

Women and Environments International Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 1978

EDITORIAL

The *Women and Environments International Newsletter* was started for a particular purpose — to focus on action, research, and people working on topics relating to women and their environments. There are now many journals and magazines which cover feminist issues, but none which focuses exclusively on women's environmental needs.

For the editors of this Newsletter, environments are not simply our physical surroundings, the geography and urban landscape, housing, industry and transport which represent our relationship to the earth and its resources. Environments are also our interactions and behaviours towards each other, the structures of how we live together, work and play.

It is the wide conception of environments which is reflected by the range of articles in this issue — of a work and personal environment created by women of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective; the birth environments; of a women's transit system; of women struggling to preserve buildings of historical value; or urban sprawl and its effects on the lives of women; and so on.

The Newsletter has served to bring several divergent groups into contact; policymakers, planners and designers, academics, and activists. Although each of these has its own networks, conferences, even publications, at present there are few forums for them all. Our Newsletter, in a small way, has tried to serve this purpose.

The first four issues of the Newsletter have been funded by the Faculty of Environmental Studies. With this issue, that funding has ended. We have not obtained financial support from elsewhere. The Newsletter can only survive through subscriptions from all of you. The Newsletter is now sent to 375 people. We will require \$5 from each of you to cover printing and mailing costs for three issues per year. If not enough subscriptions are received, this will be the last issue of the Newsletter.

If there is enough money to continue, we will include book reviews, news briefs, news of participants, features on women's spaces, reports on conferences, lists of network participants on a regular basis. We will also invite people to be guest editor, as Jennifer Penney is for this issue. Topics which could be the focus of subsequent issues include: women and housing, housing and neighbourhood needs of single parents, women and energy, hospital environments, women in environmental professions, and many others. We hope that you will fill out the subscription form and mail it to us immediately so that the newsletter can continue with your support.

GOING STRONG: Boston Women's Health Book Collective

*In the space of a few years, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective has been transformed from a small discussion group to a collective running a non-profit foundation which supports the work of women's health groups all over North America and in Europe as well. The collective is well known for its authorship of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a book on women's health and self-help which has become a classic reader for women all over North America.*

The women's collective is an important one, not only because of its financial and moral support to the women's health movement, but because it stands as an important model of collective work and sharing from which many groups could learn.

This summer, Jennifer Penney visited Boston to interview the Boston Women's Health Book Collective for the Newsletter. She met with Judy Norsigian of the collective, and taped one of two

lengthy conversations. The following article is made up of excerpts from that taped conversation, together with quotes from a radio show by the Great Atlantic Radio Conspiracy in which Judy and another member of the collective, Norma Swenson, were interviewed. Parts of the article are also taken from a history of the collective written by Wendy Sanford, a third collective member.

The collective began as a small discussion group on health at one of the first women's conferences in Boston in 1969.

BEGINNINGS

"We were as well prepared as any women could be to know what health care was about, and we knew nothing."

Norma

Norma: Women came with a lot of what we call horror stories, about their experiences in the medical community trying to get help. Every woman there had had bad experiences and had gone away from them thinking 'There must be something wrong with me' although in many cases they were angry with the doctor. As a group we began to realize that the doctors were pretty consistently paternalistic and condescending, and essentially treated women like children and didn't give us very much information. And I think out of that first came a desire to steer women to good medical care in the belief that the thing to do was to find out who the good doctors were and make a list of them.

It quickly became clear that there was no such list, that no matter how many women had made a positive report about a particular doctor, a number of other women could be found who had not had a very good experience. That led to two things. One a basic recognition that, as middle-class women, most of whom had some kind of college or university training, we were as well-prepared as any women could be to know what health care and medical care was about, and we knew nothing, and we were not satisfied with that care. And two, the feelings that what we had experienced as individuals were not individual phenomena. It was something that was happening to all women and probably was even worse for women without this sort of background.

So then we were driven to going to textbooks, going to doctors, beginning to do our own research. And it seemed to work out best if every woman took an area of intense personal interest — which would give her the most motivation. Some women had had a bad childbirth experience, some women had had VD, some women had an abortion... every woman took an area of personal concern and went and tried to find out whatever she could about it. That was the first research we did. These things gradually turned

that process, that it just seemed as if what we needed was some way to get someone else to deal with reproducing them. So a group of the women got together and put their own personal money to take it to a local underground press, to have it put out in a newsprint edition. The first publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was done by the New England Free Press in Boston, and was distributed locally in the Boston area. As people in the Boston area began to send it around to friends in other parts of the country, it began to have an underground life all over the U.S. and the orders really began to pour in so that it became an underground best seller. 250,000 copies were sold without a word of advertising. As more and more copies were printed the price went down lower and lower until finally it went down as low as 30 cents. The women who had originally put their money in got it back.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE COLLECTIVE

"We quickly found that we operated with the most energy, effectiveness and authenticity as a group when our actions grew out of the shared input of every member."

Wendy

Wendy: In retrospect, certain aspects of our group during those early years seem special. First, we were (and are) non-professionals. Our major qualification for the project was that we were women who did not like the kind of health care and body education we had been getting and wanted to join together to try to do something about it. To be able to do the work we wanted to do, we had to help each other do it. This has perhaps helped us avoid some of the destructive competitiveness and super-professionalism of our culture today, and has taught us the power of cooperation.

Second, the *work* we focussed on and our approach to it quite consistently met our *personal needs*. We needed to be safely free from unwanted pregnancies, to understand rather than fear childbirth or menopause, to be strong when facing the imposing medical hierarchy, to claim and enjoy our sexuality. We needed constructive work to do. We needed to come out of our isolation and to talk in a sharing, non-defensive way with other women. Working together on health education for ourselves and others helped us meet these many, varied needs. The striking interplay for us of task, subject matter, and personal growth released energy into many areas of our lives, and has certainly been a big reason why we have stayed together so long as a group.

