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# Women and Environments

Vol. 5, No. 1, June 1981



# A WORD FROM US

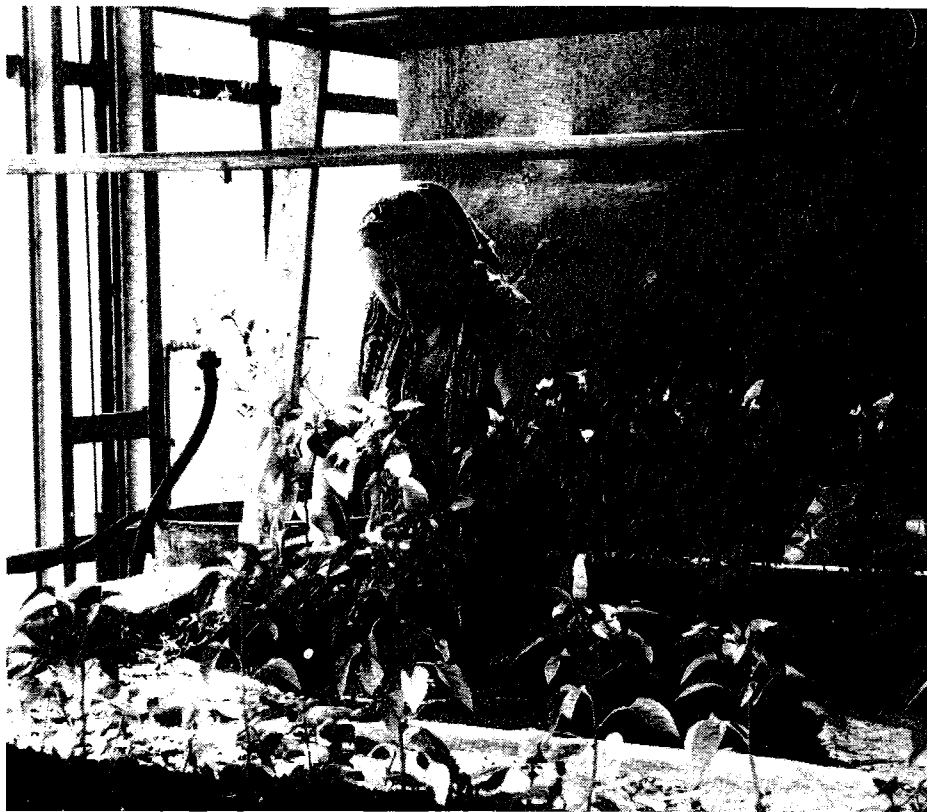
A national mail strike, in which maternity leave is a central issue, has delayed your receipt of this issue. Postal workers are demanding 17 weeks paid maternity leave. The Treasury Board is standing tough saying that the Canadian government is not ready for this trend setting change in parental benefits.

Women's environmental concerns have hit the news — especially sit-ins and protests by eco-feminist groups and women's anti-nuclear coalitions. This issue includes profiles of two of these groups. The photo essay "Kidspac" is taken from a much larger photo exhibit of children's use of the urban environment in Washington, D.C. It shows the need for diversity, mixed uses, and housing design which incorporates recreation areas, transportation systems, and supportive community services. These are all aspects of a humane environment that feminist planners and architects have shown are also essential to women's active participation in the public life of the city. "Willow Avenue" describes the experiences of three single parents as they developed a supportive environment of sharing and co-operation.

As the letters and notes indicate, interest in women and environments continues to spread. Organized groups are forming in many cities, states, and countries, both around eco-feminist issues and also to engage in planning and advocacy work with women. Coalitions are also important: we must engage the membership and resources of existing feminist and environmental groups in making women and environment issues a priority.

In Toronto, we have found that these more established groups are eager to learn about the issues, to organize special conferences on the topic, and set up sub-committees. The recent Women's School of Planning and Architecture Conference in Washington, D.C. brought together organizations involved in community development, tenant organizing, fair housing, with feminist planners and working class women.

We welcome comments on this issue, items of interest, and features. We hope you tell one friend about us and urge your school or organization's library to subscribe as we are dependent on subscriptions for our survival. We thank the Women's Programme, Secretary of State, Ottawa, for a grant which has allowed us to produce this issue.



Women make a major contribution to the rural economy and are subject to the hazards of pesticides.

Photo: Siade Lander

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# LETTERS

## Environment and Feminism

I am writing as an individual student of environment and feminism and as part of a study and support group forming around this theme at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Our group learned of your newsletter through an announcement in *Heresies* and hails it as a long-awaited resource on an often elusive topic of research.

In addition to facilitating our academic work, our group is interested in the possibility of networking with other, similar groups and concerned individuals, and perhaps in contributing to the newsletter by way of announcements, letters or articles.

Ellen Setteducati  
15-711 Third St.  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

## Women and Geography

I thought you might be interested to know of a forthcoming review article which I have co-authored with Wilbur Zelinsky and Susan Hanson on geography of women for *Progress in Human Geography*. It will be the first large scale review of the work on women specifically by geographers. Susan Hanson is pulling together a feature issue on women for the *Professional Geographer*. Finally, you may be interested to know that in Tucson there is an active *Women's Design Network* of about 35 women architects, landscape architects, planners, etc. which sponsors public lectures, group meetings and community action projects.

Janice Monk  
Associate Director  
Southwest Institute  
for Research on Women  
Women's Studies  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, Arizona 85721

## Building for Women

I am a builder who is interested in design and would be interested in any educational events or publications. My present interests in building for women are in Gothic Arches and Yurts. Leads to structured information on either would be greatly appreciated.

