasure of

watching Ben achieve and the raw energy he has fills me with joy and encourages me. Because I watch his growth and achievement so closely, there is a danger of losing sight of where he is now. It's important to value the moments of him being where he is at.

"I have felt real anger at having my sleep disturbed. I gave up all-night parties years ago and I have really resented being woken. A couple of times I've realised later that he woke because he wasn't well, and then I've felt guilty about the anger.

"I thought motherhood would change me — older women said to me that it would — and it hasn't changed me at all. I'm still basically me. Having Ben has added another strand to my life. What has been difficult has been adjusting to the reality of suddenly being unpaid. It has brought home to me how much status in our society is based on the money you earn. I have felt powerless because of the lack of money that I feel is my own.

My situation is that my partner is working very long hours and I am involved with the full running of the house and of the child care. So that my partner can earn the money we require my input is to provide the human content in our lives. I organise the animals, the fun, the outings, the food, the cleaning and the washing and the servicing of my partner. I make the home a happy place.

I know as a feminist that my work at home is valuable, but coping at that gut level with being dependent on someone else for money and that my contribution is not recognised by society as a whole makes me feel very angry and a more determined feminist than ever. I also feel angry that his opportunity to earn is much greater than mine.

"Biologically I'm tuned into a parasite that pulls on my time first, before anything else. However much I know in my head that parenting is learnt and men *can* do it well, I feel that I'm more in touch with Ben than anyone else. It's almost like no-one else could care for him as well as I do — but I know that's ridiculous. I know that children don't have to have their mothers as primary nurturers. But there's a conflict between what I know and what I feel.

"My ideal would be to have my own income. I feel that my partner has more right to the money than I do and that really pisses me off. But I still have the feeling that it's 'his' money.

"In the long term I want Ben to grow up happy and independent. And I want to retain my identity, as Robin, not as Mum."

A group of women, all mothers of young

children and living in Torbay on Auckland's North Shore, have formed themselves into the Torbay Community Support Group. Pat Rosier spoke to four of them, Marin Adams, Stephanie Smith, Sharon Francis and Jill Henry.

The group began by getting together to prepare ideas to present to a seminar that was to be held on post-natal distress. The seminar promised a dialogue between mothers feeling distress and professional helpers. The women developed the view that being a mother is so demanding that it is normal to experience periods of not coping.

"Women have the sudden responsibility of a totally de-

pendent human being with the expectations of family, relatives and friends to meet, under conditions of chronic fatigue imposed by unending weeks of broken sleep, with the need to learn a complete new repertoire of skills involved in the care and nurturing of an infant, plus the physical discomfort of the obstetric procedure of birth, the hormonal changes that render one emotionally volatile, and with long periods in the solitary confinement of one's house and no respite or prospect of it for days, weeks and possibly months on end."

They were disappointed with the seminar. The professionals made them feel like passive recipients of services decided upon by others. The main message put across was that post-natal distress in mothers was some sort of illness that no-one really understood and the treatment was counselling, drugs or breaks away from the baby.

The women did not feel that their concern for adequate rest, a reasonable workload and the emotional needs of

**"MOTHERS ARE
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'JUST A MOTHER'..."**

the mother and baby were listened to. They felt powerless in the face of being told what they needed.

With help from the Mental Health Foundation they did a study of the services in their area for mothers who were in some way not coping after the birth of a child. Thirty women were interviewed. Of these 23 said they had had problems coping at some stage when they had a child under three. The service agencies were also surveyed, to find out what they were offering. Both groups were asked to say what they saw as gaps in the services provided.

The startling finding from the survey was that what mothers thought would be helpful — practical help in the home, child-care in a range of forms, activities for mothers with creche facilities, playgroups — was not the same as the agencies' perceptions of their most important functions — moral support, recognition, encouragement. "Finding practical help in the form of housework and childcare inside or outside the home is much more difficult than finding advice, encouragement, company or counselling. Unsurprisingly, volunteers in social service agencies are more willing to befriend than wash nappies or take children for an afternoon ... Many services for mothers have the welfare of the child as a primary concern — mothers sometimes feel that their own problems managing are not being recognised by the services."

The group's impressions at the seminar were confirmed in the study: the helping services see post-natal distress as "abnormal," a clinical condition needing psychological help; the Torbay women see it as a response to the task of mothering without enough resources. And the treatment of the mothers is a symptom of attitudes towards women. "In looking at the problems of the hospital doctors who have been protesting at their impossible conditions and hours of work no-one has

suggested that counselling services be provided or pretended that moral support and encouragement is all that is required".

The mothers in the study had better living conditions and family incomes than the New Zealand average so it may be that nationally the percentage of women who have trouble coping at times is higher than the 72% shown by the study.

Establishing causes was not part of the study but the women have identified some assumptions that they see as underlying causes of the low status of mothers: mothers don't "work" so they are not entitled to sick leave, holidays, wages; mothers are seen as a burden to the state (the raising of livestock is seen as productive in ways that bringing up children is not); men are entitled to be looked after, but not women; mothers are neurotic, they should be able to cope with "only" looking after home and baby, their inadequacy is the problem; the work women do in the home is not important; women are appendages to their husbands rather than citizens of independent status.

They argue that because the service agencies also act on these assumptions the women who need their services are excluded from decisions about how to use government money.

We talked about feminism. The women felt that the pressure on mothers to go back to work is another way to undervalue motherhood. They were aware that for some women it is not a choice but an economic necessity to combine paid work and motherhood. But, "mothers are always wrong," said one, "if you go to work you're neglecting your children and if you don't you're 'just a mother', a cabbage". They want being a mother to be valued, by society as a whole, and by feminists, as they agree with many of the ideas of feminism.

Physical and emotional bonding, particularly through breast feeding, is for them a real possibility and one they value. "Some children need kangaroo mothering, but there is no support, either practical or ideological for this." While they reject the myth that the only function for a woman is mothering, they also see a prescription developing (also among feminists) that you should leave the child. "Remember, though, that we are talking about a relatively short period, say the first two years."

"I think of myself as a feminist and feel embarrassed about agreeing with christian fundamentalist women in some of the things they say about looking after babies. We would like to see feminists talk more about being a mother of young babies. But it's really hard to talk honestly about these things because it so quickly hooks into our own emotional experiences."

"In the career situation I felt like Eliza Doolittle — I was filling other people's expectations. Having children has plugged me into something that really gives my life meaning." "I see my life as a series of seasons." "I feel like I never used my brain before I was a mother." "Motherhood frees your mind for activism."

Talking with these women made me acutely aware of the dilemmas and contradictions of "mother" as a role and an activity. For me motherhood turned my brain to mush (for a few years) and inhibited activism, yet for these women, and undoubtedly others, the opposite is true. So, any prescription of what motherhood should be will exclude some women. Maybe, if support services, childcare and an accepting society could be achieved then women *could* make their own choices. □

CHILDCARE DILEMMAS

BY HELEN COOK

When motherhood the relationship is buried under motherhood the 24 hour job, women should have good childcare available. Helen Cook looks at why it isn't easy.



From the cover of Broadsheet January 1977, which had an article on daycare.

Over the past century feminist women have sought support for women involved with the care and education of young children. As the ideological and political perspective of feminism has changed so have ideas about what women *ought* to be doing, and how children *ought* to be brought up.

Changing political and economic climates have also created new demands and opportunities for women. In the late 19th century the kindergarten movement began its slow growth, providing an early childhood education and a half day respite to mothers from at least one child. In the 1930's—40's several community creches were established in city centres to provide casual childcare in a progressive educational setting.

During world war two the playcentre movement began, initially as a service to give support and leisure time to mothers whose husbands were at the war. Gradually a few charitable and private centres were established to provide a childcare service, for women on their own. Throughout the century the many women involved in establishing these services had visions of a better society, and a better life for women, particularly in their role as mothers.

Kindergarten and playcentre services fitted neatly with the ideology that mothers should stay at home with their children. They were also an outlet for women in terms of community activism, new consciousness, and providing time away from children. These services expanded rapidly in the postwar

Childcare and motherhood should not be a constraint on women's activities beyond the home.

period. Childcare services also grew, but in a climate that found the idea of mother-child separation unacceptable. Those women who were forced into using it were seen

There has always been a large group of women who have desperate needs for childcare but few resources to pay for it.

to be not respectable: single, separated, or divorced mothers. That these women were often desperate in their efforts to keep their children was not perceived as being a credit to them. Immediately after world war two there had been demands by women for nursery schools and creches but these were never met. The 1947 Bailey Report on preschool education came down firmly against Government support with the reasoning that: *"Young children spending the whole day from Monday to Friday in a nursery school are deprived of vital experiences that only a normal home can provide,"*

The demand for part time childcare was partly met by the growth in the playcentre and kindergarten movements. While these services meshed with the ideal of a wife and mother in the home, there were many women whose lives could not be arranged so neatly. It was to meet their needs that childcare continued to grow, but within the framework of a service for the needy, "those unfortunate women who had to work." By the seventies it was obvious that women with young children were in the work force for reasons which did not necessarily fit the 'welfare' framework. A new wave of feminism had again picked up the cause of childcare, and adequate funding for it became a theme of many new women's organisations. This later expression of feminism brought a new dimension into the politics of childcare.

- That women's childrearing responsibility was a barrier to our taking an equal part in society.
- That childcare and motherhood should not be a constraint on women's activities beyond the home.
- That children did not necessarily need fulltime mothering. This was

revealed as a myth which had been used to justify a system which gave power to men by limiting women to a servicing role.

The grafting of these ideas onto an existing battle for better childcare was not easy, or particularly successful. The demands for childcare support had been heating up during the 60's and early seventies, but were mainly presented within a welfare framework. Only the 'welfare' argument met with success.

Any childcare activist dealing with Government/Local Bodies/Charitable Trusts etc. had to accept that the welfare philosophy had to be kept to the fore of any childcare debate; or at least the plight of children had to be the focus rather than women. Again and again, this approach was successful at dragging out funds from various sources to establish the many new community centres of the seventies. Many feminists were uncomfortable with this strategy which may explain why feminist organisations took up the cause of childcare, but feminist women were rather sparse on the ground when it came to the "battlefront" itself. In practice however, the differences between traditional and feminist arguments for childcare became submerged under the realities of running a childcare centre. Two contradictions have emerged from this co-existence.

Firstly the concept of class. The welfare philosophy of childcare has been overplayed by childcare activists in order to get money — however! Yet there has always been a large group of women who have desperate needs for childcare but few resources to pay for it. The feminist demands of the early seventies for equality, self fulfilment and careers did not mean much to women who were (and still are) struggling to feed, clothe and house their children. The new feminist ideals were taken up by middle class women, who often had well paid husbands and were in a position to demand quality childcare. They sought some parent control of centres, and could afford to pay the cost of higher standards. Yet the growth in community childcare services during the seventies used the resources of both groups. The "welfare" cause of "women in need" was used to attract funding, and centres were able to justify their

existence against the concern and resistance by society to childcare provision. The new middle class users were able to bring more control back to the users and convince the educational "experts" to promote the idea of quality childcare and quality parent time being a good thing for all.

As more middle class women became childcare users class became apparent in another way, i.e. between the workers and the users. There had in the past been little difference in the financial plight of both workers and users. The new middle class users had more resources, although for some cost was a problem and money could still depend on a husband's goodwill. The feminist platform called for low cost childcare to be available to all working women, but, with few funds coming from elsewhere, childcare fees were kept low at the expense of the childcare workers. The new found freedoms and economic independence of the new women who used childcare, was in stark contrast to the low pay and non existent working conditions of childcare workers.

In many of the new community centres which were pioneering new styles of childcare provision, the workers along with the parents worked together in a spirit of sacrifice and enthusiasm to keep the centres going. And it was not until the end of the decade that workers started to see this sacrifice and enthusiasm as a kind of exploitation. It was difficult for workers to confront the same parents, with whom they worked so closely, with demands for higher wages that would mean higher childcare fees. Feminists had not fronted up to this issue and the shake up had to wait for childcare workers themselves to form an industrial union. Timid words to parents, or waiting until things got better were not effective strategies. Childcare workers had to overcome such inhibitions and see themselves as a class of workers being exploited by parent users, albeit for the best of causes and the nicest of children . . .

A second contradiction arises over the question of rights: the rights of women versus the rights of children. Women's actions for equal rights have been criticised for being at the expense of children. Men have not seen the need to take up their share

Ideas about rights for women and rights for children have developed alongside each other, resulting in a delicate and guilty balancing act for any mother who wanted time for herself.

Within the family it is still expected that the childrearing responsibility belongs to women even though men may be inclined to help out where possible.

of child-rearing responsibility and at the same time a belief has developed that children need more than the presence of mother, they must have *quality* care — and it must come from mother. Ideas about rights for women and rights for children have developed alongside each other, resulting in a delicate and guilty balancing act for any mother who wanted time for herself.

In relation to childcare provision the issues over rights is a product of two conflicting assumptions: That a child has a right to be cared for in the family and by a mother; That for women to gain equality with men they must participate in public life. This perspective turns childrearing responsibilities into a barrier to women.

So, women must sacrifice their own interests to rear their children, or sacrifice the quality of their children's lives to meet their own needs. This results for most of us, either way, in feelings of guilt and pain. Guilt at leaving our young children as a working mother, or the lack of respect we experience in the role of a housewife if we stay at home to care for our children.

