

DISPLAY

# broadsheet

new zealand's feminist magazine

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# Fronting up

## Office

Office hours for Broadsheet are:

Mon – Thurs: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m. – 12 noon.

It is best to ring first before visiting as we are sometimes out and about. There are sometimes people here after 3 p.m. too.

Phone: 378-954.

Address: 65 Victoria St. West, City  
(Just above Albert St.).

## Calling all feminist jokers

We would like to have a feminist joke corner. I'm always being told (as I imagine other feminists are) that as a feminist I haven't a sense of humour. Really it's because most jokes are at the expense of women. Recently I was told three jokes by an Auckland feminist and laughed out loud at all of them. How many of you are closet jokers? Please send us your jokes or short funny stories and when we've collected a few we'll publish them. This could become a regular feature in Broadsheet if enough material comes in.

## New ideas column

We've started a new regular column this month. It's something we've been talking about for quite a while and at last have got off the ground. All of us at times have ideas, brilliant insights, theories, possible explanations etc., about the world, about our oppression and about our feminism. But we haven't got the time to discuss it, work it out fully and write it up as a fully-blown article. Or it's not a big enough idea to fill very much space but we want to share it with each other. Writing a whole article, particularly about ideas and theory, is a daunting prospect particularly for those of us who haven't had much practise at doing it. Also we need to be able to share our tentative and questioning ideas to raise discussion and get feedback. So we're setting

aside some space each month for small articles on any subject you're thinking about at the moment. Please send us your thoughts – from 100 to 800 words.

Miriam Jackson starts the series off with some thoughts on lesbian separatism. Responses or new ideas please.

## Don't forget

Things you can do for Broadsheet:

- 1) Send us large envelopes for recycling and/or come in and help us by recycling the mountainous stacks of envelopes sitting on our office floor.
- 2) Send for some back issues for staff rooms, waiting rooms, schools, etc.
- 3) Use our classified ad column to advertise the product or service you have to offer or to find a place to live etc.

Also if you are holding a conference or function remember we reach a very receptive audience. \$1.10 a column centimetre.

- 4) Send for a Broadsheet car sticker.
- 5) Send us a donation – those couple of extra dollars sent with your subscription helps us keep our financial head above water.
- 6) Give a gift subscription to a friend here or overseas.

## Can you sell Broadsheet in your town?

We are concerned that we are not reaching as many women as we would like outside the main centres. We have distribution through Gordon & Gotch to the Auckland area and to a large part of the South Island. However, we know there are whole areas where there are women who would be receptive to the material we have in Broadsheet who have either not heard of the magazine or who have never seen a copy. Recently one of the

Collective visited Nelson and found that women were eager to buy the magazine and subscribe. We need to reach these women as besides the political effect our survival depends on expanding sales. We have ourselves (and sometimes through supportive readers) managed to get Broadsheet into quite a number of bookshops throughout the country. You can help by trying to get Broadsheet in your local bookshop (particularly if you live off the beaten track) and by selling Broadsheets at your local women's day or seminar or conference. If you are having some activity in your town where you think you could sell Broadsheets please write to us and we will send you some copies to sell. We can invoice these out to you at 40 cents a copy on a sale or return basis or you can sell them on our behalf and send us all the money from the sales you make.

## Articles for Broadsheet

We are always delighted to receive contributions from our readers and would appreciate it if women sending articles, short stories, letters etc., could comply with the following guidelines:

1. Articles should be typed on one side of paper only, with wide spacing.
2. Please mark your name and address clearly on all contributions – also enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
3. Short articles (say for Behind the News) should be under 1000 words; main articles 1,500 – 2,250 words (3 or 4 pages).  
Keep letters short (say, 450 words) so that as many letters as possible can be published.
4. Send two copies of all articles (not letters) as this enables us to send a copy to the woman illustrating the article.

# contents



<b>Letters</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Brainstorms</b> — a new ideas column	
Lesbian Separatism	<b>5</b>
<b>Editorial</b>	
The abortion struggle	<b>6</b>
<b>Behind the News</b>	
SOS — what is it	<b>10</b>
California Protest	<b>11</b>
Overseas news	<b>12</b>
<b>Profile: Lynne Hope</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>A Fable of Our Times</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Centrefold Game to Play</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>“Faces are Made to be Fixed Into Smiles” — shock treatment</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>No Announcement — short story</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Hogwash</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The Feminist Eye—</b>	
Broadsheet on the Arts	<b>32</b>
<b>Whatever's for Us—</b>	
Women singers	<b>35</b>
<b>The Menopause — Part 2</b>	<b>36</b>

## women

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### These people worked on this issue:

Val Cole, Rosemary Curl, Sandra Coney, Christine Dann, Anne Parsons, Jill Ranstead, Rosemary Ronald, Jean Volkerling and the enveloping women.

### Cover photo: Rhondda Bosworth

### Illustrations:

Sharon Alston p19, 22, 24  
Vanya Lowry p27, 28  
Donna Hoyle p20-21

# Letters

## SOS services

Dear Broadsheet,

I think Broadsheet readers should be given the latest information regarding S.O.S. services as they may be misled by Sarah Calvert's letter (March Broadsheet).

We do not use P.S.I. clinics exclusively. We use a number of clinics including the feminist ones.

Women who use S.O.S. Auckland (and other S.O.S. agencies) have a choice both of clinics and of either a local or general anaesthetic according to their own needs and the services offered by the various clinics. Having visited these clinics we feel we are in a position to help them make a decision.

We also provide counselling if required, referral to a sympathetic doctor, overnight accommodation in Auckland for women from out of town and assistance with travel documentation and finance when needed.

We have an escort service at both Sydney and Auckland airports, meeting several main flights a week. The women are introduced to others travelling to the same clinic so they can share taxi costs and also have the company and support of other women.

Yours,  
Megan Grant,  
For the S.O.S. collective.

## Why we are pessimistic

Dear Broadsheet,

I would like to use a few recently released figures to show why we are so pessimistic about contraception (Julia Millen BS March 1978). Figures for 1976 show that \$70 million was spent on contraceptive research by agencies in the public sector (including private foundations etc). This is the same amount as for 1974. An additional \$18 million was spent by the drug companies. Only about \$14 million of this was spent on new methods of contraception. The vast

majority of the money is spent on safety trials of existing methods (often in an attempt to prove their safety).

An example of the bias in contraception research is that in 1976 only \$50,000 was spent on the development of new or improved barrier methods of contraception. This is an improvement on the last ten years when virtually no money was put into this area but it is insignificant when compared to the total amount.

Women must be made aware that there is no good, safe, reliable method of contraception. Only when women start protesting about this will things change. Work on the IUD skyrocketed after the publicity on the adverse effects of the Pill meant a significant drop in Pill sales, and we can be sure that the insignificant amount spent on barrier methods would not have been spent at all if women had not stopped using both the IUD and the Pill and reverted to the diaphragm.

Only when we have safe, legal, free abortion on demand and safe free 100% reliable contraception on demand can we stop being pessimistic. We are a long way from that and each year women die in testimony to the existing situation. All that the volumes of work on the Pill have shown is that it is unsafe. The same thing is happening with the IUD and with sterilization, yet it is these methods which are being financed most heavily. This situation is another reason for our pessimism.

Sarah Calvert,  
Hamilton.

Dear Broadsheet,

Julia Millen seems to think that we are sabotaging the work done by Family Planning. May I point out here that Broadsheet is one of the few magazines that gives an honest assessment of the disadvantages as well as the advantages of every type of contraception.

Depo Provera and the Pill are not treatments for illness and therefore we have the right to know exactly what risks we run in order to achieve fail safe contraception. A warning is printed on all cigarette packets — I hope to see the same on all information regarding hormonal contraception.

The diaphragm is a most effective contraceptive as long as a woman takes care to insert it properly and does not have any hang ups about doing so. I don't see why men can't use condoms either especially after childbirth and during breastfeeding. It is one way that a man can show his love and respect for the woman who has borne his child. I cannot understand the attitude of Medical Professionals to the ovulation method of birth control. It is simple and effective and one does not have to be terribly brainy to observe a change in cervical mucous. It doesn't cost much and I suspect that is why it is knocked by so many. Think about it!

We can't expect anyone to respect our bodies unless we do so ourselves. Too many women are swallowing pills because authority in a white coat told them to. We must learn to ask why and keep asking until we get the right answers.

Yours sincerely,  
Sue Neal,  
Papatoetoe.

## Assertiveness training

Dear Broadsheet,

Your editorial on assertiveness training (December, 1977) stimulates important critical analysis of the relevance of assertiveness training to feminism. As a feminist with three years' experience in assertiveness training, I felt that the editorial raised a large number of complex issues and dealt with them unevenly.

Assertiveness is commonly defined by feminists as a type of interpersonal

behaviour in which a person stands up for her legitimate rights in such a way that she does not violate the rights of others. This I see as specifically answering the concern expressed by Dann and Coney that individual women might choose to use their assertiveness to their personal advantage at the expense of other women. When women (or men) act in a way that infringes on the rights of others, they are, by definition, not assertive but aggressive. Abuses perpetrated in the name of assertiveness do not make assertiveness training in itself bad.

I agree with you that however assertive a woman may become in her personal interactions she will not be completely liberated in a sexist society. However, within the limitations of this environment, she can become much more effective in her personal life and in her efforts to change the sexist society if she is assertive.

We also agree that only collective action will change society. But, in objecting to assertiveness training as focussing on the personal rather than the political, your editorial overlooks the fact that when the effectiveness of individuals increases, their effectiveness as a group is multiplied.

One last point: Assertiveness training does *not* "put it all back onto women" Butler, for example, in her chapter "The Stereotypic Feminine Woman" documents the crippling effects of the pressures of female stereotypes on assertive behaviour. A woman who has been conditioned to take care of others' needs is often punished by society for daring to assert her own. Assertiveness training is a method through which she can learn, within limits, to assert her rights.

I hope you will print this and other reactions to continue what should be a valuable dialogue.

In sisterhood,  
Philippa Bissell  
Heretaunga

## Dogmatism and elitism

Dear Broadsheet,

The workshop at the Nambassa festival on women's spirituality began gently with a strong circle of linked

hands and ended so typically with feelings of hostility and fear and disappointment. The question of what should women do with their energy seems central to many conflicts that occur over and over again. Should women work towards the annihilation of sex roles for everyone or should women work towards total female autonomy from men; should we integrate or separate? This question is mother to the question of whether we should work inside the system or outside the system. The purest form of the separatist position is the lesbian/feminist view in which lesbianism is claimed to be a political choice. What happened at Nambassa and at many other meetings is that the separatist position, which is often accompanied as it was at Nambassa by very strong



anti-male feelings, gets rammed down the throats of women, some of whom may be attending such a meeting for the first time, some of whom are trying to find and speak their own voices, some of whom even brought men along with them. Women went away from the gathering feeling that they could not belong as a feminist if they were not anti-male.

Women felt unlistened to by other women. Women felt guilty and rejected for harbouring positive thoughts about men. Women are being told by other women what they should be doing with their energy. How has this been allowed to happen in the feminist movement? How has it happened that a woman's right to choose is not being nearly enough respected in the feminist movement?

I feel that the arrogant and dogmatic

way that personal opinions and personal choices (lesbianism being one such personal choice) are often asserted can be very damaging to other women and to the feminist movement. The separatist position has led to some rather totalitarian views being fostered in the name of the feminist movement; 'feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice' being one example. Another example of this totalitarian aspect of the separatist position is Jan Smith's article in October Broadsheet. Jan Smith's lesbian chauvinism is actually insulting to heterosexual women. Lesbian-pride, like woman-pride is a positive and fine and necessary feeling but superiority feelings can only lead to arrogance and dogma. Jan Smith concludes that lesbianism is "... worthy of serious consideration by women whose feminism and heterosexual lifestyles are in conflict. . ." (p. 21). To suggest that feminism and heterosexuality is, or could be, in conflict is intimidating. They are in conflict given separatist premises but I am concerned that each woman be respected for her own premises. We don't have to agree in the feminist movement but we could at least try to listen to and respect each other. Sharon Alston describes Jan Smith's article as "outrageous idealism" (Dec. Broadsheet p. 3). It is more than idealism, it is elitism and must be recognised as such. Feminists must reject any elitist attempt to make any one view the total ideology of the feminist movement. I feel that the feminist movement is in danger of becoming elitist and thus we must open out the whole issue and really listen to each other. Can we learn to live without a total ideology in the feminist movement? Can we learn to accept segregation *and* separation without laying intimidating trips on each other? I hope to see further discussion of these issues.

Wendy Laks  
Palmerston North

## Voting day strategy

Dear Sisters,

Ability to take control of our reproduction is central to our struggle for liberation. The continuing fight to enable women to have access to legal

abortion has been of central importance to many women in this country for the past 10 years or so. During this period of activity women have demonstrated in the streets, lobbied MPs, petitioned, worked at grass-roots level to make women more aware of restrictions imposed on them and presented submissions to a Royal Commission. As a result, the majority of people in this country now support easier access to abortion. Despite this, both political parties have consistently demonstrated their resistance to carry out legislation which has been clearly shown to be both necessary and desirable. They have both shown themselves to be preoccupied with ensuring that abortions are extremely difficult to obtain and done with considerable physical and mental stress on the part of women involved. Both parties have made attempts to close down the Auckland Abortion Clinic and have finally succeeded in doing so.

As long as parliamentarians (almost all men) have such extensive power over women, so long as men can dictate what should happen to our bodies, we shall continue to be oppressed in all aspects of our lives. We have fought in many different ways so that our voices will be heard. We have got nowhere. In fact we have gone several steps backward. We suggest that the only way now women in this country can show that they are a force to be reckoned with is to go out to the polls in November and register a protest vote. A vote of *no confidence* in both parties which have clearly shown over the years their unwillingness to regard women as autonomous beings. It is obvious that the control which parliamentarians exert over women is intended to keep us in a state of dependence, tied as we are to our role of childbearers, not through choice but because we have no alternatives.

There has been, and will continue to be, anti-woman legislation until women as a united group show their strength in protest. If a large enough body of women can be mobilised into awareness of the power we have to use the democratic process to our own advantage, parliamentarians will soon recognise the power of women's vote, in this case a vote of protest, and the

effect of withdrawal of our support.

This is a crucial election year for women. Women's rights under National's term of office have been outrageously eroded. There is no guarantee that Labour will do anything more than pay lip service to our demands. Women have got the power to effect change, but only if we stand together in our anger and show we will not accept the manipulation and control that at present limits and damages us.

We urge women to write to every MP local party branches, national and local newspapers, all women's groups and discuss with women around them so that parliamentarians are faced with the campaign at every turn. Undertaken with much publicity and vigour it would impress upon politicians women's determination to direct our own path. An added advantage of this action is its guarantee of effectiveness, since, should we fail on polling day to get a substantial body of protest, the effects of a nationwide campaign beforehand should be sufficient to impress upon MPs the extent of women's anger.

In sisterhood and struggle,

Sharon Moffit

Carole Stewart

for Buller Women's Collective

### Abortion tactics

Dear Broadsheet,

Although I have been on the executive of a local branch of ALRANZ for nearly three years the following comments are all my own personal ones.

