

WOMEN & ENVIRONMENTS

\$4
Winter 1987



—EVENTS—

March 28

Feminism and Its Translations

The 4th Annual Graduate Women's Studies Conference focuses on the problems of feminist scholarship. To be held at Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, from 9 am to 6 p.m.

Contact: Conference Committee, Program in Women's Studies, 218 Palmer Hall, Princeton NU 08544

April 2-5

Atlantic Women and Housing Conference

Memracook Institute, St. Joseph, New Brunswick. The conference will share information and explore innovative solutions to Atlantic women's housing problems; and increase public awareness of the issues of women and housing. Registration for government and business, \$195; others \$50.

Contact: Atlantic Women and Housing Conference, 1095 Tower Road, Halifax NS B3H 2Y5

April 9-10

Dimensions in Women's Health Care: Education, Services and Research

Contact: WHC Conference, UTHSC-H School of Nursing, 1100 Holcombe, Houston, TX 77030 (713) 792-7800

April 15-17

Moving Forward: Innovations In Development Policy, Action and Research

The Association for Women in Development will hold its third conference at the Crystal Gateway Marriot, Washington DC. Invited speakers include: Carmen Barroso, Carlos Chagas Foundation; David Bell, Harvard School of Public Health; Hershelle S Challenor, UNESCO; Jane Geysler, Dept. of Anthropology, Boston University; Obaidullah Khan, Bangladesh Ambassador to the U.S.; Irene Tinker, Director of Equity Policy Centre.

Contact: Aida Dabbas, Dept. of Foods and Nutrition, Justin Hall, KSU, Manhattan KS 66506 (913) 532-5508

May 8-11

NAC Annual General Meeting

To be held in Ottawa. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women celebrates its first 15 years.

May 23-28

5th International Women and Health Meeting

The main themes include: population policies and reproductive rights, environmental health hazards, drugs, and health care systems.

Contact: CEFEMINA, Centro Feminista de Informacion y Accion, Apdo. 5355, San Jose 1000, Costa Rica

May 29-June 2

Public Environments: an International Forum on Environmental Design Research EDRA 18 conference in Ottawa, co-sponsored by Canadian government departments.

Contact: Conference Secretariat, 275 Bay St., Ottawa, Ont. K1R 5Z5

June 1-13

Habitat Forum Berlin

A workshop on **Women and Habitat** is being organized by a group of women architects and planners, Forschungsgruppe Frauen und Habitat, c/o Ingrid Hermannsdorfer, Erbacher Str. 72, 6100 Darmstadt, W. Germany

May 29-30

Women and Public Housing: Hidden Strength, Unclaimed Power

Women United for a Better Chicago will co-sponsor a conference focusing on the accomplishments of female public housing residents.

Contact: Susan Stall, Women United for a Better Chicago, P.O. Box 578141, Chicago, IL 60657 (312) 342-6120

June 11-14

Work and Well-being '87

A national public interest conference hosted by Alberta North Central Region of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Theme speakers include: Heather Menzies, J. George Strachan, Marvyn Novick, Bob Sass.

Contact: Michael Henry, Co-ordinator, Work and Well-Being '87, #200, 12120-106 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5N 0Z2 (403) 482-6096

June 24-28

Weaving Women's Colors: A Decade of Empowerment

The National Women's Studies Association celebrates its 10th anniversary. The conference theme emphasizes the intersection of race and gender. Feminist scholarship of all kinds, workshops, discussions, films and cultural events will be included.

Contact: NWSA '87, Emory University, PO Box 21223, Atlanta GA 30322 (404) 727-7845

July 5-8

The Canadian Institute of Planners National Conference in Toronto. The theme is: "Other Voices: Perspectives on Planners and Planning."

Contact: Ontario Professional Planners Institute, 3206 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4N 2L3

July 6-10

Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions

The Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Topics include: Language, politics, the nuclear threat, relationships, sexuality, work, religion and spirituality, health, violence, education, and environmental/ecological issues.

Contact: 3rd International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, 44 Northumberland Rd., Dublin 4, Ireland. Tel. 688244, Telex 31098

August 12-13

Sheltering Ourselves: Developing Housing for Women

This conference in Cincinnati will be built around proposals for multi-unit housing projects for women and children on three local sites. Submissions are invited.

Contact: Maureen Wood, 1309 Boyd, Cincinnati OH 45223 (513) 542-0088

September 13-16

New Partnerships — Building for the Future

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Canadian conference, co-sponsored by the Canadian Association of Housing and Renewal Officials and the International Council on Social Welfare. It will include a substantial women's as well as a Third World component.

Contact: IYSH Conference, Box 1987, Stations C, Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 4G1

October 10-12

National/International Women's Housing Conference

co-hosted by the National Congress of Neighborhood Women and the Women's Division of the State of New Jersey; to be held in Camden, NJ. The conference will focus on sharing comprehensive community-based women's housing strategies. It will be participatory in nature, thus limited in size; diverse in ethnic and class make-up, thus invitation-only.

Contact: NCNW, 249 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn NY 11211 (718) 388-6666

WOMEN & ENVIRONMENTS

Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter 1987



A WORD FROM US

Joan Simon: In Memoriam	4
Organizing to Help Each Other: Low-Income Support Groups in Ontario Barb Carss	7
Women Plan Toronto Birgit Sterner	7
Changing Places Regula Modlich	10
Women and Man-Made Environments: The Dutch Experience Jan Penrose	12
Working for Women Sheila Rowbotham	14
Rough Horizons: Women in Offshore Oil Irene Baird	17
Taking Sides	20
A Word from You	20
Out in the Field	21
Reviews	22
In Print	25

"Planning is usually seen as a thing that comes out of the brains of expert planners, and then is sent out to people who — perhaps — might be consulted." As British feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham reflects in this issue, a very different way of planning developed through the Popular Planning Unit of the now defunct Greater London Council. Starting not from the brains of experts but from people's daily lives and needs, this approach, as Rowbotham describes, presents the possibility of transforming the very nature of planning.

The GLC experiment was as remarkable as it was short lived. But however brief, the possibility that it demonstrated of changing the nature of the relationship between the planner and the planned should illuminate women's attempts everywhere to gain access to the planning process.

This issue of *W&E* examines experiences in several different jurisdictions: in the Netherlands, where women's planning interests have been incorporated formally into government structures; in Toronto, where a consultative and coalition-building process is using a variety of techniques to promote women's concerns; in Ontario, where popular organizations intercede to defend the interests of low-income women dependent on the state; and in London itself.

The key to planning that these women use is to work *with*, not to plan *for*. But can this non-hierarchical and essentially informal process of working *with* people, of planning through consultation, remain alive and responsive if it is formalized as part of the system that plans *for*? Or are our interests better served by a perpetual condition of outside agitation?

The question has special relevance this year. For the kinds of action that will emerge from the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, which will focus the energies of "the experts" on the issue of inadequate shelter, will bear disproportionately on women. It is striking that the women's IYSH initiatives that have come to our attention have several common structural threads: they all explicitly emphasize grass-roots, consultative processes as their method and coalition-forming as their strategy; their goals are to demonstrate solutions that are immediately possible. Powerful proposals should emerge. Now, if we can just avoid the brains of the expert planners ...

Editor: Judith Kjellberg

Editorial Board: Gay Alexander, Katherine Davies, Kate Lazier, Regula Modlich, Anella Parker Martin, Susan Prentice, Barbara Sanford, Marie Truelove, Miriam Wyman

Book Review Editor: Marie Truelove

Editorial Assistants: Barbara Carss, Susan Prentice

Circulation: Kate Lazier

Promotion: Gay Alexander, Kate Lazier, Regula Modlich, Miriam Wyman

Management Advisory Committee: Larry Bourne, Susan Eckenwalder, Lorraine Filyer, Miriam Wyman

Layout and Design: Barbara Sanford

Typesetting and Assembly: Eveready Printers Ltd.

Printed in Canada by Jet Print Inc.

Cover Illustration: ©Birgit Sterner

Women and Environments (ISSN 0229-480X) is published quarterly. Authors and artists retain copyright, 1987

Subscription Rates: Individuals \$13/year, institutions \$20/year. Overseas subscribers add \$3 surface, \$5 airmail. Back copies \$3.

With grateful acknowledgement for funding assistance from the Secretary of State of Canada. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Secretary of State.

Women and Environments is published jointly by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto and the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University.

Joan Simon: In Memoriam

We are dedicating this issue of W & E to Joan Simon, who was killed in a car accident on November 12, 1986.

Joan was an architect and partner with her husband, Charles in Simon Architects and Planners in Toronto; she was Associate Professor of Consumer and Family Studies at the University of Guelph, and a friend and contributor to W & E. In many ways she exemplified the values and in-

terests that the magazine also stands for. She cared about the quality of the surroundings of those people whom few care about, and she spent her life trying to do something about it.