For many years the guilt of working mothers was fuelled by the myth that mother was the only one who could meet the child's needs and the realities of the poor quality childcare available. The myths may be less potent now and the quality of childcare continues to improve, but arguments concerning the best ways

of providing "mother substitutes" are difficult to resolve. Arrangements using husbands, families, friends and childcare centres all have their problems. The informal childcare arrangements of family and friends are often unreliable and unsuitable for any long term commitment. At the same time centre based care is also unreliable in the sense there is no guarantee of quality. Centres are still grossly underfunded, and the need of women for low childcare fees does not mesh with the child's need for high staff ratios and a quality environment. Despite the current belief that quality childcare is good for children, there is still a lot of *bad* childcare in New Zealand.

Government regulations on standards in childcare centres have been ineffective in policing or prosecuting some of the abuses carried on in centres. Even new regulations that have just come into effect make little headway in this direction and the Department of Social Welfare has been extremely reluctant to broadcast the realities of bad centres through the court system despite repeated complaints from workers, parents and indeed their own officers.

In this sense the rights of children are not being served in current childcare provision, and advocates for children's rights are justifiably reluctant for the rights of women to be at the cost of placing children in poor quality childcare. In a climate where feminist women have demanded the right to childcare, but have given little practical input into raising standards and quality, the childcare movement has felt somewhat alone. However the rights of children for quality care is an issue that cannot rest only on the women users. Government undertook a responsibility for regulating and policing standards in centres in 1960. Thus they also have a responsibility to highlight rather than hide the bad childcare practices.

The Children and Young Persons Act, 1974, is the act covering childcare regulations. This states that "the interests of the children be paramount" when making decisions. But instead of keeping the interests of children paramount in its consideration over the quality of childcare the government has opted in favour of: Operators convenience and financial interests; Parents

financial plight and convenience; The childcare movement's need to demonstrate the existence of quality childcare. While children remain in centres whose conditions are sometimes horrendous.

The debate over the rights of women versus those of children found its most extreme expression in the abortion debate of the late seventies. Leaving a child in care has been compared to abortion; as a forcible separation of mother and child. The two clauses in the Working Women's Charter that caused most commotion were those on childcare and abortion. The well organised conservative groups campaign, explicitly linking the politics of abortion and childcare as an issue over the rights of women versus the rights of children, with the rights of the child, born or unborn, to be paramount in all circumstances. The responsibilities of men towards these born or unborn children were ignored. Effective lobbying by these groups destroyed any chance of consensus over the Working Women's Charter and halted for some years any government support for childcare. After the abortion debate Government was not willing to enter a similar fray over childcare.

Feminists have been caught in the middle of the contradictions surrounding the issues of class and rights in relation to childcare. It has been felt by many of the providers of childcare services that feminists have been more concerned to use the service rather than help and support it. On the other hand feminists have made the argument that their energies are needed in the public domain and that Government has a responsibility in terms of funding and provision. The reality however has been that Government has not been prepared to accept this so childcare has had to be provided by the dedicated few and at the expense of workers. The conflicting interests over class and rights in the politics of childcare should not necessarily be seen just as a product of traditional and feminist arguments and needs for childcare provision. The conflicts are much deeper, and stem from the way the workplace and family life are structured in our society, and the attitude of successive Governments that the tide of childcare must be stemmed.

At present work is structured so

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

My husband was on a low income...

Mabel Barnett of Ngati Porou is a mother, a paid worker and a union member. After five years at home with young children (Nathan and Shannon, now six and two) she returned to the paid workforce when Shannon was 14 months old. "Basically it was a matter of necessity. My husband was on a low income and it got to the stage where we couldn't make ends meet." Mabel, her husband and two children live in a small two bedroom flat and are getting by on two incomes, but only just.

Mabel's biggest problem was childcare. "A lot of it hinged on whether Shannon would settle down at daycare. She had been to three or four different places and finally settled at the last daycare centre. The reason I took her out of it was the expense. It was taking half my wages." Mabel was paying \$80 per week in fees plus \$20 for disposable nappies and all the other small things young children

need. Another \$10 went to pay for Nathan's after school care. Shannon is now cared for by Louisa, an ex-daycare worker, in her home, which is working out very well. Louisa also takes over when Nathan is sick which relieves Mabel of the worry of having to take time off work.

A long working day begins for Mabel at 6.00am, sometimes five if Shannon wakes early. She starts her paid work at 8.15 which allows time to get Nathan to school and Shannon to Louisa's. "I'm allowed time off to collect Nathan at three and he comes in and spends the last hour with me at work. I don't normally leave work until 4.15."

She works as a secretary at the Northern Drivers' Union. "It is a varied job. I don't get bored". Mabel is herself a member of the Clerical Workers' Union and regards union membership as very important for women. "I think we need unity and one of the ways we can get it is by belonging to a common organisation such as a union and by supporting the Working Women's Resource Centre — any organisation that can further our aims as women."

Unlike many women who are still

expected to fill their traditional roles as "housewives" as well as doing paid work, Mabel shares the household tasks with her partner. "John does all the cooking, helps with the vacuuming, makes the beds in the morning and organises Nathan's clothes for school. He also takes over when I have to attend executive meetings in the evenings. Without his support I would not have been able to manage. I have always believed in sharing household duties, and this has been the situation in our relationship for 13 years."

At the moment Mabel's biggest problem is the car not starting in the morning. Childcare, for the time being, has been satisfactorily arranged. "Now I don't know what I would do if I had to leave work." Unions should place a high priority on the provision of good, inexpensive child care in the workplace. Without it inequalities in pre-school education will continue, and low income families will continue to be affected the most. It is these families that face the constant dilemma of requiring two incomes in order to survive, and yet are forced to spend a good deal of the second income on providing safe and adequate care for their pre-schooler. **Athina Tsoulis.**

The feminist platform called for low cost childcare to be available to all working women but, with few funds coming from elsewhere, childcare fees were kept low at the expense of childcare workers.

that no account is taken of the fact that most men also have childrearing responsibilities. It is assumed that there is always a wife at home, which is no longer the case. When women are working their childrearing responsibilities may be recognized, but in the negative sense in that their job or promotion is in jeopardy if their responsibilities might intrude. As long as the workplace ignores the fact that children exist and need adequate care, and that *all* workers with children have responsibilities as parents, the seeming conflict between the rights of women versus the rights of children will continue.

Similarly, until Government is prepared to make up the shortfall in

childcare funding, the quality of childcare services will be unreliable. Adequate funding would remove much of the "welfare" connotations of childcare as many women would not be in the situation of being unable to meet the fees, or having to apply for welfare subsidies. The reality is that the fees from parents can never be sufficient to provide the high standards of care that our children deserve. We do not expect parents to fund the kindergarten service, so kindergartens can provide both caring and education, and what women do while their child is at kindergarten is seen as irrelevant.

Within the family it is still expected that the childrearing responsibility belongs to women even though men may be inclined to help out where possible. Women nowadays have many responsibilities beyond their childrearing duties, and bear an unrealistic and unfair load. The *appearance* is that the needs of children conflict with women's social and economic independence beyond the home, and indeed this is how women experience the conflict. Yet this surface perception of the conflict overlooks the crucial issue of men and their family responsibilities. For men to move beyond helping towards taking equal responsibility for childrearing, involves institutions,

and individual men and women making far reaching changes in attitudes and organisation in society and family life.

The Labour Government has a more positive attitude to childcare provision and support, but will its policies really make any difference to the politics of childcare in the context I have described?

- They have put in place timid new childcare regulations without teeth, and without the higher staffing ratios so crucial to the quality of childcare.
- Their first input of funds barely kept up with inflation costs.
- A crucial part of their policy is to move childcare to the department of education. At present this seems like a magic lure where at last it might "all come right"... but can we really believe that after all these years that there will be equitable support and funding with the other services? □

1. A notable exception would be the Dunedin Community childcare centre which was set up as an IWY project.

Helen Cook has written a book, *Mind That Child*, about the history of childcare in New Zealand, in which she explores a wide range of issues. It is being published by Blackberry Press and should be available from Broadsheet and other bookshops in early December.

FROM KAMP GIRLS TO POLITICAL DYKES

**A personal view of 30 years
as a New Zealand lesbian.**

by Alison J. Laurie

PART TWO (Part one was in the November Broadsheet. It finished as Alison boarded the ship that was to take her to England.) I was pleased to find six other Kamps onboard the Castel Felice, and the five week trip was interesting. We tried to find the "others" at Naples, but ended up at a brothel full of drag queens.

On arriving in London I went straight to The Gateways, already an herstoric place in 1964, and also found The Robin Hood. To me it seemed like a multitude of lesbians, but the best was yet to come. Within a week I was able to go to a Minorities Research Group (MRG) meeting — that first British lesbian organisation, which I had left New Zealand to find.

MRG had members all over Britain, ran advertisements in newspapers, and held monthly meetings in London as well as special interest group meetings. Many of the women who had started it were "colonials," as we were called at that time, from Australia, South Africa, "Rhodesia" and New Zealand. Some of the South African women (whites) had tried in small ways to oppose apartheid and felt that they had more than one reason to reject their country and live in London.

My first political work as a "homosexual girl" — for in London we were not Kamp, and we were not yet women — was to help mail out *Arena Three*, the monthly magazine, and to start getting up and talking at meetings. There were often 100 homosexual girls at meetings, so this was quite intimidating at first. Then I volunteered to run a group. The weekly literary group met at my flat, and a dozen of us read Dylan Thomas and other male authors very seriously.

It did not occur to us to read many women authors. We knew of no lesbian books except *The Well of Loneliness*, which we'd all read and reread, and with no women's bookshops, or movement, or politics, why should we have? We were lesbians, not women, so why read women authors particularly?!

Bryan Magee from the BBC wanted to make a TV programme about female homosexuals — he had just made one about male homosexuals. We were all very pleased at his interest. I was assigned the task of showing

him around the clubs. I took him to The Robin Hood and The Gateways and introduced him to the girls. Everyone was thrilled that the BBC would do a documentary on sex variants like us, pleased that people like him were "sympathetic".

Other people came and wanted to do research. MRG cooperated enthusiastically.

We went along and filled out questionnaires, did ink-blot tests. It was so nice that the experts were willing to study us, perhaps prove that we were mentally normal. This would help us to win acceptance. We looked forward to a time when we might be tolerated, might be allowed to live in peace, might be granted a few crumbs from the table.

This was a very radical view. Most London lesbians, who did not belong to MRG, thought that nothing could change, and that the less the outside world knew about us the better. Then no-one would suspect that we existed. That was much safer.

Then, in Easter 1965 I went as part of the MRG delegation to a lesbian conference in Holland. We became aware of this conference when an American lesbian living in Amsterdam visited London. Otherwise there had been few international political links that we knew about.

That conference changed my life. There were 300 lesbians there, mainly from the Dutch mixed homophile (homo: same, philos: lover of) organisation (C.O.C.) Holland had no laws against homosexuality, their society was quite tolerant of variants apparently. At the conference many lesbians talked about social change — although no one except the British delegation was wearing slacks — and they all looked very serious and conservative. I was very impressed. My expectations began to expand. If not quite equal to heterosexuals... perhaps almost so...?

I left London, and with two other New Zealand lesbians explored Europe on the thumb. My decision to live in Copenhagen was based on a tall, Danish lesbian that I met in a piano bar, Lille Rosenberg, one romantic night, so it was hardly political at first. But I soon became involved with the Forbund of 1948 (F48) which was another of the European mixed homophile post-war



Sharon Alston

organisations. I helped with mailings, until one day I found I could speak Danish well enough to say a few things at meetings. As time went by I could say more and more, and I began to think and feel like a Dane.

I visited the United States, but returned to Denmark. The States were so apolitical, so disorganised apart from the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), which I thought was doing only half the work that the Danish F48 was.

They might be more freewheeling, and have lots more bars, but the Danes were getting articles into the newspapers about homophiles! And anyway, the bars in New York were all mafia-controlled, with thugs wearing guns guarding the doors, and everywhere in the States you could be arrested for wearing more than three items of male clothing. I had put away my tie and butch identity when I left New Zealand, and was now that new word, "femme" — but still, I liked to wear pants and shirts.

And I liked being a homophile. Homophile was such a wonderful word, so much less sexual, somehow, than being plain old homosexual. More dignified too, very Greek and everything. I liked the Danish beer, and the piano-bars where you danced waltzes, and the discos which were just beginning with wilder, louder music, and the Danish lesbians who made jokes in bed and laughed a lot.

My new lover was Norwegian though, and as we moved in together on New Years Eve in 1969 neither of us knew that within a year our whole world would have changed.

When we read about New York's Stonewall riots (the first large scale gay rebellion against police harassment in America) that June, we were amazed. Homophile men and women rioting in the streets! We held weekend seminars to discuss it. Something called gay liberation had happened. What was it all about?

The new ideas were mind-blowing. You could be lesbian, gay or however you wanted to be. You didn't have to integrate into society, or beg for tolerance and acceptance. You could do your own thing. You could be free to be yourself. You could — and should — come out of the closet.

We held our first public demonstration in the Faelled Park in the middle of Copenhagen. There were hippies all around, with long hair and beads, smoking hashish. People talked about civil rights, made comparisons with the Black civil rights movement in the States. People talked about the anti-Vietnam war movement. The sun was shining. At that moment everything seemed possible. We were going to be free at last, we were gay people, liberating ourselves and the world.

Then more things happened. A small group of heterosexual women calling themselves *Redstockings* who said they were feminist, whatever that was (something to do with that old suffrage movement, perhaps), invited the gay women from F48 to meet with them at a weekend seminar. We went, dubiously, and they talked about something called women's liberation. They said that they thought that we were oppressed by the gay men in F48, and that we should do something about it. And they said that we were oppressed by society in general as women!