Third, our membership was relatively fluid for the first two years. Research and teaching brought us together, with personal sharing as part of, but not the only element in our experience. Our personal relationships, therefore, had time to grow and solidify as we shared. By about November 1971 we found that a core group of... their more and more steadily, including... the beginning and others who had... have chosen to remain closed... one of us moved to Canada... Those two years of... a lot to do with how

stable we have been since.

A fourth special thing about our group has been that our ways of making decisions and getting things done reflected from the first our sense of meeting as equals. We quickly found that we operated with the most energy, effectiveness and authenticity as a group when our actions grew out of the shared input of every member. We also realized that a decision or process which didn't take our feelings into consideration could not be whole. So from the beginning we sought to make our decisions not by vote but by consensus, with each of us in turn speaking both her reasoning and her positive and negative feelings. Our decision-making process is often lengthy and sometimes frustrating, particularly when outside pressures demand a quick choice.

Norma: We have a theory, that even though our process appears to take longer, at any given point in time, that in the long run, it is a more efficient decision if it's made that way because people's willingness to live with it is then assured, and there's no backlash and no bad feelings cropping up later that sometimes make people leave.

Judy: There is an aspect to collective process that requires personal sharing. It's hard to engage in other than a hierarchical Roberts' Rules of Order approach if you don't have good personal relationships. We go overboard sometimes, you know, in our informality and we have to bring ourselves back to focussing on the issue, keeping good minutes, and so on.

The group has met once a week every week for nine years. They also have sub-group meetings of members who are working together on various projects. These meetings are often with women outside of the collective.

Wendy: When we let work pressures squeeze out our time for personal sharing, we lose our centredness as a group, at which point we are good neither for each other nor for our work. This is what happened for nearly a year after the publication of the new edition of our book: it was like a postpartum slump, as joy and pride in our 'new baby' met the constant demand of unfamiliar, unexpected and not entirely pleasant new responsibilities, just when we wanted/needed to sit back and collect ourselves. Finally, after some months of tense meetings and crowded agendas, we started to hold separate business meetings twice a month for those who could attend. This all sounds simple, but required a fundamental change in our process: even though decisions are still reserved for the larger group, those who can't be at the business meeting have to accept missing out on the discussion process so central to consensus decision-making. Recently these daytime business meetings have freed up Monday nights for some lovely celebrations and spontaneous rituals for each other.

The main thing which makes our prolonged business periods tolerable is the extent to which we share in each other's lives outside of our meetings. Our interconnectedness has grown steadily, as we have worked together in two's and three's, had picnics with our kids, done workshops together around New England and beyond, and spent the travel hours in long and searching conversations.

The combination of personal sharing and work that characterizes the collective shows up in their work environments. Despite a large income generated by the royalties from Our Bodies, Ourselves, the collective does not have an office or other work space, separate

from their homes. Judy Norsigian keeps many of the files and papers of the group in a spare bedroom of the apartment which she shares with her mother and brother. The weekly meetings of the group are held in homes of the members. During the interview with Judy, we sat at the dining room table where she does much of her work, with the clatter of cooking from the kitchen and musical instruments playing upstairs.

Other women in the collective also do work in their homes, on tables in their living rooms, surrounded by photographs of their children and friends, plants, personal treasures . . . and mounds of periodicals, letters and manuscripts-in-progress.

The collective work has not always been easy. Some very difficult decisions have had to be made. The first major one faced by the group was the decision to publish the book commercially.

Judy: That decision to change from working with a movement press to a commercial capitalist publisher was an agonizing decision. We did not make it easily. There were many trade-offs. There was a feeling in the group that we were copping out in some way. There wasn't really a feminist network at that point. There weren't feminist publishers. And yet there was the possibility of developing that network were we to use this book. And yet we wanted the book to have a mass distribution very soon. It was a desperate need at that point. We talked about the pros and cons of staying in the movement or going with a capitalist publisher where a lot of the control would leave our hands. We knew that. Even with a very fine contract (negotiated for us by a lawyer), control over the cover, final editorial control, control over ad copy. We even built into our contract a clause that required Simon and Schuster to make available unlimited copies at a 70% discount to non-profit clinics and other groups that did health counselling. But even with all of that, we still had some reservations. And still sometimes have a few negative feelings about being plugged into that system.

SUCCESS: OUR BODIES, OURSELVES

"Certainly the book has held us together . . . We realize that there's a responsibility and a commitment to keeping up with the issues created by *Our Bodies, Ourselves*."

Judy

The book has been a phenomenal success. It has sold over two million copies in the Simon and Schuster editions. It has been on the 'best seller' list for some time. (At present it is about number 9.)

When the money from royalties began to come to the collective, they made another important decision. They set up a non-profit operating foundation which funds all kinds of alternative projects for women's health. The collective sees this funding as a kind of repayment to women for buying the book.

Projects which they have supported financially include:

- the establishment of HealthRight, a national women's health newsletter (originally published as a joint project of HealthRight Inc. and the Boston Women's Health Book Collective);

• *the production of Taking Our Bodies Back (Cambridge Documentary Films), a film about the women's health movement and about selected women's health concerns;*

• *the Women's Community Health Centre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Somerville Women's Health Project, through joint health education programs;*

• *a menopause questionnaire project, the results of which have been summarized in the 1976 revised edition of Our Bodies, Ourselves;*

• *a women's health literature packet, distributed on a monthly basis to women-run health centres, women's health groups, and selected health activist organizations. The packet, which is sent to approximately 300 groups in the U.S. and to 150 groups abroad, is designed to provide up-to-date information on a wide variety of women's health concerns;*

• *the National Women's Health Network, the first national membership organization with an exclusive focus on women's health (a member of the collective sits on the Board of Directors of the Network);*

• *a Spanish-language edition of Our Bodies, Ourselves which the collective is publishing itself.*

The book has also contributed to the stability of the group as a whole:

Judy: Certainly the book has held us together, and even though we feel overwhelmed with work and sometimes kind of wanting to dump the whole thing, we realize that there's a responsibility and a commitment to keeping up with the issues raised by *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, helping out librarians in local communities where there's a backlash against the book and trying to give people support when they're struggling for sex education for teenagers, or whatever. I mean the struggle takes various forms. But we are in a position to be helpful and it's an obligation and a responsibility which we may not like all the time, but it's there and it holds us together too.