First let me say that I am in complete agreement with Marianne Doezi and Val Cole. Of course they are right, but I fear that both of them in their articles may be "rocking a very fragile boat".

I don't think that we have failed. Without us all doing our bit the abortion legislation would have been accepted with apathetic resignation. But what I have learnt is that we did not "get through" to the majority of New Zealand women. SPUC did its propaganda so well in frightening them not to ask for "Abortion on Demand". I am afraid the majority of

New Zealand women were and are *not* ready for Women's Choice, to me they seem frightened to make a choice, so conditioned are they to having matters decided for them. So the "Woman with the consent of her Doctor" has found national favour.

Val, you write: "We shouldn't need to ask; we should *take*," marvellous stirring words, but *how*? The ultimate fertility control would be being able to bring on an overdue period whether the cycle has been fertile or not. If dandelions were abortifacient then we could indeed be strong, proud and autonomous, but unfortunately nothing as simple as this plant is available. So what *have* we got? Prostaglandin pessaries and the progestional pill – but these are made and controlled by male pharmaceutical companies and prescribed by male doctors. Menstrual extraction equipment is also manufactured and could be dangerous in unskilled or unpracticed hands, apart from being against the law – more obviously so than drugs which are often "contraceptive before implantation and abortifacient after" according to the Royal Commission's Report! So what *now*? Women are in desperate need of leadership and guidance to work positively for the control of their fertility but they are intelligent enough to recognise the facts as they are. It is no good saying "take" and then finding ourselves in prison. Only a few of us are brave enough for martyrdom and a surprising number of us have been sterilised in one way or another and would be useless. Of course by doing this we have had our fertility very effectively controlled, but by the patriarchy! So please let's get the legislation repealed first, the Clinic back, and then by all means day clinics in the main centres run by women. Encourage, educate and inform the now not-so-silent majority, but don't frighten them off with Women's Lib slogans and the word *radicalism*, which I know only too well happened before and paved the way for 44 men to do their worst to us.

Letters

Continued on page 15

# Brainstorms

*Ideas time/ideas space...we all have ideas about what we see happening to women, what we see happening within the Movement, and sometimes we say "I'd like to write about that", but what with one thing and another, we never get it down. We don't have enough material for an article, or we're scared of what the reaction will be, or we're too busy to work it out to the last detail. You know. Goodbye, idea — I can't bring you to term and I'm too shy to expose you half-formed. Well, why not? So long as readers accept that this is a rehearsal, not the full performance. Perhaps they can offer helpful criticism. We thought we'd try a column where women can offer their ideas without feeling that they have to produce the "last word". A space where they can get something off their chest, experiment, toss a few ideas around. Five hundred to a thousand words — any ideas? Miriam Jackson kicks off with some of her thoughts on lesbian separatism.*

## **Lesbian separatism Pie-in-the-sky or a practical alternative?**

Choosing a separate path would seem a viable alternative for disgruntled feminists who want to avoid the energy-draining compromise of working in a full-time job in the system. However, before all feminist wimmin pack their bedroll and move to the New Lesbos they will have to look at the ties that must be cut either now or later. The obvious tie is that between wimmin and their children. Can separatist wimmin compromise their politics and let their children attend state kindergartens and schools, with their inherent sexism, hierarchies, and suppression of creativity? Can separatist wimmin compromise their politics and get around the red tape you get tangled up in when trying to provide your own style of education?

We cannot avoid the biological fact that not all feminists have daughters. Can separatist wimmin cut their emotional ties with their sons when they reach the age of puberty, and how can this be accomplished without the pain experienced by our mothers and grandmothers when their sons marched off to war? Or is the bearing of daughters the separatist privilege of a few? How many of us cannot cut off these ties and are forced to live in a schizophrenic twilight time holding separatist political ideas whilst being emotionally tied to our "will-be-men"

children and the job of earning enough to support them?

## **Who is left holding the baby?**

This brings me to the thorny point of separatist incomes. 'Juno' No. 2., talks of the lesbian feminist life styles in Palmerston North. These women see their low incomes "as compatible with refusing to prop up institutions which oppress women, etc". However, such low incomes and the lack of access to institutional resources means more wimmin energy is spent economising, because wimmin have been denied access to resources which they should have a half share of as of right. Or can separatist wimmin compromise their politics and use the resources their "in-the-system" sisters work for (such as transport, and other "perks"), while failing to give them the nurturance they need to survive in the system?

I also see a real danger that this lack of contact with wimmin who are not feminists, or not "useful", may lead to a *decreased tolerance* for other women. It is this decreased tolerance for other wimmin which gives the Women's Liberation Movement such poor prospects. We should never be complacent on this point for only if we can *understand* all wimmin instead of ignoring or becoming hostile towards them will the Movement gain strength. A woman who is just beginning to comprehend sexism in child-rearing (that it is now O.K. for girls to climb trees, etc.), will not be encouraged to read and look

for other facts of our oppression if she is offended and upset by extreme points of view, unsoftened and bluntly put. It is good to be out front about yourself and your politics but in terms of understanding other wimmin and recruiting them to the Movement it is not always the most appropriate tactic. Whether it is appropriate or not will depend on your judgement of the situation. Just as some of us may feel that petitions are no longer a useful tactic, others may feel that separatism is not useful, although for many lesbian wimmin it may be a useful and important strategy enabling them to grow and develop their own strengths.

## **Looking outwards and inwards**

However wimmin who have suffered considerable oppression may well need to face the enemy at very regular intervals to prevent their anger from becoming self destructive or deflected onto wimmin who hold differing views on feminist issues, yet who are pro-wimmin. Such anger can be used effectively out in the system, whereas in developing a separatist alternative, which could become too isolated from the system, there is the danger of losing sight of a major goal of feminism. For surely the basic premise of feminist politics is to allow wimmin an informed choice and not to dictate what they should or should not be doing. To act politically it seems essential that we have access to system

**Continued on page 15**

# Editorial

## A look at the social and historical context of the abortion struggle in New Zealand, with some suggestions for future action.

... so Des Dalgety and his band of merry men teamed up with the Sheriff of Nottingham (alias Sir Robert the Pig) and the women of New Zealand were ground further into the dust. Dalgety went off to get his pat on the back from the Big Daddy of them all, the Patriarch of Patriarchs, in that last and greatest bastion

of male supremacy, the Vatican, while Sir Robert stayed home (for a change) and planned further additions to his dungeons.

What did we expect? That pigs could fly, leopards change their spots, and men liberate women? Hardly. Yet of course we were disappointed when that Bill went through, and some of us felt demolished and discouraged.

I hope we've all got over that feeling now and are ready to go on again. I think that at this point an analysis of the historical and social context of our abortion struggle is long overdue, and so I'll have a go at it.

### Who is on our side?

The right of women to control their own bodies, to the extent of aborting unwanted pregnancies, is a very new concept. Most left wing groups and individuals, who claim to uphold the "rights of man" against oppression by the rich and powerful, have yet to acknowledge and wholeheartedly support the right of women to control their own bodies absolutely, as a fundamental civil liberty. This point was brought forcefully home to feminists who attended rallies against the S.I.S. Bill. Speaker after speaker mentioned the attacks on human rights the Government had made during the year, and speaker after (male) speaker "forgot" to mention the worst attack of all, on half the population, — the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion legislation.

If the Left is so backward in its thinking and practice, then naturally the Right does not have to make any concessions at all. The Right is led by the rich and powerful in the interests of the rich and powerful — white men with money. White men with money do not make concessions until their arms are twisted behind their backs, they do not give up power until they have a gun at their heads. (I am speaking figuratively, of course — though when the situation becomes desperate, when oppression is severe, then examples such as China, Algeria, South Africa, Vietnam and so on, show us that figures of speech can leap off the page and into the hands). How can we reach a position where we do the "arm-twisting", the "gun-pointing" — instead of *them*?

It's not easy. We start with none of their advantages. Our only advantage lies in our greater numbers, and the work which those numbers can do

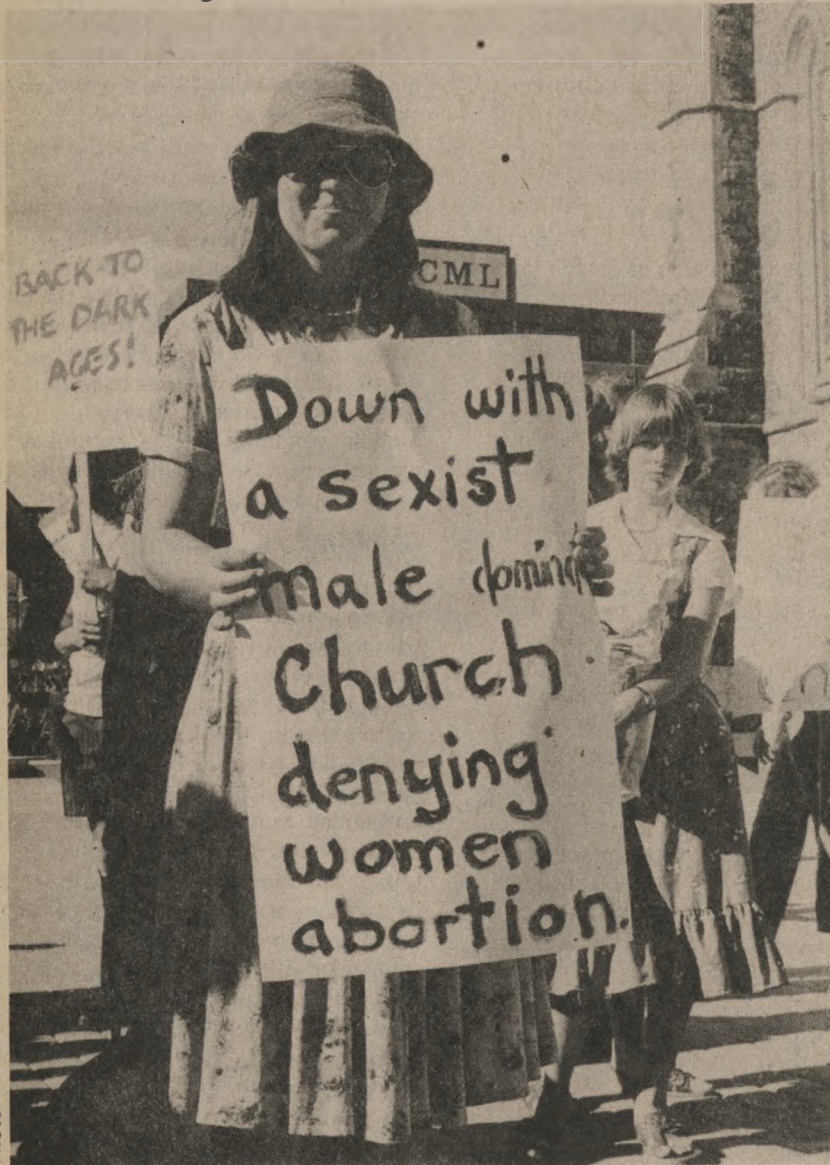


Photo: Julie Lambie



when they know what needs to be done. What needs to be done? In the short term we must win the right to control our own bodies. In the long term we must destroy the system which puts rich white men in control of society as a whole, and of individual women, blacks and workers, and replace it with a society where justice and liberty came as a right to everyone, and cannot be bought.

That is a mighty tall order. How are we ever going to get there? It seems so far away it looks like we'll need a space ship, and most of us are still walking. I don't know how we'll get there, I don't know if we even will. Maybe the rich white men will have destroyed the world with their nuclear playthings before we are even half way there. But since we are still (I hope) going to keep trying, what can we expect?

Obviously, we can expect a long struggle. Let's forget about our Utopia for the time being and concentrate on what we can realistically expect in our short term struggle for a woman's right to choose. The abortion struggle has assumed the proportions and significance of that earlier and major women's rights struggle — the struggle for the vote. A study of the suffrage campaigns in New Zealand and Britain shows the necessity of understanding our struggle within a specific historical and social context.

In New Zealand the suffrage campaign was won in six short years, from the time when Kate Wilson Sheppard took national responsibility for the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1887, and instituted an organised campaign for women's suffrage, to the passage of the suffrage Bill in 1893. In Britain the struggle lasted over fifty years. Dr. Richard Pankhurst was a foundation member of the first Women's Suffrage Society which was started in Manchester in 1865 — his wife and daughters were still struggling forty years later, leading the outbreak of suffragette militancy which began in 1905, after decades of suffragist campaigning.

Thus we can see that no matter how just our cause, the speed with which we reach our goals is partially dependent on factors which are

outside our control. New Zealand women had advantages which British women lacked — a less class-bound society, greater access to secondary and tertiary education, a less stable and less entrenched Parliament, and the support of middle-class men in the temperance movement, which played a large role in mobilising women. Suffragist techniques, such as speeches, pamphlets, rallies, letter-writing, articles and a petition succeeded in New Zealand, whereas British women were forced into a militant suffragette campaign, after the failure of forty years of suffragist activism.

### **The abortion struggle today**

If we look at the abortion struggle in New Zealand now within its historical and social context, what can we learn? A comparison with the suffrage movement shows us the need for a sustained and vigorous campaign, directed at involving the maximum number of people *against* the government which denies us our rights, and *for* a woman's right to choose, using all means possible. Not just an organisation which collects subscriptions, does a bit of research, a bit of speaking, and a little lobbying. Not just an organisation which limits its style of campaigning to public demonstrations and pickets, confusing physical visibility with effectiveness and rejecting other tactics as "reformist". Not just spontaneous protests which often seem to confuse militancy and radicalism, though there is no reason to believe that a militant illegal tactic, such as the destruction of property, will be any more effective in isolation from a mass base of support than will a militant but legal action, such as a rally, which also suffers from lack of mass support.

This is the state of the pro-choice campaign in New Zealand at present. The first group mentioned above is the Abortion Law Reform Association of N.Z., which has never made a concerted effort to get and to lead mass membership (as SPUC has). Potential pro-choice activists and supporters are of course harder to track down and organise than anti-abortionists (you can't round

them up in certain buildings on Sundays, for instance) but we now know (I hope) that winning a fight against those rich white men who control our lives is not easy. Unfortunately, ALRANZ does not perceive that this is what it is up against (some of its members being rich white men themselves) and its tactics have reflected this fact. It has had a go at beating the boys at their own game (lobbying) and failed dismally. This is not to doubt the sincerity and dedication of active ALRANZ members, but merely to point out that Dalgety and his merry men have plenty of powerful pigs up their sleeves, which is more than ALRANZ has, or can realistically expect for the present. It is time that ALRANZ made a careful assessment of just what individual lobbying, of Members by members, can achieve at this stage, and whether it is not time to turn to involving more people.

Which brings us to the second group, the Women's National Abortion Action Campaign, which claims to be doing, or trying to do, just this. WONAAC certainly has a more radical line than ALRANZ (a "woman's right to choose" rather than "a woman and her doctor") and it also claims to have more radical tactics. It aims to mobilise masses of women. Feminists would support both a woman's right to choose and mass involvement — unfortunately WONAAC hasn't quite worked that way in practice. In the cities it had tended to be led by women who are Trotskyist socialists, who follow the organisational principles of the Trotskyist socialist group they belong to, the Socialist Action League. When these women are opposed the cry of "red-baiting" goes up. I consider this to be unfounded, as most feminists are against capitalism as well as against sexism and they see the necessity for some form of socialism. Where they differ with the Trotskyist women is over means, not ends.