We went away and started our own consciousness raising groups to talk about all this. It was an amazing discovery, that we shared an oppression with 51% of the population, instead of our gay 10%. And what was even more amazing was that these women said that we were their sisters. They said they felt solidarity with us.

Soon we started a group called the Q-Activists — Q for queer and for *qvinde*, an old Danish word for women. We met at the newly-seized women's house, an empty building we had helped our sisters liberate from the Copenhagen municipality. The top floor was lesbian space, and we began to refer to ourselves as lesbians, that frightening word we had always avoided.

We used the Q-Activists as a pressure group within the F48, to get more women onto the committee, and to get a women only night at the Pan Club. We held a Scandinavian lesbian conference at the women's house in 1972, and though not many came it was a start.

I went to the States again that year too, because that was where it was all happening now. I worked on an issue of *The Lesbian Tide*, met lesbians who were starting groups and magazines everywhere. I started to call myself a lesbian-feminist.

"All women are lesbian except those who don't know it yet", and "feminism the theory, lesbianism the practice", and, "In a society where men oppress women, to be lesbian is a sign of mental health" were the slogans. Butch and femme were laid to rest. We were roleless, liberated — and any woman could choose to be lesbian — should choose to be lesbian. Few did, as yet.

We read Elizabeth Gould Davies' *The First Sex* and became excited about the matriarchy. Men were mutants, we said, women were actually superior to them!

The ideas were all developing: they were new, stimulating. I felt I was part of a movement which was forming them, finding them, exploring them. There were no limits any more. I felt a strong urge to return to New Zealand. Letters from friends implied that the revolution might actually reach there, too.

I packed a VW combi van with supplies and American lesbian magazines like *The Tide*, *Off Our Backs* etc, and with my Norwegian lover and an escaped American headmistress set off from Denmark to drive overland to New Zealand, shipping the vehicle across intervening oceans. We arrived in early 1973, to a blazing January.

Gay liberation and women's liberation had started.

We were mainly in Wellington at first, where I was asked to speak at some early abortion meetings, and here and there about gay liberation. About six of us went to a gay liberation party in Auckland, following a meeting where men had said they really wanted more lesbian involvement. We were all bashed up at the party by

Alison in Norway, 1980



drunken gay misogynists and everyone ended up feeling that it was quite impossible to work with any of the men. As for me, I went back to Wellington and worked in the mixed gay liberation group until we split after a dance with half the takings and announced that we were going to organise separately as lesbians.

We met with Christchurch lesbians and formed Sisters For Homophile Equality (SHE). We might call ourselves lesbians but you couldn't have an organisation with that in the title... SHE was New Zealand's first and only national lesbian organisation. We started *Circle*, and reprinted articles from my American lesbian magazines, which I was busily distributing around the country. Lesbian feminism hit New Zealand as a fully formed blast from abroad, but fell on fertile ground, among many of the lesbians from gay liberation for starters.

Lesbians wrote to *Circle* from all over New Zealand, and issues were put out from Christchurch and Auckland as well as Wellington. We held a national lesbian conference at Victoria University at Easter 1974, and got media coverage although we held out for women journalists only. We were on radio talk-backs, were mentioned in the news. And we held a lesbian demo outside parliament. We often sang "I Am Woman" and did ring dances. We believed in the sisterhood and the matriarchy-to-come.

I returned to Denmark in 1975 and was part of a group trying to set up an international lesbian front. To my surprise all kinds of new lesbians were "coming out" of the women's movement. Although we had wanted this to happen it was surprising when it did, and difficult to adjust to. I had known some of the women as heterosexual

feminists and it was hard to accept them as the new experts on lesbian political theory. They seemed in some way to lack what I felt was a lesbian identity, though I was unable to analyse quite why.

I went to a lesbian conference in Amsterdam, with women who didn't know and couldn't have cared, that there had been one there ten years before, and how important it had been. I sought out some of those 1965 lesbians and found them now quite anti-political. "We can't stand all these new lesbians" they said "They're so negative." I disagreed of course, on principle, but somehow there was less joy in the air. Unemployment was starting to happen in Europe; political discussions seemed different, we talked more about rape and violence, about men and what they were doing to the world. We talked less and less about the sisterhood until finally we didn't talk about it at all, because none of us could really believe in it quite the way we had when the sun shone and it was always summer, and the whole world was poised on the brink of change.

I asked one of the new lesbians to dance at a social after a meeting. Then I tried to kiss her, gently, as we had been doing for the previous five years. She pushed me away roughly and said I was behaving like a man. I felt hurt and didn't understand. I got drunk in the corner with some twenty year olds, crying into the snaps bottle and trying to explain to them that there was something happening now that wasn't what I thought I'd fought to achieve. Something uptight, critical, rejecting. Something not quite — lesbian.

I was only 35, but I was beginning to feel like an old woman of the movement. Most of the lesbians my age were not to be found in the lesbian movement. Many were back working in the mixed homophile organisations, now changing their names to Association of Gay Men and Women. Or they were branching out to start women's refuges, getting involved in the peace movement, active in the political women's movement.

I had moved to Norway and found that the only lesbian group I wanted to work in was one called The Panthers, involved in social and cultural activities of lesbian poetry, discussions and sing-alongs. But that was not until quite a lot later. I got involved meanwhile with the Norwegian F48 and a huge split over marxist-leninist politics, which resulted in the formation of the Workers Homophile Association (AHF) — which turned out to be not at all marxist anyway. It all made for interesting political intrigues, but I grew tired and began working very hard so that I could spend part of each year back in New Zealand.

My work as a tour guide made saving money easy, especially doing lots of trips through the USSR, where there were few consumer temptations. (I did of course, and dangerously, search for Soviet lesbians wherever I could.)

Back in New Zealand, by 1977 SHE was dying, though *Circle* still continued as it does now. Many lesbians had come out through the women's movement here too, and certain conflicts were beginning to emerge. The sisterhood had turned out to be far more complicated than we had imagined.

We were becoming conscious of other oppressions like race and class which created differences between lesbians. As yet we had little analysis of any of this and few women attempted to really do anything about it. In

1978 a lesbian centre started in Wellington and political work included forays into the Human Rights Commission where chief commissioner Downey had concluded that "some kinds of discrimination cannot be outlawed". Newsletters were published, women's bookshops began providing regular access to the flood of books coming off the international women's presses, and women's music was strumming and beating its discs into every lesbian home. There were crafts, too, and poetry, and women's art in the Women's Gallery, pioneered in Wellington by Aucklanders.

Overseas again, there was now the International Les-



Alison. 1973

bian Information Service (ILIS) and the International Association of Lesbians, Gay Women and Gay Men (IGA) providing regular international networking and holding annual conferences for delegates from as many as 30 countries.

Many lesbians were beginning to work with gay men again, though tentatively, and only on specific issues. Others continued to develop a strong separatist politics, and some women were moving to the land. Pornography became an important issue, though as yet no accurate lesbian analysis has been made.

As for me, I dabbled, worked on a couple of issues of *Circle* for old times sake, got into lesbian broadcasting on our first (and still only) lesbian radio programme running weekly here in Wellington, performed lesbian plays, saw the first lesbian centre die and another begin, to vanish in its turn. We now have a lesbian club here in Wellington and a lesbian phone-in service and informal links with lesbians in other centres. But when the homosexual law reform campaign came, we had no lesbian political organisation to tackle it and had to develop strategies on the run.

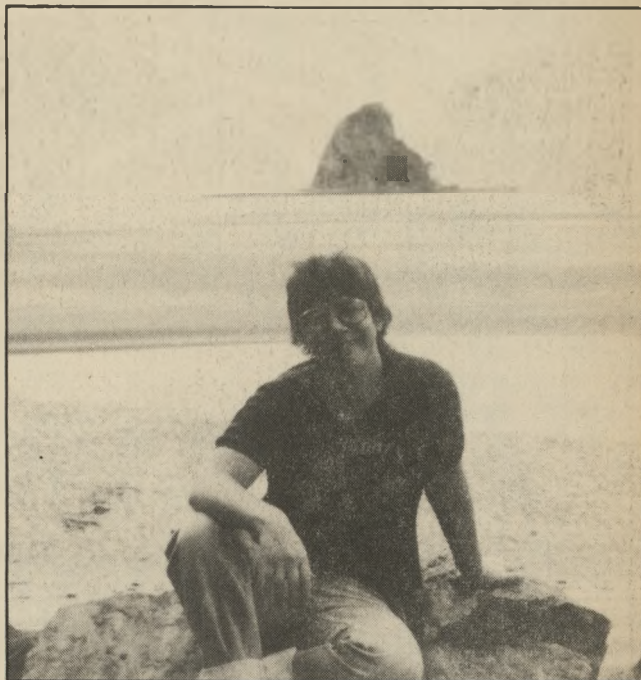
Now we battle against a US-inspired moral majority (so-called) which has petitioned against us door to door and whose hatred has thundered at us from public platforms throughout the country. Win or lose the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, we know that we are in there for the long haul, against a right wing that will not be going away.

What do the political dykes of the eighties have in common with the Kamp girls of the fifties? A determination to survive may be the single most important thing.

The problem is that not all of the Kamp girls did survive. Some are dead, lost to suicide, or the slow deaths of stress diseases. Others married, to live a daily lie, a double life, made tolerable by tranquillizers or booze, and perhaps

an affair with the woman down the road. Some even married gay men, to provide a double disguise for two frightened people. Others lost their minds into alcoholism, living half-lives in the shadows, while other good women were attacked by the shock treatments and drugs of psychiatric institutions. And every single one of us carries scars.

Alison, NZ 1981



And I know how easy it would be to put us all right back there, with the no-communication and the no-visibility, and a relentless search that only finds you four others.

Close the bookshops and ban or burn the magazines and the books; prohibit the phone-lines and the public advertising; close the clubs and the centres. Only now do I know that there was a world wide movement once before — the first wave of lesbian and gay liberation, smashed at its German centre by the Nazis in 1933 and throughout the rest of occupied Europe from 1938 onwards. It vanished with few traces; the first great Nazi book-burning in Berlin was of the lesbian and gay books, manuscripts and records of Magnus Hirschfeld's institute — a homosexual organization which had held international conferences and which was founded in 1897.

Lesbians and gay historians now say that what is especially remarkable about the few surviving copies of the last issues of the over 200 lesbian and gay newsletters and magazines is that they were all so unsuspecting. Their last issues wrote of next month's dance, next issue's feature. But they were all simply closed down without warning.

My own search for "the others" began in the fifties, long after the Homocaust of Europe. As yet we know very little about pre-war lesbians in New Zealand, or of any political work they may have done.

My search for the others continues — back into our lesbian past, in our present and through into our future. Sometimes I find them, and when I do I am convinced more and more of our ability to survive, in spite of any odds, in every society and in every time. □

GST, TAX RATES AND ALL THAT STUFF

The amount of Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been set. Its start has been delayed until October 1986. Prue Hyman brings us up to date on the implications.

Despite finance minister Roger Douglas's assurance that everybody will be better off from the combination of GST and lower income tax it's the well-off that benefit most, as usual. The rate is "only" 10%, and Douglas says that he intends it to stay at this level (maybe). The income to government will, of course, still increase as prices rise. But even at 10% GST is a regressive tax because higher income earners will pay a smaller proportion of their income than lower income people. (For detailed discussion of the tax

and a fuller explanation of concepts like regressive tax, see June Broadsheet.) And the income tax cuts don't change this: the combined effect is much more favourable for the wealthy.

Will everyone even be better off? Before 1 October 1986, when GST and the tax changes come in, there will be a couple of wage rounds, a further year of price rises and three increases for beneficiaries, in January, April and October 1986. Real disposable incomes (what you have left after allowing for tax payments and price increases) have been falling in recent years. If the wage and benefit increases don't compensate everyone fully for price rises, the GST package will not make things any better. Milk and (probably) electricity prices have to be paid straight away. The fall in petrol and other import prices will be shortlived if the dollar weakens again, which is likely.

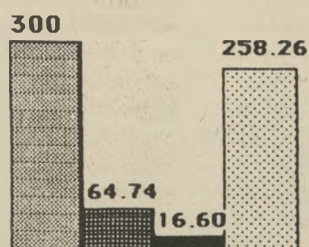


	Income	—	Tax	+	Family assistance	=	Spending power
Now	300		64.74	+	16.60	=	258.26
October 1986	300		47.37	+	21.23	=	273.86

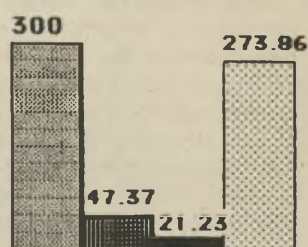
Decrease of 17.37 Increase of 5.23 Increase of 22.60

Income	
Tax	
Family Support	
Spending power	

Now



October, 1986



PRICE INCREASES

Douglas' other crucial assumption is that the 10% GST will cause only a 5% price increase because wholesale taxes, mostly higher than 10%, will be removed. (Petrol, alcohol and tobacco taxes will remain, together with some customs duties.) Benefits are to be raised by 5% at 1 October to compensate before the effects of GST are felt. However, most of the

low income household's spending — food, housing, electricity etc and clothing — will increase closer to the 10% figure as they are not taxed at all at present: it's the luxuries that have high wholesale taxes. New houses will be subject to GST so all house prices and rents are likely to go up. Therefore the things bought by people with lower incomes may increase by 7 or 8% on average,

even if the overall consumer price index rises by only 5%.