The royalties not only support a wide range of women's health projects, but are now also going to wages for the work of collective members. The women take wages from the royalty money on the basis of the number of hours they work each week.

Judy: We work all the way from two hours a week to forty — most people around twenty. I'm the only person working full time at the moment. The proportion of our budget that goes to salaries is between one-third and one-half. That's everybody's wages, not just the people in our collective.

Wendy: Money was perhaps our most difficult subject, for it was one that many of us had always preferred not to dwell on. Never having been paid for our research and writing (a possibility because most of us were at least partially supported by our husbands), we had first of all to struggle through the important decision to pay ourselves for future work — for the health education work of giving workshops, revising the chapters, and attending the lengthy business meetings in which the group carefully selected which other projects to support. Paying ourselves was a mark of taking ourselves and our work seriously.

The advantages that this financial independence allows for is best illustrated by contrast with the difficulties of another women's health group admired by members of the collective.

Judy: The Women's Health Concerns Committee in Philadelphia

is a wonderful model for government-supported women's health advocacy. Believe it or not, they have been funded by the state department of health. They have been really active with local health agencies and consumer-provider planning bodies that came out of a federal law several years ago. They've been active in advocacy both for women in institutions, in hospitals and in creating alternatives. They've done a great deal of consciousness-raising. They've worked closely with the Elizabeth Blackwell Women's Health Centre in Philadelphia. They do provide a good example of an activist women's group that works somewhat like a collective only they have to have an established hierarchy in order to get state monies and to be supported by the government. Governments don't look too kindly upon collective models at this point. Of course, right now their funding is in jeopardy so that it brings up the age-old problem that if you are depending on the government for money and you don't have other sources of funding or an alternative, then your existence is very precarious.

PRESENT WORK

"The collective as a group right now has more and more demands placed upon it. We constantly feel like we can't keep up with things."

Judy

A focus on the collective's work is the development and maintenance of a wide network of women and women's groups working on alternative health care. We asked Judy to describe their work in this area.

Judy: Primarily it's through correspondence. People find out about us through the book, through somebody's mentioning our collective, and they write to us with a request, an interest or they share information with us. And what we do is to keep track of, to the extent we can, who's interested in the same things and put them in touch with one another. And we put out a monthly literature packet to women's health groups in this country and abroad, on a contribution basis, though it's basically supported by royalties from *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. That is a way we disseminate good information that comes in. Some of it is in the medical literature but a lot of it is coming straight from women's health groups in terms of doing their regional work or they're tracking down particular problems with new drugs, etc. We're mostly concerned about the various ways in which women can gain control of their health care, focus on the political issue, the fact that the health care system is male-dominated, that women have very little to say about policy decisions that get made at the federal and state levels of decision making. We have to work as well at the level of figuring out alternative remedies for menstrual problems, the personal health care solutions that we all certainly need.

We also have a number of projects going with foreign groups. They do pamphlets in other languages based on information we've shared with them. We're in touch with foreign publishers about foreign editions of the book (there are 11 of them at present) and groups of women who work on those editions. (We've required that foreign editions be prepared by a group of women so that some feeling of collectivity emerges in the book. And also that the book gets somewhat adapted to fit the needs of the perspective of the women in those countries.)

*The collective as a group right now has more and more demands placed upon it, both in terms of the mail, calls — the phone is always ringing. We don't have an official office, but we get calls personally all the time. Plus there's the new book, *Ourselves and Our Children* that half the people in our group worked on with some other women. That is being published in the fall, and of course will involve many parenting workshops and parent education programs, the offshoots of the book just as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* has had many offshoots in terms of activities and programs.*

Judy: Two of us have been active in the National Women's Health Network, which is very, very draining in some sense, and takes a lot of work. Some of us have testified at congressional hearings, or participated in HEW meetings. There are a lot of local groups that seek our participation in local efforts. For example, there will be a childbearing rights conference in the fall, being organized by Low Income Planning Aid, which is a group concerned primarily with the needs of low-income people and will focus this particular conference on sterilization abuse, childbirth, abortion, things like that, trying to tie these issues together, to create a unified focus.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

"We have this fantasy, you know, of being in our eighties, sitting in rocking chairs, discussing things together."

Judy

*The development of a strong right wing attack on the ERA, abortion rights, sterilization, and other health-related matters has given the collective a sense of urgency about its work. Their revisions of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* are aimed not only at updating health information, but at including important political material.*

While the collective has a realistic assessment of the opposition that women face right now in their work to gain control of their lives and bodies, they also have positive visions of the future and an understanding of what is necessary to get there.

Judy: I think that to the extent that the women's health movement becomes broader-based, more grassroots, involves women speaking for themselves more and more, speaking out when outrageous things are done or said by the medical establishment, then we have a better chance of influencing the system, and bringing about at a point in the very distant future some great changes in how the system runs, the problems of professionalism, excessive use of technology, male-dominance, capitalism, the profit motive in health care. All these things are issues that are there all the time. They don't go away and as we think about the band-aid approach and as we work on change and reform in the short term we still like to keep a view to the long term, to much more basic changes in the system.

I can only speak personally on alternatives to the present health care system. We haven't assessed the question enough as a group for me to speak for the collective. My own feeling is we have to move to a less medicalized approach, making distinctions between health and medical care — look to things like nutrition and exercise, lifestyle factors as real solutions to staying healthy. We need to focus on political activity, like the environmental issues, as an

approach to preventive health care. And health care services should have a great deal of consumer input and control. Professionals shouldn't be dominant. We should eliminate fee-for-service and establish some sort of national health service with boards of consumers and providers, people making decisions about their health care.

There would develop an attitude about being capable, and responsible for certain aspects of our health and less dependence on professionals. The idea for women of women-controlled health services, community-based care, fewer high-technology tertiary care centres, in fact *far* fewer hospitals than exist now. Much more can be done on an ambulatory basis. Having lots of well-woman, well-baby clinics, an approach to health care which focusses on doing things while you're healthy rather than waiting until the crisis. . . . Then there's the whole issue of who does health education, where it happens, and I think a lot of it ought to go on, not in the health services, but out in the community, wherever we are, in our schools and our churches and our community organizations.