Donna Pilkington  
General Delivery  
Auke Bay, AK 99821



## Women and the Future

I am very interested in woman's involvement in shaping our future, and am working to establish a productive network of women with similar concerns in the USA. However, your proximity to this country is critical, and I would like to know what is going on in this area in Canada.

Judith Kinney  
Program Manager  
Training Division  
National Center for  
Appropriate Technology  
P.O. Box 3838  
Butte, Montana 59701

## Social Change

I am a graduate student in the masters program at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am interested in developing a program for myself which will enable me to bring feminist concerns and needs to the planning and allocation of social resources. In addition I am interested in exploring the community networks of women and their role in creating social change.

Mary Beth Welch  
10801 Clarmon Place  
Culver City, California 90230

## Congratulations

Enclosed is a subscription form to your magazine, *Women and Environments*. I came across it on a friend's desk and found it enthralling and decided I must have my own subscription.

Sabrina Williams  
1380 Riverside Dr.  
New York, New York 10033

*Women and Environments* is getting better and better. Wonderful. Can you spare a recent back issue? I will be doing a lecture on women at the University of New Mexico, and I'd like to leave them with a few interesting things. I will not give them my own copy!

Ellen Perry Berkeley  
Box 311  
Shaftsbury, Vermont 05262

I am concerned that many people are not aware of a feminist perspective on spatial issues — the historical or current positions. I was happy to find that this newsletter and network of interested persons existed!

Susan J. Stall  
Sociology Department  
Iowa State University  
East Hall  
Ames, Iowa 50010

## Ecology Group

Pollution Probe Foundation is an environmental research group working in the public interest. We have found your publication, *Women and Environments International Newsletter*, a good source of information on environmental issues.

Pollution Probe not only shares your concern about the environment but also the roles men and women play in restoring and preserving an environment of high quality. We operate as a collective, consciously avoiding sexist assumptions.

Carol Brotman  
Ecology House  
12 Madison Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2S1

# NOTES

## Occupational Health and Women

A group of women concerned with developing a feminist perspective on health and safety formed the *Women's Action on Occupational Health* in 1979. This group sees all women as workers and concerned members of communities. This means that women who work in the home are subject to similar health and safety concerns as those who work outside the home. They describe themselves as a resource group, seeking to share information they gather on specific hazards, legal procedures and organizing ideas. Their purpose is to carry out research and make the public aware of health and safety issues.

The group plans to produce regular bulletins to inform others. They are also looking for information from all women on health and safety issues in the work place.

For more information or to contribute ideas contact:

Women's Action on Occupational Health,  
1501 W. Broadway Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1W6  
Telephone: (613) 736-6696

(Excerpted from *Connexions*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1980, p. 7.)

In October, 1980 the *Women and Occupational Health Conference* was held in Nova Scotia, Canada. Over 100 women gathered to discuss their common concern for the health of women in the workplace. The women represented a variety of occupations including fish plant workers, teachers, clerks and librarians.

The group was addressed by Dr. Jeanne Stellman of the Women's Occupational Health Resource Center in New York. She saw a need to focus specifically on women's occupational health issues because women do different work than men as nurses, secretaries, household cleaners and textile workers. To date, there have been few studies of the health risks of these types of work.

In another part of her address, Dr. Stellman pointed to stress as a major health hazard for working women. Since most women continue to also do the majority of the work in the home, the stress from the job is compounded. A U.S. study has recently discovered that the highest risk for heart disease among all workers is for secretaries and clerical workers with unsupportive

bosses and three children at home. Dr. Stellman's New York based Resource Centre is gathering this kind of documentation on health risks to support the growing number of claims against firms unconcerned with these issues.

The panels at the conference focused on situations in the Maritimes regarding the law, unions and the community. Workshops focused around different workplaces professional, clerical, hospitals, retail, and industrial and participants listed their health concerns in their own jobs.

More information is available from:

M. Keddy  
5534 Columbus Place  
Halifax, N.S., Canada  
B3J 2G6

## Planning with Women In Mind In Oregon

*Planning with Women in Mind* is a publication prepared by the American Planning Association Oregon Chapter's Women in Planning Committee. Four issue papers prepared by women on housing, community services, citizen participation and transportation are presented. Vicki J. Pflaumer, Chairperson, writes that the committee has also sponsored two all-day seminars and one workshop at the chapter's annual conference. She welcomes telling others about the Oregon experience — the committee's financing, organization, and its problems.

Reach her this way:

Vicki J. Pflaumer  
Principal, Region West Research  
Consultants  
520 SW Sixth Ave., Suite 1107  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
Telephone (503) 222-9029 or (503) 246-0680

## Quota System in France

France has sought a unique solution to the problems presented by the current urban system to women. Legislation has been passed where cities with more than 10,000 people must have city councils consisting of at least 20% women. Previously, less than 10% of local level representatives were women, while women voters made up 53% of the electorate. Only 3% of mayors were women — the majority in rural areas of less than 700 people.

Mrs. Monique Pelletier, Minister of Women's Conditions (1978) who initiated the legislation, says that the quota is not an objective in itself, but a way to see some evolution in the mentality and functioning of political life.

In general, the reactions of men and women concerning the quota system are not very positive at this time. Men are rather indifferent, while women think it is not enough.

For more information contact:

Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin  
2, rue des Prêtres Saint-Séverin  
75005 Paris, France

## Psychologists Examine Feminist Issues in Urban Communities

The American Psychological Association will hold a symposium entitled "Feminist Issues in Urban Communities" at their 1981 Annual Convention. Susan Saegert will chair the session. The purpose of the symposium will be to present for discussion a redefinition of feminist issues addressing more directly the problems and perspectives of women, particularly low-income and minority women living in urban communities.