Let's take the example of a one income family with one child from the glossy pamphlet put out by the government to promote GST. At an income level of \$300 per week with one earner, either a solo parent or the only earner, Douglas argues that this household will be about \$10 per week better off:

If the prices of goods this household bought did indeed increase by 5%, or about \$13 they would be \$10 better off, but an 9% increase would swallow up the whole of their gain.

Meantime, the two-income household at a gross level of \$500 per week, split between a full-time worker on \$400 and a part-timer on \$100, will have \$458.86 to spend after tax and family support, an increase of \$57.92 or 14.4% on their current situation, as against only a 9% increase for the first family. This second household should genuinely have something over after paying their GST, although not as much as the really high income earner. Take the person earning \$1000 a week. His (there are not many "her"s at this level) tax reduction is \$101.61 per week. This is more than enough to pay GST, likely to average nearer 5% than 10% for him as he can afford the luxuries that are now free of wholesale tax.

BENEFICIARIES

From 1 October 1986 beneficiaries will be able to earn more before the benefit is reduced. The limit goes from \$25 a week to \$60 for those with one or more children and \$50 for others. Douglas claims that those with dependent children and on benefits will be better off with the new family support package, and the 5% increase in benefit from 1 October. However, this is dependent on the extent of GST-induced price rises on what they buy. In addition, although they can earn more while receiving a benefit, benefits are now to be taxed.

The net amount received will be the same for those reliant only on benefits all year since they will be increased to ensure this. But those working part-time all year, or on benefit for part of the year and in paid work for part of the year may be pushed up into a higher tax bracket. The aim is for those earning all year and those with the same total income, partly from benefit and partly from earnings, to pay the same amount of tax. One good aspect of making benefits taxable is that it gives access to tax rebates (or reductions in tax payable) for spending on particular items, such as donations to charity and, for homeowners, part of the rates bill.

The surcharge on superannuation introduced last year remains unchanged. This means that

superannuation with other income will still face a marginal tax rate of 55 cents in the dollar (30 cents 'normal' and 25 cents 'surcharge'). This occurs even though their income is far less than the \$30,000 at which anyone else will reach their top tax rate, of 48 cents in the dollar!

GUARANTEED MINIMUM INCOME?

Douglas' proposals include something like a guaranteed minimum income. As yet this applies only to families with one or more dependent children and a full time (yet to be defined) earner who earns \$250 net per week, plus \$22 per additional child. This does at least mean an improvement for very low earners with children. Family support is to be divided between the two parents where relevant, and paid by a reduction in tax or a tax credit. It will only be paid through Social Welfare when one parent does not earn. Doubtless the minimum family income is meant to encourage people to transfer from benefits to full time work — for which there is also a special incentive — as though it was that easy to get full-time work!

TAX CUTS

Douglas will cut income tax rates at all levels, with personal income tax forecast to fall from 63.3% to 51.4% of total tax receipts. But neither the cuts nor the total decrease in revenue are as dramatic as appears due to fiscal drag. This is the process by which inflation moves income earners into higher tax brackets, automatically increasing the proportion of earnings going into tax and the income the government gets from this course. With the highest marginal tax rate (tax paid on the last dollar of income) reduced from 66% to 48% high income earners benefit more than middle income earners. For example, the \$101 weekly tax cut for the \$1000 per week earner is a reduction of 23.6% in tax paid. The \$200 earner, with a tax cut of \$8, is paying only 16.9% less.

The prevailing wisdom, based more on faith than evidence, is that high marginal tax rates stifle initiative and hard work as well as encouraging tax evasion. Whether paying 48 rather than 66 cents in the dollar tax will magically improve worker effort or reduce tax evasion is doubtful. So is

the idea that big differences in income are needed to make people train as accountants rather than become cleaners. But both these arguments influence the decision makers who benefit from them. However, whatever the tax rate is at the top it has little effect on the government's tax income compared to the rates at the bottom. This is because there are so many more earners lower down the income scale.

MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum full time weekly wage was recently increased from \$100 to \$170 at age 20. The unions wanted \$208 at 18. The increase has little direct effect as only a few awards are below this level and then only by a few dollars. The award affecting the largest number of people is that for grocery and supermarket workers, at \$168. Nevertheless, the impact on lower paid workers, particularly women, could be significant if the unions can use the increase to negotiate for higher award rates.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to forget that this package comes from a Labour government — the better off certainly benefit most. The most hopeful sign is the small step towards a guaranteed minimum income and payment of family support to each parent, and through the tax system where possible. At the moment the tax and benefit systems are a real mishmash. Separate rules for phasing out family support through the tax system and rates of benefit as other income increases can mean some people are actually worse off when they earn an extra dollar. Better integration of the tax and benefit systems is therefore urgent. This could include a minimum income for all individuals or household types whatever their sources of income, so that those below the guaranteed level would get a tax credit (or negative income tax).

A single unified benefit paid to all in need, as of right, was recommended by a large number of submissions to the Budget Tax Force. However these proposals will probably be one of the areas to be investigated by the impending Royal Commission and thus change will be slow.□

Prue Hyman

LOOKING AT PAKEHA POWER

*Karena Way outlines
an anti-racism
workshop.*

This workshop was designed by Karena Way and Robyn Agnew, two feminist anti-racist pakeha women. It was originally used with feminist women and has also been used with a mixed group of women and men. It takes about four hours and can be included in any anti-racism work.

The workshop is action oriented and focusses on a critical analysis of pakeha feminism and its effects on our racism in Aotearoa. It explores the dual role of women, as an oppressed group in relation to men and oppressors in our racist society.

One of the objectives of the workshop is to look at pakeha power and the ways in which we as women relate to and support that power. Another is to move from this position to being actively anti-racist.

The Process

- To acknowledge and validate where each woman is in regard to racism.
- To have a structured, therefore safe, exercise that involves everyone, keeps energy high, and also challenges and educates.
- To build women's confidence to act for change.
- To allow time for women to discuss in groups of their own choosing ways they, as individuals or groups, can be actively anti-racist.
- Through our experience we know that it is important for anti-racist workers to work as a team, with at least two pakeha facilitators and one or two Maori monitors.

Historically we pakeha people have used force, trickery, and double talk to put down Maori people. This racism

is deep within our consciousness. Maori people are the paramount victims of this racism here in Aotearoa. Therefore, to do anti-racism work requires the presence of Maori monitors so that we facilitators are accountable to them. It also gives us feedback on whether we are being effectively anti-racist.

Before the workshop the team members need to discuss and agree on their responsibilities and roles. This is usually rediscussed during breaks and, if the group gets stuck, an open discussion of team members is sometimes necessary. Materials required for the workshop are newsprint, big felt pens and five to eight chairs.

The Workshop

As every group is different and individuals are not at the same level of awareness, it is important to begin with a round of introductions and time for each person to state why they are there and what they are wanting from the experience. The role of the facilitators is to listen actively, remember each person's name and take mental note of the issues and needs that should come up at some point. Depending on the size of the group this can take from 15 minutes to an hour. If time is short people can be asked for one short statement or a set number of sentences each. One of the facilitators should start the round, the other close it.

It is best if the group educates, changes and shapes its own direction. The opening round is an important part of this process. The next step is for the facilitators to describe the set piece and ask the group for cooperation in doing it. The excitement and enthusiasm of the facilitators will be picked up by the group.

Set Piece

Ask for five to eight volunteers to represent pakeha males. Emphasise that this is representation only, not role play. Ask these people to stand on chairs, to physically demonstrate the male position of power. On the floor in front of each chair place a large piece of newsprint and a pen. Then ask the rest of the group to write down on the newsprint everything that pakeha men have power over. The representatives stand quietly.

The facilitators' role is to ensure that the representatives feel safe and

that all the issues are recorded, with a focus on the situation in Aotearoa. Here are some examples of what should come out: land; economics; pakeha women; education; the Treaty of Waitangi; lesbian and gay communities; sexuality; employment; rape; Maori people; children; the legal system; spirituality; politics; Pacific people; war; differently abled people; health; childbirth; publishing; mobility, time, and so on.

Then ask the same number of people to represent pakeha women. Stand them on the floor in front of but not facing the pakeha male representatives. Put paper at their feet and ask the group to write what pakeha women have power over. Sometimes an example will be needed to start them off. Check that all the important issues come out, such as: mobility; 1/4 acre sections; children; Maori people; consumerism; literature; education and so on. Many will be the same as before.

Ask each of the pakeha male representatives to make the statement "We have power over . . ." and read out what is at their feet. Ask the women representatives to do the same. Then ask the pakeha women to turn and face the pakeha males and make a statement each, starting "We as pakeha women support your position of power by . . ." Some possible endings would be — "by making sure resources aren't shared with Maori people," "by wanting to own our own home and land," "by educating our children to have the same values as us".

Then ask the pakeha male representatives to make a statement to the pakeha women starting "We as pakeha males support your position of power by . . ." Some possible endings are, "by working the land to provide for you and the kids," "by making all the decisions," "by wanting a better standard of living," "by not acting on our obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi."

After this ask the rest of the group to join one of the representative positions and make similar statements, either as or to pakeha males or females. Keep them focussed, ask questions so that the connections to Maori people, the land, the Treaty of Waitangi, our economic and political base are clear.

Our economic base depends on agriculture, so the use of land is the key element in our economic power.

We acquired this land through breaking the promises we signed in the Treaty of Waitangi. Our political base is the "Westminster" system and we have used that to change legislation so that we could take and buy Maori land. By forcing and expecting Maori people to "fit in" with our pakeha way of doing things we continue to advantage ourselves and disadvantage them in all areas over which we have power.

Bring out these ideas and keep focussing group members on what was written on the newsprint. Make sure that the representatives don't respond to the statements — but that they listen and take them in. Ask the male and female representatives to pair up and make a statement beginning, "We as a pakeha group retain our power and advantage in Aotearoa by" or "We as a pakeha group retain and benefit from our racism by" Some of the endings might be — "remaining ignorant about our unjust involvement in our society", "choosing not to listen to Maori or pakeha people who make us feel uncomfortable", "knowing the truth but choosing not to do anything", "wanting to continue to say how things should be done".

Thank the people for taking part and ask them to let go of being representatives but to hang on to all they have learnt and to remember they are an integral part of the pakeha group and pakeha power.

Next, ask everyone to divide into smaller groups with people they would like to be in a group with. Present them with a quote like this one from Donna Awatere's *Maori Sovereignty*: "White feminists do this by defining 'feminism' for this country and using their white power and status and privilege to ensure that their definition of power supercedes that of Maori women." Or alternatively make up one of your own such as, "Now that you know how you are privileged by our power, status and racism, what practical moves are you committed to to change this."

Direct the small groups to take the statement and their learning from the earlier exercise and discuss how they will act on these to begin being anti-racist. They will be reporting back to the whole group.

It is important to encourage women to use collective power in actions such as going to challenge a person in power, making an affirma-

tive action employment policy or changing the education syllabi so that true pakeha history is taught. We can also use our ability to recognise male "power games" and use methods for change that feel good for women.

The facilitators stay out of these small groups so that the people taking part can make their own decisions, but they remain available as information and resource people.

When the small groups come back together they will talk about the things they can do. Facilitate to affirm these decisions and criticise positively if necessary. For example a group may report back that they are going to learn Maori language. A facilitator can respond, "It's good that you're learning Maori, but what are you doing about racism?" or, "How does the rest of the group see that as antiracism action?" or, "That's fine, but maybe we pakeha should use our energy to make sure that Maori people can learn the Maori language." Make sure that the group focusses on racism rather than race relations.

The group then discusses what they will need to carry out any actions they have decided on. Networking, ways of contacting each other and allies should be talked about. A follow up meeting is very important, espe-

cially if this is not an already established group.

Leave enough time for group members to give feedback on how they experienced the workshop and to express unsaid things. A final round with everyone making a statement starting "I feel ..." is a good way to finish.

As feminists in Aotearoa we recognise our oppression as women and use that to empathise with the oppression of Maori people. This workshop demonstrates that we must now turn around and confront our links to pakeha power that make us oppressors. Then we can use that knowledge to actively change our racist society. □

Broadsheet would like feedback from women who use this workshop.



The class of ?

Pakeha men have power. Pakeha women support them in that power.

By forcing and expecting Maori people to "fit in" with our pakeha way of doing things we continue to advantage ourselves and disadvantage them.

ON THE SHELF

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

SUNSHINE

Jan Ormerod

One morning a small girl gets up rather earlier than her mother and father. Subtle colours and humorous touches make this book without words an enchanting and affectionate portrayal of the first hours in a family's day. Picture Puffins pbk \$3.95.