WONAAC constantly insists on mass involvement, but since it was formed in 1973 the actual numbers involved in and supporting WONAAC have been small. Most feminists are not involved.

Why has WONAAC failed to broaden its base, and is it always doomed to failure? I believe that it will go no further than it has done so far unless it abandons its simplistic notions of "action" and "mass mobilisation" in favour of a more realistic assessment of the New Zealand scene. The WONAAC "answer" to every anti-abortion blow is to stage a march or rally. Despite the claim of the Trotskyist women that marches should be used as publicity vehicles, so far WONAAC has staged them in reaction to issues which are already getting publicity, rather than choosing their own time, place and issue. We must ask ourselves what is the *point* of marching? The point, presumably, is to involve as many people as possible in expressing their views to the government and the public, and thus converting both the public and the government to their point of view. Is a march always the best way to go about this conversion process? I would argue that this is not always the case. Huge demonstrations, such as those against the Vietnam war which were held in the early Seventies, may have this effect. By way of contrast, New Zealand has yet to stage a huge pro-choice demonstration. At present SPUC, with its captive clergy and schoolkids, can beat us hands down at the numbers game. The large numbers which turned out to protest against the Vietnam war were also achieved under different circumstances. The horror of Vietnam was on the T.V. and in the papers every day – abortion is not. There was a mass campaign over the Vietnam issue, involving intensive leafletting of schools, factories and suburbs and complementary activities such as hunger strikes and vigils. Demonstration organisers chose the date for the big march months in advance and built towards it, intensifying activity as the date got closer. Sources of support which are not forthcoming in an abortion campaign, such as churches, helped swell numbers considerably. The campaign was organised largely by men, with all their advantages, and supported by men. There were more men than women marching, despite the fact that women felt strongly about Vietnam, because before a woman can join a public demonstration she must

solve the problems of transport, children and domestic responsibilities, not to mention her conditioning against getting vocal and stropky.

### The medium and the message

Does this mean that women can't be mobilised around radical demands? Of course not, but we must consider what forms of mobilisation are appropriate, and what we can realistically hope to achieve. It seems to me that if we could get a majority of women to write to their M.P. telling him that they support a woman's right to choose and will not vote for a candidate who does not, then we will have mobilised women far more effectively than getting several thousand out on the streets and leaving the rest with nothing to do. WONAAC confuses form with content. A march demanding abortion law reform is more *militant*, but less *radical*, than an extensive letter-writing campaign demanding complete repeal of all abortion laws. The argument that letter-writing and other less militant tactics are "reformist" because they appeal directly to the existing power structure just will not wash. What do marches appeal to? Until the demonstrators have the power to enter Parliament and take control into their own hands, then they too are merely appealing to the existing power structure. They are trying to pressure those in control into acceding to their demands by showing a strong front. But those in power are patently not frightened by a couple of thousand in Queen St. of a Friday night. It seems to me that tens of thousands of written threats to oust them from power if they do not accede to the voters' wishes are worth more than a couple of thousand shouted threats. To get those tens of thousands of threats would require a "mass mobilisation" i.e. the message would have to be spread to thousands of people before they are motivated to act. This "reaching the people" is one of the most valuable functions of mass mobilisation campaigns, and if we are able to envisage alternative forms of "mobilisation", and not merely see it as marching, then we will be getting somewhere. This is

particularly crucial in the light of the difficulties New Zealand women face with regard to public demonstrations. Especially when we are so lacking in imagination as to hold demonstrations *at night* when probably more women could come in the day time (as they did in the U.S.A.).

I will turn now to the third "group", which is not really a group at all, but small groupings of individuals, mostly "non-aligned" and/or lesbian feminists, who are dissatisfied with both ALRANZ and WONAAC, but who have yet to devise an effective strategy for getting what they want. These women are under no illusions about the power of the white male club, and the necessity to fight it by all means possible. However, I believe that their (completely justified) anger has led them to choose tactics which are original, militant and exciting, but which have had little, if any, long term effect, because they were conducted in isolation from a mass campaign. These women have also talked about setting up women's health clinics which will break the law if necessary, but again, how will they survive without widespread support? Without protection from large numbers, they would be easily isolated and picked off. To refer back to our herstory – the militant acts of the suffragettes were the culmination of forty years of action by the suffragists. By this stage so many women had been reached, and so many women were angry, that it was possible to fill Holloway prison over and over again merely with suffragettes. We certainly do not have this situation in New Zealand at present, and militants are liable to end up suffering in silence. If we are going to have martyrs, then we must be able to ensure that their martyrdom is effective and glorious, a front page rallying cry and not just a once-only court notice on page 15. Civil disobedience must be, and must be seen to be, the tip of the iceberg of organised discontent, and not merely the work of a "lunatic fringe." Militants must work for these conditions, and make sure that they prevail, before they strike.

### Two things to bear in mind

Which leaves us – where? What tactics

should we use, and what are our chances of success? An analysis of the suffrage movements in New Zealand and Britain shows that the trend was the same – only the pace differed. We can see that in New Zealand in the nineteenth century there were specific factors which helped us forward, whereas at present Britain leads the way while our special circumstances cause us to lag. What can we do to accelerate the trend?

I have suggested that it looks like our fight in New Zealand will be a long one. New Zealand is no longer the comparatively progressive country it was in the 1890s. *An effective campaign must take notice of these two realities:*

(1) that it is possible to obtain reforms through the Parliamentary system (as they did in Britain and the U.S.A.). Of course the system as a whole is rotten, and we oppose it, but short term reforms through the system are possible, and they should not be sniffed at, as they frequently form the basis for further progress.

At this stage there is no mass acceptance or even understanding of "alternatives", and alternatives are therefore doomed for lack of support.

(2) Parliament is influenced only by heavy pressure. At present the heaviest pressure is coming from the anti-abortionists, who have numerous advantages. We must apply counter pressure, and as we lack the financial resources and the white male privileges SPUC enjoys, our pressure must come from force of numbers – angry and committed numbers. Therefore we need to consider how we can most effectively mount a mass campaign aimed at getting what we want from government. This has not been done before, and we will find out what will succeed only in practice. But here are some suggestions:

Parliament has defined abortion as a "conscience" issue which is therefore entitled to a "free" vote. We should reject this definition and make it a party issue, by pressing the parties to have a policy (as Values has). How? By joining a party with the express intent of "stirring" on this issue (SPUC has done this already); by pressuring party members and M.P.'s



Photo: Zusters

to adopt a stand; by encouraging party members and M.P.'s who make the right stand; by making it a platform of our campaign to vote only for individuals and parties with the right stand. (If one party takes the popular stand, the others will soon have to follow suit). Let us do everything we can to divide the parties internally over the issue by getting party women involved in all-party, non-partisan abortion campaigns. This issue is so important to women that already they are threatening party solidarity. (More on this to come).

Mounting campaigns in each electorate aimed at reaching every woman in the electorate with the feminist view on abortion should be tried (I think we often overestimate the level of awareness). We must devise ways in which these women can be mobilised most effectively, given that they are not turning up to "mass" rallies at present.

What about turning our attention to more ambitious and exciting ways of raising funds and publicising our cause – going to meet New Zealanders instead of expecting them to trek out to us. In my opinion a benefit rock concert or sports meeting would attract thousands more than a demonstration, would provide an excellent opportunity for reaching people with our political message (via leaflets at the gates, etc.), and (best of all) the people would be paying for something they believe in, thus helping the cause along.

Let's make use of the fact that it is election year and form groups which will heckle and leaflet at every political meeting, no matter what the party or person, pushing the pro-woman, pro-choice line. Make sure that feminist banners and slogans are right in front of the cameras whenever T.V. turns up. Keep the issue alive and screaming. Let's consider more militant "zap" actions too, but remember that they must be carefully organised so as to ensure maximum publicity, and not martyrdom, which we can't afford at present.

Demonstrations can be used too – if we can be sure that we can take the time and trouble needed to reach and mobilise impressive numbers

Let's be realistic and recognise that women are not going to be liberated once and for all tomorrow, or next year, or even in ten years time. That countless feminists have died with their struggles unfinished and we will too. That's no reason for being discouraged – if our feminist foremothers had given up we'd still be fighting for the vote! So let's think hard about what we're up against, where we've gone wrong in the past, what will work better in the future, and let's get going!

"The glass is falling hour by hour,  
the glass may fall forever  
You can break the bloody glass  
But you can't hold up the weather!"  
(Louis McNeice).

Christine Dann.

# Behind the News

## The Tasman Traffic

**Sisters Overseas Service helps get woman wanting abortions to Australia. Sandra Coney talked to the women at SOS about how their operation is going.**

The women at SOS Auckland are kept pretty busy these days. Which in one way is a pity because it shows how big the traffic across the Tasman is at the moment. SOS sees about 60 women a week, which added to the numbers seen by SOS in other centres and those who get to Aussie themselves makes a total which exceeds the number of women seen at AMAC and in public hospitals before the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act was passed in December last year. The women at SOS wonder about this. Is it because the women don't have to get a doctor's referral and convince somebody (a termination committee at public hospitals; assessing and operating doctors at AMAC) that they need an abortion? Or has the climate of public outrage at the Act enabled women to be more upfront to friends and relatives about having an abortion?

Whatever the reason, it's hard work pinning down anyone at the SOS office in New St, Ponsonby to find out how things are going. Megan Grant has to keep dashing off to answer the phone; Joss Shawyer is working out with a woman how to explain to her husband her absence for a couple of days and Sharyn Cederman is listening to a young woman telling how she got to be 16 weeks pregnant without realising that she was pregnant at all.

SOS sprung up very quickly when the new legislation was passed. Julie Maddison and Joss Shawyer, working at the Council for the Single Mother

and her Child (CSMC) were only too aware of the struggles of solo mothers to bring up children they did not let alone those they didn't. Joss is also an ex-AMAC abortion counsellor and a woman of action, so it was only hours after the Act went through that Broad-sheet got a call to say that SOS was underway.

At first the service consisted of giving women the information to get to Australia and was run by volunteers but it soon became apparent that the service would have to be wider than that and that several full-time staff would be needed. Problems at airports with women unfamiliar with jet-setting; how to raise money; what was the position of Pacific Island women (particularly overstayers); what were the various Sydney abortion clinics like - all these questions had to be investigated and dealt with. Now as well as the office at New St there is a woman stationed in Sydney to help the women at that end with hotels, travel and to see that they are getting good service from the clinics there. As a result of criticisms both from feminists and patients of Arncliffe, the big Sydney PSI clinic where SOS was initially sending all women, Joss and Megan visited the various Sydney clinics. They were horrified at the whole Sydney abortion scene which they describe as "cut throat" - it was obvious that several clinics were eager for New Zealand referrals as it's big business. Now SOS assesses each individual woman's needs and helps her choose the clinic best suited to her - whether she wants a general or local anaesthetic, how far the pregnancy is advanced, how much money she has.

Following phone calls from women suggesting that SOS not use the

Government airline, Air New Zealand, to ferry women to Australia, the SOS Collective recently decided to shift all its business to other airlines. "Why should the government make a profit from their own bad legislation?" says Sharyn Cederman.

Faced with many of the other health problems which women have besides getting an abortion and which aren't dealt with adequately by the establishment medical profession, SOS has decided to expand into a feminist health clinic with self help, comprehensive information about contraception and providing other services for women's health care. Although at the time of writing this project is in its infancy SOS has already found a feminist woman doctor who is coming on a part-time basis to help with abortion referrals and other areas of health care. There is such incredible enthusiasm at SOS that one feels no doubt that they will successfully get this part of their operation under way. The group of women working there are in the happy and indeed unique position of having a full-time paid collective running the show.

The only black cloud on the horizon is the uncertainty over the New Street premises. These belong to the Auckland City Council and were leased to CSMC at a low rental. Now some members of the Council (some say with a prod from up top) are using town planning ordinances to try and harass and oust CSMC (and with it of course, SOS).

At the head of this attack are the same anti-abortion councillors who reacted so hostilely to a report to the council last year on the Royal Commission from ACC community advisor, Julie Thompson. Mayor Robinson, has a

liberal attitude to abortion but some say that these days the power lies in other hands. However it'll take more than a few small-minded businessmen to get the good women at SOS down.

If you need the services of SOS their number is:

766-386

Hours: 9-5 Mon-Fri.

We'll publish more details about the feminist health clinic as information comes to hand.

Other SOS branches operate independently but all exist to help women get to Australia.

Details of other SOS branches on p.40.



Photo: Susan Mogel

## Art & Politics

**Some Los Angeles women effectively use guerilla theatre to make a point about violence against women in California.**

**Leslie Labowitz-Starus and Suzanne Lacy are artists who stage theatrical events to convey a political message. After a spate of rapes and murders of women in California recently they staged a memorial event, which drew attention to the murders and also emphasised the plight of battered, raped and murdered women everywhere.**

The memorial event took the form of a motorcade and a protest on the steps of City Hall. Over 60 women dressed in black arrived for the motorcade which assembled at the Women's Building in Los Angeles at 9 a.m. on

December 13. They were given stickers for their cars (saying "Funeral" and "Stop Violence Against Women") and practiced their lines as the chorus for the performance. Then the motorcade - 25 cars, a black hearse and two motorcycle escorts - drove slowly to City Hall, where the media were waiting. Nine women, all over six feet tall and dressed entirely in black, got out of the hearse, accompanied by a woman wearing scarlet. They took up their places on the steps of City Hall with banners saying "In Memory of our Sisters" and "Women Fight Back". Unfurled behind them, and the other mourners grouped on either side of the steps as a chorus.

Each mourner in black made a statement connecting the California murders with violence against women nationally, and was supported by the chorus crying "In Memory of our Sisters, We fight back!". As she left the microphone, each mourner was draped with a red shawl by the woman in scarlet. It was an impressive sight. Then Suzanne Lacy read a press statement, explaining the purpose of the performance, and a list of feminist demands related to protecting women from violence was presented to members of the City Council, who responded with supportive statements. Finally, Holly Near sang a song written especially for the event.

The artists have worked on similar and successful events in the past, integrating their political and artistic visions.

Information from Ruth Askey, "Artweek".

### Cover photos

This month we're starting on a series of cover photos of women. The notion we're trying to convey is not "you ought to be like this to be a real woman" but rather "this is you" or "this is one of the ways a woman can be". The photos show the beauty and excitement of the women around you in all their variety, not a male-defined cover girl image. We'd like to know what you think of them.

### SYLVIA PLATH — A DRAMATIC PORTRAIT

A play based on the work of one of this century's most influential women poets.

Lunch-hour performances : 1pm to 2pm

April 12, 13, 14, 20 and 21.

Little Theatre, Maidment Art Centre, University of Auckland.

Directed and Performed by Women.

# A BROADSHEET

Further to our report of overseas feminist activity in our January issue here are some recently received reports of progress in other countries.