Chalsa Loo, an environmental and clinical Psychologist has completed a large survey of residents of San Francisco's Chinatown assessing women's perceptions of their community and their own life chances as well as examining their lifestyles and well-being. Her research provides a basis for looking at the impact of available housing, transportation, child care, jobs and services in a minority community on the lives of women.

Marilyn Gittell, a political scientist, will describe interviews she has been conducting with women leaders and activists from low-income and minority communities in several cities about their experiences as activists, their perceptions of major issues, how these issues relate to women, how being women have affected their experiences and how they perceive the women's movement.

Finally, Stephanie Riger will outline some of the stumbling blocks frequently encountered in feminist organizations when they try to effectively respond to the needs of women in urban communities. Nancy Russo will be a discussant.

## Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development

The Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development is a non-profit corporation, established to stimulate and assist projects concerned with long-term housing and economic opportunities for women, and to provide a clearinghouse of related information.

As government policy shifts away from welfare and social supports, it becomes increasingly crucial to forge new alliances to increase women's housing and economic opportunities through partnerships within the private enterprise system — expanding and initiating new development with joint-venture sponsors in the established business community.

WIHED's purpose is to provide technical assistance and resources in development, planning, architecture and organization issues, particularly to serve the increasing and critical needs of low and middle income women — to improve and maximize their options for self-sufficiency by providing resources and technical assistance, on a selective cost-sharing basis to:

1. non-profit corporations
2. professional advocacy groups
3. women's neighborhood groups.

WIHED has prepared a brief questionnaire for interested groups to solicit input to assist in the precise formulation of its policies and objectives — and to plan a program that can be of the widest possible benefit.

To receive a questionnaire, write to:

WIHED  
Suite 710-12, 146 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109

## Housing Cooperative For Women

The present housing crisis, occurring in all major centres with varying degrees of severity, hits women particularly hard. Women earn less than men, and are less likely to be able to buy their own home, or to pay the high rental costs that are now common. Women with children are not only faced with high costs but discrimination against children.



A group of women in Toronto have set out to create a co-operative housing project to meet the needs of women such as those mentioned above. Although the project is small (30 units), it is hoped that it will point the way for further, similar developments. Apart from the 30 units of 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms, a 6 bedroom communal house is being designed as medium-term housing for women leaving hostels or crisis centres and will involve some staff support.

The project is now in its design stages. The architect, Joan Simon, is bringing to the project sensitivity towards the needs of women and a strong background in energy-efficient building design. Potential members have also met to begin to establish policies and to work with the architect on the design.

The group is not aware of other projects of this nature in North America and would welcome correspondence and idea sharing with other groups developing woman-centred housing.

Contact:

Lyn Adamsun  
Constance Hamilton Housing Co-operative  
523 Melita Cr.  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Women in Downtown Vancouver

At its convention in 1979 the B.C. NDP Party decided to create a task force to investigate problems faced by older women. In a brief to this task force the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre points to the fact that women who live in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver face a harsh life in the predominantly male environment. They face both poverty and isolation in hotels or rooming houses as well as harassment by men.

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre was started as a 'home-like' drop-in in 1975 to provide a place for support and sanctuary for the women of this area and has since developed into an informal 'multi-service' centre with membership of over 250 women. The centre has a staff of three, one for each of the major ethnic groups that use the centre — Chinese, Native Indian and Caucasian.

It is the Native and white women over 40 years old who are most frequently hit by extreme housing difficulties. To get beyond the 'band-aid' approach, the staff of the centre have been working with others in the area through the Urban Society for Women's Residences to establish a women's residence that will have 30 suites.

Contact:

Katherine Roback  
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre  
412 E. Hastings St.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1P7

The Urban Society for Women's Residences is a non-profit group formed in 1978. They have recently carried out the *Study on Housing Needs of Single Women in the Downtown Eastside*. The study consisted of interviews and questionnaires and discovered that most of the women were hoping for self-contained units that would also have 24 hour live-in support in the building and the authors recommended that this type of housing be a priority for the Society.

Contact:

Society of Women's Residences  
180 Main St.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
c/o Marg Segal

(Excerpted from *Connexions*, Vol. VI, No. II, April 1981, p. 1-2.)

# FEATURES



*Streetstuff: Adaptive Use. Picture No. 5. Barry farms 1980. These girls turned tires into "houses" with pieces of cloth for roofs. Vivian Barry.*

## KIDSPACE

*Excerpted by Rebecca Peterson and Judy Thompson from materials provided by KIDSPACE.*

The Community Design for Family Use Project is a photo exhibit called KIDSPACE which relates city planning to the needs of children and families. The issues examined include open space and the built environment in terms of children's play, their daily

business as part of a family, and their development of independence and responsibility. Urban design must recognize the differences of children at various ages. The planning and design of neighborhoods also must aid today's parents who no longer have the extended family nearby for support. KIDSPACE shows children and families using and sharing the city of Washington, D.C. and draws upon historic as well as current resources.

There is new national concern about the

condition of the family caused in part by the changing roles of women and men over the past two decades. Our goal is to draw attention to the issues of the family in the context of the city; the areas of housing, transportation, social services, retail services, recreation, education and health may be considered from the viewpoint of children's needs.