THE BIRTH OF MAUI TE WHANAUNGA MAI O MAUI

Glenda Kauta, illustrated by Janet Piddock, translated by Marara Te Tai. Designed to fill the need for bilingual Maori readers at pre-school level, this book is also beautifully illustrated with alternate pages in black and white outline for colouring in. Reed Methuan pbk \$7.95

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE AGED 13¾

Sue Townsend

Mole believes he is an intellectual, he is certainly a poet. He is dogged by ill health as well as an infuriatingly ever-present pet dog, and by a catalogue of misfortunes familiar to anyone over the age of thirteen. Touching and screamingly funny. Methuan pbk \$6.95

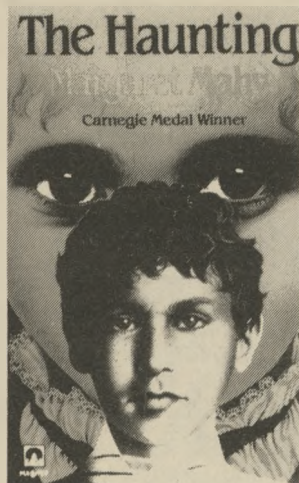
*The Secret
Diary of
Adrian Mole
aged 13¾
Sue Townsend*

THE HAIRY BOOK

Babette Cole

The funniest, hairiest book for the very young — full of delightful drawings of hairy

things big and small.
Jonathan Cape hbk \$11.95



THE HAUNTING

Margaret Mahy

This is no ordinary ghost story, but a richly imaginative and exciting novel about a family that has more contact than most with the spirit world. Good reading for 10-15 year olds. Magnet Books pbk \$4.95

HAVING A PICNIC

Sarah Garland

Some unexpected guests join in the family picnic in this, Sarah Garland's third picture book for the very young. The Bodley Head hbk \$11.95

THE BODY BOOK

Claire Rayner, illustrated by

Tony King

Wonderfully illustrated and clearly written, this book tells children all about how their bodies work, from growing up, having children, to growing old, in such a way that will sustain their interest throughout. Piccolo Picture Books pbk \$6.95

THE DARK IS RISING SEQUENCE

Susan Cooper

Susan Cooper's brilliant and absorbing fantasy sequence — Over Sea, Under Stone, The Dark is Rising, Greenwitch, The Grey King, and Silver on the Tree, is here published for the first time in a single volume. Puffin Books pbk \$12.95

TEN, NINE, EIGHT

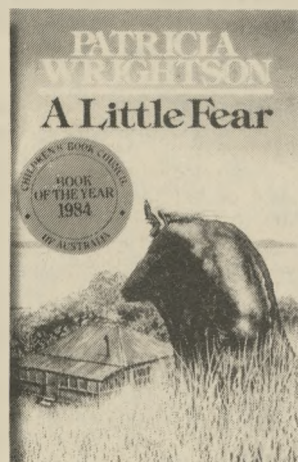
Molly Bang

Counting down to bedtime can be fun, as this little girl and her father find out. Another charming title in the series of books with no words. Picture Puffins pbk \$5.50

A LITTLE FEAR

Patricia Wrightson

The Njimbin watched from its camp and brooded, it had lived among people for years without any trouble and now this old woman had moved in, upsetting its control and invading its territory. And she had a dog too — there was nothing the Njimbin hated more than dogs. A magical book for the older child. Hutchinson hbk \$21.95



COMPUTERS DON'T BYTE

Mary Matthew, illustrated by Rita Parkinson

This book has evolved from a series of highly successful articles which appeared in the New Zealand Herald and the Christchurch Press. It delightfully and amusingly fills in the march of the microchip revolution. Resource Books Ltd pbk \$9.95

LESBIAN

SAPPHISTRY: the book of LESBIAN SEXUALITY

Pat Califia, illustrated by Tee Corinne

Pat Califia's approach to lesbian sexuality is challenging,

accepting, caring, and practical. She blends specific information with a deep appreciation of the power and necessity of sexual play. Naiad Press pbk \$22.95

LESBIAN SEX

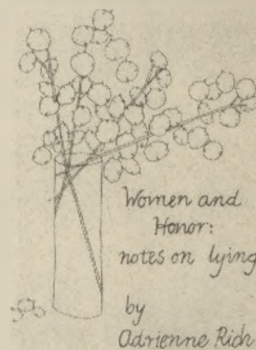
JoAnn Loulan

This is a book about lesbian sex, written by a lesbian counsellor, for garden variety lesbians. It was written with a specific intent in mind: to help you achieve the kind of sex lives you want. Spinsters Ink pbk \$25.95

OUT FROM UNDER: SOBER DYKES AND OUR FRIENDS

Edited by Jean Swallow

Out From Under details recovery from substance abuse in a way never before collected or published. From personal and professional perspectives, this anthology looks at many aspects of recovery: relationships, sexuality, ethnic culture, physiology; and includes the recovery experience of lesbian co-alcoholics and adult children of alcoholics, as well as lesbians who were chemically dependent. Spinsters Ink pbk \$22.95



WOMEN AND HONOR: NOTES ON LYING

Adrienne Rich

"Women have always lied to each other. Women have always whispered the truth to each other. Both these axioms are true." This pamphlet is the second in a series intended to reflect the development of ideas important to feminism. Onlywomen Press pbk \$4.50



NICARAGUAN WOMEN

Janet Bedggood works for CORSO, which has supported Nicaraguan literacy and health campaigns. She recently visited the country in a delegation hosted by the CST, the main trade union body.

Why Nicaragua — a small country in Central America, under half the size of New Zealand, with a similar population, struggling to develop? For 60 years Nicaragua was run by the Somoza family, in the interests of a few wealthy families and US multi-nationals. The National Guard, the Somozas' instrument of repression, was trained and backed by the US military. Opposition to the dictatorship grew in the 1960s, centred among peasants, urban workers and middle class professionals.

The delegation visited a live volcano at Masaya National Park, and as we looked down into the smoking crater, we were told that opponents to the Somoza regime were taken by helicopter and dropped in. The cruelties of the regime affected most of the population less dramatically; poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease are accepted by many not suffering them, as part of life.

Auxiliadora Flores in Esteli



On 19 July, 1979, an insurrection led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front overthrew Anastasio Somoza. Thirty percent of the revolutionary militia were women. This reflected profound changes for women in Nicaraguan society. Lesbia Heron, of the Nicaraguan women's organisation AMNLAE, talked to us about the involvement of women in the revolution: "Many women were drawn in to protest the atrocities — the jailing and the tortures — and joined sit-ins in churches, radio stations and schools. They went on hunger strikes and on widows' marches rattling their pots and pans." As women participated politically, they suffered the repression and their commitment strengthened. Some joined the armed struggle, some offered their houses as "safe houses" — refuges for soldiers. For feminists there was "no other way for women to have their rights other than through the revolution." So the top priority for women's liberation has been the survival and consolidation of the revolution itself.

The gains made by women during the revolution were written into laws, unlike the advances made by women in the First World during WWII, which were largely reversed as the men returned from the front. The big initiatives of the new government depended largely on women, both implementation and effect. Illiteracy was more than 85% in rural areas, over 95% for peasant women. Brigades of young volunteers left their jobs and studies in the cities for three months, to take part in the National Literacy Crusade. They went to the most remote parts of the country and lived and worked with peasant families, teaching them to read and write in the evenings. Illiteracy was reduced to only 13%. People also learnt what had happened to their country, and were

given self-confidence and the opportunity to participate in their society for the first time in their lives.

Community participation was also the strength of the Health Campaign. Despite their domestic commitments, women could become involved in local committees and train in basic health skills. The national campaign eliminated polio and measles, and drastically reduced many other infectious diseases. It provided a basis for continuing women's involvement in their own health care programmes. Traditional midwives formalised their skills in training programmes. The emphasis on community responsibility for health de-mystified health care.

We were keen to see evidence of the exciting changes for women. We talked to many women all over the country. Some were shy and frustratingly let their male co-workers speak for them. Other passed on their ex-

Nicaraguan woman





periences confidently and articulately, deferring to no-one. At the Women's Legal Office, we were reminded by the forceful director, Maria Bolarius, that there are "no magic answers, you can't undo in six years decades of machismo — the inequalities still exist." She had been appointed from the Supreme Court. Most university educated women in Nicaragua are in paid work. Even under the Somoza regime, these women had access to any professions. But in revolutionary Nicaragua, the gains of women are not measured by the gains of middle class women.

As in most other countries, women in Nicaragua are the hardest working, lowest paid workers. Although they have benefitted tremendously from the revolution and have taken advantage of many of their new rights, progress is limited. Development everywhere in Nicaragua is limited. We saw a country under siege. Since May the US has imposed an economic blockade. No imports means shortages everywhere. No exports to their biggest market means no income from the coffee, sugar cotton and beef which are the basis of the economy. This is part of a systematic campaign by the Reagan administration to overthrow the Sandinista government. Last year Nicaragua won the case it took to the World Court to prevent the US mining its harbours. The UN Security Council had also called for an end to the mining of Nicaraguan harbours. the Contadora peace meetings have repeatedly pleaded for an end to foreign intervention. But the Contra forces (remnants of the National Guard) continue to attack Nicaragua from bases in Honduras in the north to Costa Rica in the South, officially supported, encouraged and armed by the US-\$25 million was granted by Congress this year for the purpose.

Seven parties contested the Nicaraguan elections in November last year, and the Sandanista party gained 63% of the popular vote — A more solid base than Reagan got the same month.

Over 50% of Nicaragua's resources go on defence. All the women we talked to were preoccupied with economic and military strategies for survival. When we travelled north to the war zone, we

spoke to Auxiliadora Flores in Esteli. She said the coffee would be harvested this year with the help of international brigades and some of the pickers would be armed. Some of that coffee will be coming to New Zealand to be sold through Trade Aid shops.

Factories are also guarded everywhere "in defence of production" as the slogans on the walls proclaim. Women volunteer for the rosters for guard duty. We visited a state owned cotton mill in Managua which employs 600 women and 900 men. We talked to a group of workers who were enthusiastic about the benefits workers had gained since the revolution. All workers benefit from government-set pay rates, have the right to work at any job (regardless of gender), get subsidised meals, can attend the health clinic and use the creche facilities attached to the factory. Pregnancy is protected by a change to lighter work, a grant for birth costs and clothes and two months maternity leave. On return to work lactating mothers can breast feed up to an hour daily. Despite being under half the work force, women are 60% of the union activists.

Workers in privately owned factories are not as well off. We visited Nabisco, Nicaragua's equivalent of Grifflins, and talked to two women trade unionists just inside the gate. The management would not let us inside the factory. They employ 340 workers, mainly women. The women said the union was established in the Somoza regime and "the National Guard came the day the union started. We had no newspaper and the union always lost against the bosses. With the change in laws it is better organising, but conditions for workers are still bad. The administration have only their point of view." We sweltered in 95 degree temperatures while they told us of their demand for fans in the factory. I asked, "Do the management have fans?" "No, air conditioning."

All the factory workers had problems with heat, noise, and in the cotton mill, dust. Because of shortages, there was little protective clothing and consequent health problems. There were also shortages of machines and spare parts, now unobtainable from the US.

Not all workers can get child care. We visited one of the 12 day care centres in Managua. The Director Carmen Bolaires explained, "We need more but the money goes on defence." There is a waiting list and priority is given to children of workers in essential industries — factory workers, teachers, nurses and the militia. Parents pay what they can afford and fees are subsidised by the state. The creche cares for 350 children daily and is open from 6am to 6pm. It looked well run, staffed by 54 women. All the children were asleep on stretchers so we didn't see them playing. I asked Carmen Bolaires if the mothers felt guilty leaving their children. She did not understand. I was translated again. "Do the mothers feel they should be at home with their children?" "No, they are pleased their children are here."

Homes for many are primitive shacks, not much bigger than most New Zealand living rooms. Through gaps in the walls we often saw the light of a TV. Most houses have electricity and running water. In many households women are the only breadwinners. Most have children early, are not formally married and are deserted by their de facto husbands and left with children to bring up and support.

As Maria Bolanos of the Women's Legal Office said, "It's difficult to protect women against men. Men who abandon women and won't admit to paternity is a common problem all over Latin America." The Legal Office protects women and gives them support when they are before the courts, particularly for domestic disputes. The new laws changed the situation where the women had "all of the responsibility and none of the rights." Now women have equal rights over their own children — AMNLAE argued against sole rights in law as fathers should also share rights and duties. Women tend to form close relationships with their own children and their extended family rather than their husbands, so in being drawn into political life they bring an independence and a strength from enforced self-sufficiency. Many thousands are self-employed, working as street vendors. They work from stalls in markets, or move around in crowds selling their wares on trays.



the Legal Office promotes legal education for women and a greater awareness in the community of women's concerns. They are also working closely with police minister Doris Tijerino on a survey of domestic violence, which they think will show a high incidence. Because the cities are well guarded, no rapes are reported on Nicaraguan streets. As we talked to Maria Bolanos I was aware of the crowd of women outside waiting to see her. The office is busy and is extending its work into the regions. Nicaraguans seem to work on the principle that progress comes from honest evaluation, and we got straight answers to our questions. I asked about the leadership of the country and the murals and posters reinforcing the male images of superiority. Yes, that concerned her, but there were many women in the ruling party and the government taking decisions. The new policy is to give women the role they must have.

Abortion is illegal in Nicaragua. Middle class women can obtain abortions in the private hospitals but self-aborting working class women present themselves at the women's public hospital in Managua as 20% of all admissions. They are not prosecuted. This issue has been crucial to the women's movement in New Zealand over the last 15 years. Why is it not a priority in Nicaragua to legalise abortion? The women we spoke to about it outlined the problems. Everyone acknowledged that part of the problem is lack of sex education. Although contraceptives are available, most women are too shy to use them because they know so little about their own bodies. Neither are they organising and pushing for abortion. Nicaragua is 90% Catholic and the demand for abortion would put more strain on the church/state relationship. The people's church follows liberation theology, encouraging change and development and defending the rights of the oppressed. The church hierarchy continues to be a loyal ally of the old ruling class. I attended a mass, celebrating the end of Miguel D'Escoto's fast. The prayer was "God is God of the people and against imperialism. D'Escoto has the support of many Catholics, his fellow ministers in the government, but not the Catholic bishops in Nicaragua. The impossible cult of the

"virgin mother" is challenged by the radical clergy but promotion of abortion would seem to be extraordinarily difficult with the religious authority of the church so antagonistic to the government.