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## YUKON

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Across this wide earth, the Women's Liberation Movement is alive and active. In one corner way up above the 60th parallel, one finds Whitehorse, capital of Canada's Yukon Territory and home of the Yukon Status of Women's Council.

The Council formed as a result of a three day conference in February of 1973. The gathering saw some 100 Yukon women of varying ages and occupations fill the local YMCA gym in Whitehorse. The stimulation of one adult mind to another and the realisation of other women with the same hopes and fears for their own growth, their family and their community brought fifteen of the delegates forward to form an ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee held meetings, elected the first executive Council members and registered as a non-profit society under the name Yukon Status of Women's Council.

Over the following months the Council formed into study groups and reported back on the three main areas of concern brought out by the February conference: Daycare, Continuing Education, and Public Transit.

Through all this activity some of the women found the need for a friendship, information, you-name-it place. Soon a Women's Centre Society group formed and the Women's Centre opened its doors, complete with a library, toy box and lots of steaming mugs of tea for the asking.

With a grant from the Department of the Secretary of State, five members of the Council produced a book with use-

ful information on legal rights and responsibilities, the availability of health care in the Territory, as well as giving a sense of the roles women have played in the history of the Yukon and a glimpse of the women here today. The book "Yukon Women" was ready for sale in 1975 as part of the Council's International Women's Year project. Monies from the sale of the book help to pay the rent on the Women's Centre, making it one of the few self-sufficient centres in Canada.

Unfortunately, not all the objectives of that first conference have been so successful. The objectives of the Day-care group; funding to assist centres, standards of child care and the training of workers, have not been met. This is fast becoming a serious problem as the lives of all Yukoners will soon be affected by the building of the Alaskan Pipeline, almost a certainty to come through the Territory. The impact of day care services will see staff being lured off by higher paying jobs and the existing facilities taxed to their limit.

Karen Douglass

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## GREECE

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Sunny Morley sent us this report on Women's Liberation groups in Athens, Greece. Sunny is a New Zealander living in Greece, and she stresses that the report is her personal view of what is happening.

The Multi-National Women's Liberation group has a basement centre in central Athens holding general meetings bi-monthly as well as a morning creche once a week and a weekly evening session for newcomers. Various special interest groups have the centre open at other times for meetings, language classes, counselling,

dance, yoga or just so women can find free time to themselves to read or talk. The membership of the group is about 60-100; fluctuations in the membership are continual due to the transience of foreigners in Greece. The group is multi-national and the language used is English although there is interest within the group for separate "language" groups (e.g. German and French) - probably these will begin as consciousness raising groups.

The group evolved out of a C R group nearly three years ago. It grew, and rented its premises in October 1975.

In my opinion, the centre has been neither very political nor very radical, but in recent months, with an influx of new members and therefore new energy, things are beginning to happen. We have issued protest letters and letters of support on various international issues involving the oppression of women, such as the forced sterilisation of women in Bolivia.

There is a lot of disagreement within the group about taking political stands, especially *inside* Greece. A lot of us have a very unstable status within this country and we are hesitant to do anything to jeopardise our residence here. We also represent a very, very wide span of ideology and beliefs, and our lifestyles are equally varied and often opposing. For example, some women are not open to even *discussing* lesbianism and some women *are* lesbians. However, our unity comes from the fact that we are all women, oppressed women, and oppressed more especially here in Greece in a society where women are still *sold* into marriage, where husbands have the ownership of children and the legal right to prevent wives from taking a job or training.

Some of the projects the group has undertaken have been a non-sexist education workshop (which has been successfully presented in several Athenian schools and which has resulted in the recent publication of a bi-lingual non-sexist children's book "I Want to Fly") and a monthly newsletter with local and international news, poetry, reviews, and a survey of foreign women in Greece.

The survey on foreign women living in Greece is most important in that it has opened up many areas of our lives here where we are ignorant of our legal rights (or rather *lack of legal rights*) and of the services, such as health services, which are available.

One thing which grieves me is the lack of contact between our group and Greek women, although we do have several Greek women in the group. I have attended one meeting of the Greek Women's Liberation group and was disappointed that although they have a wonderful centre with several empty rooms which could be used for self help, rape crisis, etc., the women themselves feel unready to get into such activities at this point. They are organised into subgroups, each with a particular project. They have written and distributed a booklet on contraception (an illegal action). We took a copy of this booklet to the first International Women's Health Conference in Rome this year and it was very well received, especially by groups from countries where Greek women constitute a large migrant population.

In addition to this group there are various other Greek women's groups in Athens, some associated with different political parties. I hope that in the future there will be more contact between us, and shared goals and action. Consciousness raising I see as first priority, for Greece is only just emerging as a "Western" nation, and the legislation and cultural mores of a patriarchal society where women have few rights are slow and difficult to change.



The underemployed: a sweet vendor in the street, Bogota.

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## COLUMBIA

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Sara Bright reports from Colombia:

"Women's consciousness is just beginning to awaken here: suddenly groups of women are mushrooming everywhere, and not just in the capital, in the other cities too. In fact, there is a group in Medellin (the country's second or third largest city) which is very active and even publishes a small magazine from time to time.

As regards abortion, the situation remains the same — totally illegal. There has been a small improvement, and that was the founding of a clinic exclusively for attention to abortions which have already started — they vacuum the rest out, and also offer counselling and humane treatment. This is far from sufficient, not only because it is a private concern and therefore most women can not afford it, but also because they are limited: they cannot attend women who are badly infected, over 12 weeks pregnant, nor can they in any circumstances

begin an abortion — they can only clear up the mess. Also, it is a traditional clinic — a far cry from a self-help, or a woman-controlled clinic, which would be ideal. However, they do have a system of counselling, the patient is reassured, they explain what is happening and what is going to be done, and birth control is offered and explained. A step in the right direction, at least!

As you can imagine, women's situation is far from good here. Apart from the strongly class-divided society, 'machismo' (male chauvinism) is rife. In law women have some rights, such as being equal to the husband in matters of child-rearing, choice of where to live, education and even property . . . but in practice things are just as before, and there is no doubt who the head of the family is!"

Sara would be delighted to correspond with New Zealand women on feminist issues, the situation in Colombia and New Zealand, personal lives and troubles. Her address is Apartado Aereo 1578, Bogota, Colombia.





## Letters

### Continued from page 4

I have lost count of the times women have said to me "... but we thought you (myself) were too way out or had a hang-up about abortion; we did not dream that Parliament would ever pass such a dreadful law in such an appalling way."

That's why they are on our side now, the "impossible" happened. So please don't let's send them back to the sidelines again and undo all the good work so many of us have put into the Women's Movement. We need them all otherwise we are lost.

April Armstrong,  
Hastings.

### Don't be a pig in your office

Dear Broadsheet,

Allow me to please release some of my frustration through your column, in the hope that your readers who are office workers, male and female, might consider the plight of those commercial cleaners who may seem to them phantom, faceless callers. I know that we are lumped together in your thoughts as "The Cleaners" and as such are treated with indifference, even disdain.

Of course, we are getting paid for the job we are doing, but we would dearly appreciate some consideration even praise occasionally!! When I mention to my boss that I have found maggots in a rubbish tin with unwrapped food scraps; or find, week after week, desks surrounded by rubbish which has been dropped on

the floor without any attempt at getting it in the bin; anonymous notes addressed airily to "The Cleaner - or So-called" offering continual criticism of some supposed job or other allegedly not done - I get the retort that it is "part of the job" and if I don't like it I can leave - all said quite matter-of-factly. Of course the next willing hopeful comes into the job only to get their nose rubbed into the dirt (so to speak) as well - nothing is changed, on with the soul-destroying grind!

This job is worse than housework because I can't yell at someone who walks on my nicely-washed, still wet floor, or leave a note "OINK! OINK!" to the dirty, mucky people who kid themselves they are civilised. Have a heart! It *will* be appreciated, believe me!

"Sadie"

### A male festival

Dear Broadsheet,

I am writing this letter in support of a sister's letter in the January Broadsheet about feminists celebrating Xmas. This last end-of-year found me thinking the same thoughts (and trying to convince others), triggered by the abortive legislation(s) which had been recently passed in the old persons' home in Woe-town, and the amazement with which I watched NZ female serfs once again prepare to spend hours in the kitchen readying feasts to celebrate the arbitrarily (male) chosen date of birth of the (male) incarnation of the christian (male) god.

Ladies, christianity is the greatest oppressor of all time in this western world of theirs, and last year you managed to celebrate both this centuries-old oppression/exploitation, and at the same time forget the most recent and crippling blow from the patriarchal police state.

I cannot convey my disbelief in our limitless ability to accept such crushing atrocities; simply cannot comprehend a mass masochism of such power... what a Xmas-present for the pig; total and utter acceptance of such a level of subjugation... how powerful he must feel.

The same criticism is levelled at the celebration of easter... if there is a need for celebrations, then at least re-discover the original meanings of these festivals which all current (male) religions have perverted. And if you need to have an all-encompassing force to lean on, take strength from, and learn about, then look to the earth which supports your life; pagan worship was before the patriarchy, and is waiting under the patriarchy, and is waiting for you to reclaim its non-sexist energy to overthrow the oppressor. This is an emotive letter. I cannot write it otherwise, and make no apology.

In sisterhood, and with the wish that we all examine those elements of our patriarchal "culture" that we accept so readily and without question... each forms a brick in the prison wall.

Chris Hamilton

## Lesbian separatism

### Continued from page 5

resources from time to time and I suggest that the "in-the-system" sisters should be aware that separatist wimmin are also compromising.

Not all of us can have separatist privilege. For to struggle on a low income with children may prevent wimmin from finding the energy to act politically, and those who work

may feel unable to jeopardise their jobs by taking radical political action. A woman may feel angry to the point of self-destruction, but who will offer to feed, clothe, house and nurture her children should she be arrested and/or lose her job. Thus it seems apparent that wimmin with children cannot have the separatist privilege of radical action. Some of us do have educational privileges, even if these have been wrested from the system at considerable personal sacrifice, but to offset this advantage there is the lack of

support groups, tolerance, and time for cultural pursuits, which we sacrifice if we reject separatism for the "privilege" of working in the system.

All wimmin are oppressed. All wimmin should be able to expect tolerance and understanding of their position and not be subjected to personal put-downs, for to live a life style free of men is pie-in-the-sky for some of us, for we will never have the right credentials.

Miriam Jackson.

Two of the photographs illustrating last month's article on physical strength were of Lynne Hope, a Wellington woman, who much more than most of us has overcome the barriers which keep us weak and physically powerless.

## Profile: LYNNE HOPE

Sharyn Black interviews her.

Lynne Hope's life perhaps illustrates the experiences of many women who are forced to fight complex battles in order to work in situations or follow lifestyles considered by society to normally be the prerogative of men.

In her teenage years Lynne was an active sports-woman, and member of the Wellington Ladies Highland Pipe Band, to which she still belongs. With her brother acting as coach, she underwent a modest athletics training programme, which included discus, javelin, long jump, hurdles, shotput and middle distance running, and within a surprisingly short period was ranked fourth in New Zealand in 1963 in the Junior Womans (under 16) half mile. Lynne found her confidence boosted with each race, and discovered that the

physical exertion both sharpened her mind and aided relaxation at a time when her personal life was full of tension. However, immediately after leaving school, at the age of 18, Lynne decided to place running second in her life, and entered training with the Assembly of God to study for the ministry. Intensive study of up to 10 hours a day was required, and many of the students, including Lynne, also worked part-time through financial necessity. Towards the end of the two-year pioneer course, the women students were advised that although, when they graduated, they would be able to work as missionaries and permitted to preach, they could not be ordained as ministers. (It has since transpired that women rarely received invitations to preach,



Photo: Sharyn Black

so many have not reapplied for an annual preacher's licence due to lack of opportunities within the churches). Despite the shattering news, Lynne completed the remaining few months and at the end of 1969 graduated with a Diploma in Theology (approximately equivalent to a B.A.), unable to practise the profession she had trained for.

After graduation, Lynne married a fellow student, and the activities of the church became meshed into their living pattern. A son was born within their first year of marriage, and Lynne suffered serious post-natal depression, the effects of which lingered for almost three years, and didn't lift until her return to athletics training.

Around the same time Lynne wrote to the Police Department, making a general enquiry regarding the possibility of employment as a policewoman. She requested to know the situation regarding married women with children, and mentioned she was prepared to wait, if necessary, until her son was 12 before entering training. At the age of 32 she would still have been under the maximum acceptance age of 35 years for trainees. The reply she received was very much to the point. It was considered that married women should stay at home, as their responsibilities were to their families, and they were not suitable anyway because of the shift work requirement and problems related to transfer to other areas. (See footnote).

Meantime, Lynne was receiving a lot of flak from both women and men within the church. She was speaking out against church policies in relation to women (i.e. men not sharing creche-minding during church services). She was also rebuked for spending time undergoing athletic training and (presumably) not giving her son the full attention he required. Her arrival at church services in a tracksuit, straight from a training run, was not greatly appreciated by the congregation! However, her loyalties remained with the church, and out of a desire to help raise money for a mini-bus to transport children to and from Sunday School, in 1974 Lynne began a three month intensive training programme in preparation for a sponsored marathon run. She ran up to 30 miles per day, taking trains and buses to out-of-the-way places where public transport was not easily available and therefore not a temptation on the enduring run home. During training Lynne lost three sets of toenails and often had great difficulty walking. She had also experienced difficulty in obtaining proper

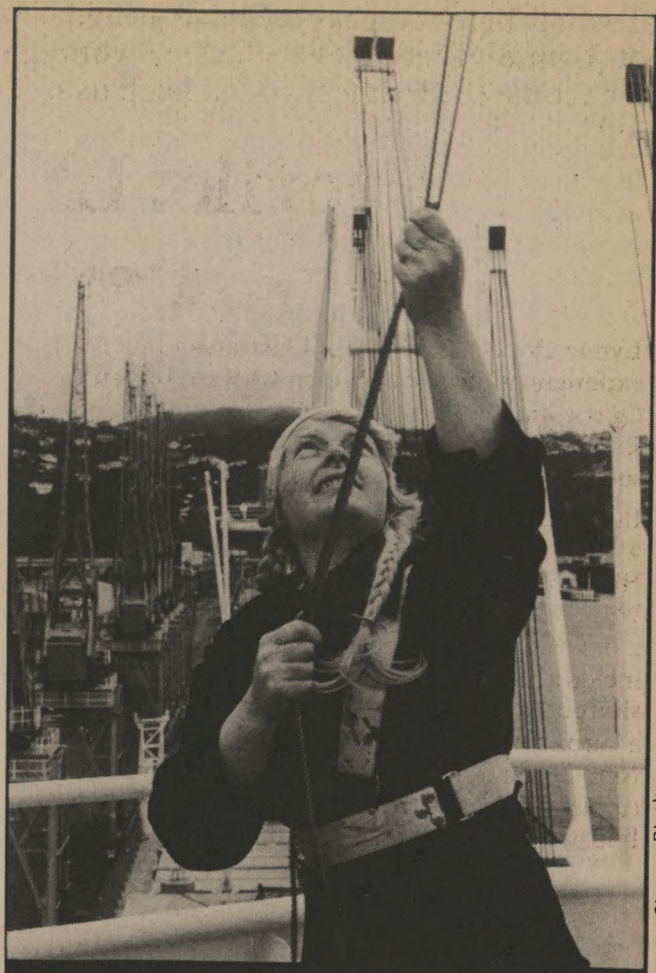


Photo: Sharyn Black

specialist treatment for a recurring back problem. She was told such treatment was really only considered a necessity for men doing heavy physical work, and not important for a housewife, even if she did happen to like running! Private treatment was out of the question for financial reasons. However, towards the end of 1974, Lynne became the first woman to run the Kaitoke and Rimutaka ranges, a distance of 27 miles over an undulating range dividing Wellington from the Wairarapa. This is a feat not achieved by a great number of male runners, and as a result she was able to raise over \$200 for her church in the form of sponsorship money.