As a way of remembering Joan Simon and her work, three colleagues who were collaborating with her on research projects at the time of her death have written about her ideas and her influence.

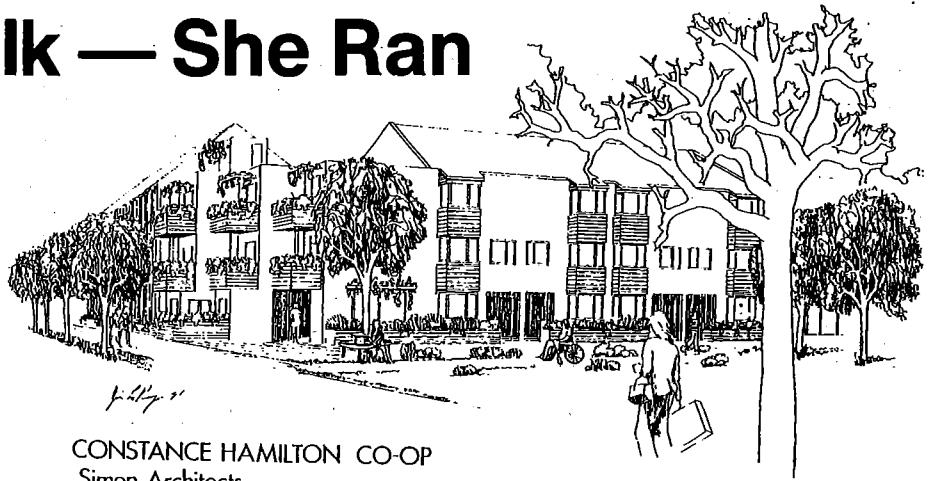
She Didn't Walk — She Ran

My lasting image of Joan Simon is of her rapid walk up my street to deliver a set of notes or to come to a meeting. From my office on the top floor of the house I could chart her progress by the staccato of her high heels on the pavement. No one else sounded quite like her.

We were collaborators and partners in research for the past three years. I first met Joan about ten years ago when we were on a panel at an Environmental Design Research Conference. Even though we lived in the same city, only a few blocks apart, and were involved in related areas of research, our lives touched only briefly when we met at parties or at the airport enroute to somewhere else. I was a member of the selection committee of the Constance Hamilton Cooperative, when we interviewed architects for the first women's housing co-op in Toronto. Joan Simon was one of these applicants and we were impressed with her approach. She was the only candidate who focussed on kitchens and their relationship to the total living space of the dwelling; she was the only architect with a background in developing with users the kind of housing design that would meet their needs.

She was hired and spent considerable energy on surveys of prospective residents, on evaluating the needs of the first women to move into the project, and on extensive discussions with the founding Board of Directors on how to translate their vision into reality. Joan was enormously proud of her association with this project.

Our paths crossed again when I was



CONSTANCE HAMILTON CO-OP
Simon Architects

preparing a proposal to study the application of design guidelines in the development of a new Toronto neighbourhood — the same neighbourhood as the Constance Hamilton Co-op. I needed an architect for the project team, preferred to work with a woman, and knew Joan Simon. Her enthusiasm for the project and her willingness to try new approaches was contagious. In the course of our collaboration, a rather routine project expanded into a very exciting analysis of design decision-making contrasted with actual use of the site. Joan devised an intriguing tradeoff simulation game to use at group meetings of residents, which was ingenious in its simplicity. She created a format for recording residents' behaviour in public outdoor space during the summer and winter. At the time of her death, we were working on a manuscript based on this research.

Joan was becoming well known as the architect of the Constance Hamilton Co-op, particularly as interest grew in women's housing. Our neighbourhood

study had brought us into some contact with the co-op and we discussed the possibility of doing a post-occupancy evaluation to determine how the building was working two years after residents had moved in. I had been collecting information on other women's housing projects in Canada and elsewhere and suggested that a comparative study of a range of women's housing projects might be more useful than a case study of only one. We obtained the funding and set off on site visits to eight Canadian cities between September and February 1985.

Our plan was to conduct a two-fold study: an analysis of the development process leading up to each project and in-depth interviews with residents. This had not been done before, although there were descriptions in the architectural and planning literature of physical designs for women's housing. For Joan, the fact that a study had never been done before was only an incentive to plunge in with both hands. We learned after the project was almost finished that survey research firms have

virtually stopped doing national surveys at multiple sites because of the difficulties of supervising data collection at a distance. In our enthusiasm we charged ahead, making contacts on initial site visits, hiring interviewers from each community, and trying to obtain the data that we needed. For one and two weeks at a time, we spent almost 24 hours a day in each other's company. We saw more of one another during this intense period of data collection than we saw our families.

While we had envisaged this project as documenting women's housing problems and solutions, in the field it became far more than that. As Joan and I interviewed the founders of projects and the women who lived in them, we were deeply touched and often tearful at the accounts of women's survival against incredible odds, the human toll across the country of the crisis in affordable housing. Especially in the cases where battered women and their children were living in second-stage transitional housing for a fixed period of time, we came to realize the centrality of safe, secure, affordable housing to the survival of these families. Joan was especially moved by these opportunities to share in a few women's lives. I remember one comment she made as we were walking back from an interview in Vancouver: "It's good that we're not social workers who see this every day. Somehow no one believes them. We're hearing this fresh and our indignation and outrage at what women have to suffer will be far more compelling."

It's hard to believe that such a vital and energetic person as Joan Simon has vanished so abruptly from my life. As I try to make sense of the enormously rich data we have collected on women's experience of creating their own housing, I find myself wanting to consult Joan and listening for her half run, half walk up my street. I miss her.

Gerda Wekerle

Landscape Award

The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects has awarded honorary memberships to Joan Simon, posthumously, and to her husband, Charles Simon, in recognition of their contribution to landscape design, research and education. Honorary members of the OALA are persons other than landscape architects who have performed notable service in advancing the cause of Landscape Architecture in the Province of Ontario.

Pushing for Changes in Housing Management

When Joan Simon invited me to join her as a research associate in her consulting firm last fall I jumped at the opportunity. I was thrilled at the chance to work with her, not because I knew her particularly well, but because of her reputation as a progressive in the housing field. It was only after I had been swept up in the frantic pace of our work that I realized that the basis of that reputation was not simply her integrity and intelligence, but her incredible energy, dedication and an almost unique ability to foresee the subtle implications of various housing policies.

Though an architect by training, Joan's interest in providing new housing options for those typically "underhoused" in our society was not limited to physical design. Very early on, before the current wave of interest in participatory management, she recognized the necessity for low-income and special-need groups, such as the elderly, natives, the disabled and, of course, women, to have direct input into the design and management of their own housing.

For example, in 1973, when Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation first introduced its non-profit housing program, Joan was quick to note both its potential and its limitations. While an enthusiastic supporter of the program, she realized that few tenants were likely to have had the opportunity to develop the complex management skills needed to make the co-operative housing aspect of the program an entirely successful endeavor.

As a result, Joan proposed that the University of Guelph, where she taught, establish a Housing Management and Research Centre to draw on the experience of



Joan Simon

COURTESY: CHARLES SIMON

housing managers in the private sector, as well as other professionals and housing activists. The Centre would develop co-operative and participatory management skills among tenants in the non-profit housing sector.

Though Joan's idea for the Centre was rejected, and the development of management skills among housing co-operatives somewhat haphazard as a result, her interest and work in this area continued.

Last fall, when I joined Simon Associates to work on a study of Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority family residents' social and recreational needs, Joan was especially enthused by the prospect that our report might prove to be influential in improving the quality of life for tenants of Canada's largest landlord. She suggested modification to the study's methodology, as outlined by MTHA, in order to consult with tenants'

needs. Unfortunately, we had only 12 weeks in which to complete the entire study and thus had little time to follow up on all of the issues we were uncovering.

Worse, of course, was losing Joan. Though we had been, surprisingly enough, on schedule to that point, the 12 weeks stretched to 16 as I tried to pull myself and the report together. There can be no doubt that the final report suffered from Joan's absence, but I could hear many of her comments echoing in my head as I filled in the outline we had established earlier and I hope, though at times doubt, that I have done them justice.

Among the most important themes included in the final recommendations to MTHA were themes Joan had emphasized throughout those earlier conversations. First was the necessity for changes in organizational structure that would prove more genuinely supportive of the social and recreational needs of tenants. Second

Opening Up the Discourse

I only knew Joan Simon for one year, and even then only briefly through efforts to write a joint essay on Canadian residential design, for a federally-funded project to evaluate housing since 1945. I was constantly impressed by her energy and by her practical understanding of the role of architects in the shaping of the built landscape. She was funny, cynical and down-to-earth, and we shared a healthy disdain for theoreticians who were unable to see the house as a place where people lived and loved, that was designed by someone trying to create spaces beyond the merely functional yet constrained by bureaucracies and the property industry.