In particular, urban design has barely dealt with the realities of the family as a unit. The relationship of open space and

the built environment in terms of how children play, go about their daily business as a part of a family, and build independence and responsibility is the subject of our work. The balance of supervision of children for safety and discipline juxtaposed with self-reliance and the growth of self-confidence is affected by the design of housing most importantly, but also the design of recreation areas, transportation systems and the supporting community services for the family.

The family's needs change with the ages of the children. Urban design must be sensitive to the requirements of various ages. For example, the adult pushing a baby carriage or stroller greatly appreciates the curb indentations at crosswalks so that the wheels of the stroller make an easy transition between sidewalk and street. The four year old (and his or her parents) appreciates the safe alley connections of the backyards of friends houses with her or his own so that street traffic need not be encountered. Nine year olds learn about responsibility and money when the store is accessible to the child by foot or bike. Children of all ages can utilize common open space next to housing to meet each other and yet be close to home.

Urban design also affects those caring for children. The nuclear family often is isolated from emotionally supporting experienced relatives; networking among parents in a neighborhood may fulfill the need for information and friendship. Central areas to which parents gravitate provide routes to this networking whether it is the lobby of the child care centre, the PTA or the benches lining the edges of the playground.

Children play on the one hand, imaginatively through pretend and through arts and crafts, and, on the other hand through sports. We found that kids seem to be 'generalists'; they are most of all engaged in the humanistic process of learning. In the past months we found them to be learning not just about themselves and their physical and mental capabilities, but also about the world we live in. We found children all over the city playing individually or in small groups amongst larger groups of people of all ages. The kids want to be in the human context of testing relationships with other age groups and also of seeing what older and younger kids and various adults do in different roles. The process of growing up human is aided by good design where the children not only do their natural work of



*Out & About: Commercial Services. Picture No. 5. Barry farms 1980. Errands for the family provide a sense of responsibility and participation in family and community life as well as an education in arithmetic.*



*Hometown: Fronts. Picture No. 4. Capitol Hill 1942. The perfect neighbourhood block. Interaction among neighbours and responsibility for the public sidewalk by the residents. Enclosed front yards provide safe play for toddlers. Credit: Library of Congress/Louise Roskam.*



*Streetstuff: Amenities. Picture No. 3. Marion Park E. & 4 St. S.E., Capitol Hill. Mothers and kids taking a break on the park bench on their way home from the store. 1980. Vivian Barry.*

play but also observe and interact with their neighbors. From the historic pictures of the alleys we again see the kids in the community-like spaces, that is, the alleys themselves. After the requirements of food, clothing and shelter kids needs include first of all, contact with community life.

Of critical importance to children and families is scale: the relationship of human beings to the open space which in turn makes a relationship with the nearby structures. Sometimes the relationship is harmonious and indicates respect for the people using the space and sometimes design ignores fundamental human needs. We discovered that spaces can have great meaning for their users. The many courtyards around Washington serve as a centre of neighborhood life. Children perceive their courtyard surrounded on three sides by (residential) buildings where they and their friends meet and play as safe, protected, and clearly defined. Many courtyards had several groups of children and adults playing or talking or passing through. The numbers and constant flow of people establish a safe environment where everyone knows

their neighbors. Also, those responsible for the children can attend to their household chores and are still able to observe and hear the children from their windows.

The area outside the home provides the most natural playspace for children. We found that even when playgrounds were within a block or two of home, parents sometimes insisted that their pre-school and grammar school children stay on their own block.

These examples indicate that the ongoing policy of government and developers regarding planning and design does affect the "humanness" of the quality of life in the city. Without a concern for the humanity of its citizens, a city (reflected through buildings, streets, open space and facilities) becomes a "system" which finds little involvement from its citizens towards the preservation of community life. This lack of concern, in turn, affects family life and makes the raising of future citizens an arduous task. Through further historical research and exploration into our neighborhoods, we will continue to watch for the strengthening bonds that tie people together to form

healthy living environments.

The exhibit is organized from the home outward. Even in neighbourhoods where good playgrounds are available, kids play with their friends in the open space around the house. Parents know where their kids are and can do household chores while still hearing and seeing their kids. Kids love courtyards; they are protected, enclosed, defined space — close to home, with lots of action. Alleys also provide safe spaces of good size for the kids on the block, as do streets. Before there were playgrounds, kids were in the street — and they still are. Water, playgrounds, public services such as recreation centers, and libraries, and commercial services are important destinations for both parents and children in the wider urban environment.

For further information about this exhibit contact:

Vivian Barry  
Project for Community Design  
for Family Use  
American Planning Association  
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036



## Willow Avenue

by Anella Parker-Martin  
Maryke McKeown

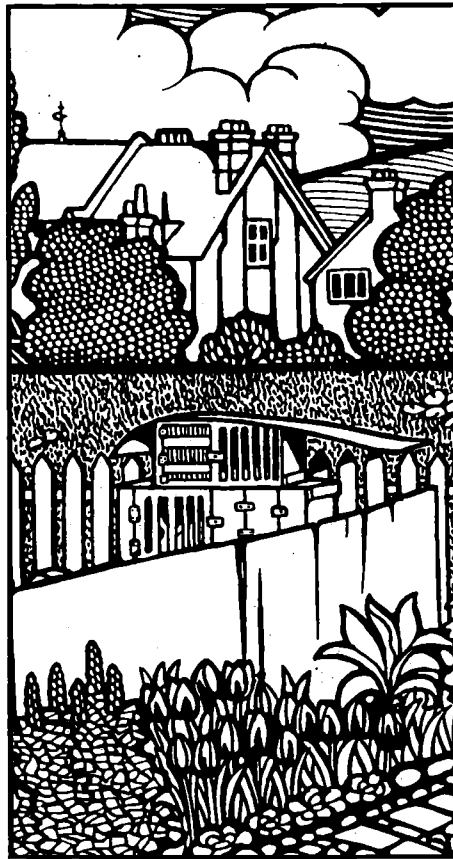
Marriage break-up, separation, economic self-dependency, single parenthood — all these jolt loose the traditional images and expectations of women (and men) who find themselves catapulted into a lifestyle for which they have been singularly unprepared by upbringing or precedent. Different people find different ways of re-arranging their lives. What follows is an account of how three people unexpectedly and unintentionally evolved a living arrangement which was practical, fulfilling — and fun, both for the adults and children involved.