Meanwhile, Lynne was working as a security guard aboard Scandinavian ships visiting the Port of Wellington. Special regulations were bought in to licence all security guards in 1974, and Lynne's application went in with the rest – and took considerably longer to be approved. In 1976, Lynne was registered as a Security Guard under the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, possibly the only woman in Australasia to

be so registered. Her duties involve controlling gangway traffic, maintaining night watch on often volatile chemical cargoes, keeping the peace at shipboard parties, checking moorings and hoisting and lowering the ships flags. The flags must be worked from a small deck situated above the ship's bridge, work which is potentially dangerous in Wellington's high winds.

In 1977 Lynne and her husband decided the only way they could afford their own home was to build it themselves. Finances were tight and Lynne was working part-time in an unfulfilling job to help boost the joint income, in addition to ship security work when this was available. They bought a caravan, in which they lived for eight months, and began clearing the steep hillside section by hand, while the neighbours were clearing their sections with bulldozers. Then the foundations required digging, and Lynne would leave her office job early afternoon, collect her son from school, change into working clothes and spend the remainder of the day through to as late as midnight digging 6ft trenches. As the foundations progressed she also worked with a kango hammer (a form of pneumatic drill but using electricity mains as a power source).

Then came the time to bend the steel, and pour concrete for the foundations. Lynne automatically expected to be involved, but husband and father-in-law gently ridiculed – what would a woman know about pouring and mixing concrete – or building a house? So Lynne sat back and watched for the first few times. When she felt she had observed and understood all the “complexities” involved, she worked quietly away by herself while both husband and father-in-law were absent, until it became painfully obvious that the foundations were growing at an abnormally fast rate! In fact Lynne ended up mixing and pouring around 30 of the 60 tons of concrete used for the house foundations. From that point onwards Lynne was accepted as an equal, contributing partner in the house construction. However it remains a bone of contention when people ask, “Who built your house?” Answer: “We did”. . . . “Oh, your husband did a wonderful job!”

So now, in March 1978, the house is more or less completed, and all that really remains are the substantial weekly mortgage repayments. Lynne cannot afford to leave her monotonous office job, which offers reasonable money and hours

suitable for coping with a school age son. The availability of night security work has been decreasing, due to the conversion of Wellington to a reasonably sized container port, cutting off another source of income. Yet Lynne is itching to get back into full-scale athletic training. She wants to concentrate on middle-distance running, and find a good coach who will give her the physiological and psychological support required.

**Footnote:** As a few years had elapsed since Lynne Hope made enquiries with the Police Department regarding the recruitment of married women with children, the author decided to check on the current situation. Personal opinion of officer in Recruitment Section, Wellington District Headquarters, Police Department: “You would have to check with National Headquarters regarding official policy, but my personal opinion is that the woman's place is at home, looking after the kids. I mean, the man's the breadwinner – isn't he?”

Senior Sergeant in Recruitment Division, National Headquarters, Wellington: “We simply cannot take on women with children; anyway, recruitment of women has been cut since 15th October last year so we couldn't consider an application even if it was put in. There are certain kinds of jobs which women can't do – they can't go around pubs where there are fights. But they are useful in certain areas such as rape, dealing with women and children. But the frontline police cannot have too many women . . . There is a policy setting a ceiling on the number of women which we can take. In fact, we are embarrassed by the number of applications we have from women, and we can afford to pick and choose who we want . . . We now have equal pay, and well what person wouldn't be attracted by a salary of \$9,500 to start, at nineteen years of age?”

## KATERINA SELIGMANN

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I will also be running a women's encounter weekend with Jan Shaw, 8th–9th April. Ring me or Jan (541-610) for enquiries and bookings.

# A Fable of Our Times

in which a Lady meets her end at the hands of the King, the ferocious Gnats and the Royal Priest.

Once upon a time there lived a lady. Called by others a woman, a girl, a bludger. It all depended on one's political viewpoint.

This lady lived alone in a house with two small children. She existed by means of some gold coins given to her once a fortnight by courtesy of the King. (Like all fables this is set in a kingdom). The King and his court jesters, particularly the chief court jester, or fool, Walkbert the EggNoodle, retained the right to take back the gold coins if they thought there was cause.

As the mood of the court varied from day to day and hour to hour, their perception of 'just cause' differed also. The King's subjects were aware of this, and consequently their lives were filled with uneasiness. Those who were most uneasy were those who depended on the gold coins from the King. Such people did not want to incur the King's displeasure, for he could change the interpretations of the laws of the kingdom at a snap of his fingers.

Moreover, within the Royal Hives he had swarms of ferocious Gnats, which he would let loose on the people, using them to bite until the people protested. When the people protested thus, they would then be locked in the Royal Dungeons or be forced to pay homage, in the form of fines, to the Royal Court. The worst kind of Gnats were the baby Gnats – called the Junior Gnats. They were the most ferocious and bit many people. However, as they got older they mellowed, and would not bite at all. The King then killed them by putting royal knives in their backs.

The lady with the two small children did not want to upset the King or his Fool and have the supply of gold coins stopped. Particularly as a neighbour of hers had had her supply of gold stopped because the gold carriage of a male Gnat noble had broken down outside her cottage and been parked there for two days. The ladies who depended on the gold (called Goldbludgers, by the simple villagers) were not allowed to have men in their humble homes for longer than two minutes at a time – which made things rather difficult if a male plumber or electrician had to affect lengthy repairs, for the tradesperson then



charged the goldladies extra for the time he spent running in and out of the house to the street, where he could be viewed by the neighbours, and then running in again.

This particular lady decided to solve the problem by calling in a Royal Priest everytime a male plumber, electrician or meter-reader had to visit. For as women were not allowed to work outside the homes, all jobs such as these were done by the men of the kingdom.

Thus when men came to do repairs on her cottage the Priest came along too and was able to verify that her conduct with the men was beyond reproach.

Unfortunately the King stopped the lady's supply of gold coins anyway. The King and his court jesters queried whether her conduct with the Royal Priest was beyond reproach.

So the woman lost her gold coins and had to go begging on the streets. One day a fine gold carriage of the Royal Priest (who had not been censured at all) ran her over in the street and she died.

Moral of the story: These people have no morals.

Robyn Griffiths.



# The Bath

Heather McGrath

Her watch gave another time check, was placed face down on the embroidered protection of the dressing table mat before she moved to the bathroom. A plug, precisely centred withheld the water, bubbles bore up, burst into freedom the perfume of bath oil. She turned, bestowed a smile on the row of personal insurance lining the vanity. Mouthwash, deodorants, talcum, spray-on scent. They DID give confidence, no hint of her for him to follow, only dried flowers and sterility.

While her bath filled Julie chose her clothes, top ones first, then in quick succession, and reverse order, laid them one exactly on top of the other (like hands in that long ago child game) on her bed. If an invasion occurred and this system observed she had always to lie, reasonably. Pinned to the board of personal enquiry she simply made things up, always amazed at what people would accept. Said things like "It saves time", "I'm very organised", "Only my bedroom and I see the methodical me". What she never said was "I can't make a decision naked". She grimaced, remembering missed appointments, herself frozen in front of the wardrobe.

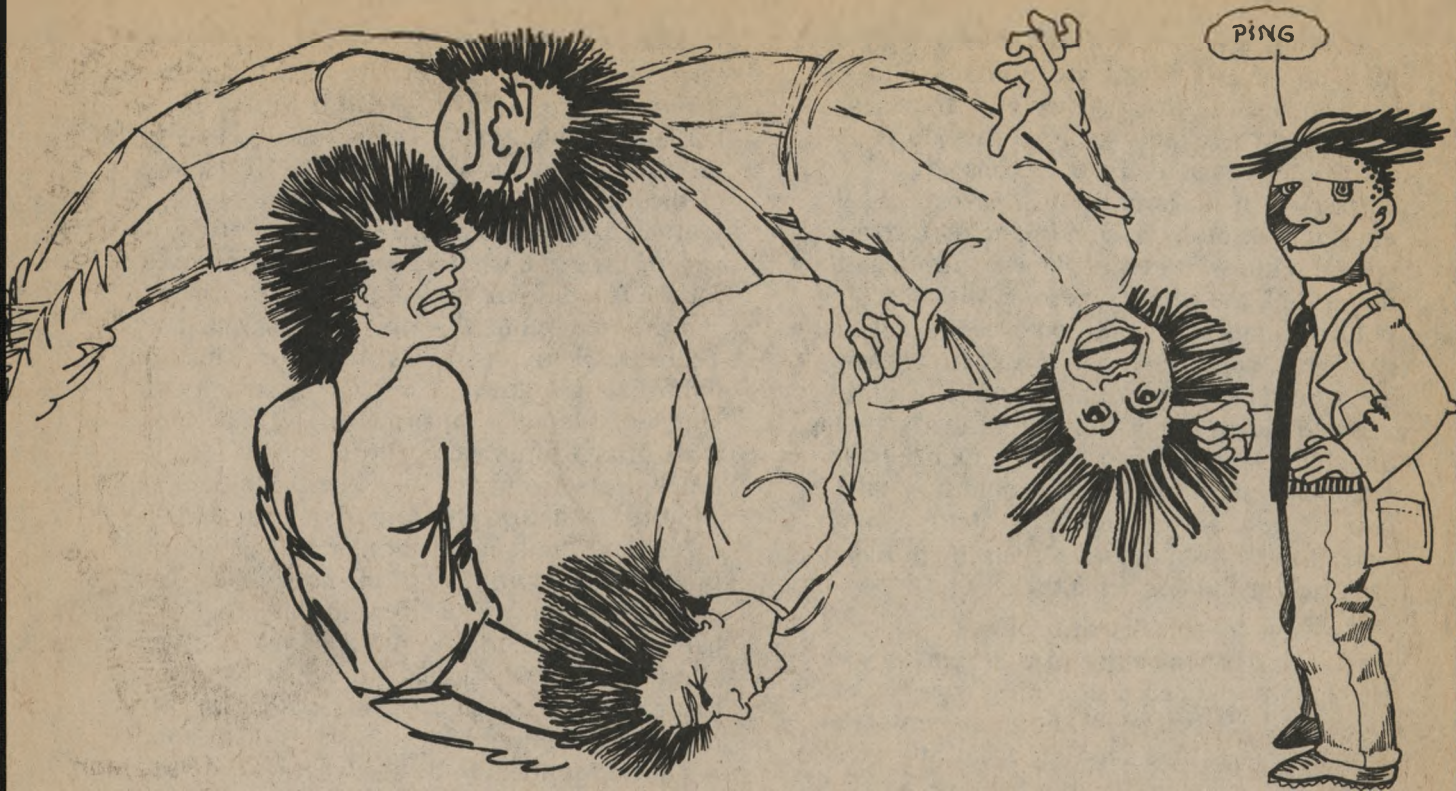
Her bathing had a system too (only she never had to explain that!) Back to the bathroom to follow it, washed her face in the hand basin cupping the water in her hands, throwing it at her face (like all good cowboys). Facing the taps a flannel squaredly folded, the journey began. First the neck, circled the breasts, leapt the gorge from navel to thigh, doubled-back from toes to the never promised land.

Drying was quick. The route repeated. The soiled towel stuffed into the wicker basket (hand woven beauty behind the door). Julie braced herself for the assault of cold bra on breasts, body moving away from the contact, almost in relief stepping into briefs and pantihose, pre-rolled, prepared. But the body shirt still waited. Over the head a deep breath, pull it down and away, dome it. She noticed the stretch all gone from the lace, the way the crutch hung, shrugged herself into her sweater and skirt. In perfect safety she moved to the mirror, hid her face in make-up, shaped her hair around it.









Over the last twenty years or so, shock treatment has been a major weapon in the psychiatrist's armoury, because it is cheap, easy to administer and apparently effective. Patterns of using ECT have changed over the years, since it was discovered that schizophrenia, its original target, did not respond particularly well to this approach; now ECT is commonly used in treating severe depression (although schizophrenics are often still treated in this way, since some medical fashions don't die easily). There is no doubt that depressed patients often improve rapidly following ECT, (although their improvement is often only temporary. But no one knows how it works (see boxed inset). The common analogy given is that it's like shaking a clock to get it going again. To persist with this analogy, one could say that when one shakes a clock, bits of it may come unstuck; and although a brief period of ticking may reward the shaker, if there is something fundamentally wrong with the clock, it's going to stop again soon. There is also the very real possibility that ECT works so well because it is an extremely effective placebo. After all, in this day and age, what could seem more scientific than some white-coated technicians manipulating a complicated machine? Just what the doctor ordered to drive out the bogeys!

From a feminist perspective, one objection to

ECT is that its main target is women, whose problems have arisen from trying to cope with an environment which offers them little hope for a meaningful existence. It isn't easy to get exact statistics on ECT usage, because none are published; but other statistics can help us to guess that around two-thirds or more of ECT's recipients must be women. Although there aren't more women than men in mental hospitals, there are marked differences between women and men in regard to the mental disorder attributed to them. Many more men are alcoholics, for instance. But in the categories of "Depressive Psychosis" and "Depressive Neurosis" (and remember, ECT is mainly used for treating depression), there are twice as many women as men. Another indication for ECT is suicide attempts. Recent figures show that three times as many women as men try to kill themselves. These statistics (all taken from N.Z. Government publications) clearly indicate that women are on the receiving end, as far as ECT is concerned.