The workplace is another place in the community where health education ought to be done — education about hazards in the workplace and how to handle certain health care problems of their own.

The visions extend to their work and personal sharing as a collective.

Judy: We've envisioned the ideal thing living together all in the same neighbourhood, or some of us getting a house together and sharing different floors. There've been on-and-off discussions when people have been about to move. Nothing has worked out quite like that, though. Some people are close to one another. Two people in the collective live around the corner from each other, and have been terrifically supportive of one another. We have had day retreats together and occasionally have thought about going away overnight. But it's very hard when you've got kids and everybody's family schedule is different. I think it's a dream, that some day we'll all be close together in the same area. Some of us think of maybe living together rurally, but that's . . . not concrete at this point.

We have this fantasy, you know, of being in our eighties, sitting in rocking chairs, discussing things together. We do have an image of growing old together even if we're not in the same area, which is really something to look forward to.

For further information on women's health care organizing, write:

Boston Women's Health Book Collective
Box 192
West Somerville, Mass. 02144
U.S.A.

HealthRight
175 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10010
U.S.A.

National Women's Health Network
Suite 203
1302 18th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
U.S.A.

ENVIRONMENTS

A recent article in the September 8, 1978 issue of the *North East Bay Independent and Gazette* from Berkeley, California, notes the opening of a new birth center at the University of California, San Francisco. The new UCSF Family Centered Birth Program is equipped to serve certain patients with complications of pregnancy, as well as women anticipating uncomplicated pregnancies.

"In a typical situation, the mother enters the hospital when labor begins. A labor coach plus two others, including children, may accompany her. However, children under 12 years must be looked after by an adult other than the labor coach. Both the labor and delivery will take place in a bed in a comfortably furnished hospital room that is far more informal than the traditional, sterile delivery room. An unusual aspect is the availability of a special fetal monitor with a lightweight transmitter. If needed, this transmitter permits a physician to study the fetus's progress but does not restrict the woman's complete freedom to move around. She remains in this room with her family and friends for two to four hours after birth, when she, the infant and the other participants are transferred to a larger room furnished with a sofa, rocking chair and bed. Discharge can be as soon as 24 hours after delivery. Participating women must take a course in prepared childbirth and be under the care of a licensed physician or midwife who agrees to bring her into the program. Expectant mothers also must attend an orientation session in the final month of pregnancy".

This innovative birth center is illustrative of a wide range of types of centers that have been created and are proposed for other parts of the country as well. Leslie Kanes Weisman and Susanna Torr  conducted a studio on the design of birth centers at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark in 1977. As a result of this project, an exhibit has been put together which is available at very low cost for interested individuals and institutions. If you are interested in receiving more information on the birth center studio, or would like to inquire about the possibility of obtaining access to the exhibit for display in your community.

Contact:

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Child Birth Studio,
New Jersey Institute of Technology,
School of Architecture,
323 High Street,
Newark, N.J. 07102

WOMEN IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is a field that not only includes women professionals from a wide variety of disciplines (architecture, planning, landscape architecture, law, journalism, real estate, finance, business, interior design, history) but has historically included a large number of women as volunteers. In fact, most of the early preservation efforts in the United States were initiated and led by women, beginning in the late 19th century with Ann Pamela Cunningham's crusade to save Mount Vernon through formation of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union. Today, women continue to play a major role in preservation at all levels, including substantial numbers of volunteers in neighborhood conservation



efforts and citywide preservation groups.

Preservation is becoming increasingly professionalized, with degree programs and courses offered in colleges and universities throughout the country. One of the major questions facing women in the preservation field is whether or not increasing professionalization will gradually squeeze out women, who with their years of volunteer experience may be supplanted by predominantly male, paid professionals. In addition, the growing professional hierarchical structures may mirror that of other professions and relegate women to low or middle-level positions. A major factor in this area is increased public sector involvement in preservation and the traditional preponderance of men in the city, county and state planning offices.

In order to ascertain women preservationists' perception of the problem and in general to survey their awareness of themselves as women preservationists, the Preservation Press of the National Trust has initiated a project to study women in preservation. The Press is forming a coordinating committee of concerned and informed preservationists. A preliminary study has been made and tentative plans call for a questionnaire survey and publication of a report. A card file of more than 300 women active in preservation in the past and present has been compiled.

Historic preservation is a multi-disciplinary area that must use a variety of approaches and community support to achieve its objectives. It is a unique opportunity for women professionals and volunteers to work together for mutual benefit and in the process break down status barriers. Preservation continues to be a field in which women can progress from volunteer status to paid employment as they gain experience. For example, many women who are today directors of city and statewide preservation groups began as volunteers. In general, how can we assure that this opportunity continues, that the field does not become "degree-bound" or does not otherwise exclude its past leaders from positions of authority? Because of the grass-roots, activist nature of preservation efforts, it is unlikely that professionals will ever completely dominate the field; there must always be a place for women as volunteers to achieve status through local initiative.

Prepared for Women's School of Planning and Architecture, 1978 Summer Session, by Jenette B. Bull, associate editor, the Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 740-748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Beyond Hitchhiking and the Bus:

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PROPOSED FOR WOMEN

When a series of rapes and murders related to hitchhiking hit Santa Barbara a year and a half ago, sociologist Rebecca Dreis began doing research on the problem.

Through a sample survey that took her across the country, she found that transportation difficulties and the fear of sexual assault form a double problem limiting women's mobility. In turn, she discovered, women have less than equal access to the benefits of urban living.