In a country where so many have been killed and are still being killed, people are an important resource. Abortion might seem a denial of that.

In the late sixties American aid programmes were tied to family planning, particularly in areas strongly anti-Somoza. Observers say this is also used as a population control in Catholic East Timor.

With the implementation of programmes in sex education and more systematic use of contraceptives, it seems likely that women will make demands for control of their fertility. It also seems likely that these demands will become government policy. As a worker in Fetsalud, the health workers' union, told us, "the government is for us, it works with the people, not against us."

One of the problems for Angela Mera, chief nurse at the Managua Women's Hospital, was that abortion cases were using scarce resources. There are shortages of all equipment and materials in hospitals (including a chronic shortage of surgical thread), exacerbating health problems.

We were not able to visit another hospital for the war wounded in Jinotega, in the war zone. We did not have the correct papers. We saw plenty of evidence of the devastation of the war. A bridge blown up, war wounded in the streets, bullet holes in the ferry we took down the river to the Bluefields on the Atlantic Coast and the devastation in Bluefields itself, where the major industry, fishing, has wound down. The CIA has blown up two fishing boats and the US market for shrimps and crayfish is non-existent. It is isolated from the rest of Nicaragua by a range of mountains, difficult communications and a different historical experience. Some of the indigenous Mosquito Indians living near the Honduras border have been recruited into the Contras, but the majority voted for the Sandanistas in the elections last year. Maybellin Martinez, who is working on the bi-lingual programme for the teachers' union in Bluefields, talked about autonomy for

the Atlantic Coast. This would mean self-determination, and a recognition of the diversity and the special needs of the area. She also talked about her mission to the US earlier this year to lobby against US funding of the Contras and the "self interest" of the politicians there compared with the support of solidarity groups.

We met a Mosquito Indian in Managua, working for the Barricada, the Sandanista party newspaper. Deborah Robb explained that the paper gives good coverage of Atlantic Coast events and also women's affairs. Most of the staff are women. "It's not that we don't employ men, it's just that they're not good enough." Sexist advertising is prohibited by law in Nicaragua. Deborah defended press censorship as necessary because of the war. "Freedom of the press is linked with respect for people." Part of this respect appears to be protecting the rights of Nicaraguans to survive.

The new thrust in Nicaragua is defensive. Lesbia Heron was crying as she told us of AMNLAE's newest priority — looking after mothers with children at the front. The Patriotic Mothers Front enables mothers to visit their children in the war zone with food and support. Mothers whose children have died are looked after by the committees. Fetsalud's new health project is to mobilise people for the civil defence campaign, "to work with the defence committees to form brigades against napalm, germ warfare generally and other invasion and terrorist tactics."

We went to Nicaragua to see for ourselves what was happening. We learnt that it is not enough that people make decisions and statements — people make ideas a reality through struggle. Neither is that enough when all that Nicaraguan women have achieved is threatened with destruction.

No Pasaran.□

Suggested reading:

SANDINO'S DAUGHTERS.

Margaret Randall, Zed Press

SWEET RAMPARTS: WOMEN IN REVOLUTIONARY NICARAGUA.

Jane Deighton and others, War on Want.

REPORT OF THE NEW ZEALAND FACT FINDING TOUR TO NICARAGUA. CORSO

WHAT'S NEW?

EXHIBITIONS

Eight photographs taken at home during winter by Andree Brett. Real Pictures small gallery, third floor, His Majesty's Arcade, 171 Queen St Auckland. 11-29 November.

Women View Women

Photographs by Fiona Clark, Gil Hanly, Marti Friedlander, Ans Westra and Jane Zusters. Real Pictures 2 December to 31 January to mark the passing of the UN Decade on Women. 1974 film "Some of my best friends are women" screens on opening night. Exhibition will tour nationally in 1986.

Fabric Textiles and costumes from the collections. Auckland Museum 21 December to 31 January.

port and lobby organisations for people with disabilities in Auckland. \$2 from ILC 14 Epsom Ave, Royal Oak, \$3 by post PO Box 24042 or \$3.50 posted from Broadsheet

Women in New Zealand Society. Poster by Gretchen Albrecht to commemorate Decade for Women. \$6 from Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt.

Lesbians: As we see ourselves. Fifty minute documentary video by lesbians about lesbians. VHSE 60 colour tape \$50 to buy or \$15 to hire (negotiable). Write to Debbie Moran 61 Selbourne St Auckland 2.

QE2 Arts Council Resource Centre. The centre has information on women and the arts, slides of women's work and an audiovisual programme for loan. Contact the Resource Centre, QE2 Arts Council, PO Box 6040 Wellington 851176.

Waiora

Four hour-long TV programmes in connection with this Maori health project will screen in prime time on 24 November and 1, 8 and 15 December

Mobil/New Outlook short story award.

First prize \$1000. Judge: A.K. Grant. Entries close 20 Jan 1986. Send \$2 entry fee with each story and SAE to Box 5840 Wellesley St Auckland. The winning entry will be published in New Outlook.

The Cerebral Palsy Society urgently needs money to continue its services to the 6,000 New Zealand people with cerebral palsy. These people can be mildly or severely disabled and are often unable to raise money themselves. They need our support. Send donations to Cerebral Palsy Society of NZ Inc, Independent Living Centre, 14 Erson Ave, P.O. Box 24042, Auckland 23.

The Auckland Working Women's Resource Centre is producing an eight page newspaper about working women — cleaners, checkout operators, mothers, union officials, teachers and more. It is available at the same price as a daily paper from the centre, TUC, Great North Rd, Grey Lynn (Private Bag 5, Newton) or from your union.

WHAT'S NEW? WELLINGTON

YWCA. Workshop for young women re the education curriculum review, to get young women's perspective. December 14, 9.30-4.30, lunch provided, at the Y, 3 Moncrieff St, Wgtn.

Feminist Teachers group, Wgtn. Pot luck dinner, 6 December, 7 pm, at 14 Fairview Cres, to review whether or not group will continue. Contact Lyn Jowett, 759-080 (eves) for information about the group or the meeting.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has now moved into its new offices at 126 Wakefield St, Wellington, phone 734-112. Postal address is still Private Bag, Wgtn. New offices are opposite the old Town Hall, in Commerce House, 3rd Floor. For those of you who did not meet the November 15 deadline for the Project Fund, the next deadline is February 16, for the March meeting. Guidelines and criteria available from the Ministry.

December school holiday programme. December 16-19, particularly useful for children of mothers in the paid workforce. Extended hours, 8.15-5.15, rates \$55 per week. Shorter periods possible. Contact the YWCA, 850-505 for details.

YWCA mothers and pre-school children camps, February, Otaki. Registrations underway. Contact Tina Reid, 850-505 for details.

Lesbian Club. Social night every Friday. Ring Women's Place bookshop, 851-802, for venue and information.

Women's Studies Association, Wellington branch. Contact: Anne Else, 759-958, about summer meetings.

Women Against Pornography, Box 475, Wellington, phone 849-501. Office at 50 Courtenay Place will until further notice be open only on Thursdays, from 10 till 3.

Media Women, Wgtn. Contact Ally Webber, 849-307 or Diane Gilliam-Knight, 666-969 (work) for information.

Women for Peace. Contact Jenny, 728-950 or Ngaire, 849-028, for information. Maori women's happenings. Contact Anaria, Wgtn 887-842.

Woman Zone, Wellington's feminist radio programme. Access Radio, 783 kHz, Sunday mornings at 10, followed by the Lesbian programme at 11. The Woman Zone collective needs new members, so ring the Access office, 721-777, if you're interested in being involved. No previous radio experience necessary, just lots of pro-women interest and energy.

Society for Research on Women, Wgtn branch. Ring Kay Switzer, 766-468 for details of forthcoming meetings. SROW's latest publication is an observational study in 6 kindergartens. SROW observers worked with kindergarten teachers to increase girls' participation in two learning areas which are very important for the development of mathematical and spatial concepts. *Once Upon A Time, Amongst Blocks and Car Cases* costs \$2.50 + p. and p. from SROW, Box 12270, Wellington North. Also published in set no. 2, 1985.

WONAAC needs support to counter activities of anti-abortion groups who are picketing clinics and hassling both staff and clients. Please help. Contact Di, Wgtn 861-857 or Helen, 848-541.



MEETINGS GROUPS COURSES

Auckland Women's Health Centre needs new members and volunteer workers. Energy and money welcome. Ring 764506 or drop in to 63 Ponsonby Rd.

Christchurch Anorexia and Bulimia Group. New Box Number 4520 Christchurch.

Women Against Pornography, Auckland. Meets every second Monday at WEA 21 Princes St. December meetings 7.30 2nd and 16th. Ring Denise 862084 (h) or 765266 (w) for more information.

RESOURCES

Ability Differences, Auckland's Awareness compiled by Maria Monet for the Independent Living Centre. An illustrated directory of 37 sup-



STROKES AND ART ATTACKS

**HERSTORY DIARY,
Rural Network Team
New Women's Press
\$11.95**

1986. A year when rural women show their strength. The cover of this diary introduces the image: a strong woman lifting a large sheep. A gutsy, cheerful, determined woman, like all the others celebrated in this diary.

The rural sector has long been the backbone of the New Zealand economy. Rural women have been an inherent part of that backbone. Unfortunately, for women to be "inherently" *anything* generally means they have been rendered invisible. This diary is an attempt to note the contribution of rural women, which is largely unpraised elsewhere.

The diary emphasises the point that rural women are not just rural dwellers, but also rural workers. And they not only farm. They are also nurses, writers, teachers, politicians, voluntary workers.

Biographies and photographs of the women are arranged chronologically. This way we see improvement at least in physical conditions for rural women: wattle cottages, camp ovens and families of eleven soon fade.

But the dominant theme remains constant: rural women's efforts as innovators. These are women working for change, for themselves and their communities, alone and in groups.

Many of the women shown here have had to confront problems related to rural life. There is a distinct pattern of women who began lobbying locally over an issue that concerned them, and gained access to decision making on local organisations. In many cases this served as a training ground for later involvement at a national level — sometimes, touchingly to the surprise of the women themselves.

The authors have made an effort to select women representing a range of occupations and ages, and from all regions (though there is no Waikato woman, I noted pet-



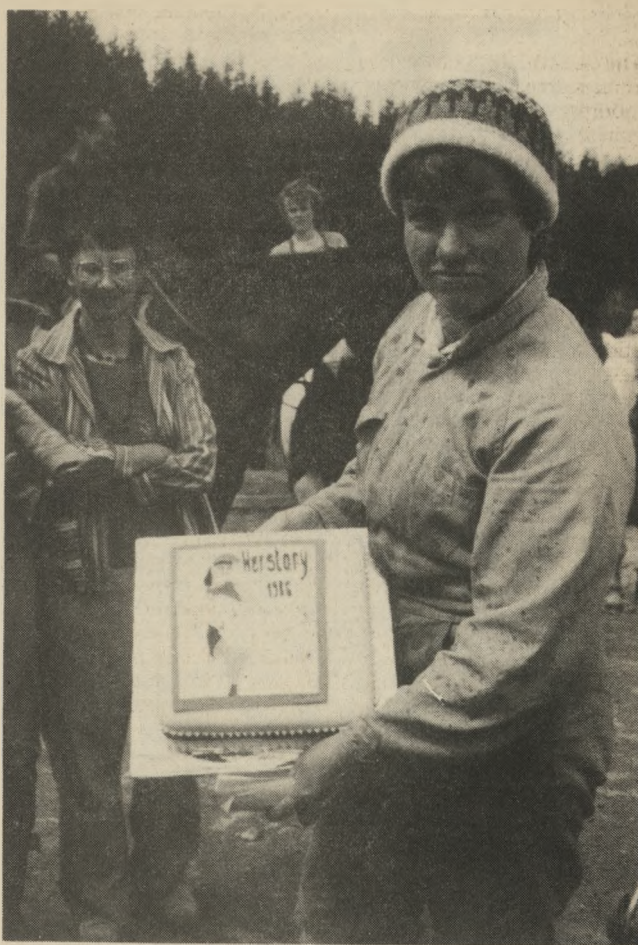
tily, looking for representation of my own pastoral roots!) But Maori women are surprisingly under-represented. This is odd, given the traditional rural lifestyle of the New Zealand Maori, and the large numbers of remarkable Maori women to choose from. It is also odd, given the greater proportion of Maori people as rural residents (over a fifth) compared to pakeha people (16%); in the 1981 census nearly one in seven of all rural people was Maori.

This publication offers no romantic version of life on the land. Neither is it a howl about rural hardship. The biographies work together to give a broad view of New Zealand country women, now and historically. For those who wondered what country women do all day, the answer is here: plenty!

The stories of these women fit well together in a diary. I like the juxtaposition of *our* story, as we fill the pages, with *their* stories. The 1986 portrait of ourselves becomes more than personal herstory, as we record our lives with those of these women.

The selection of biographies and photographs could scarcely have been an enviable task for the Rural Network Team. Some photographs, for instance, could have been of better quality. There are pleasant and practical extra touches: days and months in Maori, mottoes above each photograph, and an index of useful addresses at the back.

However, I especially like the defiance of popular myths about rural women that this



Donna Glendinning with the cake at the Herstory launching

diary offers. They really do a lot more than make scones and jam. □ Claudia Bell

INDUCED ABORTION IN NEW ZEALAND 1976-1983

**By Janet Skeat for the
Abortion Supervisory
Committee.**

**Pub. Government
Printing Office.**

This report is in two parts. The first contains the data collected through the notification necessary for all abortions, and is something of a statistician's handbook. It makes complex and tedious reading for the layperson, but does present a summary of the information in its conclusions:

- Since 1981 there has been little change in the level of abortion in New Zealand. It is much lower than every other

country with adequate data, except the Netherlands.