Two of us, Maryke and I, moved into what became known (inaccurately) as the Willow commune. We did not know each other and our situations initially were somewhat different. Maryke was still married, not very happily (and subsequently separated) and I had been separated for a year. We had three boys between us: Maryke's Jessie aged four, my Simon, 7, and Dominic, 5. We also had an assortment of animals which included two ancient and indomitable cats (mine), and an elegant Kerry Blue terrier (Maryke's), my spaniel, and various ill-fated cats of Maryke's. There was a floating population of gerbils, budgies, fish, etc. which added to the confusion and enrichment of our children's lives — but who were prone to escaping, disappearing or being murdered by one of the other animals.

The Willow Ave. commune was in fact three attached rowhouses, very tiny, made of wood and built nearly a hundred years ago. They had reportedly been condemned a couple of times over the years and were certainly in very bad shape. However, they had the attraction of being the cheapest houses in Toronto, and both of us had determined that (no matter how broke we were) having a house of our own in which to raise our kids and make a new life was the most important thing we could do.

We shared ignorant optimism about fixing up old houses and a vivid fantasy image of what this little row of frame houses could become, and of a lifestyle that included tea on the lawn under the apple tree, candlelit dinner parties, and peaceful children playing creatively in their rooms.

The tone of our relationship and the flavour of what was to become a shared life was set by our first real meeting — known as the day Dominic drowned. I arrived home from work to be greeted by neigh-



bouring kids telling me that my little boy had been pulled out of the lake and raced to hospital. Not quite believing this, I rushed into the house to find my mother pouring tea for Maryke and Jessie, and alternating between tea and gin for herself. Dominic had indeed been rescued from the lake and taken to hospital but was home — drinking ginger ale and watching T.V. Since my house was under radical renovation, this scene was happening around a sawhorse with an assortment of workmen whose English had not been up to coping with police, ambulances or even knowing where the hospital was. Dominic himself was fully recovered. Maryke shared in my "what if . . ." shock while my mother poured more tea and offered gin and tonic all round.

Maryke and I got to know each other very quickly after this and shared, first, our plans for our houses and gardens and then our concerns and problems about finances and children — daycare, schoolwork, relationship with their fathers, etc. For the first year we each had daycare arrangements

for our kids elsewhere, but the second year they were all going to the local school and we decided to pool our resources and share a babysitter. We set out to find some one who would come early enough to get them lunch, tidy up the two houses, and welcome them home after school. This arrangement was much cheaper, and it enabled a growing sense of responsibility for each other's children to develop. For the children it meant there was another adult (in addition to the sitter) who could look after them if their own mom was late, and on whom they could rely.

In the middle of our second year the third house was bought by a friend of mine — aided by both Maryke and I. Sandy was a separated father with a fourteen year old son, who lived with him on and off. He fell easily (and eagerly) into our pattern of sharing meals, tea, coffee, a drink, and involvement with each other's children, animals and lives. His imagination regarding the potential of the houses was tempered by more realism than ours, but also by a surprising ineptness on his part. One unplanned weekend we took down all the fences that divided our back gardens and spent the rest of the summer barbecuing and sunbathing — while planning to landscape the huge overgrown, debris-filled back garden with smooth green lawns, fountains, and vegetable gardens.

None of these plans were ever realized (though we did put in a lovely brick patio in the front, filled with flowers) but during the time we lived side by side we became a new type of family, interdependent and yet maintaining our own essential independence and personal identity. The physical closeness was encouraged by an intercom system between the three houses and the shared outdoor areas. Many of our resources (a car, vacuum cleaners, mixers) we pooled. Food was borrowed without question and we moved freely in and out of each others' houses. Dinners and parties always included each other. Easter Brunch and the intention (never realized) to mount our own float in the annual neighbourhood Easter Parade became a yearly event. Friends became shared, and our closely knit relationship absorbed from time to time the special friend who became involved with one of us.

Most of all, without ever specifying or even talking much about it, we provided a strong non-judgemental peer group which

## Women, Nuclear Power, and Other Issues

was accepting and supportive of each other's children. For the kids, this meant there were always other adults with whom they felt at home and who would watch out for them. They also had the benefit of being exposed to an adult viewpoint in addition to that of their own parent, and could absorb a number of different viewpoints as the three of us argued our varying and often diametrically opposed opinions on any issue going.

The relationship was not always symmetrical and we were not always equally involved. In a crisis, however, the practical help and the concern was always there. The crises — as any single parent knows — were many and were both major and minor. In retrospect, it seems that this turbulence both forced us and enabled us to keep open lines of communication for both giving and receiving support which otherwise may have reverted to the more traditional neighbouring patterns, or to conventional male/female relationships.

Now that events and personal circumstances have resulted in two of us moving away, the bond and the relationship is still there and has accommodated our respective new living situations. The lack of physical proximity and new partners (in marriage) for Sandy and I, has, however, limited the degree of support and emotional involvement we have with each other.