Dreis, who just received an M.A. in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Barbara, explained the results of her study at the annual conference of the Environmental Design Research Association in Tucson, Arizona recently:

- Most people may fear crime in general, but women must also consider the possibility of rape if they walk alone at night. Fear of sexual assault may be the deciding factor in whether or not a woman goes to a job or a recreational or cultural event.
- FBI statistics show rape is reported somewhere in the nation every 10 minutes.
- A Queen's Bench Foundation report says at least half of all rapes occur at night, often while a woman is walking, waiting alone outside, or hitchhiking. Women are especially vulnerable if they have to walk to a bus stop and wait there at night until a ride comes along.
- Women as a group must rely more on buses and subways than men. On an annual average, women drive fewer miles and have fewer drivers' licences and less access to family cars and taxis than do men. Women are also more likely to be in the low income groups which cannot afford to take taxis — especially elderly women who by far outnumber older men.
- Those who do depend on buses are faced with constant frustrations. Buses may not be available when and where needed. Travel between inner city and urban areas is often difficult for those who must get to 8 a.m. jobs or return home after late evening shopping. And, women often have the added burden of co-ordinating children while carrying packages on public transportation.

What can be done about such problems? Dreis discovered that four types of transportation alternatives had been developed, primarily by women, on a limited basis around the country. For example, she said, "ride switchboards" operate during evening hours in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, serving over 1,000 women in Madison and 300 in Milwaukee each month.

The Madison ride switchboard, called the Madison Women's Transit Authority, is the most notable in the country, according to Dreis. It operates on funds raised from the University of Wisconsin, the city and the county, and has cars circulating from early evening until 1 or 2 a.m. on campus and within a 4-mile radius of it. The staff is voluntary, except for two paid, part-time co-ordinators, and serves both university and community women.

A second type of alternative, Dreis explained, is an escort service

— walking or riding — available on request, provided by fraternities and sororities or by Security and Public Safety Departments on many college campuses. Most of these services, according to Dreis, tend to develop as a reaction to, rather than as a prevention against, local rape or related violence.

Informal ride services have also been set up by and for women in various parts of the country, Dreis continued. They usually operated through "crisis centers" which help women in emergency situations — especially battered wives and victims of sexual assault.

A fourth type of transportation alternative, Dreis noted, is the shuttle bus service. Most shuttle buses operate through universities, supported by city or statewide programs. But a Delaware Authority for Specialized Transportation (DAST) has also come up with a statewide shuttle service for people with special needs — primarily the elderly and handicapped. With a paid staff and complete office services, Dreis said, DAST exemplifies what can be done to meet more of the transportation needs of the population as a whole.

"More can be done for all the 'transportation poor,'" Dreis explained, "including the elderly and very young, the handicapped and impoverished, ghetto residents and minorities, as well as women. What is needed," she continued, "is an innovative approach to meet the dual problem of transportation difficulties and the fear of sexual assault."

She recommends the following:

1. City and county government should do a "needs survey" of their female constituents to supplement current bus and subway services. Mini-buses and/or special cars could then be adapted to meet their needs, as some already are in use for the elderly and handicapped.
2. Community people can organize jitney services, car pools, group taxi services and/or van pools, paying a monthly fee and signing up ahead of time through the workplace or whatever place they want to get to.
3. Employers at factories, hospitals, universities and shopping complexes, where large numbers of women work, can provide transportation to those who would otherwise have to depend on public transportation. Employee benefits could include a safe ride home at night, using company vans and cars when necessary, or car pools or company taxi services to take workers to a safe point of connection with public transportation.

"These innovations would be especially important for swing-shift and grave-yard shift workers who would otherwise be walking out across dark parking lots and along isolated, dangerous streets to get to public transportation," Dreis explained.

"Architects, urban planners, engineers, and designers of all kinds who have created our physical environments in urban areas, especially outside of the home, have been primarily men until recently, but now, women are showing a new willingness to take responsibility for themselves on new levels. They are beginning to realize they can have input and control over their own environments — not just at home, but also at the workplace and in the larger environments of the cities and the counties.

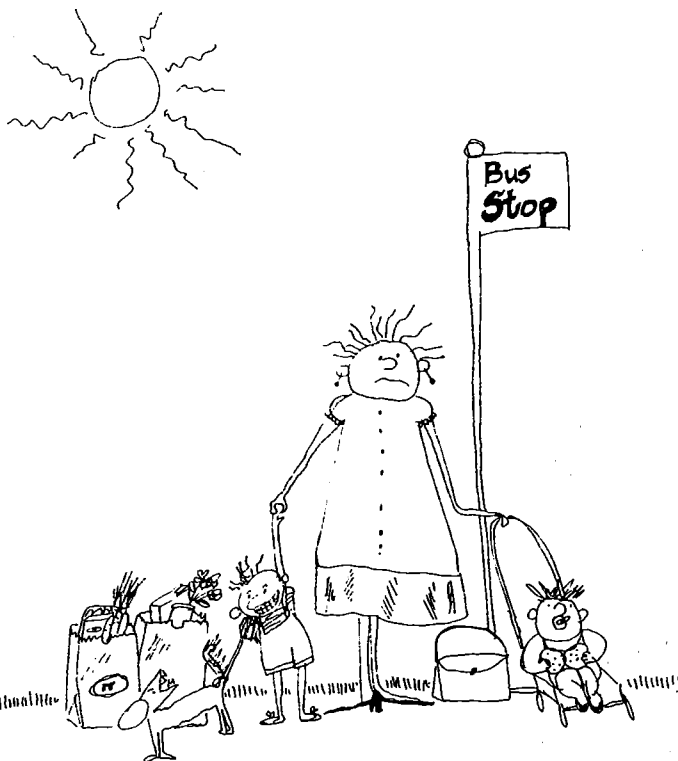
URBAN SPRAWL: The Price Women Pay by Gerda Wekerle and Novia Carter

Until 1976 there was no bus system in Whitehorse, a city of 13,000 sprawled over 165 square miles. Now more than 700 passengers per day ride the 16-seat minibuses operated by the Yukon Women's Minibus Society. It is significant that the bus system was initiated by women. The idea arose after the Yukon Status of Women Council studied the effects of isolation on women and children in Whitehorse. The Council found that day to day life was claustrophobic for the women who had no access to stores, schools and businesses. Long, cold winters further aggravated the strain. The minibus system was designed to make the city centre accessible to women and to provide them with high-paying part-time jobs. The buses are now widely used by commuters and children as well as women and the Society has added another bus to the initial fleet of four.