- Women under 25 make up half the cases.

- There are more Maori and Pacific women than there are proportionately in the population.

- Thirty-eight percent of abortion patients had not used any contraception in the month before conception. More than 80% of women under 20 and of Maori and Pacific women were inadequately protected from conception.

- The total fertility rate for the population fell by 14% between 1976 and 1983. Most of the decline must be attributed to increased and more efficient contraception. There is little evidence that abortion is a major method of fertility control in New Zealand.

- New Zealand has one of the highest rates of early teenage (14-17 years) pregnancy of all the developed countries.

- Fewer married women under 25 were having babies; more married women over 25 are having babies.

- The chief reason for inequality of access to abortion services is where a woman lives.

The second part of the report uses data from the survey of abortion patients in 1983. Feminist action to get contraceptive education for teenagers is borne out by one finding of the survey — the highest level of non-use and inefficient use of contraception is amongst the under 20 age group. Yet in later teens when access to contraceptive information and services is not limited by law, significantly fewer women conceive.

Skeat's report corroborates the Women's National Abortion Action Campaign's (WONAAC) 1984 survey, which showed yet again that women outside the main centres still have to travel long distances to see consultants and to have the abortion. More than one-third of the women in the Abortion Supervisory Committee's survey had travelled more than 50 km to have the abortion. Their major

reason was that there was no place locally where they could have the operation. More than half the women who had travelled to have an abortion had their operations at the Auckland Medical Aid Centre. "Remoteness from facilities produces delays and increases costs for those women who have to travel to obtain an abortion," says Skeat. "Lack of facilities is often accompanied by lack of information about where to go, so women in such areas are doubly disadvantaged in comparison, for example, with their counterparts in the Auckland or Wellington areas."

WONAAC sees the decision to seek an abortion as a personal one made by the woman herself. This is confirmed by the survey, which shows that women did not see this as an area in which professional assistance in making the decision was either necessary or desirable. "The study set out to see whether there was a need for extra counselling services to be provided for women in the pre-abortion period," said Skeats. "No great need for such services was found. The need which was articulated

was for more information to be more easily available so that informed choices could be made. There was an implicit rejection of the idea that women considering a termination require advice about what they should do."

The Abortion Supervisory Committee's report tallies in many areas with feminist criticisms of abortion services. WONAAC, however, does not want cosmetic patchups of the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act. The act must be repealed. It is opportune now for women to push for this, because the Labour Party is committed to reviewing the law and the Abortion Supervisory Committee has called for a major change — making all doctors consultants. This is not enough. Repeal would mean that abortion becomes a woman's choice, and would be treated just like any other health deci-

Booker McConnell prize, worth \$36,000, for her first novel, *The Bone People*. Congratulations, too, to Irihapeti Ramsden, Miriama Evans and Marian Evans, of the Wellington feminist publishing collective Spiral, for introducing Maoritanga and a touch of feminist style to the upper crust prizegiving ceremony. Spiral first published Keri's novel. We look forward to your next book, Keri. □

Keri Hulme



YEA, KERI WON THE BOOKER!

Congratulations to Keri Hulme for winning the English

SPARROW FALL

A POSTER
BY ELIZABETH GRAINGER



I feel that our Earth is like our mother out of which we are born and to which we will return. Personified, she is the most noble, most loving, most giving, of all ladies. And look what we have done to her: used, abused, poisoned, raped. I have painted this in

Sparrow Fall
ELIZABETH GRAINGER

AVAILABLE FROM BOX 2312
TAURANGA, \$10.00

The Sexual Wilderness

Men and Women in New Zealand

By Sue Kedgley



Frank, provocative, often witty and sometimes outrageous, this is an intimate account of how women have changed in the past fifteen years — and how men are responding to that challenge.

A REED METHUEN BOOK

\$24.95

sion. While we wait for this to happen, feminists need to keep pushing hospital boards and local MPs to improve local abortion services, and to get women who have had abortions involved. □

Sue Clement of WONAAC

WOMEN VIEW WOMEN

Photographs by Fiona

Clark, Gil Hanly, Ans

Westra, Jane Zusters

and Marti Friedlander.

Real Pictures Gallery,

Auckland, and touring

nationally.

This exhibition of 40 photographs was organised to mark the passing of the UN Decade for Women. All the photographers have been aware of the issues that concern women and have taken photographs throughout the last ten years. The exhibition will run from 2 December until 29 January in Auckland, and afterwards will tour nationally.

The 20-minute film *Some of My Best Friends are Women*, commissioned by the government for International Women's Year in 1975, will be screened on the opening night.

The photographers' selections were personal. "Coming from a rural community in Taranaki," says Fiona Clark, "these women are the sorts of women who surround me. At first glance they appear quite ordinary, yet they will have special strengths which are often taken for granted." "In my selection," says Ans Westra, "I have searched for portraits of women of obviously strong character: the photographs clearly defined their varied roles in today's society. These women seem to me to be very sure of where they belong and what they are fighting for." "I photograph people who care passionately about what they do," says Gil Hanly, "about the relationships between people and the events which change society." "I have a highly developed sense of injustice and a very positive sense of self," says Marti Friedlander. "These photographs reflect the way I see women, their response to me."

The exhibition is organised by Dianne Quin. □

Jenny Rankine

CHANGE OF HEART

Sandi Hall, Mercury 2,

October

Change of Heart has great impact. Sandi Hall exposes the human dynamics of the "average New Zealand office", this being a television newsroom somewhere, everywhere.

The play presents a group of workers who, like chameleons, live one life at work, another at home. On the one hand, Ash (Sylvia Rands) is the stable, liberal go-ahead journalist with the world at her feet, and yet on the other she is battling with an unfulfilling marriage and uncertain sexuality. Similarly, Carole (Megan Edwards) and Tony (Robert Bell) are forced to conceal their homosexuality at work, and Olga, (brilliantly played by Dorothy McKegg) the totally organised tea person, struggles to come to terms with modern day trends. Jerry (George Henare) is the ever-loving but not understanding husband, and Barney (David Weatherly) is the epitome of the New Zealand male bigot.

Barney is into sexual harassment, is threatened by successful women, downs beer, loves rugby, supports the tour, dislikes Minto, and he's the bane of his co-workers' lives. Unfortunately Barney's the boss, and like similar men in equivalent positions everywhere, he thinks he's got it made, he has the power.



Sandi Hall

Change of Heart is about challenges, feeling free enough to discover your sexuality; it's about changes that New Zealand and New Zealanders are making, and getting back at all those Barneys.

Unfortunately, *Change of Heart* (feels like it) was written for television and that's where it should be played. It's no use preaching to the converted, and those who make the effort to go to the theatre to see this play won't learn anything new. It's unfortunate because those who need to be more tolerant are sitting at home watching television from their armchairs, and they are the ones who could really learn something from the play. □

Wallis Barnicoat



Poster from Queer Pictures exhibition by Adriana Tuscica

QUEER PICTURES

This exclusively lesbian and gay artists' exhibition was on in Auckland for two weeks during the second reading of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill. The group of fine arts students whose work was being exhibited formed a support group earlier this year to counteract the isolation they felt as lesbian and gay students, and to give themselves a group identity and support system.

The work of the artists covered many different subjects using a wide variety of media and techniques. With mounted photographs and paintings lining the walls and an interesting variety of mixed media sculpture, the exhibition turned the crypt of St Paul's into an artistic maze.

Sally Smith and Fear Brampton stood out with their use of a variety media. Together with Mark Summerville they produced one of two videos which featured in the exhibition, "Sons and Daughters", which showed members of Auckland's lesbian and gay community.

Most of the work was for sale and reasonably priced. The exhibition is a celebration of art by gay people. □

Christine Smythe

STRETCHMARKS

Written by Sarah

Delahunty

Arrangements and vocal score by

Michelle Scullion

Instrumental scoring by

Barbara Griffin

Circa Theatre, Wellington

Stretchmarks (lovely title) is a revue consisting entirely of songs (and a little dancing) about courting, marriage and motherhood, energetically presented by Sarah Davison, Cathy Downes, Ann Pacey and Katy Platt. They go through the full catastrophe, from first date to divorce, making marvellous use of a really inventive range of props (including some remarkably realistic large-headed floppy "babies"). Is this the first time we've seen a rotary clothesline in all its glory on a New Zealand stage? They're dressed in the latest baby doll fashion colours — sickly pastel blue, pink, apricot and yellow; but these just happen to be a perfect match for the plastic clothes pegs, nappy pins and rubber gloves they're festooned with.

We've heard all this before, of course, but rarely so tellingly presented. The songs are really first-rate — I'd love to have the whole show on tape. The one about breaking up came a little too close to home; the one that had me helpless with laughter was the "hymn" to food and fat, sung adoringly before a fridge, which swung slowly open, its light streaming forth, to reveal all the goodies inside. Great stuff.

My only quibble was with the finale. They obviously didn't want to send their audience away in too suicidal (or homicidal) a frame of mind, so they tried to soften the blows a bit by an uplifting number, meant to convey that all would be well for Everywoman in the end. But the fact is that there aren't any easy answers, and to me this last song came across as shallow and unconvincing. On the other hand, I haven't a clue about what would have worked as a conclusion. A video of this show, minus the ending, would be marvellous to have for women's studies groups — it's an instant consciousness-raiser. It's also terrific entertainment. □

Anne Else

*"The writing of black
North American
women is going to be
the literary revolution
of the 20th Century."*

OF PUBLISHING AND MOTHERHOOD

**Sandi Hall interviews
Stephanie Dowrick**

Stephanie Dowrick — I've heard her name across several years, always from a great distance. This is the woman from Aotearoa that went to England and started The Women's Press, which has published books like *Why Children*, *In Our Own Hands*, *The Colour Purple*, *Sister Gin*, *For the Record*, and more. This is the woman that a casual phone call from Wellington allows me to meet, in the Red Rose Motor Lodge, on a cold, rain-spattered, windy day, because she's now written a novel of her own — *Running Backwards Over Sand*.

Perhaps we could start with you going from here to there — when was it, why was it? It's very hard to know in retrospect exactly why, but it seemed to me that I very desperately needed to go away. I now understand that I was feeling extremely confined by the role models that were available to me at that time, and the pressure to conform to them came not only from parents and teachers and the like, but also from my peers. I found the ways of being judged very uncomfortable...

It wasn't that I was feeling unhappy about being a New Zealander; like every other New Zealander, I grew up thinking I was incredibly privileged to be a New Zealander, and in some ways of course I was. There were some things I grew to love about my New Zealandness,



Stephanie Dowrick

which of course I've made clear in the novel. I wanted to say in the book something to Europeans about the positive aspects of being a New Zealander. But I felt the negative aspects, as conservative as New Zealand was at that time, quite strongly.

And what were you equipped with to go abroad?

Courage, that's about all. No qualifications. A little money that I'd saved myself. I'd been working for four years by that time, I started work at 16, first as a law clerk for three years, then a year in the library at the University of Victoria. I was allowed to work there weekends as well as weekdays so I worked seven days a week and accumulated the money. I was a very determined young woman. I had no means to get away, other than the ones I could create for myself.

Did you have any specific plans?

Yes, two. One was that I would work on a kibbutz, in Israel, which I did, in the Negev Desert. The other was that I'd go to Perugia and learn Italian, but actually I got married.

How long did it last?

About ten minutes! No, no, it actually lasted a year and a half. It was horrible, it was like

— being asleep. Which is horrible if you're actually awake. Not because the person was so unpleasant, not in the least. He was as much a victim of his notions of marriage as I was.

OK. England.

There, I ran around and did all sorts of ridiculous things, began to get involved in the women's movement, went to Berlin and became more politicised, because it was a very normal thing to be a political animal in Germany at that time. I had that kind of party atmosphere — everybody you knew was engaged in politics, so your social life, emotional life, everything revolved around those kinds of discussions. I try to convey a bit of that in *Running Backwards Over Sand*.

During that time I also felt very strongly that I no longer had any capacity to do ridiculous, shitty jobs, and that I was going to try to have a proper career. I'd been doing shitty jobs by then for eight years. So when I went back to England, I did a secretarial course in 12 weeks, and I got a job in publishing. And I was more and more involved in the women's movement and beginning to feel more like myself. But I think all my 20's were very dif-

ficult years for me emotionally. I do like to be older — the older I get the more I like it.

We've now ended up at The Women's Press. To have your emotional needs fulfilled in your work must have been very good.

Yes. That was extremely important to me. I had been working in publishing houses. When I glimpsed the possibility of setting up The Women's Press, what happened was the most extraordinary leap, because to be emotionally engaged, not only with a profession that interests you very much in its possibilities of being very very effective, but to do it in context with one's political idealism — it was simply extraordinary. Although it was also, until I'd had children, the hardest thing I'd ever done.

To begin from an absolute beginning. What happened was that I'd some sort of ideas about how a feminist publishing house might operate, and Naim agreed to be the financial godfather to it. That is, he guaranteed the overdraft. We never had any capital because I had absolutely no capital, and it would have been absurd, for obvious reasons, for him to put capital in. And then, at the very beginning, there was a group of women who were more or less friends, or friends of friends, who were just interested in this project, who came and we would talk and discuss it over and over. After a relatively short time, six months or so, that became one more thing to organise and was hard to do.