Spurred on by a desire to inject some humanity into what sometimes seemed to be rather humourless social science discourse within the project, we interviewed some of the leading architects and planners of the post-war suburban landscape. They opened up to Joan, respecting her reputation in the design field and put at ease by her intelligent, insightful queries into the various early influences on their work. With their words as some of our "data" we wrote about the "strawberry boxes" of the immediate post-war boom, the subtle British influences on public housing projects, and the bizarre landscape of contemporary suburbia where the snouts of two-car garages overwhelm whatever historicist facades have been tacked on. Our grant guidelines demanded a final section forecasting future housing trends, so Joan tacked on a cryptic phrase: "cheap and nasty for the poor." That shorthand note, to be expanded upon in the final draft of the paper, was a telling lament for the seeming demise of an interesting decade of experimentation in design and financing that had led to townhouse clusters for mixed social groups instead of monolithic and alienating blocks for low-income tenants. She had been a centrally active figure in those experiments.

Joan reminded us that sensitivity to people and to places, to the designers and the designed upon, and to the historical nuances hidden behind data series, are essential ingredients of useful writing and commentary. As I encounter the city day by day I will think of Joan and be thankful for our all-too-brief walk along the same path.

Deryck W. Holdsworth

Joan proposed a Housing Management and Research Centre to develop participatory management skills among tenants

organizations and community relations workers in the projects before the actual surveys got underway, and in order to establish mini site offices for our field researchers, so that tenants would associate a "human face" with the firm.

Throughout the early part of the study, Joan and I would meet to discuss preliminary findings, observations and the approach we would take in making recommendations to MTHA. With her usual acumen, she noted the absurdity of preparing a generalized report on the needs of public housing tenants, when our major finding was that these needs differed significantly from one housing project to the next. Not only were projects different in design and location, but the diversity of residents' needs and the degree to which these were being addressed by project staff, by other agencies and by residents themselves were strikingly varied.

We pondered the role played by family structure and ethnicity, by site design and location, by tenants' organizations and by management structures and styles. All of these could significantly contribute to residents' needs and the effectiveness of existing programs and services to meet these

was the need for each housing project to be assessed and planned for separately. Third was the need for residents to be included in relevant management and service-delivery processes.

Reflecting on the last of these recommendations, I am reminded of Joan's desire for a Housing Management and Research Centre. That Centre is still needed, and not only by those in the co-operative housing sector, but also by public housing tenants. Participatory housing management requires a complicated array of specialized skills, and while some unusually talented individuals may develop these as they go, it seems a bit senseless to rely on this process when we could share our experiences and substantially improve our chances of creating more viable and effective management styles and structures in all types of non-profit housing.

Barbara Sanford

I owe special thanks to Charles Simon for discussing Joan's ideas with me and for his support of my efforts to continue her work at Simon Associates.

Organizing to Help Each Other:

Low Income Support Groups in Ontario

by Barb Carss

“Vulnerable” is a good description of people who are poor in the modern welfare state. The assistance programs, allowances and subsidies which are supposed to make their lives more fair and equitable also expose them to rules and regulations by the cart-load. The majority of social assistance recipients are women who find themselves more and more intimidated by all the agencies they have to deal with.

But low income women are organizing to help each other work with what is often a dehumanizing system. In Ottawa, a 19-year-old organization which was formed in a public housing community recently received a provincial award for its involvement in social justice in Ontario. OCLISS (Ottawa Council for Low Income Support Services) has a mandate to keep poverty issues in the public eye. Its full-time staff of seven women work both as community organizers and advocates for Ottawa-Carleton's low income community.

This year, for example, OCLISS has 52 projects on its plate. Some of these are ongoing, such as the long-running Prisoners of Welfare (POW) support group; the annual bus tour for city politicians, welfare workers and housing authority workers; and a tenant-management campaign aimed at getting the provincial housing authority to hire public housing tenants for jobs in public housing buildings.

New projects include a campaign for spousal support; support groups for youth and for sexually abused children; a rally against increased transit fares; a project for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless; and plans for OCLISS's 20th anniversary celebration.

Circumstances have changed for the group since members first began meeting and working in each other's homes back in 1968. Today, OCLISS has solidified its place in the community and is in the unique position of having both the support of the low-income population and the grudging respect of government agencies.

OCLISS is funded by the city of Ottawa, and the co-ordinator, Maxine Stata, suggests that local government has come to rely on the organization's expertise. “They realize how important we are to the city,” she says. “Where the hell would people go if we weren't around? They could go sit in aldermen's offices, I suppose.”

“The things we were saying years ago have happened. People have started to realize that we know what we're talking about,” she continues. “We're recognized as a legitimate group that's really interested with what happens to low income people. If other agencies don't come to us

and ask us things, people say: ‘Why didn't you talk to OCLISS?’”

OCLISS's relationship with its clients is easy to understand because the staff members aren't much different from the people they serve. They live, or have lived, in public housing. They have raised, or are raising, children while living on social assistance. When Stata first became involved with the group in the early seventies, she was a young mother living in public housing with two small sons. The monthly board meetings were somewhat of a social event for her. “My only night out,” she recalls.

Stata says this leads to an approach which is different from social service workers because OCLISS staffers understand more fully what the clients are experiencing. “The first thing is to be able to identify with what they're going through,” she says. “When someone calls here with a problem we always assume that they're really having these difficulties, that the person who is calling is telling the truth. So we take their side right away.”

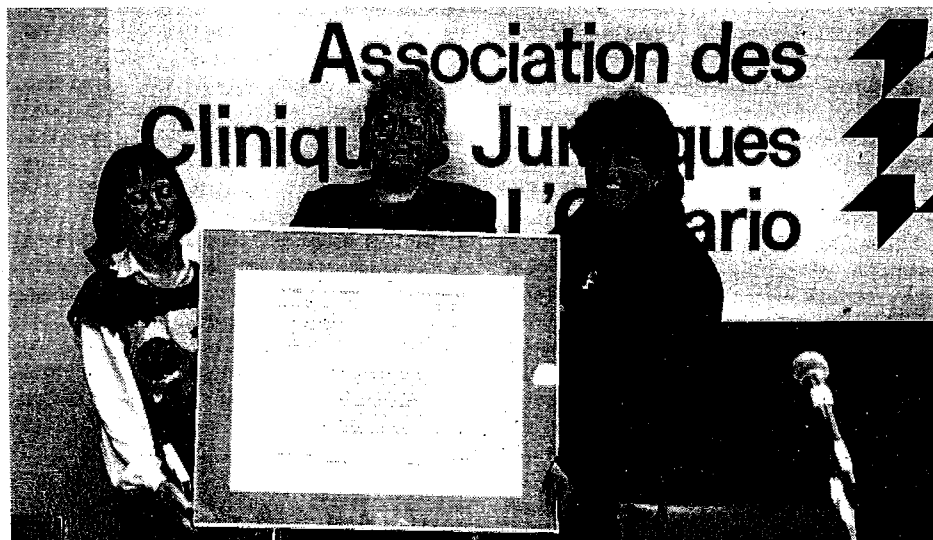
“The people we serve are the people who end up on our board and staff,” Stata says. “We always remember where we came from. We have an area we work in and we

stay there and we don't let professionals try to get us to be professional. Board and staff and poor people, we're all the same people. There's not a power struggle because everyone has a voice. People who are out to get things for themselves usually move on anyway.”

OCLISS has served as a model for low income groups in other communities. Last summer, women in Sudbury, Ontario established Welfare Rights to provide counselling and advocacy services for social assistance recipients in that northern community of 150,000.

Helen Jantti, Carmen Boivin and Helen Belanger, three women graduates from a social work program at a Sudbury community college, started Welfare Rights with a grant from the federal government. They have all lived on social assistance at some time, and have been unemployed since the grant money ran out in September. However, they have kept the service going on a volunteer basis and are applying for new sources of funding.

“I thought we accomplished a great deal,” says Boivin. “At the end there were more cases than we could handle. It felt good being able to help people; social workers didn't have the time to explain things to them. I'm at home right now and



OCLISS receiving F.R. Scott Award from the Association of Ontario Legal Clinics in November 1986.

OCLISS

I still get one or two phone calls a day from people asking me to help them."

Welfare Rights defines its role as explaining the welfare system to recipients and making sure they know about all the programs available to them. For example, special assistance — which provides money for items such as eye glasses, prescription drugs, dentures and dental work, emergency transportation, and first and last month's rent — is available for social assistance recipients, but often isn't publicized. Clients have to know about it in order to ask for it.