One of the prevailing myths about suburbs is that they are good places for women and children to live. Until recently, the many books, articles and research studies on suburbia neglected to examine women's lives in the suburbs. The study by the Yukon Status of Women Council is part of a growing body of evidence that suburbs are not designed to suit women. The conclusions of the research now being done are devastating. Women tend to be more inconvenienced than are men living in such an environment and they are less satisfied psychologically.

David Popenoe, an urban planner who compared women's lives in a Swedish and an American suburb concludes that, "urban sprawl is an urban development form designed for and by men, especially middle class men." Suburbia functions best for those with an automobile at their disposal and those people tend to be men. American women in Popenoe's study experienced the isolation and boredom associated with the "trapped housewife" and some had feelings of incredible loneliness. Women who did not drive were highly dependent on others for all the basic necessities. Popenoe argues that the inadequacy of the suburban environment for women's needs is largely a design problem. North American planners have a stereotypic and narrow image of women, limited to the traditional housebound wife and mother. According to Popenoe, the major flaw of American suburbs is "the lack of facilities essential in the lives of working women, and the inaccessibility of those which are available." In contrast, higher density Swedish suburbs are exceptionally well designed from the point of view of working women. They are relatively compact clusters of low rise apartments, with close public transit links to the city centre and public facilities. The woman's dual role is supported by access to a large job market, public transportation, a range of local daycare options, and a low maintenance dwelling.

Women in North America become the captives of the inadequate public transit systems of the suburbs, a situation which is aggravated by the low density of the housing and the time and cost of getting from one place to another. Reliance of suburban women on public transit affects their participation in the labour force. Those women with a double commitment to an outside job plus home and children are very conscious of time and distance. More than men, they have to find jobs closer to home, near the transit service and with ready access to day care and shopping facilities. For many



women this means the location of a job may be just as important as pay and opportunities for advancement.

A woman's journey to work is both more complicated and time-consuming than the typical male worker's. Women with children routinely make two trips every morning and two more in the evening. They travel from their home to the day care facility and make a second trip from that location to their job. Often the day care centre is not close to either home or work but is in a different location entirely. There is a considerable expenditure of time, money and energy before the workday has even begun. New jobs being created in industrial parks in the suburbs are off limits to many women. These industrial parks are difficult to serve by public transit because they are spread out, and therefore less accessible to women whether they live in suburbs or in the central city.

Given these drawbacks it is not surprising that women are often the catalyst for moves from suburbs to older inner city neighbourhoods which are being renovated by middle class families. After such a move women report shorter commuting times, more time for leisure activities outside the home, and a higher level of general satisfaction with the house and neighbourhood. In fact, research on attitudes that men and women have towards the home show that their environmental preferences are antithetical. Men tend to view the home as a retreat from urban stress and a source of status. They often prefer a marked separation between work and home life. Women on the other hand tend to view the home more as an expression of self, a place to raise children and a location which provides them access to jobs, services and friends.

Even in the seventies, however, there is no evidence that suburban design is changing. Builders, architects and urban planners have not yet realized that as women's roles and aspirations change, so must their urban environments.

There is some hope that planning for women will become part of urban planning. A few professional associations and schools are encouraging women to enter architecture, planning and engineering because of the low numbers of women in those fields and in the hope that women will bring their own experiences to bear in the solution of problems. Important though this is in terms of general equality, it is a long-term solution and no guarantee that new perspectives will enter planning.

A second promising approach is to focus on planning with and for specific populations. At present, planning is often based on geographical boundaries such as neighbourhoods or regions, or it is organized along functional lines such as planning for housing or transportation. People who are going to live in the neighbourhoods and use the services should be involved and their needs considered whether those people are men, women, the elderly, children or handicapped.

This approach to planning is illustrated by the Lebreton Flats Project in which women associated with the Ottawa Tenants Council joined in planning for a federal demonstration housing project. A group of single parent mothers living in public housing drew on their own experiences to design a housing model. The model would support the housing needs of women at various stages in the transition from being part of a two-parent family to heading up a single-parent family. The design provides for crisis housing, a small apartment complex which supports co-operative sharing of work and childcare as well as family privacy, and a women's centre. This proposal would place mother-led families squarely in the downtown area where there is good access to transit, community facilities and social services. The proposal has received extensive media exposure and interest among women's groups and non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, the design was rejected by several federal agencies as too expensive, but an attempt is underway to form a non-profit co-operative to get the single parent housing built.

Women's self-help groups have begun to address more directly the issue of women's mobility in the city. Rape Crisis Centres, for example, have found that women's fear for security and safety greatly limits their freedom. Women's transit authorities have been set up in various American cities to provide services to women at night and prevent rapes. Women's Transit Services in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin were organized by women, are run by women and provide rides only for women. The Madison Transit Authority was founded in 1973 and now operates two cars seven nights a week. It operates within a four-mile radius of the campus and provides about 750 rides a month. Both programs are dependent on volunteers and seriously underfunded.

The minibus service run by the Yukon Women's Minibus Society is another example of a women's self-help project. It is extremely unusual to have a bus system in the North on a fixed route and in addition to the letter by city hall included the argument that women were "too tough" to ride a bus system. In addition to the letter the Yukon Women's Minibus Society appealed to the federal government for help. The federal government provided the funds for capital

equipment for the Corporation (CMHC) the federal government office that has been set up to deal with urban planning from a women's perspective. It

has set up a women's bureau to monitor internal hiring and promotion and looks at the effects of the National Housing Act on women through mortgage-lending practices. But the women's bureau is merely advisory and has limited input to decision-making at the highest levels of the CMHC. Its existence has had little apparent impact on mortgage-lending practices in Canada, although access to mortgages is critical if women are to have a broad range of choice in residential location. Women are triply discriminated against when they seek mortgages: because they have low earning power, because they are women and because they are often heads of single-parent families. Sex-discrimination has often forced women to rent even when they could afford to own, or they have been forced to live in city locations where houses are cheaper. In the United States an Equal Opportunity Credit Act makes mortgage discrimination by sex illegal but women in Canada are not afforded this protection. Creating a women's bureau within a federal agency does not safeguard women's rights unless it is given power to impose sanctions, budgets and access to decision-makers.