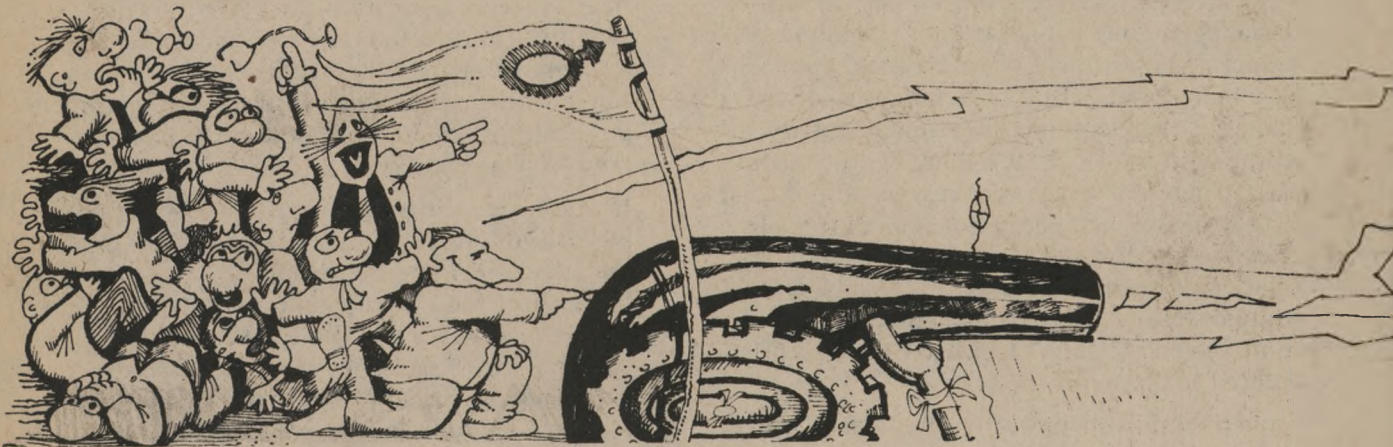
In our society, it is not surprising that depression is more common in women than in men. (See the June, 1977 and September, 1977 issues of *Broadsheet* for a discussion of this topic). After all, depression is a result of powerlessness combined with passivity. Women, who have been taught all their lives to take second place to men, are likely to respond to their lack of

power passively; this situation breeds depression. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to react to lack of power aggressively; they have been taught to expect it, and if they don't get it, they may turn to crime, or console themselves at the boozier. Most psychological explanations of depression implicitly recognize its correlation with lack of power, although they do not link the whole syndrome with the political and social condition of women. Thus, for Freud, depression, psychosomatic illness and suicidal impulses resulted from hostility turned inwards against oneself, instead of being directed towards its causes. To feminize this Freudian interpretation, one could say that women are taught to accept the status quo; and when this status quo makes their life intolerable, they see the fault as being theirs.

A more modern theory of depression which is very popular at the moment is Seligmann's. He believes that depression arises from "learned helplessness". When a person's actions have no effect, time and time again, this person comes to feel helpless and ineffective. She feels that the course of her life is beyond her control. This theory, once again, fits in well with a feminist view of depression. Women are taught to be helpless; they don't have much real power, and they aren't taught to expect it. No wonder they succumb to depression. The housewife is most prone to this condition; statistics show that the peak age for women to be admitted to mental hospitals is 25-30, the age at which the average woman has a young family and no outside job; admissions steadily decline in the older age groups. (This figure ignores age groups over sixty-five, where senility causes a large number of admissions). In contrast, the peak age for male admissions is 45-50 (the male menopause, no doubt!).

If depression is caused by personal circumstances (and most psychiatrists believe that it usually is), then why do psychiatrists treat it with a barbaric method? It works, they say, yet they carefully ignore the long term side-effects. Most of the literature on ECT in psychiatric journals examines only the short-term effectiveness of ECT (i.e. whether the patient improves for the few days or weeks following treatment), and the studies on side-effects are one-sided. There are plenty of studies of memory functions immediately following ECT, but hardly any on long-term memory impairment. This is because it is difficult to measure with scientific instruments - one can only take the patient's word for it that they've forgotten everything they know about economics, or that now they can't make sense of any of the books they read, or that they can't remember anything that happened to them for a couple of years before being treated. Why should a psychiatrist take this sort of thing seriously? After all, these people are loonies. What they say isn't reliable. It's not up to them to decide whether they've improved or not: that's what the doctor is for. Anyway, the psychiatrist's job is to get these square pegs back into their round holes as soon as possible, with minimum cost to the taxpayer. To quote Dr Selwyn Leeks, of Lake Alice, "If you want to get people back as economic units of society then you get on with treating them - you don't play therapeutic games with them." (*N.Z. HERALD*, Dec 20th, 1976).

The ECT debate is not just an isolated issue. It should be seen in a broader context, where the role of the psychiatrist in relation to society is examined. Although psychiatrists are often well-intentioned and humane people, who see their job as that of alleviating human misery,



those employed in institutions have the primary role of either curing or imprisoning the kind of social deviant who doesn't fit into the category "criminal". In other words, people who often have committed no crime, but are nuisances — to their families, or to the community at large. Women who aren't managing to carry on caring for their family properly, for example. Such women, oppressed by feelings of guilt and helplessness, admit themselves, or are admitted to hospital by relatives, then sign a consent form without any adequate knowledge of the possible consequences of ECT, have their brains scrambled, and are booted back into the same situation, with perhaps some helpful advice about "getting out a bit more". It is small wonder that many of them return for the same reasons; the stigma of "mental illness" no doubt makes it harder for them to carry on anyway.

Are psychiatrists the right people to deal with

the problems we call "mental illness"? Is "mental illness" an illness? Or is it a person's failure to cope with a hostile world? No easy solutions can be offered, but surely a more constructive way of dealing with the problem would be to attempt to understand the background circumstances rather than to dull the mind into submission with a handful of pills or 110 volts. The solution to sadness is not the fixed smile painted on the face by the psychiatrist.

Hilary Haines

(With thanks to Janet Moore for her assistance).

Further Reading:

John Friedberg: "Shock Treatment is Not Good For Your Brain" (Glide Publications).

Thomas Szasz: "The Manufacture of Madness" and "The Myth of Mental Illness" (both Paladin). These two books present a view of psychiatry as a means of social control.

Phyllis Chesler: "Women and Madness" (Avon). A feminist view of psychiatry.

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## One woman describes her experience with shock treatment — the "reasons" it was given and the effects on her.

It is seven years since I was given ECT but to this day it causes me anxiety. Every time I forget something I anxiously wonder how many brain cells I lost during treatment and whether my impaired memory is a result of that loss. I have been patronisingly assured that any memory dysfunction is transient and superficial, but my experience and intuition tell me otherwise and I have yet to see any statistical evidence to the contrary.

I do not know how much ECT I was given, for such details are lost in the bewildering and frightening confusion it creates. It was suggested and authorized by a woman psychiatrist in Ashburn Hall, with whom I had discussed at

length the frustrations that led to the depression for which I was supposedly being treated. I refer to the difficulties in reconciling and fulfilling my roles as housewife, mother and career woman, and also being a non-heterosexual socialist feminist in a conservative heterosexual society. I believed she understood my situation as she discussed her own anger and frustration in attempting to fulfill antagonistic roles; she agreed my despair was justified and we discussed at length personal and political solutions. She then suggested ECT, first assuring me that it was not harmful and that it was to be on a trial basis only; I accepted. So therapy was authorised. she went on leave and I was literally in for a



## Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) — What is It?

This treatment consists of passing an electric current (70 to 140 volts) into the brain through electrodes placed on the head. Lasting about one second, the current causes convulsions, similar to those of an epileptic. A muscle relaxant is also administered to minimize the risk of breaking bones during the convulsion. An anaesthetic is usually given (but remember the recent case of the 13-year-old Niuean boy, which brought to light the fact that anaesthetics are not always used; and the case of the death at Porirua, where the anaesthetic was being given without the presence of a qualified anaesthetist.) The patient usually receives about six sessions of ECT during the course of treatment.

### Does it Work?

ECT is often followed by a substantial improvement if given to sufferers from severe depression of recent onset (although it can make people worse). It is now thought to be of little value in the treatment of schizophrenia, which it was originally designed for. It seems possible that the improvement which ECT brings about is largely a placebo effect. Some studies have shown that if you give the patient an anaesthetic only and then tell them they've had ECT, they improve anyway. As a long-term remedy, ECT is far from spectacular. Many patients are brought back for more.

### Side-effects

1. The procedure itself has certain risks, owing to the administration of the anaesthetic and of the muscle relaxant; but these risks are not greater than those for minor operations.
2. Memory deficits. This is the side-effect causing most concern, because it is very common. Many patients experience temporary memory

deficits, which often disappear in a short time.

But some have permanent impairments. One study showed that, a few years after ECT, nearly half the patients had specific memory losses (usually for the time close to the treatment), and about 1/6 were troubled by persistent memory defects. In some cases important skills are lost and cannot be relearned (e.g. an economist found it impossible to return to her job after ECT; and even after taking time off was unable to regain the knowledge that had been wiped out). In other cases, memory for periods of one's life is completely wiped out. One woman lost a two-year period completely and had to be re-introduced to friends made over that time and reminded of important events. She cannot remember why she was admitted to a mental hospital. The writers Ernest Hemingway (who killed himself some time after receiving ECT) and Penelope Mortimer have described vividly the effects of memory loss. ("It was a brilliant cure but we lost the patient" — Hemingway). Whilst doing research for this article I heard of three cases of memory deficits arising from ECT, without making any special effort to search them out.

3. ECT can have many different effects on hormonal systems, amenorrhoea (no periods) being one of the most common.
4. Brain damage. The memory deficits are probably caused by damage to certain areas of the brain. The brain may be affected in other areas too. But instead of boring you with technical details, let's hear what Karl Pribram, one of the world's leading neuropsychologists, has to say: "I'd rather have a small lobotomy than a series of electro-convulsive shock. I just know what the brain looks like after a series of shock — and it's not very pleasant to look at."

'shock'.

On the appointed day I was directed to the therapy room and ordered, without any explanation, to lie on a table around which stood 4 or 5 stern-faced nurses and a doctor. The doctor mechanically administered an intravenous injection and the room spun and receded as I fell into unconsciousness.

The next thing I remember is waking in a

curtained cubicle feeling fogged and dopey as though I'd indulged in too much alcohol. I was bundled out of bed only to find that my muscles wouldn't respond and I had to be supported, stumbling and embarrassed, past the unveiled curiosity of other patients.

While the muscle control returned, the fog in my mind did not recede and I gradually became

**Continued on page 30**



## NO ANNOUNCEMENT

*Fiction by Heather McPherson*

When the blackbird gowns hang straight, feet down in the hall are steady, the loudest sounds are the creak of loose doors and the muted swish of cars outside, the headmaster swings to the front of the stage. He is solid below a correct dark cowlick, short back and sides, and heavy glasses. More sailing ship than bird, he has mana, is rarely seen except for major crimes in his office, or in the distance at first fifteen matches.

– Good morning school.

– Good morning sir.

– The hymn this morning is number twenty-three in your songbooks. Number twenty-three, page seventeen.

Shuffles of feet and pages, a subterranean murmur. The piano down in front of the third formers warms up, pauses. The singing starts awkwardly, grows in volume.

– ..... Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven, feed me now and evermore..... The girls hold their notes longer, higher than the boys. On the last note Mr Nickleton moves to the lectern. He waits at the bible, fat and black, for an outburst of coughs to clear.

– The reading this morning is from the book of Deuteronomy – And Moses charged the people the same day, saying.....

We spread our feet, get ourselves comfortable. We have had Moses for nearly a week now.

–..... Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image, an abomination of the Lord..... And all the people shall answer and say Amen.

Cursed be he who dishonours his father or his

mother. And all the people shall say Amen.

Curse be he who.....And all the people shall say Amen.

Cursed be he who.....And all the people shall say Amen.

Cursed be he who.....

The fourth formers are already giggling and nudging. The teachers' faces change. Some glaze, some frown down into us, some hold grins. Smithie's bald head is bent and red. Timmy Carr has an open smile.

– Cursed be he.....

The prefects are restless, disorder bubbles along the uniforms. One or two have their heads down. Daphne Andrews' big shoulders heave, Marlene Moir, immaculate, tilts her head up with a grave angelic expression. There is more.

– Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law.....

But Mr Nickleton has finished. He closes his bible and looks up. His face has not changed, he does not notice unrest. The hall goes quiet, the laggard grins are bitten off. Usually it is the Lord's Prayer. But this morning he walks to the front of the stage again. He waits and massages the little finger of his left hand. It is a habit we know, it might almost set us off again, massaging our little fingers. Mr Nickleton's glasses tip up. He seems almost hesitant.

– School... I have very sad – I have some very sad news this morning.

Our head girl of two years ago, Myra Coolin, has



— is very ill in Auckland hospital. Myra was — a very popular and capable head prefect. She — her family have long and close links with the school. She is seriously ill with peritonitis and may — may not recover. I would ask you all this morning to pray for her — for her recovery. We will offer a special prayer for her that she may be — that she will recover.

Mr Nickleton massages his little finger. We are spellbound.

— We will now have a short silence and each offer a prayer for Myra.

— Let us pray.

Mr Nickleton bows his head. We bend ours reluctantly, look to each other through sideways eyes. Goodness. Strange. Awful.

Please God make her better? Please God don't let her die?

Furtively I look up. My French teacher has her head down. Her brown hair falls over her face. Mr Monk the science teacher looks straight ahead. I look down quickly.

Our Father, who art in Heaven.....

We join in raggedly, the muttering swells. I glance down my row. Most are fervent. I shut my eyes.

— Amen.

Mr Nickleton swings out, firm-heeled. There are shuffles, scuffs, murmurs. The vice-principal turns his hawk beak to the sources. They die away. The staff sit. The vice-principal reads, in an ordinary voice, ordinary announcements: room changes, lateness in class. The Head Prefects read out detentions and team practices in ordinary voices. But the air is charged. Great wings poise over the assembly. When we get outside they take off, beating.

— That's Kate and Danny Coolin's sister... — She used to play basketball with my sister... — What's

peritonitis? — They live round the road from us. I think Mrs Coolin's stuckup . . .

— Don't say that. — Well, she is. They don't talk to anyone...

— They've got lots of money... — But you shouldn't... — Well Myra wasn't stuckup. — What's peritonitis? — It's funny praying for someone you don't know... — No, it's not. We always pray for people overseas... — They're good friends of his...

At morning break the wings flap. And at lunch-time when we bag our place under the trees by the fence.

— What's peritonitis? — I don't think praying does any good. If it worked nobody would die... — Yes what about all the millions...

Well you can try... — They're Roman Catholics... — and the wars... — What's peritonitis? — It's like pneumonia...

— No it isn't. I asked Mrs Fowler. It's a ruptured appendix. If you get appendicitis and it's not fixed you get peritonitis and you can die.

Silence. We chew our sandwiches. Someone remembers how funny the reading was. But it has lost its first hilarious sheen. Our variations are half-hearted, juvenile. Cursed be she who doesn't share her cake... Even Timmy Carr and Miss Evans are as small as a weather house couple.

I tell my mother when I get home. She is peeling potatoes at the sink.

That's no good.

We are a family of few words.

Next morning at assembly the wings hover. Myra Coolin charges the air. We endure the reading. More Moses, but not funny. When Mr Nickleton finishes we hold our breathes.

Let us pray. Our Father, who art in Heaven.....

Myra Coolin. Shouldn't we pray again today?  
She can't have died?

At lunchtime, over boiled eggs and sandwiches  
on the grass, we peck and poke at the great  
spaces above the trees, where death lies.

— If it was that serious wouldn't they know? —  
Not with peritonitis. My mother was a nurse —  
she says it can be a week... — My father says  
the hospitals are to blame sometimes. He says  
you can pick up germs there because a friend  
of his died like that... — I've been in hospital . . . .

I've been in hospital. It was crowded, it was  
always busy, I seemed to be awake all night. A  
burnt child in a cot halfway down the ward  
smelt terribly. At the end of the ward was the  
death room. An old lady was taken to die  
there. When I was allowed to walk again, down  
the corridor of beds, I was drawn to the room.  
Only an empty bed in it, shadows, an aura of  
dusty disinfectant.