Default of spousal support is another area of concern. Deductions are made from the monthly Family Benefits Allowance of women who are supposed to be receiving support payments, but many are not actually receiving the money from their estranged husbands. In such cases, Boivin says, a group like Welfare Rights can provide needed support while the women argue their cases with welfare officials. She says some women are too timid to do this on their own. "They don't go after things. They take it for whatever it is; they accept what they're told."

Welfare Rights workers received mixed reactions from the social agencies they dealt with. General Welfare Assistance (GWA) administrators worked with the group and the Sudbury region's health and social services director even suggested that Welfare Rights relieved some of the burden from the region's busy caseworkers. But, Family Benefits Allowance (FBA) administrators refused to meet with Welfare Rights. "I often got the feeling," Boivin recalls, "that maybe some agencies didn't really want us there because we were giving them a butt in the ass."

One irony of groups like Welfare Rights is that they are often dependent on the very groups they are trying to "butt in the ass." Among proposed projects, Welfare Rights plans to campaign for a guaranteed annual income, raise the issue of the plight of widowed women under the age of 60, and lobby for an ID card which would allow welfare recipients to cash their cheques. But first the group has to find some money.

While OCLISS and Welfare Rights are examples of region-wide organizations, many tenant associations in individual public housing communities are accomplishing similar things. Regent Park, Canada's oldest and largest public housing community, can almost be seen as a small city within itself. About 20,000 people live there in the heart of Toronto. The first residences date back to 1949; yet this community made up largely of single mothers and children just got its own community centre last autumn.

"It took 17 years to get it built," says



Queen's Park rally of welfare rights activists, October 1984.

Carol Walsh, a member of the Regent Park Residents Association (RPRA), and the residents' representative on the committee of city, provincial, and social service agency officials who co-ordinated the building of the centre. "It was just one thing after another, and one battle after the other, and the determination of people to make it work."

The RPRA hopes to operate the new community centre on a resident-management model; residents can make their own decisions and hire their own people to work in the centre, if they can come up with a management board and ongoing core funding within the next two years.

The programs sponsored by the RPRA are tailored to meet the needs of the citizens in the community. Two of those projects are a community garden and a food depot. For three years now the community garden has helped put fresh vegetables on the tables of Regent Park homes. Last summer fresh tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, potatoes, leeks, beets, parsnips, cabbage and green onions were available to all tenants who asked for them.

The RPRA first asked the Metro Toronto Housing Authority for a plot of land to grow some vegetables and flowers in the spring of 1984. "They said if it was successful the first year they could give us a bigger plot of land," says RPRA co-ordinator, Angela Crichlow. And it's been so successful that the housing authority has since provided more land, a rototiller, and other garden supplies.

Although some funding was provided to hire two students last summer, most of the gardening has been done by volunteers from the community. "We were out there forking, hoeing, breaking the ground and

Barb Carss is a graduate student in environmental studies who has worked with low income support groups in Ontario.

everything," says Crichlow. The residents also got together to prepare garden produce for three community dinner nights featuring West Indian, Vietnamese and vegetarian food. Crichlow, a 16-year resident of Regent Park, says this is the sort of community spirit which has made the residents' association strong.

Many of the executive members put in full work weeks but, of course, none of them is paid. "I keep telling people this association is standing because of dedicated, volunteering people. If we didn't care, we wouldn't be here," Crichlow says.

The four volunteers at the food depot are some of the busiest people. The food depot was originally set up to serve Regent Park tenants, but recently people from outside the community have been seeking emergency help. "If people are hungry, I'll give them food. It doesn't matter where they're from," Crichlow explains.

Other projects are more political in nature. The Regent Park Sole Support Mothers, for example, is a collective established in 1981 to deal with some of the day-to-day issues facing low-income mothers. The group focuses on issues within the community as well as city-wide and province-wide matters; it is an organized, supportive body which makes individuals feel less alone in their dealings with government agencies.

The group helps residents seeking to transfer from one subsidized unit to another, and it lends support to empty-nesters — those women who are told they are overhoused and must move because their children have grown up and left home. The group also monitors things like maintenance and elevator safety. Outside the community, the Sole Support Moms are lobbying for subsidized transit passes and are scrutinizing Family Benefits Allowance and General Welfare Assistance regulations. MARC — the Mothers Action Rights Committee — was set up to help mothers deal with the Children's Aid Society and its workers.

More important, Walsh says the Sole Support Moms provide the emotional support and restore the dignity which the social services system often robs from its clients. "The resident association is super. It builds your character. Even though you are down and out with no money, you still have your dignity, you still have your beliefs," she says. "Some people say we're welfare bums, but do they take the time to talk to us, to ask us why we're here, what happened, and what we're doing about it? I would like to get out and have my house back and have my job back, but I will never feel this close, this unity, when I'm out in society. Society doesn't help you do this." □

women plan toronto



by Birgit Sterner

Wouldn't it be nice if ... "I could live and work and shop in the same community"; ... "there were more understanding of the housing needs, not only of seniors, but of all special segments of society"; ... "all of Metro's residents could have a feeling that they were part of a community."

These "dreams" are not fantasy; they are the very real concerns of women who live in a city. The city is Toronto, Canada; the concerns are those of a wide and representative range of women; the project which recorded them is Women Plan Toronto. A previous article in *W & E* (8(1) Winter 1986) described the consultative process that we developed to encourage women's critical examination of traditional urban planning, zoning, design and servicing patterns in light of their own experiences, needs and aspirations. Then, we were a research project; now, we are an innovative organization seeking to improve the quality of life in our city. The project's goals were twofold: to produce a set of planning guidelines that reflect women's needs, and a plan of action to put these into practice. The four-phased process we developed to meet these goals was guided throughout by a commitment to participatory research.

First, we met with 25 women's groups: young, old, native, immigrant, business, home-making, employed, disabled, middle class, transient, single women and sole support mothers. The women were asked to draw and describe their communities, areas of activity and aspects of their environments which support and frustrate their varied activities and roles. They were then invited to share their dreams about the changes that they would like to see take place. They had fun. Drawing made it easier for women to visualize and talk about their ideas and helped build a sense of group identity. "I do like to be asked about what we are looking for. Who would ever ask us any other time in

our life? It is difficult to get into that frame of mind to be able to speak freely; and after this I have to go back into that other world and forget about all that I have dreamed today." The "wouldn't it be nice if ..." statements were graphically illustrated by a facilitator. In one instance the discussion led to a demonstration against a restaurant owner who refused to admit mothers with children. He changed.

We consolidated the experiences and aspirations expressed by the women in the report "Women Plan Toronto — Shared Experiences and Dreams." Our original intent had been to summarize the sessions and to give some preliminary planning

Wouldn't it be nice if . . .

and design recommendations. The discussions, however, revealed that many women felt isolated, powerless and far removed from any planning policies or processes. The report therefore became something different and perhaps far more important. By simply grouping the women's own statements, it helped to unify disparate groups around common concerns; issues raised by disabled women, for instance, appear with those raised by mothers with young children in strollers trying to negotiate our streets and transit system.

The women's narratives were presented under four titles: *My Place, My Community, Getting Around, and Finding Understanding and Support*. The subtitles under each section give a quick overview of the main issues which were raised. Under *My Place*, for example, the headings include: finding a place, coping with housing we didn't design, affording a place, coping with chores, caring for chil-

dren, needing a place for myself. The report was sent to all women who participated in the discussions and to groups, agencies and the media who had expressed interest in the project.

Each copy carried an invitation to the third step: to help shape a workshop which would try to prioritize the issues raised and to plan ways to realize them. The one day workshop featured small discussion groups organized around the main headings of the report, with the addition of health and safety. Day care and a school-aged children's workshop took care of the youngest age groups. Plenary sessions brought together the prioritized issues and recommendations for action from each discussion group, and underlined the need for urban planning, design and services to take into account the complexity of women's lives, and their different roles and circumstances.

The workshop concluded with a commitment to go forward on the impetus created by the project and to strive towards a city which would better meet women's needs. Many of the women helped formulate this sentiment into a mandate for the group: "We are now an innovative organization which seeks to enhance the quality of life in our city. As a resource/reference group we are a voice for women's planning concerns — specifically those expressed in our report. We are involved in using creative strategies including lobbying, to voice planning alternatives. We hope to become an umbrella organization for other groups. Our desire is to educate ourselves and others about the processes required to facilitate change." We have since realized that step four, which was to consist of the development of planning, design and servicing recommendations, would have to be postponed since the link between women's awareness and the specific practices of these fields was still too conceptual. We are therefore working on both the educa-

tion and action fronts to make the link more tangible.

Realizing that women need to become more aware of urban planning and that urban planners need more awareness of women's needs, we are arranging workshops with both groups. We have initiated information sessions for women with the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto and the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department. A conflict resolution workshop for women has also been held. Workshops with planners focus on heightening their awareness and understanding, and the need to communicate with specific subgroups when making planning recommendations. Two sets of "how-to" kits consolidating the content and method of these workshops will be made available to future groups of women and planners.