Women should not be forced to choose between their own environmental needs and those of husbands and children. Neighbourhoods, instead, should move away from the model of the child-centred, homogeneous community centred on the school. Alternative suburban plans that have been suggested by Popenoe and others involve enrichment of the local environment, decentralization of services and jobs, increased densities and better public transportation links to all parts of the urban system. Most of the innovation in dealing with women's needs in the urban environment is occurring outside the government sector as women themselves create solutions to problems that have not been met by traditional institutions. Urban decision makers must be encouraged by these activities to acknowledge that women are a distinct group with legitimate environmental requirements — otherwise the present inequalities will become much worse.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The following is an abstract of a workshop entitled Innovations in Environments By and For Women, which was presented at the Environmental Design Research Association annual meetings held in Tucson, Arizona, April 8-11, 1978. The workshop was chaired by Rebecca Peterson, Gerda Wekerle and David Morley of the Faculty of Administrative Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

Abstract

Three presentations and introductory and coordinating statements by the organizers formed the core of the workshop. The cases were discussed in the context of current work on women and environments and its implications for design innovations on behalf of disadvantaged groups. Short initial presentations were followed by audience participation. Papers presented included:

"The Women's School of Planning and Architecture: An Alternative Learning Environment" by Phyllis Birkby: a review of the process of planning and implementation of the Women's School of Planning and Architecture — a collective process in creating a non-hierarchical organization.

"Alternative Uses for Communal Spaces in Housing for Elderly Women" by Galen Cranz: a discussion of the redesign of communal areas in spaces for elderly women.

"Innovations in Transit Design by Women for Women" by Rebecca Dreis: a discussion of research conducted on women's transit authorities which have been established in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. (A more extensive description of this article is provided elsewhere in this Newsletter.)

For further information on any of these presentations contact the authors at the following addresses:

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notes

• Marnie Sweet, University of Akron, is planning a conference on planning for women (tentatively scheduled for Spring 1979). She would appreciate hearing from others and would like to receive "bibliographies, position papers, thoughts, names of people who are doing current work". She can be contacted at: 176 S. Portage Path, Akron, Ohio 44302.

• Ruth R. Edelstein, College of Nursing, State University of N.J. Rutgers, Newark, N.J. 07102 is organizing a Committee on Women's Studies in Self-Management and would like to receive material from others interested in this topic.

• Bonner Fraueninitiative (Born Women's Initiative) has organized an exhibit "Women Form Their City" on new and better housing forms. The exhibit was shown at Galerie Ortolus, Bonner Talweg 111, Bonn, Germany, organized by the Gottlieb-Duttweiler

• Recent papers presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meetings include:

"The Home: A Critical Problem for Changing Sex Roles", Susan Saegert and Gary Winkel, Graduate School and University Center, CUNY.

"Spatial Inequalities and Divorced Mothers", Carol A. Brown, Department of Sociology, University of Lowell, Lowell, Mass.

"Factors Which Enhance the Participation of Women in Neighbourhood Life", Sandra Schoenberg and Irene Dabrowski, Department of Sociology, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

"Women's Place in Suburbia", Sylvia F. Fava, Urban Studies, Brooklyn College, CUNY.

"Opinions of Women and Men in Three Cities About Rape Prevention Strategies", Margaret T. Gordon and Stephanie Riger, Institute for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

"Women and Class in Transition to Socialism", Dorothy E. Smith, Department of Sociology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto.

"Status and Life Style Within a Women's Community", Andrea Baker, Department of Sociology, Case Western Reserve University.

"Division of Labor in the Family: Technology and Changing Women's Roles Over Time", Chris Bose, Department of Sociology, University of Washington.

"Gender Differentiation in Utopian and Communal Societies", Pearl W. Bartelt, Glassboro State College.

"One Woman's Journey", Sylvia Porter describing her involvement in the anti-nuclear movement.

"The Castle Revisited", Lynn Hannley and Marsha Mitchell, on housing for women.

"Trial Balloon: The Story of a Course", Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson and David Morley, a description of a course on Women and Environments.

Copies may be obtained from *Branching Out*, Box 4098, Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 4S8. \$6 per year for 6 issues.

• New publications on women and environmental issues . . .

"Do Women Have Equal Play?", Michael J. Heit and Don Malpass, report to the Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Sports and Fitness Division, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario.

"Sexism in the Practice of City Planning, Some Views", Jane Rachel Kaplan, published in *Practicing Planner*, Sept. 1978.

"The Social Construction of Birth: A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis of In-Hospital 'Prepared' Childbirth", Barbara Katz Rothman, Department of Sociology, Brooklyn College, CUNY, Brooklyn N.Y. 11210.

"Sex Differences in Free Play Behaviour in Nursery School", David C. Factor and Gary H. Frankie, Department of Psychology, Guelph University, Guelph Ontario.

"Public Recreation", William F. Theobald, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Sports and Fitness Division, Queen's

reviews

Jeanne Stellman, *WOMEN'S WORK, WOMEN'S HEALTH*. New York, Pantheon, 1977.

Women's Work, Women's Health is a thorough and well documented sociological analysis of the myths and realities surrounding women at work. Stellman examines these issues first from a historical perspective. The central thesis is that the increased number of women in the workforce today corresponds to a general movement on their part to regain the economic productivity and social parity they enjoyed before the industrial revolution destroyed the formerly dominant agrarian and home based industry. Since then women's work, domestic or in the factory, has been ill-paid and of low social status.

In her analysis of the destruction of the meaningfulness of women's work during the industrial revolution, Stellman looks at the myths and stereotypes that sprang up; the mythologizing of motherhood, the leisured "woman-on-a-pedestal", the contemporary "career-girl" image.