Thursday morning. Mr Nickleton's face tells us  
nothing. There is no announcement. The charge  
has subsided, the great wings follow his loud  
heels off the stage. At lunchtime we wander  
back to Myra Coolin as to a bare signpost.

Friday morning. We realise we will not hear  
the end of the story from Mr Nickleton. But the  
rumour has spread, is spreading. By morning  
break it beats in our cupped hands, a bird with  
a broken wing. Myra Coolin is dead. She died in  
the night. Danny Coolin is not at school, nor is  
Kate. Her teacher didn't call her name. The  
family have gone away.

It is in the Times when I get home. Beloved

daughter of.....loved sister of Kate and Daniel.  
R.I.P. Private Ceremony. No flowers by request.

I feel an ache that wants to cry, or shout.

The weekend disperses Myra Coolin. Impending  
death opens the vast spaces, death closes them to  
a dark room at the end of a corridor.

I like to read the paper after school. I read it  
cover to cover. It puts off the evil moment of  
homework starting and I enjoy my milo. By  
Thursday of the next week I have almost for-  
gotten Myra Coolin when her name leaps out  
from the back page of the Herald. It is a small  
item.

— A 46-year-old man was today charged with  
manslaughter in the magistrate's court. William  
Smith of Auckland was charged with the unlaw-  
ful use of an instrument thereby causing the  
death of Myra Coolin aged 18. The accused  
pleaded not guilty and the case was remanded.

I read it and read it. I take it into the kitchen to  
show my mother. She is at the stove stirring the  
stew. I shove it towards her. She stops stirring  
to read, then turns back.

— Yes, she says heavily. That's what happens to  
these girls.

I fold the item uppermost, carry the paper back  
to the sitting room and lay it on the couch. It  
catches my eye all night.

Next morning at assembly there is no announce-  
ment.

Myra Coolin, in all your names, here is your  
announcement.

May the Goddess gather you with all her  
daughters from the silences.

#### LADY GODIVAS (EQUUS TRANSLATED, FOR SARAH)

The love of horses for girls  
Is the love of one caught creature for another.  
The horses hate spur and bridle  
Young girls to be dominated  
So they send a message: proud caught horses  
Call to proud caught girls  
(Especially those with long ponytails)  
Across the evening hills.  
So nobody wins and nobody loses  
And the cold world moves on:  
Into the roar of the crowd  
Ride the Lady Godivas.

Elizabeth Smither.

## ECT

### Continued from page 26

aware of gaps in my memory – conversations and events had completely disappeared, or, when I could remember events, it was as a bare fact, stripped of its affectional or emotional component. Rather like knowing you had had dinner but not being able to remember what you ate or what it tasted like.

I had always valued my intellectual ability and was confident of my ability to reason logically, but suddenly that too was taken from me – causing worse fear and depression than had ever existed previously.

I protested against any further treatment – but of course when you are a psychiatric patient your opinion is considered irrelevant, besides, I was told, I had signed an authorization paper and while my psychiatrist was on leave no one else could counter her authority. I was stuck with it. Eventually I was assigned to another psychiatrist and ECT stopped – but not before every vestige of confidence in my mental ability had been eroded and not before my jaw

had been permanently damaged so that when I yawn, laugh or open my mouth wide, my jaw cracks loudly and uncomfortably and locks temporarily in that position.

ECT did inadvertently have some positive results: I realised I could never trust psychiatrists and that their treatment was worse than ineffective – it was destructive. Also I realised that I had to get out of the hospital, which wasn't easy even though I was a voluntary patient and theoretically could leave whenever I wished. It was made abundantly clear that if I was to run away I could be committed to a state hospital and that I was ridiculous if I really thought I could cope without them. I quickly learned to play the "good patient" game – that is, I denied any anxiety, repressed all emotions, fears and protests and passively did exactly as I was told so that I could get out of the place.

When details of treatment were sought by a later psychiatrist, Ashburn Hall admitted that they had been unable to help me in the six months I had been there.

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Hogwash pages to Broadsheet,  
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# hogwash

Contributors: *Rosemary Cocker,  
Angela Baker*

## Sometimes There Is No Option

Defendants with nobody to look after their children while they attended court had no alternative but to take them along. Mr D. I. N. MacLean, the senior magistrate in Auckland, said yesterday.

There was nothing illegal or improper in their doing so.

An Otahuhu magistrate, Mr D. D. Finnigan, this week rebuked a woman who took her children into court.

Mr MacLean said the courts required people to attend and they obviously had to take their children if there was nobody at home to supervise them.

There was always somebody at court — the police matron or the Friends at Court organisation to look after the children if necessary.

Mr MacLean said if a child cried while a court was in session a policeman could ask the parents to take it outside.

Spectators in court with children were in a different category, for they had no need to be there.

## Auckland Star 9. 3. 78

Mrs Elizabeth Hague — celebrates her 100th birthday.

Her secret for long life? Mrs Hague has never worked, apart from a short singing career during her teens.

She later remarried and had four children — three of whom are living.

Mrs Hague has 14 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren.



"I got held up at the office. Better start nagging without me!"



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The hours envisaged are 9 till 4 but 9 till 3 would be considered if we can find the right person. For this reason the job may well suit a married person with children at school, although the person appointed must be able to work during the School Holidays.

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# The Feminist Eye

One of our readers enjoyed "The Women's Room" so much that she sent us this review. Although we have already published a review of the novel in our December issue we thought it was worth sharing another women's views with you.

**The Women's Room,  
Marilyn French,  
Hutchinson Publishing Group,  
1977, \$10.95.**

It was my Xmas present to myself and gave me a wonderful week's reading in every available moment from Xmas to New Year's Day. It's Bloody Marvellous, not to be missed by any feminist. Give it to all your women friends to read. It's all there — the whole bit — why every woman who has given thought to her and every other woman's position in the world is a feminist, though the word itself is not used often.

Mira's story begins in childhood and Marilyn French's insight into the female mind is never better than when describing Mira's childhood ideas. She describes how these change through puberty and her teenage years until she



Marilyn French

realises that as a girl she can never make it in the world alone, and allows herself to be written off into marriage, motherhood and suburbia.

But then she goes on to describe her gradual awakening to what is happening to her; whatever she does it will be her fault. For instance, when she becomes pregnant — "You've just ruined my life, do you realise that?" he cries. She wonders why marriage falls so far short of all that society says of it for "most of the time she feels like a child who had stumbled, bumbled into the wrong house".

Mira is everywoman. Certainly I identified with her very closely, perhaps because she is almost exactly contemporaneous with me, and therefore had much the same upbringing and even read the same books. There would be few women who would not echo her thoughts and feelings. For example, as a young wife Mira "thought she had escaped, but all she had done was to let the enemy into her house, let him into her body . . . But he was gentle and respectful, he was among the best of men. If he was like them, there was no hope. It was not worth living in such a world."

Interpolated into Mira's story are philosophical interludes written in the first person, and it is not till the last page but one that we know the identity of that secret writer. In one of these she muses on the necessity of money and the fact that this is one way that men keep women under subjection. "There are so much easier ways to destroy a woman. You don't have to rape or kill her; you don't even have to beat her. You can just marry her. You don't even have to do that. You can just let her work in your office for thirty dollars a week".

Another character with whom I identified closely at one particular point in the story was Val. Val was the most political of the group, and alone of all the women ended up living in a feminist commune. No. That is not how Val ended up . . .

Val had been at the centre of the Harvard group, jolly, fun-loving, yet very concerned for her fellow humans — the only one of the women or their men to actively get into the anti Vietnam War movement. One night she was listening to the TV news as she prepared tea and she heard an

item which stopped her in her tracks. Then . . . "she heard this screaming, it was ungodly, it was coming from the back of her head, she could hear it, it was a woman screaming in agony". It was the year 1968. I think the incident was the shooting of students by the National Guard at a peace demonstration.

An almost parallel experience occurred in my kitchen in 1968 when I was living in Adelaide. It was a newspaper photo that set me off — a photo of a Vietcong girl, and the report said she'd been subjected to the water torture by AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS; not Americans (we all knew they stood round and did nothing — at the very least — while South Vietnamese army men tortured prisoners) but AUSTRALIANS. Australians, not just watching, but using, torture. And against a girl. Of course the report was denied by the Government (men) when the outcry went up.

Yes, as Marilyn French postulated, the year 1968 was really the beginning of the end. "It was the time when the nightmare broke out into public vision". The peace movement swelled, but Val's only child, her daughter, was raped, and that was the beginning of the end for Val. Then she really saw, the scales fell from her eyes, she went "over the line", decided to

## The Women's Room

by Marilyn French  
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drop out of a world which included men — the only and ultimate enemy, even giving up her study.

There are flashes of humour too, as on the night that Mira finally says THAT WORD, and the others gather round her cheering and chortling. The whole women's spectrum is laid out before us. We go with Mira to visit Lily and find her among a bevy of beautiful if neurotic women kept in a mental hospital by husbands who are tired of them. We share the ultimate despair when she slashes her wrists one night in the bathroom. We sit with Val in the courtroom, watching the ugly, bulging-hipped American policemen and smooth white lawyers, mind wandering, babbling, holding her mouth to stop from calling out "Sexist. Racist." We share the utter disbelief of Mira when she realises that Ben expects her to give up the career that she loves, not only to go to Africa with him but to bear him a child — she, with grown-up sons. We share the love all the women bear towards Iso, who discovered early in life that she was different, to whose heart full of love they all turn in time of trouble.

Marilyn French is a writer of power, of telling imagery, who takes us inside the hearts and minds of her women. This is verily a book for every woman, especially for every feminist. May it be as Fay Weldon says of it — "the kind of book that changes lives".

Dora Sutcliffe

**Stay at the Dinner Party,**  
**Rachel McAlpine,**  
**Caveman Press, 1976.**  
**\$3.25.**

Well I woke up this morning and I thought I would review my own book for *Broadsheet*. Since I am patently a reviewer with a strong personal bias, I'll try to describe the book rather than evaluate it. I'll tell you what's in it, what it's about, what it looks like — you decide whether or not it is "good" poetry.

*Stay at the Dinner Party* is its title: stay there if you want a nice safe socially acceptable life. For about ten years of my married life, I did stay at the dinner party, where you are preoccupied with competitive, elaborate food, superficial discussion, and trivial, clandestine flirtations. The dinner-party-life served its purpose at the time, I guess — bringing some perfumed air into my provincial nappy-pile. But it wasn't healthy, and it's over.

The book has a purple cover with big

yellow spots on it. It wants you to notice it and buy it for yourself and friends. The poems are hand-written, and kind of wobbly, I admit.

There are three sections, each with a dozen or so poems in it. The first is called "Sheila and the Honourable Member". The speaker is Sheila, married to an M.P. who is suffering from all the occupational hazards of his career — loss of figure, loss of sobriety, loss of ideals and loss of honesty and respect in marriage. Sheila speaks out for herself and for other women:

I have a small brown voice  
here it is in my handbag

She speaks sympathetically about her husband's mistress, "the lady with purple carpets", guessing that her relationship with the MP is no more satisfying than Sheila's own. She speaks of sexual revulsion; she speaks both modestly as the neglected wife ("I know I am dull") and acidly, angrily. Most of all, Sheila wants to be heard, and she has not finished talking yet by a long way.

For instance Mr Speaker  
I would like permission to speak  
I am tired of signing forms

The second section of the book is called "A Chat With God the Mother". These poems were written close to a crisis and a moment of heat, so they have some pretty rough spots. They tell the story of how and why I left the church after thirty-seven years of close involvement and commitment. Once sensitised to sexism in the hierarchy, the theology, and the language of Christianity, I eventually found I just couldn't handle it any longer. I felt very much the odd person out, and couldn't face the struggle of trying to change things in my own branch of the church. There are some parts of these poems that I really like — for example:

Mother Mother have mercy on men  
I love them but  
I think I should not forgive

and also:

we cling to the pot of the world  
but we cannot find the mouth

But on the whole, six months after publication, I am astonished at the strength of the resentment in these poems. They end this way, appropriately enough:

TYRANNOSAURA REGINA  
HAS BLUNDERED INTO THE LIGHT  
I DO NOT RECOGNISE HER  
I DID NOT GIVE BIRTH TO HER  
I MERELY ROLLED AWAY THE STONE



Rachel McAlpine

After the first two sections of the book, the final one may come as a surprise. It's called "And On The Way I Dropped It", and consists of sixteen love poems. They describe, or reflect, the development of a love relationship between equals. The poems tell of an initial edginess:

you are distinguished in your thirties  
I intend to be rude to you

of course you are clever  
but so am I, so am I  
in my mousy housewifely way

and wariness:

your eyes are in khaki  
are you at war  
or on safari?

I would hate to be a pet  
but I am scared of dying

but mostly they celebrate the positive aspects of a love affair.

Well, that's it: two parts feminist anger rising; one part grown-up love. As the poet, at this point I am obliged to rest my case.

Rachel McAlpine

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# 'Whatever's For Us'

## Women Songwriters and Singers

### Wendy Waldman

I first came across Wendy Waldman whilst listening to Maria Muldaur albums. Maria Muldaur devotees may have noticed the frequency with which Waldman-written songs appear . . . there's 'Mad Mad Me' and 'Vaudeville Man' on *Maria Muldaur*, there's 'Gringo en Mexico' on *Waitress in a Doughnut Shop*, there's 'Wild Bird' on *Sweet Harmony* . . . Waldman songs are as popular with Muldaur as McGarrigle sister songs, perhaps because Waldman is such a versatile writer. Not only do her lyrics describe a wide range of experiences, but her style covers almost everything from a Hindu nursery rhyme to blue grass.

She has done two albums, but Warner Brothers have been indiscreet and foolish enough to have stopped printing the first one. Her second one, *Wendy Waldman* is available here, occasionally. She doesn't exactly get a lot of exposure, in fact I'm the only person I know who has a copy of *Wendy Waldman*. I'm also the only person I know who likes it. No, I can think of another woman who likes it. Perhaps she and I can sign a petition and get Warner Brothers to give Waldman better coverage here. I mention this element of controversy in the hope that it will inspire no end of curiosity and thousands of women will go out and demand her records from every shop in New Zealand.

They're worth the trouble. *Wendy Waldman* has more surprises per track than any record I've heard since Joni Mitchell's *Hejira*. Really, it has. Take her voice, and you should. It's anything from a Bronx Linda Ronstadt to Mitchell on sixty a day. The same extremes apply to her songs. They're clever. They use every device available to a woman using a male backing group and producer and label. Her arrangements are intricate, they enhance the lyrics so well that each song, while being immediately impressive still maintains a certain mystery that unfolds a little bit more on each hearing. This mystery gives a touch of sadness to most of the songs, a sadness that is a direct reflection of the down on women attitudes that society maintains, but it is not a down album because she

makes such beautiful sounds.

*Gypsy Symphony*, her first album, has a more commercial sound, as if she didn't have the confidence, or permission, to show a more individual approach. But her versatility is even more obvious, as is her ability as an all-round musician. Not only has she written all her own material and arrangements, but the orchestral arrangements are hers too, a job that most solo artists prefer to leave to someone else. This allows us the refreshing change of hearing a truly solo album, Waldman-permeated with sensitivity and imagination. I just hope that she survives the Warner Brothers fraternity and keeps on reaching us.