On the action front we have made several submissions at public meetings/hearings: in support of work place daycare, neighbourhood stores, and cleaning up Toronto's Waterfront; to the Social Welfare Assistance Review hearings; to the Toronto Transit Commission on scheduling and proposed route changes. Most of these were made by women who had previously never written or presented submissions or appeared in the media. We have supported nominations of two sole-support tenants to the Metro (public) Housing Authority, and of a woman to the Toronto Transit Commission which has never had a woman citizen member. The Canadian Institute of Planners invited us to present the process and transportation findings of Women Plan Toronto to their 1986 national conference, and we are organizing a panel on "Clients without Voices" for their 1987 conference in Toronto, as well as doing a workshop for the Environmental Design Research Associates conference in Ottawa in May. We are also assisting in a research project to establish where, when and why women feel safe and unsafe in the city; we hope that videotaping and discussions of such areas with women will lead to design recommendations which will allow us to enjoy our city more fully.

In summary, the discussion groups, the report, workshops, our interventions and media attention have all encouraged women to look at their environments more critically and to take action on specific issues. Women Plan Toronto, which at one time seemed like a dream, is now very definitely a voice to be heard in the decisionmaking processes which affect our lives. □

Birgit Sterner is a process consultant who has played a leading role in the development of Women Plan Toronto.

Changing Places

by Regula Modlich

“Women? That's not a land use issue.” A constructive and timely refutation of this all too common attitude among planners is presented in the report from the Greater London Council's Women's Committee: *Changing Places: Positive Action on Women and Planning* draws together some of the initiatives that have been taken in London over the last few years to improve the urban environment for women. Ironically, *Changing Places* also marks the Women's Committee's last publication before the entire GLC was axed by the Thatcher government in March 1986.

The report reviews the situation of women in London vis-à-vis several planning issues, makes recommendations for improvements in the planning process in each of these, illustrating with examples

the kinds of action that some London boroughs have taken.

Certain administrative weaknesses and needs are common to all the areas at issue: the need for more and better data collection and research which is not only gender-specific but often also specific to the ethnicity, age, economic and/or physical handicaps of women; the importance of continuing consultation; the need for co-ordinated interdepartmental approaches, and the value of policy statements in local planning documents which can then be used for specific agreements in development proposals.

The British situation has an advantage over many jurisdictions in that the inclusion of women's issues in the planning process has a legal basis in the incorporation of social planning considerations in the Town Planning legislation, a position further supported by a growing body of law and precedent, including obligatory public participation and anti-discriminatory laws.

Consulting with Women: Special approaches are needed to communicate and consult with women who may otherwise remain outside the consultation process. Written material must be made relevant to women; women-only meetings are frequently necessary to draw women out; compensation, transportation and child care are important to enable them to attend. Translations into other languages, braille and/or audio tapes are also important mechanisms to involve otherwise excluded women.

Statistics: Preconceived and often misleading assumptions, the myth of objectivity and frequent factual shortcomings limit the usefulness of much of our statis-



MAGGIE MURRAY/FORMAT

Caring for others.

Regula Modlich is a planning consultant who was instrumental in starting the project Women Plan Toronto.



SARAH SAUNDERS/PHOTO CO-OP

Safety

tical information. This need not be so if less conventional techniques are used.

- *Only after the London Travel Diary of 2000 people's weekly trips included gender and ethnicity-specific surveys did it reveal significant differences in travel patterns of subgroups which had never before been considered.*

Housing: Housing is a paramount issue in women's lives, and they bear the brunt of poor conditions and design. Housing should be adequate in quantity, quality, location and affordability. Tenure should be treated as a land-use issue and be included in guidelines for development agreements. Development applicants should demonstrate accessibility of sites to shopping, schools, play spaces, parks and health facilities. All ground floor dwellings should comply with accessibility standards, and housing policies should include guidelines for hostels and rooming accommodation.

- *A gender-specific housing survey revealed that for many women's groups the standard dwelling with a master (large) and one or more children's (small) bedrooms, was unsuitable.*

Caring: "More women care for sick, disabled or frail people than for able bodied children under 16." Caring is enormously emotionally and physically demanding, underpaid, undervalued, time consuming and often without alternatives for the care giver. Comprehensive policies on community care should include hostels, facilities

for their residents, as well as for care givers and residents in private dwellings. The special needs of ethnic and other minorities as care givers and care receivers have to be considered.

- *The Lambeth Community Care Hospital has a short-stay unit to give care givers some weekends off; the Camden Centre for under Two's evolved from a mother and baby playgroup to include resting space and classes for care givers with a multi-ethnic staff.*

Jobs and Skills: "The physical separation of residential areas from work areas and the general resistance of planning against introduction of employment into residential areas are a major constraint on job choices of women." Strangely, there are no recommendations to question land use segregated or land use based planning; such an analysis could have provided the basis for a section headed "Community Planning," which is missing from the document.

The report stresses the importance of Homework (such as textile work) being done in women's homes, and urges public support for homeworkers. It encourages public agencies to facilitate the granting of temporary permits which are required in Britain.

- *The Voluntary Action Council was publicly supported to provide a centre for homeworking which included a play room, meeting rooms, offices to counsel homeworkers on rights and to break their isolation; the Lewisham Women's Employment Project includes training, research, women workers' rights nights, etc.*

Mobility: The report underlines the important role of local boroughs in lobbying for improved local public transit, and urges support for such initiatives as Dial-A-Ride and the GLC Taxicard scheme for women with disabilities.

- *The Disabled in Camden (DISC) have formed their own access scrutiny team; Tower Hamlet Community Transport held car maintenance courses with women instructors, conducted confidence driving sessions for women minibus drivers, and are planning their own minibuses for a safe women's transport project.*

Safety from Violence: This is high priority as a planning issue; safety policies should be included in local plans and development briefs. Immediate action is needed against advertising and graffiti which suggest women's sexual availability to men.

- *The Haringey Comprehensive Housing Service set up an interdepartmental "defensible space working party" to coordinate different departmental responses to safety matters and to put forward improved policies and practices.*

Shopping: Planning has tended to focus on retailers' rather than consumers' needs. The report also suggests priority of pedestrian over vehicular access, the provision of residential uses with separate entrances over commercial stores, extended evening store hours, and the restriction of vehicles in shopping streets to buses, taxis and bikes and/or to certain times of day rather than total pedestrianization.

- *The Arndale Centre in Wandsworth included such facilities as shoppers' creches, baby change and feeding facilities, automatic sliding doors, total wheelchair access.*



RAISSA PAGE/FORMAT

Social life

Social Lives: It is important to recommend the need for "women only" spaces, as well as additional public open spaces.

- *South London Women's Centre in Brixton includes a range of classes, such as self-defence and jewellery making, a cafe, a pool, TV room, creche, large meeting room and advice and information resources and spaces for individual women's groups; the Calthorpe Project in Camden started with a plot of land which local citizens succeeded in keeping from being developed. It now has a garden and a prefabricated hut for English classes for Asians, Bengali mother-tongue classes, video and batik workshops, child minders' support groups, a toy library with child care, a daily play group and drop-in session.*

This outline is necessarily brief; for more information contact Planning Policy Group, London Strategic Policy Unit, Middlesex House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London Sw1V 2SB. □

Women and Man-Made Environment:

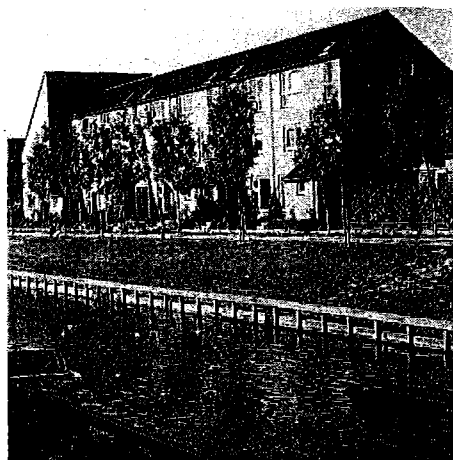
The Dutch Experience

by Jan Penrose

In the Netherlands, the women's movement has played an important role in drawing attention to the capacity of spacial organization to advance or retard changes in gender relations within society. Over the past 25 or 30 years, Dutch women have established an infrastructure that puts them in a position to begin humanizing the man-made environment. Their success in this regard is both admirable and inspiring but their difficulties in paralleling advice with practical influence suggest that persistence is still a byword for women in planning.