Whether the physical living arrangement we shared on Willow Ave. (which is referred to as "cluster housing" in the literature on new and emerging family forms) and the emotional and practical qualities it encompassed can be translated into a pre-planned situation is hard to say. Probably no more than three or perhaps four families could become as interwoven as we did. However, variations and modifications of that situation have been tried and appear to be working.

For us, circumstances had thrown us out of the conventional family structure, and while we each clung to the traditional value of "our own house" we needed and were open to patterns of living which were very different from that of the typical nuclear family. In this I am sure we were typical of many single parents, and for that reason this example of adaptation might be useful to others.

1 Rainey, Eric: *Shared Houses, Shared Lives. The new extended families and how they work.* Tarcher, St. Martin's, 1979.

by Mariann Langton

Members of many women's groups argue that the nuclear issue has particular significance for women; that arms development and nuclear power are symptoms of the patriarchal mentality which exploits people and resources without regard for the destruction it reaps. As bearers and nurturers of children, they say, women are more intimately concerned with the need to protect life. Below, members of three groups which are concerned with nuclear power and other energy issues, discuss their special relevance to women.



### Survival Feminism

by Linda Bullard

The backbone of my Philadelphia safe power group is three mothers who came forward when Three Mile Island blew the whistle on nuclear power. A year and a half later they have not forgotten the horror of those days of fear for their children and the world. They are educating themselves and their neighbors, organizing teach-ins, energy fairs, demonstrations, occupations, writing, testifying, raising money.

It makes me wonder: what is it about this particular issue that was capable of mobilizing these women instantaneously? Why is it that no fathers came to our group when they did? I believe that the answer lies in "women's values".

The endurance and powers of nurturance which have been thrust upon women by our biology, socialization, and oppression are enabling us to both correctly assess the horrible significance of this moment in time and see the way out. Questions of social justice which the women's liberation movement has been asking for decades have not become questions of survival. And so a movement of women for survival has recently begun to grow and

gain momentum throughout the world, based on the shared conviction that our very lives are at stake. Feminists think that our present crisis is the result of the product-oriented, dominate-and-exploit violent character of patriarchal society, and that the solution lies in the process of utterly routing these dangerous values.

Thus feminists do not think it is enough to ratify SALT II or win a moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants. Even renewable energy sources can be turned to destruction in the hands of present powers — for example, the development of solar satellites for centrally-controlled energy and weapons.

Feminists are beginning to understand that our own liberation requires that we prevent nuclear holocaust. As Bernice Reagan noted in a song introduction, "If we lose this one, we won't have to worry about all those other issues". The nuclear industry is taking us so seriously that they have embarked on a nationwide campaign of their own to woo us to their side. "Nuclear Energy Women" is promoting the industry's interests under the banner of "pro-nuclear feminism". Last fall this group organized nearly 300 "energy coffees" in New York City alone, where they used a living room setting to convince women of the safety of nuclear power. Now NEW is busy organizing the women who went to the coffees to lobby Congress on nuclear issues. Women could be expected to be our own best allies, but unfortunately, like members of any oppressed group, they are not immune to internalizing the values of the oppressor. We must learn to recognize true commonality in values rather than in biology.

For the first time in history, history itself is now hanging in the balance of human decisions. Disarmament is what we've got to do to avoid the distinction of being the last generation of human beings on this planet — not just dismantling the bombs, but dismantling the power structure and attitude that gave us the bombs in the first place. Feminism is how we've got to do it. And I'm afraid two or three years is the time we've got to do it in.

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Linda Bullard is a member of the National Disarmament Program of the American Friends Service Committee.

Excerpted with permission from the AFSC Women's Newsletter, Fall, 1980.

## Women for Survival in Toronto

*The Toronto-based Women for Survival has been actively protesting the development of nuclear power. Below are excerpts from an interview with Uschi, a member of this group.*

Women for Survival is a group of women concerned about nuclear proliferation and the destruction of our environment. Our major target so far has been Ontario Hydro (the province-owned power corporation). We feel it symbolizes what is wrong with the patriarchy — its centralized hierarchy, its exploitation of people and land, its failure to deal with the garbage it produces. On March 30, we held an occupation and demonstration at the Hydro Building. Our demands included a halt to the construction of the nuclear power plant at Darlington, Ontario, priority to the development of renewable energy, and an end to spending on nuclear technology. We also demanded that any jobs lost through the cancellation of nuclear construction be compensated in renewable energy and conservation.

Our idea of demonstrations is to maintain a spirit of hope — we feel that too many demonstrations by environmental groups have been heavy and depressing. Of course, nuclear power is a very serious issue, but we also want to demonstrate that there is an alternative to death and destruction. So at the demonstration we did a lot of singing. The Hydro officials didn't know how to handle it — we find that men get very intimidated by women's spiritual power. They refused to negotiate with us in private, so we decided to stay after the building closed. We had all taken non-violence training the day before and we were prepared to be arrested. One hour after they closed the building we were arrested and dragged out.

We also planned a Mother's Day event to include a lot of singing and entertainment. We want it to be a celebration, not just a demonstration. It's important to us to experience the creative aspects of our lives. We feel that women organize differently than men do, emphasizing creativity, art, and hopefulness.

Women for Survival was started by women working with some of the mixed environmental groups. They got fed up with the sexist division of labour they found and men tended to do the high profile

media work while the women did the typing. The women thought that they could organize a group which had a less centralized structure, with greater participation by all members. We try to emphasize skill sharing and job rotation. We encourage all individuals to speak and make all our decisions by consensus. Members show a lot of caring for each other in our meetings — we're very aware of the dangers of getting burned out and want to prevent that by supporting each other and enjoying what we're doing.