The beginnings of The Women's Press were extremely difficult. We were so strapped for resources. There was me working full time, Sybil working part time and we worked from my kitchen. We did that for quite a long time. I literally ate, slept, dreamt The Women's Press. There was nothing I wasn't doing. Sometimes I sat on my front step, put my head in my hands and literally begged for a minute. And of course, it being in my house, people rang up morning, noon and night.

So there were aspects of it that were really hard, but it was all so exhilarating. It created tremendous anxiety, too, because there were so many groups that one was trying to please. And also, necessarily, trying to please oneself. It was a very exceptional time. And it didn't really change. Of course

The Press became bigger and it became more vivid, and one had to explain it, justify it, less. I had always found that very stressful, having to justify the existence of this women's press. Which was very naive of me, because for many, it's not always obvious why women's presses should exist.

It became easier when it moved out of my house and there were a few more people. Although with the book club and the publishing house, we were only five when I left. Three on the publishing side, and two women working, not full time, on the book club. Suzanne Perkins, who'd worked with me from the very beginning on the jackets, was working from home. I think that now there are about eight or ten women altogether. Not that they're doing heaps more books each year; but because they've got to keep their backlist alive, and so on. They were very extraordinary, exciting times.

Eventually I wanted to go from there, from the Press, but it was very hard to wean myself away from it. But it was necessary. I'm a great believer in cycles in one's life, and trying to avoid repetition. I'd come to the end of a ten year cycle in publishing and I needed to make the shift to an inward mode. That was perfectly correct.

How did you come to that decision, that next step?

It came to me in dreams. The dream life is a very honest one. I had a few false starts — I had one leaving and went to Australia for six months to see if I could actually come back to the South Pacific. Then when I went back to England, I started to interfere in The Women's Press, which was awful for them and awful for me. Wanting to say things about the jackets — and of course I had to say to myself, "This is ridiculous, Stephanie, you're not helping anybody and it's no longer your place to be." Because I wasn't writing when I was fretting.

Where does Why Children? fit into that?

Why was one of the projects that Sybil and I edited together. It took us 2½ years to find those pieces, and during that time, she left working for The Women's Press. It came as an idea very early on. Suzanne Perkins was a single mother of two children and she was always saying things

that I, as a non-mother, only half-heard, really. And one of the things she said was "A mother almost always has a damp cloth in her hand — she's always wiping something, somebody's bottom, the surface of a table", - and this remark somehow resonated and stuck, and led to lots of conversation. Why Suzanne had children, why I wanted to have them, why Sybil didn't. And eventually we decided that this was a larger conversation and we could make a book of it. Which has struck a chord and it goes on selling.

That's true of many of the books The Women's Press has published. *In Our Own Hands* is another, and was a very hard job to work on because neither Lucy or Sheila had any writing experience. I met with them almost every week over a two year period. The rewards for me on those projects were very great; to learn so much through the process of publishing such books.

Were you associated with the press when it took the decision to explore the writings of women of colour?

Yes, I brought Alice Walker, Toni Cade Bambara and Angela Davis into our list of authors. I thought that they were extraordinarily good books. But I've also come to see that the writing of black North American women, especially, is going to be the literary revolution of the twentieth century. They explode every notion of how writing could be.

How did Running Backwards over Sand happen? And why Viking Press?

Viking Press because I didn't want to be published by The Women's Press, writing a novel. I thought it would be very difficult for them to say no to me — and it would have been very difficult for the world to believe that they would have said no to me. It would have been like being published by family. Also, I wanted to be separate from the publishing process, truly separate. I just wanted to pretend to myself that these things happened by magic. So it was quite important to me that the book came out with a commercial publishing house.

To me Running is such a New Zealand book, so delightfully a New Zealand book, and Zoe so delightfully

a New Zealand person. How did you — this is the silly question — how did you come to write this book?

I came to write the book because I thought I was writing something else — and knock, knock, knock, I wasn't! I started writing it in a very secretive, almost embarrassed way. Writing by hand in a little embroidered notebook. Not at all daring to think I was writing a novel, because I had never seen myself writing fiction. But nevertheless feeling an emotional tug towards it.

I was with my sister in Australia during a period of enormous change for both of us. We went one Easter Sunday to the Botanical Gardens in Sydney and I said, "I've got something I'd like to read to you", feeling excruciatingly embarrassed because it's not my mode to read people my work and especially my sister, whose opinion I value and am scared of in a way that I'm not of anyone else's. I read her the first part of the book, and she cried. I felt I'd written something real. I was happy that she'd cried because I'd written something that really touched her. That gave me the courage to go on.

I know that the women who read this in Broadsheet will be interested in hearing you talk about how they should judge where to send their manuscripts.

Right. Well, I always think the most sensible thing is to ask yourself "who has recently published books that are like mine?" And then write and say, I see you've recently had a big success with — let's say, *The Bone People* — and though my book is not at all the same, I think maybe you are the people who will appreciate it. Try to discover the name of the editor and send the letter direct.

I also think it's incredibly important how one presents it, as though you are proud of it. Publishers are deluged with manuscripts, and the one that they will read most eagerly is the one where the work is very well presented, and has been very much worked on. You've lost your chance if you send out your first draft, absolutely lost your chance. What you have to send out is the work that is absolutely as good as you can possibly make it. Which is not to say that if it's bought, the publisher won't have suggestions, as there was with yours and with mine. Of course there

will be. But you must ask yourself honestly "Is this the absolute best I can do? Or am I wasting their time, asking for guidance at a point where it would be better if I asked a friend for guidance?" Because publishers have very little time to give guidance to anybody except those writers they're taking on.

Another thing, of course, is for writers to consider that there are some rewards made, personal gains made, just in the writing of it. We're all a bit addicted to the applause of publication. But in fact the real learning comes not from the applause of publication, but from the process of writing. And I think that's what women should remember, that whether your book is finally between covers or not, you've still learned what you had to learn through the writing. That's quite different learning than the one you get from conversation, or from therapy. Because of course it's the learning from the unconscious, which I feel very committed to.

And the last thing I'd like to ask about is your children — the decision to do it, the doing of it...

Gosh. What a huge question. I feel that my life is now, at this particular point, documented by the concerns of maternity, rather than the concerns of literature. I think the concerns of maternity are extraordinarily interesting, precisely because of the political and intellectual interest which I've been cultivating up to this time — which is, how do we become who we are?

So having this little workroom, which is my life with my children, and observing them from their very beginnings, and also seeing that they have so much to teach me — for example, teaching me to be in the present, about sloughing off my preconception of how it is to be a mother, how it is to have a son, how it is to have a daughter.

I never expected to have a son. Somebody like me was a mother for daughters! Clearly! So I give birth, and I look down, and clearly I have a son. And that wasn't easy for me — I had to accept it quickly because I loved this little being I'd given birth to — and I was mourning the daughter I hadn't had, who'd been expected all that time. So both those things were going on. At

a time when one is all over the place, having just given birth — in a hormonal tidal wave, so to speak. So that very profound experience of giving birth, was from the beginning, a realisation that maternity was full of surprises. That was what I had ended my piece in *Why Children* with, saying: "There are no adventures without surprises." It was like a prediction.

But I do find it hard. I find the isolation of it hard. I feel cynical and bitter, sometimes joking, but mostly cynical and bitter, at how differently one is treated when, for instance, one is out as a writer, and one is out as a mother, with two children in a pushchair, shoving them along the road. I feel angry every time I go into a bank and realise that my custom as a mother is not wanted, (though my custom as a writer undoubtedly would be) because there are steps up and down and the door opens the wrong way for pushchairs. All those things that every single mother will tell you.

But the other thing is that being a mother has put me in touch with lots of women who are mothers, and that I've also found a very rewarding experience. They're not women who would necessarily identify themselves as feminists, but we find ourselves with lots in common. And it's also been very necessary for me to find women who are older, who are feminists, and who are mothers of young children. □

RUNNING BACKWARDS OVER SAND

Stephanie Dowrick

Viking (Penguin Books)

1985, \$22.95 hbk

It's a large rambling intelligent rag-bag of a novel that feels as if it has been written in intense short bursts with long gaps over a long period of time. It's a pleasure to read such a big book, and it has a marvellously nineteenth century disregard for unity — of structure, of style, of tone, of point of view. It's a novel of Zoe Delightly growing up and meeting the world, first as a child in New Zealand and then as an adult in Europe. But the novel jumps from Zoe's point of view to seeing through the mother's eyes, the father's, step-mother's, the Reverend

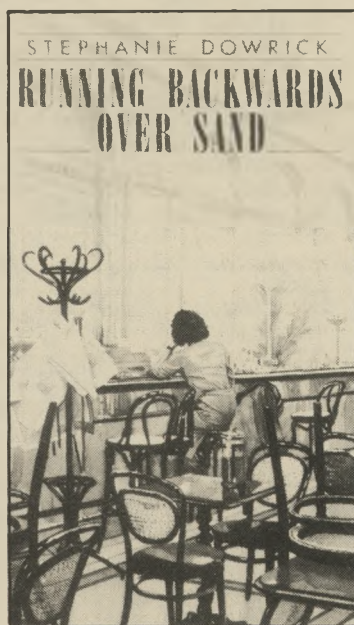
Mother's of the convent, various lovers; giving us information Zoe could never know. Although it feels like an autobiographical novel, its told in the third person, and I remained distant from Zoe, possibly because of the multiple points of view.

The adult Zoe is given long formally expressed, rhetorically metaphorical conversations with her lovers, and they reply in an identical voice. Try reading the dialogues aloud and you'll see how far removed from any believable conversation they are. The novel does have the changing, developing, half-aware feel of living; it does capture a sense of a growing, confused awareness of the need to find oneself. But it certainly could have been pruned. When Zoe in Germany talks of studying Frida Kahlo's painting the next chapter is a short story recreating Kahlo's affair with Leon Trotsky. Why is it here? Is our heroine Frida, and her lover Gabriel, Trotsky? The parallel (if there is one) doesn't seem apt or revealing. Or are we meant to suppose Zoe has written the story? Rather it reads as if having written the episode Dowrick can't bear not to use it, and so finds an opportunity to insert it in the text. There are several chapters like this — but who can regret such largesse.

The book does have a central theme. It begins with a powerfully evocative description of Zoe's mother's mother-love, and her death when Zoe is nine, which leaves her with a permanent sense of loss. When her great love, Gabriel the German sculptor, comes along she seeks for and senses in him her "lost essential home". He's portrayed as warm, empathetic, sensitive, even maternal, but he cannot fill her need and her inner grief and loneliness increase. She dreams constantly of a woman — a woman who evokes Gabriel, her mother — and who finally leads her to find herself in relationships with women.

On page 325 we are given a chapter which is the most explicit description of lesbian love making I've ever read. Compulsory reading for all lesbians even if you don't read the rest of the novel! And you can read it like that — it's complete and self-contained and doesn't connect with the texture of the rest of the novel.

Even the tenses have changed from the conventional narrative past of the rest of the book to a recreative sexual present. Is this the end of Zoe's search for the love and security her mother gave her? In her relationship with Gabriel, during his "exquisitely choreographed love-making" she feels like "a princess-become-pea, as the frog become prince looms over". With Claudine (echoes of Collette) "it is every moment of her past — good and bad — extraordinary and ordinary — which has brought her to this moment, which has allowed her this moment. There are no frogs, no princesses in bed with them; no Sleeping Beauties, no princes gathering to haunt her, beneath their mattress no hard pea lies." But extracting out these contrasting passages gives the lesbian passages an importance they don't have, buried in the multitudinous episodes of the novel. It doesn't read like a novel tracing the growing awareness and coming out of a lesbian — though this is certainly what it is about. Zoe's development is not seen in terms of any sort of political analysis.



They book ends on the point of return to New Zealand. Zoe idolises and identifies with Katherine Mansfield, and like her she's the New Zealander in Europe. It's a novel about being a young New Zealand woman in Europe in the late sixties, early seventies. Zoe is seen, and sees herself as vital, exuberant

and spontaneous. She's different from the conforming English. But inwardly she's uncertain. She feels culturally naive and inadequate, and feels awe and envy for Gabriel's European sophistication and knowledge. She's "too unsteady in her sense of self" for the world of feminism and sexual politics, and drifts into the limbo of the London male camp scene. She's defensive about any suggestions she could benefit from therapeutic help to understand herself.

As one of that generation of expatriate New Zealand women myself it felt very familiar to me. She's certainly captured a time and a psychological state of being. But I didn't gain any insight from Dowrick's account. It's presented superficially — again without any analysis. "That incandescent spontaneity which seemed to him to be drawn out of the near-empty country she came from. That kind of spontaneity was surely crushed and buried long ago in Europe." This is Gabriel speaking, but it's the same romanticisation as the authorial eulogy of Zoe in the opening paragraphs of the book.

I liked the enthusiastic and unabashed commitment to self of the novel. This woman's life is considered to be of engrossing interest in itself-not for any programmatic reason, or typicality. *Running Backwards Over Sand* is so refreshingly unlike all those New Zealand novels about forty-ish women looking back over their lives that we've seen so many of recently, from Fiona Kidman's *A Breed of Women* to Marilyn Duckworth's *Disorderly Conduct* and Lauris Edmond's *High Country Weather*. They're so depressingly alike and empty as to make me feel all New Zealand women lead only one restrictive and identical life. Most of all though I liked the fact that I ended the book feeling challenged — if this mish-mash of ideas and life can be published, and be a stimulating read, why not do it yourself? What would you make of your life and thoughts? Get to it women — there are a lot of novels waiting to be written and read, and one of them will be the one we've all been waiting for. □

Aorewa McLeod



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