The earliest impetus for women's involvement in Dutch planning came from diverse women's organizations which lobbied for the formation of Women's Advisory Committees for Housing in the 1950s. Their efforts were successful in that such committees were actually established in municipalities but there were qualifiers: the positions were voluntary and members were appointed by the mayor and aldermen. This meant that women's input remained largely subjugated to the decisions of men. At this time, women's sphere of activity was effectively limited to the municipal level and to encouraging planners to incorporate the practical insights of women into the design and layout of housing.

It was not until 1975 that advances in the women's movement as a whole led to the establishment of an infrastructure which encouraged female involvement at all levels of planning. At this time, the national government formally recognized the widespread neglect of women's interests in Dutch society by setting up a Women's Emancipation Advisory Commission to assist in the creation and implementation of a coherent policy on women's emancipation. Two years later, the government appointed the first Undersecretary of State for Emancipation, and established an Interdepartmental Coordination Committee responsible for ensuring that all ministries are involved in the preparation and promotion of women's



Row housing in Almere.

emancipation policies. In addition, each ministry has its own emancipation committee which must integrate the broad objectives of women's emancipation policy into the department's specific field of activity. This means that the Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and Environment among others must conduct its activities in accordance with the objectives of women's emancipation, which are currently: 1) redistribution of paid and unpaid work; 2) economic independence for women; and 3) combatting sexual violence.

By coordinating the activities of a whole range of women's interest groups, and by providing them with the respectability of

Jan Penrose is a doctoral candidate in Geography at the University of Toronto, whose research is focussed on the Netherlands.

governmental support, the general emancipation policy has raised the profile of women's issues and stimulated the formation of additional organizations in specific fields. In physical planning and housing, such progress is evidenced by changes in the objectives of Women's Advisory Committees for Housing. Where their advice to planners initially focussed on the pragmatic concerns of the housewife, their current input reflects the changing position of women in society. Their traditional interest in the design and layout of housing has expanded to include the environment of the home in a much broader sense. In 1983, these municipally-based committees were complemented by a National Foundation of Women, Building and Housing which sought to combine and coordinate incentives and to stimulate women's involvement in all areas of building and housing.

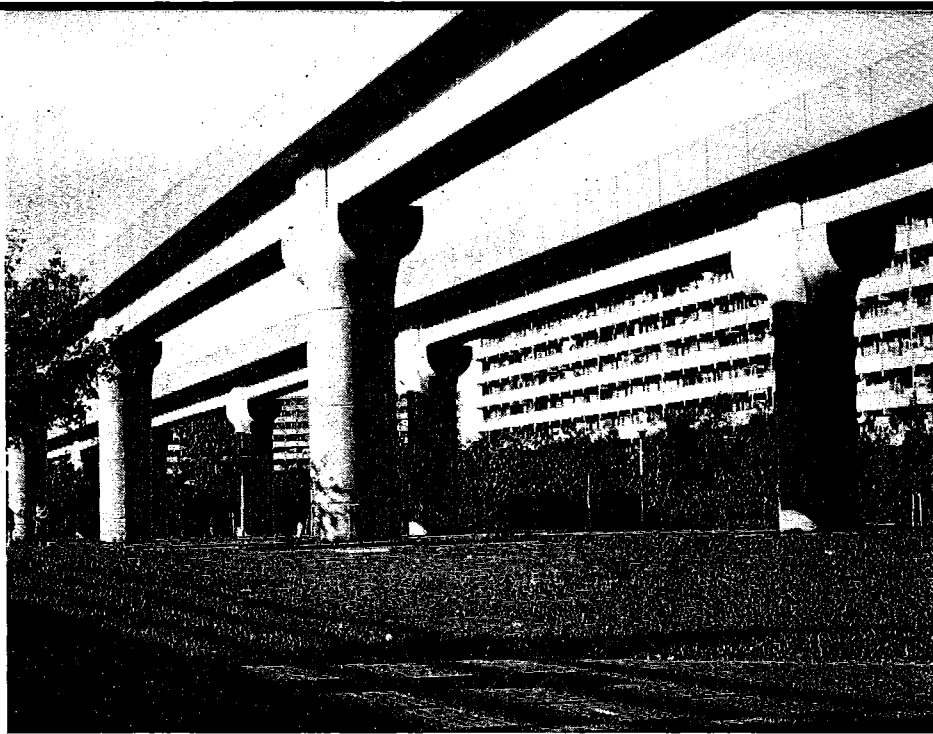
At the same time, a number of women working in physical planning and housing set up their own working party within the Netherlands Institute for Physical Planning and Housing. This professional organization has provided women who work in physical planning and housing with a forum for discussing their role in humanizing the man-made environment, for presenting concerted analyses of developments in their fields from the perspective of the female user, and for promoting new ideas about the layout of the home and its environment. The very existence of this kind of group is indicative of women's growing involvement at decision-making levels. However, the fact that it is perceived as necessary suggests that formal channels have not been effective enough in implementing the objectives of women's emancipation policy.

This latter suggestion is borne out by practical experience. Since the 1970s, advances within the women's movement have helped to structure and, thereby, strengthen support for women's interests in the fields of planning and housing, but women's actual involvement in these fields has remained overwhelmingly re-

sponsive or ameliorative rather than initiatory. Two examples should illustrate the tendency for planning in the Netherlands to circumvent women's interests and to minimize their professional influence. At the same time, these examples show how a strong emancipation policy has lent structure to efforts to alter the existing man-made environment.

The first example is Bijlmermeer, a massive high-rise housing project of the 1960s located on the outskirts of Amsterdam. At the time of its inception, planning policies were based on the strict division of land use and Bijlmermeer was specifically designed to fulfill an urgent need for housing. In retrospect it seems to have been designed with the intention of keeping women in their place. The lack of local employment opportunities, a paucity of day-care facilities and a public transportation system which catered to the needs of people who worked full-time in Amsterdam, reinforced the traditional male/female distribution of paid and unpaid work. This set-up effectively precluded greater economic independence for women. In addition, the physical layout of this residential area, while aesthetically interesting from a distance, was dangerous to walk through. The net result was a further reinforcement of women's isolation.

By the time an emancipation policy was introduced, Bijlmermeer had acquired a deeply entrenched reputation as an unattractive place to live. Although the units themselves were well designed, the surrounding environment was viewed as dangerous and undesirable and the area came to be dominated by those who were already marginalized in Dutch society,



JAN PENROSE

The Amsterdam subway passes overhead through Bijlmermeer.

obstructions were removed. Accessibility was further enhanced by the addition of exterior elevators which created alternate entrances and eliminated long walks through enclosed public galleries. Finally, intercom systems and locks were installed in entrances to improve security in the buildings themselves.

The creation of a safer environment has helped to ease women's isolation in Bijlmermeer but the problems of female restriction to unpaid domestic labour and, consequently, economic dependence have been more difficult to address. Although local improvements in day-care and public transportation have granted women

The prospects for employment which these developments present suggest that women will gradually acquire access not just to jobs, but to jobs that cover a full range of skill requirements and, hence, prestige. Where easy access is important to those trying to combine domestic and paid work, the qualitative aspect is important in righting the traditional imbalance between male and female employment.

Experiences associated with Bijlmermeer clearly indicate the difficulty of adapting man-made environments to the changing needs of women. The case of Almere, a totally new town 20 kilometers to the east of Amsterdam, offered the unusual possibility of incorporating women's interests into all phases of planning. Here was a chance for women to play an initiatory role, but while the land was empty and new it was destined to comply with policies that were old and established, and man-made. Despite remarkable advances in emancipation, women's organizations did not participate in the planning of Almere.

Although women's organizations could be ignored, planners were compelled to incorporate the goals of Dutch emancipation policy into their plans for Almere. This, combined with changes in the basic objectives of planning in the Netherlands, meant that Almere avoided some of the problems which had characterized Bijlmermeer. However, it also meant that women's role in planning the built environment remained largely reactive.

The most dramatic difference between Almere and earlier planning projects is an

(continued on page 26)

In 1977 the Dutch government appointed the first Undersecretary of State for Emancipation.

particularly immigrants and the unemployed. Women's committees were not involved in the initial planning of Bijlmermeer but local women's groups have since played an active role in efforts to reverse the cyclical degradation of their neighbourhood.

These efforts began with improvements in safety. Public open spaces were better maintained and brush was cleared away from the sides of walking and cycling paths. An enormous, central parking garage — the scene of much violence — was partially destroyed. To reduce problems of orientation, building entrances were clearly demarcated with colour and all

greater freedom, the cost — in both time and money — of travelling to work, continues to discourage female participation in paid employment; these disincentives are even more prohibitive for women seeking part-time jobs.

Although there are currently no employment opportunities within the residential area, ongoing changes suggest a brighter future for the women of Bijlmermeer. In the first place, their neighbourhood lies close to a large industrial area which continues to attract new businesses. Second, the central area of Bijlmermeer is in the process of being built up with offices and a large shopping centre.