We have good relationships with some of the mixed environmental groups, and have worked with them on some actions. We'd like to work more on bringing various women's groups together — we don't have direct links with any right now, but we've been in contact with feminist ecology groups in Montreal and the U.S.

## Brief to National Energy Plan Hearings

*Women have been making their views on energy and the environment known by participating in hearings on the third National Energy Plan (NEP — III) held in April by the United States Department of Energy. The Federation of Organizations for Professional Women received a DOE grant to encourage women's groups to participate in these hearings. Below is an excerpt from the sub-*

*mission by Susan Saegert, Robyn Cirillo, Lynn Paxson, and Irene Fanos of the Environmental Psychology Program of the City University of New York.*

Women comprise the majority of this country's population. They are generally low income and comprise a greater proportion of the elderly as well as 98 percent of single parent families. Since women have lower incomes and more dependents, the energy efficient organization of the environment is particularly important to them. Women are generally more poorly housed, and substandard housing is likely to be energy inefficient. Programs that relate to providing more energy efficient housing for low income people and those which rehabilitate existing structures in an energy efficient manner will particularly benefit women and other low income groups. Women tend to take the most responsibility for health care, child development, and future environmental quality and safety. They tend to be more concerned about radiation effects on reproduction and the selection of non-hazardous energy sources.

In light of the increasing costs of the dwindling supplies of safe energy sources, it would seem imperative that the federal government take an active and supportive role in the development and direction of energy use in this country. The following suggestions for the role of the government are submitted:

- to provide public transportation since the private sector is unlikely to invest sufficiently
- to provide incentives for low cost, energy efficient housing
- to co-ordinate development guidelines for energy efficient organization of land uses and transportation
- to continue and to upgrade government monitoring of environmental quality
- to monitor the effects of the use of different energy sources on health, economy, and environment
- to continue the support of the development of alternative technologies
- to encourage the development of worldwide energy guidelines and a United Nations-type task force for guidance.

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## REVIEWS

### **Women and the Social Costs of Economic Development: Two Colorado Case Studies.**

Elizabeth Moen, Elise Boulding, Jane Lillydahl and Risa Palm. Westview Press, Social Impact Series No. 5. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981. Hardcover, 215 pp.

*Reviewed by Audrey Armour, MES, MCIP*

The central proposition of this book is an intriguing and potentially significant one — that there is a connection between the high rates of personal and family problems evident in boomtowns and the status of women in such situations, a connection that tends to be overlooked by impact assessors, planners and policy-makers. Unfortunately this idea does not receive its due.

Women, the authors argue, traditionally have played an important role in maintaining social integration and stabilization. "Women, because of their central position in the household unit, are the key equilibrators of the family and the community as a social system — they are responsible for social buffering." Their ability to provide emotional support in times of stress, however, depends on their own mental and physical health. This ability, the authors contend, is reduced in boomtown situations for two main reasons:

1. Energy development creates a more masculine environment and increases class and gender stratification, thus lowering the status of women; and

2. Because of their dependency and low status, women in boom communities become fatalistic about energy development which lessens their ability to act as family and community integrators and stabilizers.

To explore the interrelationships among rapid economic development, social problems in boomtowns and the status of women, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with 106 women in two western Colorado towns — (Paonia, a pre-boom town of over 1,200 population, and Craig, a boom community of over 10,000 including new residential development outside the city limits). In addition they met with a cross-section of community members, examined reports and other documentation, and used photography and participant observation techniques to uncover perceptions of the quality of life in communities affected by energy developments. Their analysis of the boomtown phenomenon

was guided by two theoretical constructs: rural-urban transition (involving the loss of personal relationships and a shift towards institutionalized and specialized services and impersonal and contractual relationships) and gender stratification (involving a change in the relative status of men and women).



The authors offer some useful insights into the kinds of social tensions that accompany rapid growth and a change-over in the economic base of rural communities. For example, they found that:

- Middle-class newcomer women are among the most vulnerable. "Many, having come from larger towns and cities, are disappointed by the housing, shopping, services, recreational opportunities, cultural amenities, entertainment, and schools." They also tend to become frustrated by the lack of employment opportunities and the limited range of social organizations and volunteer groups in which to participate.

- Newcomers seeking an alternative to city life often make useful contributions to rural communities because of their willingness to take action to reduce the environmental degradation and social disruption accompanying energy development. At the same time, their activism may be resented by longtimers who perceive the newcomers to be essentially self-serving.

- Migratory construction workers are often the focus of blame for the social problems in boomtowns. They are seen by the rural residents as irresponsible drifters who do not share local values for home and family. Tension between the two groups is reinforced by the tendency of migratory families not to become involved in the community. Non-involvement makes moving easier.

There is a dissonance, however, between the authors' findings and their proposition. The two just don't come together. Key as-

pects of their argument are missing. First, the authors accept as given that there is a link between the status of women and their adaptation ability. This link is central to their argument but it is not substantiated either in theory or in fact. And, second, the authors rest their argument on another article of faith, namely that women are the key equilibrators not just of the family but the community as well. Again this position is not critically examined. The impression one gets is that the authors were already committed to their conclusions before they began their "exploratory" research. In effect, they saw what they already believed. This impression is reinforced by the crusading tone that creeps into the text from time to time, from the Preface:

"By focusing on women as active participants and shapers of society, rather than as affected, struggling adapters, we hope to show the social creativity of women and how central they are to any kind of social development . . . We hope to clarify the costs of energy development for the community where it takes place to enable planners and residents to see what efforts are needed to promote human welfare under conditions of rapid economic development, and to see how much the wisdom and experience of women are needed for those efforts."

to the Epilogue

"Will development always be hard on women? Will they, like the machinery smashing Luddites in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, have to oppose new technologies because they leave women more disadvantaged than before, with even poorer jobs and the problem of caring for families under conditions of endless transition with all the stress that transition imposes?"