The meatiest chapters for those interested in women and occupational health are the second and third, which give an excellent analysis of segregation in the work force (women are mostly secretaries, waitresses, nurses, primary school teachers, cashiers, sewers and stitchers, salespeople, typists, bookkeepers, or domestic workers). They also examine the specific physical, chemical, biological and ergonomic hazards related to those jobs. A special plus in her hazard analysis is the detailed hazard inventories accompanying the text. (And in the appendix, she provides a useful listing of health hazards by occupation.) Of special interest too, is the attention given to occupational stresses related to women's work. Job dissatisfaction, under-utilization of skills, inadequate financial social rewards, and the "double-day" all create serious stresses for women in the workplace.

If Stellman has little patience with the myth of male supremacy or the inviolability of male job enclaves, she makes it clear that the exclusionary policies that keep women out of certain work areas on grounds of endangering childbearing capacity legislate against all workers, and that the only safe workplace is one where standards are set to protect all workers. She concludes with a look at social and economic strategies (day-care, equal opportunity etc.) as a means of creating a more equitable and rewarding work environment in which women can find once again the economic and social equity that is their heritage and right.

Andrea Hricko with Melanie Brent, *WORKING FOR YOUR LIFE: A WOMEN'S GUIDE TO HEALTH HAZARDS*. California, (Berkeley), 1976.

Working For Your Life is less ambitious than *Women's Work* in terms of socio-historical scope and readership but in this case its limitations are the source of its impact. As the introduction explains, *Working For Your Life*, "... is a much needed addition to the small but growing number of books and booklets that accurately explain job health hazards in a non-technical way. It is written for those who most need to know — workers themselves."

Clear, concise and to the point, *Working For Your Life* is divided into five main sections. Part A gives a historical and legal synopsis as background; it refers largely to American law. Parts B, C and D provide an excellent introduction to occupational health issues. Part B explains scientific terminology related to occupational issues of particular relevance to women (mutagens, teratogens, etc.) while Part C deals primarily with the effect of toxic substances on reproduction. (As with Stellman, women workers are the target audience of the book but the underlying issue is safety for all workers, men and women alike). Among the toxic substances discussed are lead, mercury and vinyl chloride. Part D looks directly at those areas where women work and analyzes the dangers of each. Among the jobs discussed are clerical workers, textile and apparel workers, launderers, hairdressers, drycleaners, hospital and laboratory workers. It concludes with a section (Part E) containing ideas for action, (again largely in terms of American law).

In summary, *Working For Our Lives* is an excellent primer on occupational health for women, a must for workers, union representatives and all those interested in the issues surrounding women in the workforce.

Reviewed by Nancy Price-Munn.

Elise Boulding, *WOMEN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WORLD*. New York, Sage Publications, 1977.

Part I shows how the rise of urbanism fostered the separation of women's roles from those of men who dominated the public life of growing cities. Data is presented on household patterns and women's occupations throughout the world and the familial constraints on women's roles. Part II focuses on women as producers, especially in the third world, their contributions in food production and their role in development programs. Part III explores women's roles internationally and the contribution of non-governmental organizations.

Cynthia Cockburn, *THE LOCAL STATE: MANAGEMENT OF CITIES AND PEOPLE*. London, Pluto Press, 1977.

An analysis of two trends in local government: community development and corporate management. Cockburn argues that community, the family and women are needed by urban managers to control urban areas.

Susana Torre, *WOMEN IN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE: A HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE*. New York, Watson Guptill Publications, 1977.

This book documents an exhibit on Women and Architecture which was shown at the Whitney Museum, New York, and has toured other parts of the United States. It combines historical articles on the design of domestic space, biographies of women in the architectural profession, articles on women's spatial symbolism, and a historical chart relating architectural projects to women's history in the United States.

Reviewed by Gerda Wekerle.

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INTERESTS

How women can 'control' their environments particularly after lifestyle changes i.e. divorce, childbirth, etc. Women and housing, career opportunities for women in the environmental field and women and money.

"Women in Preservation" project of National Trust especially, status of women as volunteers in the field, future directions with increasing professionalization, and documenting history of women in preservation. Have developed advisory list of about 30 interest women preservationist, planners and architects, primarily from 1978 WSPA summer session.

Impact Variables to assist in determining why women have succeeded in assuming leadership roles in the Environmental Movement, including Environmental Pollution.

Strategies to increase the impact of women's concerns on their environment. Institutional resistance to the integration of women (as decision makers and/or clients).

Especially issues relating to working women in the urban environment. Both wage work and housework: Journey to work, residential differentiation of 2 earner families etc.

College women in predominately male environments. The changing meaning of home for women.

Role models for Women as Architects, the Absorption of Feminine Issues into the design vocabulary.

I work in an urban studies mental health agency and wish to be kept in contact with emerging areas of development in the area of women and the environments network.

Environmental psychology, i.e. what spaces do to people and vice versa. Have been involved for 3 years in WSPA and will be helping to plan the next session.

The relationship between sex roles and domestic space, with emphasis on men and boys

Work in Urban Studies mental health agency and wish to be kept in contact with emerging areas of development in the areas of women and environments.

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Women in working environment Member of the steering committee for the University of Guelph Association for Women.

Housing environments: suburban women in Sweden.

Women in work environments: women in management; Professional Role Images of Women.

A social space-time approach to the study of effects of the urban environmental opportunity structure on the behaviour and development of working mothers' children.

Women and employment in geography-related careers: representation of women in geographic instructional materials.

Student Advocacy group within College of Environmental Design (U.C. Berkeley) to promote issues concerning women.

On-going research for masters thesis, architectural and urban design criteria for developing housing responsive to single working mothers. Has collected biographies of the living arrangements chosen by single working mothers. Would like information on women in urban/suburban environments and their housing needs.

Women and Environments International Newsletter

Published by Becky Peterson, Gerda Wekerle, and David Morley with the assistance of Sylvia Haines and Barbara Schliefer. Guest editor for this issue, Jennifer Penney.

Financial assistance by the Faculty of Environmental Studies of York University is gratefully acknowledged.

We are interested in hearing more from you, and in widening the Women and Environments Network. If you are interested in participating in our information-sharing network, please send us your name, address, and a note outlining the nature of your interest.