Working for

Economic Planning and the Local State

by Sheila Rowbotham



In the 1980s, the Thatcher government launched very overt attacks, not simply on the working class, but on many aspects of public service, which people had come to assume were part of the welfare state and were going to stay. A lot of people who had never been at all active on the left or in the women's movement, got involved and began to feel that politics was actually affecting their lives in practical ways.

In London, the Greater London Council, as the local elected government, came to symbolize some of the new connections. It became one of the government's main targets. The Labour group at the GLC came into power in 1981, in a great flurry of horrified publicity. Their first public act was to welcome an Unemployed March For Jobs into County Hall. The sight of all the marchers, and their sleeping bags and bundles, camped in this great building was seen as almost an affront to its pompous municipal majesty. This was only a sign of what was to come.

Although London's local government had a Labour tradition, it had a tradition of a more Fabian kind. The idea was that only a certain sort of people came within the building, that decent public services would be provided, but only by experts to people who would be grateful. With the

new GLC, it became common to see the halls of the building bustling with all sorts of people. You could pass a room and the Fire Brigade's Band would be rehearsing; Buddhists would be practicing peace things; there would be children around

Economic planning isn't just a matter of getting in an expert and a researcher . . . It is also finding ways of unifying and coordinating the knowledge which exists already among workers.

because of the Women's Committee meetings and the crèches; there were lots of miners all the time because the Miners' Strike was on; there were people with disabilities who had previously been barred from the building because of its structure;

you could meet pop music groups like UB40. There was an extraordinary spirit of bringing in new people, that County Hall ought to serve trade unions, and be accessible to people and to new social movements.

The Labour Council realized that they had certain powers as local councillors, and they had a manifesto which put a priority on the need to develop jobs which met needs. They drew on a whole range of ideas which had been developing; finding ways in which — by drawing on the resources of the people of London — they could make sure that there was a means of actually putting ideas into effect. One way was to approach rank and file trade unionists to find ways to use public money to finance jobs by investing in public industry. The Greater London Enterprise Board was established to do this.

They also drew on the political experience of the community struggles which had developed since the 1970s. Those community struggles had often been quite hostile to the Labour Councils, which were thought not to be getting the resources out to the people who needed them. There was a whole background of battle, which Cynthia Cockburn's book, *The Local State*, documents. In these struggles, black women particularly had

or Women



VAL WILMER/FORMAT

Sheila Rowbotham, a British feminist historian and author, worked for three-and-a-half years in the Popular Planning Unit of the Greater London Council's Industry and Employment Branch. On November 29th 1986, at a gathering hosted by the Marxist Institute in Toronto, she spoke to an audience of one hundred on "Economic Planning and the GLC: A Socialist-Feminist Perspective." The following is an excerpt from her address, edited by Susan Prentice.

been prominent from the late 1970s in issues around education. Women had also been struggling on the issue of health: for example, the Elizabeth Garret Hospital strike in which the workers and patients united.

Economic planning isn't just a matter of getting in an expert and a researcher, despite the important assistance of that knowledge. It is also finding ways of unifying and coordinating the knowledge which exists already among workers. In the discussions, socialist feminists and black women were quick to include the knowledge of the community and of women.

In the Industry and Employment branch, the domestic labour debate was not forgotten. In discussions about what sort of jobs we might make, quite quickly Hilary Wainwright argued for making jobs from childcare. She thought, "Now what is the best way to get this to be policy?" So she wrote what is called a Leader's Report. Ken Livingstone, the leader of the GLC, stood in the Council Chamber and said "It shall be the Council's policy that domestic labour will be recognized." So we got the policy.

Echoing in my ears was something more than just discussions on domestic labour. There was something which a

woman in Flin Flon (Canada) said to Meg Luxton in her book, *More Than A Labour of Love*, which always stayed with me. She said "What I'd really like to do is change pretty well everything about the way people get fed, clothed and live. It takes lots of time, lots of work, and not just one person to make such big changes. It seems if you don't do something, no-one will. But if one person starts and keeps things going, others will too."

When I first got to the GLC, the economic development group was just a small thing, just a circle that used to sit around. I just addressed everybody on the arguments about domestic labour and these kinds of points. It meant that the *Economic Strategy* took into account not simply waged labour, but also the activity that goes into maintaining life. We weren't simply there to document and analyze, but to figure out an alternative approach to the economy. I think that this approach is still of value because it does give strength to resistance if you aren't simply "against," but are confident of an alternative possibility. The problem is, of course, that reality is much more complex than a concept, even a rather good concept like domestic labour.

The GLC was abolished. It left an example, and it left some projects. We got

so far, and we were chopped. The most hopeful thing will be if people take this stuff and let it sprout somewhere else.

It is important to know what you are up against. It is an important project, because it suggests a means of moving out of a particular mess we're in, a way that doesn't simply say "Revolution" — which seems to get postponed for a long time — or electing a Labour government and hoping it will do things after you've elected it.

The GLC example may sound like it was about small things, but what it really adds up to is that we were challenging several controlling features at the same time. We challenged the question of redistribution of resources, which has been an old battle in local government in London. As well, we addressed redistribution that doesn't simply take on class, but takes on forms of inequality which remain hidden, which aren't waged labour. Things like access to public services, for instance. The Women's Committee discovered that one of the groups which uses transport disproportionately more than other groups in London is women. The whole design and planning of public transit in no way takes women's needs into account. It is really difficult to get push chairs on; the routes aren't designed in terms of shopping, etc.

In addition to the questions of redistri-



SARAH SAUNDERS/PHOTO CO-OP

A GLC childcare information stall.

bution of resources, there is the shift in political power. The claim of social need really challenged the prevailing definition of the economy. A practical example was that in our policy we were supposed to be creating jobs that met need. In practice what was happening was that as people were putting in applications for funding, it was much easier to get projects past the legal and financial people if we emphasized the jobs side, not the need. Need is seen as something amorphous and not very important because of the whole way the term "economy" is used. "Economy" is usually used in terms of saving money, usually for business. In fact, it has a wider meaning. In Greek, economy and ecology both mean something about the household — but the term has long lost that meaning.

The GLC was also reconstituting the very act of planning. Planning is usually seen as a thing that comes out of the brains of expert planners, and then is sent out to people who — perhaps — might be consulted. But the idea of planning coming from the people, the people's plan, means that we were challenging the way planning is usually conceived of in our society. That means that we were really challenging the way that knowledge is seen. This is something that we were very concerned with, to challenge the way certain forms of knowledge are put in a hierarchy. There are lots of different names for it: know-how, knowing, knowledge, theory. And certain forms of knowledge are considered to be more important.

"Tacit knowledge" was described as a skilled male workers' ability to judge a distance very precisely. It also relates to a whole lot of women's skills which are learned from being young in relation to being domestic: the ability that Virginia Woolf talks about, to watch out of the corner of your eye when the saucepan is boiling.

There isn't any quick formula for making "popular planning" by making new forms of municipal bureaucracies. I don't want to sound pessimistic, but that is sometimes the way that what we were doing was interpreted.

After the GLC collapsed, I went to a conference in Edinburgh. It was a very posh and impressive, important conference. They thought that by having a talk on popular planning, and a conference on popular planning, they had done it. When, in fact, what they had there was the beginnings of a group of people who needed to run around and make sure they went to every tenant's group, every trade union branch, and every community group even to begin to start. They still seemed to see popular planning as a technique.

Popular planning has to come, not just by trusting people to get jobs and then to implement it, but from pressure from people below. And that means partly, that those people below have got to understand that they have a right to things which they've actually let the state get away with. Perhaps this doesn't sound very

women, particularly — although they had been there throughout the seventies — was for the first time unforgettably marked on the British trade union movement. It was an important strike because it was a sign of a new era.

If you've actually seen that something can be done, it convinces you and gives you the confidence in a way that words can never do. So if you have actually seen something work, people will keep at it. It gives confidence to people who don't usually speak on general things — and this applies to me. I wouldn't be standing here talking to you about issues of transforming economics (which I haven't studied) and transforming the nature of planning, except for the fact that I have seen, in a fragment, the possibility of it happening through people's activity. Once you've actually seen something done, I think that happened to a lot of Londoners.

Even though some people didn't like some aspects of what the GLC did, quite conservative people did like aspects of what was being done. Quite conservative people, for instance, approved of the increases in training, some of the attempts to conserve energy, and policies like that. So although it was presented as this wild leftist group, it did get a wide range of support. That kind of knowing through doing gives people strength.

I'll end by misquoting Langston Hughes. He wrote something that went rather like "Freedom is just icing on the cake until we learn to bake." One of the

*... the people's plan ... we were challenging the way
planning is usually conceived ...*

dramatic or revolutionary. But I think it is important, even if it sounds rather small. Many things start with one person standing up and saying "I don't think this is right, and I'm going to make a change."