The above omissions are significant considering the audience that the book is aimed at. Before impact assessors, planners, policy-makers and others who help to shape the quality of life of boomtowns will be willing to give serious consideration to the potentially positive role of women, they will have to be convinced that there is a role.

*Audrey Armour is partner in Lang Armour Associates, an environmental planning firm, and Assistant Professor (part-time) in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University where she teaches impact assessment.*

## RURAL WOMEN

Kohl, Seena B. **Working Together**. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Toronto, 1980

**Working Together** reports on a 20-year study of family and kinship ties in rural southwestern Saskatchewan that focuses on the role of women in the farming environment.

The role of women in the development of the frontier is examined in some detail. As a necessary requirement for survival, frontier women were allowed greater role variation than child rearing and household maintenance. The additional farm operation tasks they assumed made the family farm a cooperative venture as the title suggests.

In examining the current role of women in agriculture child rearing and household management are still viewed as a primary role; but, in addition, roles such as farm management (bookkeeping), social networking, and unpaid labour (primarily in performing 'chores') make the role of women a pivotal one in the operation of the family farm. (Brian Langdon)\*

Council on Rural Development, **Rural Women: Their Work, Their Needs, and Their Role in Rural Development**, January 1979. 106 pages including footnotes, study questionnaire, statistical tables and recommendations. Inquiries: Dr. Anthony Fuller, Director, Rural Development Outreach Project, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1 (Jerry M. Krauter)

Corenilia B. Flora and Sue Johnson. "Discarding the Distaff: New Role for Rural Women" in **Rural U.S.A.: Persistence and Change**. Edited by Thomas R. Ford, Iowa State University Press, pp. 168-181. This chapter identifies some of the attitudes and values that tend to slow the change process affecting rural women in relation to their urban counterparts. (Jerry M. Krauter)

## THE HOME

L.C. Johnson, J. Shack, and K. Oster. **Out of the Cellar and into the Parlour: Guidelines for the Adaptation of Residential Space for Young Children**. Children's Environments

Advisory Service, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation: Ottawa, June 1980

Young children spend a considerable amount of time in the home setting — either in homes of their own or in homes of family day care providers. Most homes are poorly designed from the point of view of children's developmental needs. There is a need for improvement of housing design to meet the needs of young children. This report suggests a series of guidelines for the adaptation of the indoor and outdoor home environment to support children's play and learning activities. The guidelines are derived from two data bases: a review of literature and survey of a sample of 25 homes.

The guidelines relate to: supervision of children; establishment of activity areas; accessibility of toys and equipment; personal space for children; and child safety. In addition to general discussion of adaptations for major living areas of the home, there are specific recommendations regarding kitchens, bedrooms, and outdoor areas. The report presents two acceptable models for organizing a dwelling to accommodate children.

This publication is available free of charge from: Children's Environments Advisory Service, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, National Office, Montreal Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P7

**Equal Credit Opportunity: Accessibility to Mortgage Funds by Women and by Minorities, Summary of Results**. Women and Credit Project, Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research R8122, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Wash. D.C. 20410

Although it is currently illegal to discriminate against certain borrowers this study attempts to examine the degree to which banking institutions allow their lending discussions to be influenced by race, sex and age of the applicant or the location of the property. The individual lender's decision to lend serves as the basis for the study. The study concludes that mortgage lending discrimination does indeed occur against minorities and aged people but not necessarily against female applicants only. (M.E.)

Jerome Tagnoli and Judith Lager Storch. "Inside and Outside: Setting Locations of Female and Male Characters in Children's

Television", in R. Stough and A. Wandersman (eds.) **Optimizing Environments: Research, Practice and Policy**. Washington, D.C.: Environmental Design Research Association, 1980

This study examines where female and male characters are located on television programs most watched by children. Thirteen television programs watched by children aged two through eleven were analyzed according to descriptions of their settings and what activities the characters were engaged in. Male characters appeared in outdoor settings more than they did inside the home or in all other interior settings. Descriptions of particular programs showed that even when males appeared inside the home, they assumed stereotypic postures which helped counteract the men's presence in "feminine" settings — the home and other interiors. Female characters were depicted inside the home more often than they were in outdoor scenes.

Bonnie Loyd, "Women, Home, and Status", **Housing and Identity**, ed. James Duncan, London: Croom-Helm, 1980

Although women have made great strides forward in the professional world, the common belief that women are the keepers of the home remains embedded in society. Even though a greater number of women are leaving the household to seek employment, current social and economic demands have bound women "even more tightly into their position as keepers of the house". Today, women are expected to maintain the household in addition to pursuing a professional career.

Loyd discusses the issues which in the past have led to the socialization of this myth and the current factors which allow it to continue. The home, seen as a modern status symbol, is portrayed as lying at the base of why women cannot escape the stereotyped role of "homemaker".

From a discussion of historic and contemporary economic, design, and housework considerations, Loyd points out the reasons for the development of constraining barriers that burden women with the responsibility of housework. The future, however, does not seem totally bleak, and despite the continued need for housing as a status symbol, economic and social factors may adjust to lessen the dependence on women to maintain the household. (M.E.)

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