Melanie Read

### Maria Muldaur

Maria Muldaur is one of the few singers handling traditional American folk music — which is OK by me, as I think she's a superb singer with an undercurrent of humour necessary to the rendering of much folk material.

I have been told that many of the songs she sings are virtually unchanged but Americanised versions of traditional English folk songs, and certainly

numbers like "Don't You Feel My Thigh," "Any Old Time" and "The Work Song" are universal in the sentiments they portray. All of these are on her first LP, titled *Maria Muldaur*, on which she gets fine backing and support from familiar names such as Ry Cooder, Chris Ethridge and Amos Garrett.

Her second LP, *Waitress in a Donut Shop*, has several tracks written by another well known name, McGarrigle. She sings Anna McGarrigle's "Cool River" with the smooth phrasing you'd expect, but adds an element of pathos blended with maturity that's a delight to listen to. On the track "Travelin' Shoes," she is supported in the vocals by Kate McGarrigle, and their voices work well together.

I went to the Muldaur concert held in Auckland a few months ago, and found her casual, warm style enhanced in live performance. Though dogged by lousy sound equipment and inefficient light changing, she appealed to the audience to stay with her and enjoy the music — which they did.

If you like rocky, laid-back, traditional folk with an undercurrent of humour, have a listen to Muldaur. You'll buy it.

Sandi Hall



Maria Muldaur

# Healthy Women

## MENOPAUSE part two

**In the second half of her article on the menopause SARAH CALVERT looks at controversial treatments for symptoms of the menopause and suggests alternatives.**

### Areas of controversy

Two major areas of controversy have arisen in medical and consumer literature about treatments for menopausal women. One, called the ERT controversy, has focused on the use of long-term estrogen therapy for older women. The other has focused on the increase in the use of hysterectomy as a surgical procedure. Both of these are controversial procedures open to widespread criticism from both medical and non-medical people.

### Estrogen Replacement Therapy.

About 1/5 of all women will not experience menopausal symptoms at all. Of the other 4/5, many will not require treatment. However, we should seek treatment if and when symptoms significantly interfere with our normal lives. The most common treatment used today is ERT. It involves a course of estrogen tablets taken in a regular cycle (like the Birth Control Pill). Some doctors prescribe more irregular use of tablets but this is less common. ERT is given for a variety of reasons. Whether you are given it or not will partly depend on your doctor and his/her attitude to drugs and menopause. ERT is popular among those doctors who see menopause as a deficiency disease that should be treated with hormones. These doctors usually suggest that the drug be given indefinitely. This is a cause of real concern to women.

Estrogen levels in the body do decline during menopause. It is this change in hormonal levels which is responsible for most of the symptoms associated with menopause. However, we do continue to produce estrogen, although there is no reliable method of measuring the estrogen levels in the body and thus no easy test to see if we would benefit from hormonal therapy.

ERT is given in a variety of forms. Normally conjugated estrogens are given in 21-25-day cycles which means that we continue to have periods and our monthly cycle is much as it would be if we were not menopausal. ERT does help with vaginal atrophy and hot flushes, and may help depression, constipation and insomnia. We do not really know if it does help these and other symptoms, or how it works. However we know that other things do help these problems (i.e. estrogen cream and exercise for vaginal atrophy, both of which seem less dangerous). More particularly we do not know what the long-term effects of ERT are.

If your doctor suggests ERT, he should ask you for a complete up-to-date medical history, both for you and for your immediate (maternal) family. Present research suggests that ERT involves serious risks. You should therefore only consider it for a short period of time (up to 2 years), and only if your life is really affected by symptoms which don't respond to other things. ERT is not a fountain of youth. It will not relieve many of

your symptoms, nor will it change any of the real life crises we have to face.

You should not consider ERT if —

1. There is a herstory of cancer in your family, especially if there is a herstory of endometrial (the lining of the uterus) cancer or breast cancer.
2. If you have ever had any type of cancer.
3. If you have had recurrent cysts.
4. If you have a herstory of blood clots.
5. If you have a herstory of kidney or liver problems.
6. If you have a herstory of heart problems.

ERT is known to have the following side effects: it increases blood pressure, increases the risk of blood clots, and it changes the composition of the endometrium (lining of the uterus). It may have other effects in other women. Vidal S. Clay in her book on menopause says:

“Recent studies show a statistical relationship between ERT and the incidence of uterine cancer.”

It now appears that women who use ERT are seven times more likely to get cancer of the lining of the uterus than other women (this is especially true of those women who have been using it for a long time).

There is still much controversy over the relationship of any hormones given to women and cancer. However it is fair to say that the evidence for ERT does not look good. We know that women over 40 on the Birth Control Pill have an increased rate of cancer and there is evidence of a rise of cancer associated with estrogen given to menopausal women. Between 1947-70 there was no significant

rise in endometrial cancer but since 1970 there has been a rapid rise in the incidence of this type of cancer in women over 50.

Estrogen is often given to prevent or alleviate osteoporosis – the decaying of the bones – but it has not been found to be effective for this. Moreover, a long-term study found other ways of dealing with this to be effective. One such treatment involves the intake of doses of calcium (in 1000 unit lots) with Vitamin D, starting preferably prior to the onset of menopause. Other vitamins, especially B complex and E, and moderate exercise are also important. The decaying of the bones will be prevented for as long as this treatment is continued. This treatment also has a beneficial effect on cholesterol levels in the blood and on heart conditions. (New York State Medical Journal, Feb 1975, p 325-6, Albanese et al).

Finally, when considering all the controversy about ERT, it is important to recognise that the large drug companies have a vested interest in selling these products to women through the medical professions. The importance to the drug companies of this market can be seen from the following attempt by the company which produces the common estrogen preparation used by menopausal women, to counter publicity about possible side-effects. The company's public relations group challenged the adverse publicity, not on scientific grounds, but in other ways, i.e. through misleading and inaccurate letters sent out to doctors, and through glossy publications which are free of charge. They also make use of media sources. For example, the following were suggested as ways to counter the publicity:

1. Placement of a comprehensive article on the menopause in major women's magazines, emphasising the stages of women's lives (!).
2. Placement with syndicated columnists on newspaper women's pages of articles on menopause (with you know who providing the background material).

3. The interest of such people as . . . . . (major media writers) should be fueled with the latest favourable reports and articles.

The report comments 'it is important to stress the benefits of ERT should not be explicitly stated but rather should flow from a general exposition on the menopause.' (The above comes from a letter published in "Majority Report" who received it from a woman who felt we should know what is going on. "Majority Report", April, 1977).

We witness a massive attempt to encourage women and medical professionals to use possible dangerous treatments, using all the power of the media.

### Hysterectomy.

There has been an incredible increase in this operation. Hysterectomy is a major operation, a serious intervention into the body system. It will take time to recover from this physically and mentally. Many women do experience long term psychological problems after this operation (probably from the lack of counselling). No woman should ever have a hysterectomy unless she is completely convinced of the need for it. Make sure you get a full explanation of what is going to be done and why. Normally the ovaries

will not be touched during a hysterectomy and you will experience menopause in the normal way but sometimes they are removed (because they are diseased, for instance) and you will experience menopause then. Make sure you are prepared for the level of pain you will experience and for the drain that this operation will be for a while afterwards. It is a good idea to ask to have someone to sit with you while you come out of the anaesthetic and for the first few days it is really helpful if you can have some friends around. However, providing you look after yourself and are careful you should recover completely. You should plan to have at least two weeks at home after you have left hospital for a rest.

Hysterectomy has become a popular operation, however it is often done for less than good reasons. Studies in the US show that where women are on health insurance schemes they are up to three times more likely to have this operation than women not on insurance. This suggests that many unnecessary hysterectomies are being performed.

A word on the psychological problems associated with menopause. Many feminists believe that the problems associated with hysterectomy have their basis in the fertility myths and



Photo: Rose Curl

agism of our culture. We fear being ill, and hysterectomy makes us, at least for a while very ill. We fear being cast aside, for our function is to bear and raise children and when we can no longer do this we are finished. We identify hysterectomy as being the end of the good life, the end of our youth. It seems that women who adjust least well are those who subscribe to the traditional views of femininity and female roles; these women find it hard to look beyond the loss of "female qualities".

Hysterectomy has always been associated with loss, and it is this sense of loss that our fears revolve around; the loss of childbearing capacity, the loss of menstruation (a greater adjustment than many women realise), the affect on our sexuality, our sense of lost 'youth'. If you are going to have a hysterectomy you need to think clearly about these things, and how we feel about them.

## Alternatives

### a). Vitamin Therapy.

Some women have found that supplements of the B complex vitamins and Vitamin E reduce or remove their menopausal distress. Vit. E has been found especially good in relieving hot flushes. Certainly a vitamin programme will not do you any harm and may be beneficial.

### b). Nutrition.

In our society diet and nutrition do not play a significant part in our concepts of good health. However, good nutrition can be very good for menopausal symptoms. A diet rich in protein and low in calories and carbohydrates is most beneficial at this time. Take care not to cut back on minerals and green veges and fruit. Less saturated fats should be used such as corn oil, soy oil or safflower oil. Whole wheat breads and cereals are very important. Diets low in fibre content are a major factor in constipation and colon problems, so make sure you have a high fibre intake.

### c). Herbs.

One herb is especially used for menopausal problems and that is Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*).

## Menopause Fact Sheet

- Menopause does not start or end at a particular time, it's onset is not related to the beginning of menstruation.
- There does not appear to be real differences between women who have had children and those who haven't.
- Menopause usually begins in the late 40s and early 50s and lasts a couple of years.
- There has been a gradual rise in the number of women who experience menopausal symptoms, this is unexplained.
- Removal of the Uterus does not affect the menopause, it still occurs. Only when the ovaries are removed will menopause occur.
- It is unknown what effect the Birth Control Pill will have on menopause.
- After the menopause you continue to produce estrogen but in reduced quantities.
- Four major changes occur during menopause:
  1. Irregular periods.
  2. Irregular periods with less flow.
  3. Regular periods with less flow.
  4. Abrupt cessation of periods.
- The following are abnormal and you should see your doctor:
  1. Profuse bleeding.
  2. Continual spotting.
  3. Bleeding after intercourse.
  4. Blood clots.
  5. Bleeding between periods.

Many menopausal women will develop fibroids; these are benign growths in the uterus and don't need to be removed unless they bleed and cause you pain.

## REMEMBER YOU CAN OVULATE AND BECOME PREGNANT!

Continue contraception until you have had a full year without periods. Women on ERT or the Birth Control Pill will continue to have periods so you will have to stop these to find out. It is suggested that women over the age of 40 should not be on the Birth Control Pill. It is also suggested that since the IUD affects the lining of the uterus it is not a good thing for menopausal women.

Taken as a tea it will help restore you if you are feeling low and it is good for general aches and pains. Pulped carrot and cinnamon are good for the uterus, insert into the vagina in a muslin bag. Chamomile, Betony (*Betonica officinalis*) and Comfrey are good for hot flushes and other problems. A whole host of herbs are good for rheumatics and sore joints, the following are just a selection.

You can take them as a tincture, or make up some oil and massage into the affected area. Angelica, Bay, Basil, Chickweed, Nettle, Nutmeg, Sage, Pine Oil, Dandelion and Lavendar.

### d). Exercise.

Movement and exercise are essential if we want to stay healthy, especially at a time when parts of our body do



not seem to be functioning properly, good gentle exercise that is consistent will be very helpful. Our bones and blood circulation will deteriorate unless we continue to use our body properly. Be sensible about exercise, take an inventory of your state of health, your needs and capabilities, note your body's response to exercise, only do what feels comfortable, what is challenging. **DO NOT OVERDO YOUR EXERCISE.**

e). A Menopause Group.

Many women have found getting together with other women to talk about growing old and the onset of the menopause very helpful. We all need to share our hopes and fears, to exchange experiences and learn from one another and a group is a good way of doing this. You can start by talking about how you feel about menopause, growing old, how do you relate to older women? What has affected you most, how do others react to you now. We all need the warmth and support that comes from being with other women whose experience is our own.

Finally a note about research. Although menopause is a significant physical and psychological stage in all women's lives research on it is generally of poor quality and cannot be used to draw major conclusions from. Much of the data is retrospective with a multitude of differing definitions being used. McKinley and McKinley in an article on the Menopause and Research note that the subjective experience is particularly evident in this area of research and point to the following six areas as yet unexplained (and unresearched except by feminists) points.

1. How can intra-inter society differences in the appearance and symptomology of the menopause be explained.
2. If menopause signals the end for women of major life roles could it be that menopause symptomolgy is a manifestation of the difficulties of role adjustment for women.
3. To what extent are predominantly psychological and associated

somatics symptoms merely extensions of previously existing emotional problems.

4. Is the concept of a menopausal syndrome merely the clinicians' convenient construction of reality or does a commonly occurring set of symptoms really exist; why?
5. Does ERT affect menopausal symptoms, how, which ones, to what extent.
6. How can menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms be differentiated.

Until these and other questions are answered we cannot fully expect to understand this process. Many women will continue to suffer because of this lack of knowledge. As women we can learn much for ourselves by

getting together in groups and sharing our experiences and knowledge.

Sarah Calvert, 1977.

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## A Women's Health Group

has been started in Palmerston North. All interested women are invited to contact Wendy Laks at 31 Dahlia Street for further details.

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An Australian feminist magazine produced by a group of women in Sydney.

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The Women's Union of Greece has organised a unique 15 day tour of Greece with the theme: "Greece through new eyes; the struggle of Greek women through centuries against injustice, tyranny, foreign occupation, and for equality, liberty and human dignity."

The tour party meets in Athens on August 27 and is back in Athens on September 10. The basic cost (within Greece only) is \$450 US. The organisers must know who wishes to go by the 15th of May. For a brochure with more detailed information write to The Women's Union of Greece, 34 Panepistimiou Street, Athens 143, Greece.

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Napier - ph: 446-414.

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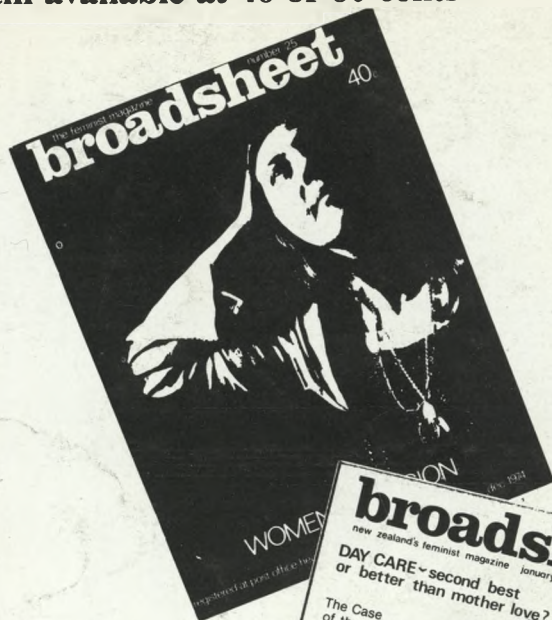
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