There was a famous strike called Grundwisch's in the late 1970s in Britain. It happened because Mrs. Desai and her son, faced with dreadful conditions in the factory, went outside with a placard and had a petition and got workers to sign up to join a union. They didn't know how to find a union, although they'd seen things about unions on television, but through the Citizen's Advice Bureau they eventually got to the Law Centre which was how they came into contact with the Trades Council. That was one of the really major historical strikes. The role of Asian

things that was learned during my experience at the GLC was that while we on the left in Britain had a lot of discussion about theory during the 1970s, people didn't know practical things. People didn't know, for example, how you actually sawed the jigsaws that a group of Afro-Caribbean and Asian women had actually learned the skills to produce. Small things like this which were not the basis for revolutionary theory. I think the practical knowledge that people have in their work and the academic knowledge we have as intellectuals needs to be brought together, because there certainly are hard times ahead.

We must use every bit of the skills and experience that we have got and try to put them into new combinations. □

Rough Horizons

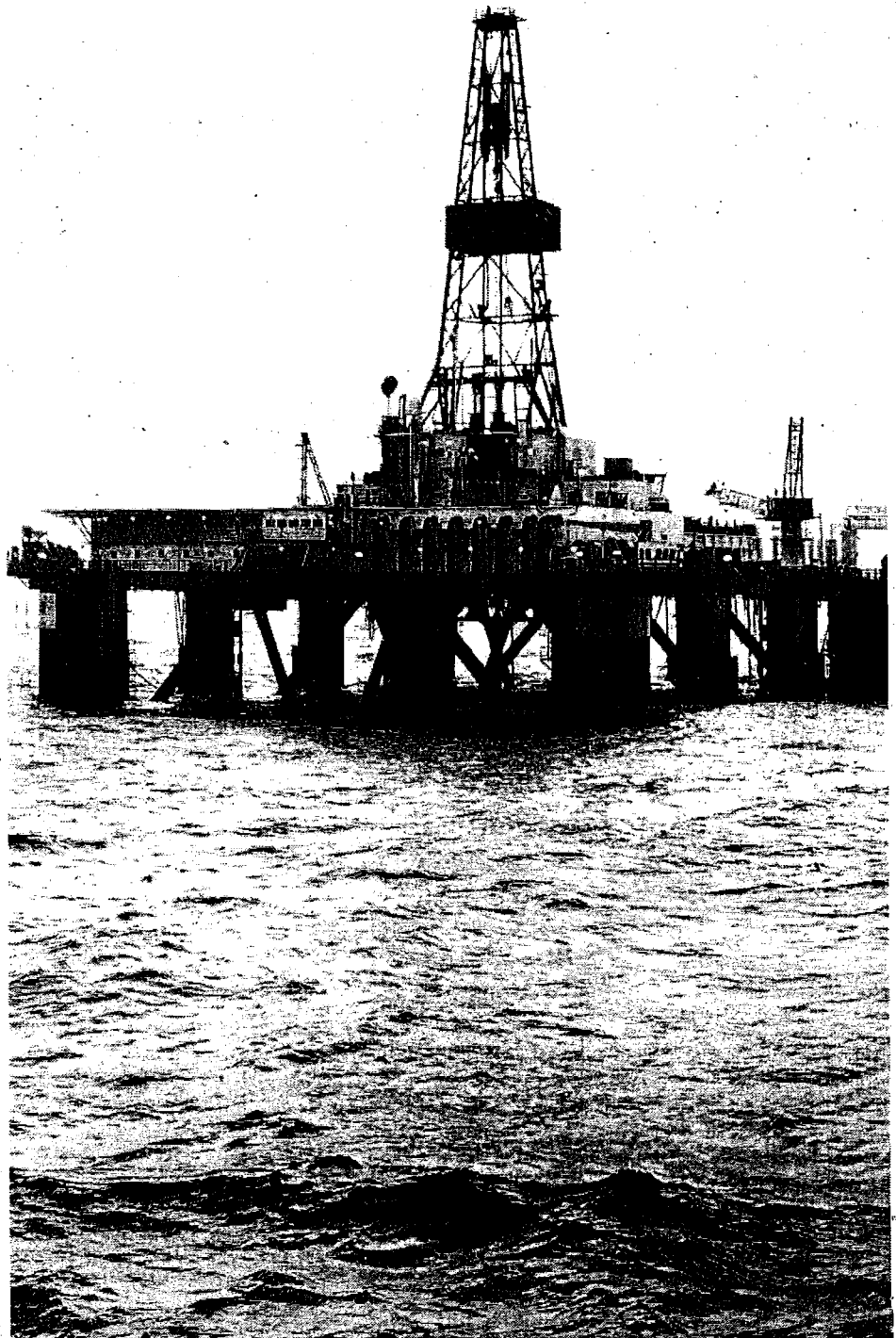
Women in Offshore Oil

by Irene Baird

There can be little doubt that strong institutional and personal barriers exist to female participation in the offshore oil industry. In the family, the school system and the labour market, men and women are led to expect that they will live their lives in patterned ways, and the limited presence of women in resource industries such as mining, forestry, trawler fishery and offshore oil reflects these patternings. Working or seeking employment in these industries is exceptional among career choices for women.

Why do women choose to work offshore and what happens to them once they are on the rigs? We did some interviews to find out. Not surprisingly, the numbers involved are few; in early 1985 we found only 23 women working in the Newfoundland offshore compared to 1,366 men, although this was an improvement over the one solitary woman in 1981. Neither is this situation peculiar to the western North Atlantic; a comparison with the Norwegian oil industry reveals much the same experience. In 1983 15,000 people were employed in the North Sea offshore sector, of whom 588, or 4 per cent, were women.

Women working offshore, and their motives for doing so, are as diverse as those of their male counterparts. Some women seconded the one who said: "I'm a sailor, I just want to be on the sea." For others, the work schedule and the intensity of the work and social relations make the regularity of onshore work difficult to contemplate. One said: "I couldn't work 9 to 5, day in and day out again. I don't know what I'd



Irene Baird is Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Planning, Newfoundland and Labrador Petroleum Directorate. This article is a revised version of a paper presented to the International Conference on Women and Offshore Oil, St. John's, Newfoundland, September 1985.

IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED

do if I had to leave that rig." Others have specific goals and timetables which do not include a long-term commitment to the offshore. One woman said: "No one wants to be offshore. Everyone is doing it to get the money that will allow them to do what they really want to do."

Money and time off are primary motivations. We can speculate that, especially for women in catering positions, these are considerable advantages, when waitresses, chambermaids and cooks in onshore positions make minimum wage, or slightly above. All the women working offshore reported a continual weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of their work. The money, time off and career advancement may motivate them to remain in the industry even at a cost to their personal lives.

Career advancement may be the single most important factor, but for the heavy majority of women working offshore that opportunity for advancement is very limited.

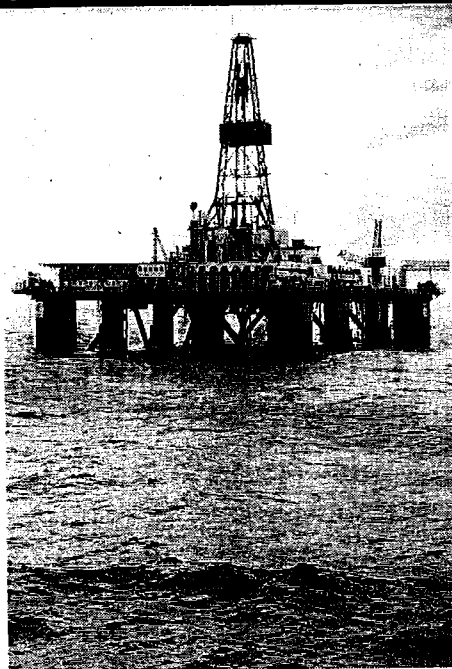
Most women interviewed said something similar to the words of one: "I'd like to make a career of it, but not if all I can do is stewarding. And where I'm working, it's once a steward, always a steward. I like it alright, but I don't want to do only that for the rest of my life."

The nature of the work requires long periods of time away from home and intensive contact with a relatively small group of co-workers, a pattern which may place stress on onshore family and social relationships. Most of those with a strong career commitment to the offshore are

Women working offshore, and their motives for doing so, are as diverse as those of their male counterparts.

either single or have partners who also work in the oil industry or in some comparable occupation. Many who are single foresee problems in establishing and maintaining personal relationships while working offshore. The women to whom we talked acknowledged inherent difficulties in reconciling work and their personal lives. But, while it is perhaps inaccurate to generalize, we may say that those with a strong commitment to a defined career path will give the industry priority over their personal lives.

Newfoundlanders, both male and



female, are no less susceptible than others to the lure of money, excitement and promotion evinced in oil patch imagery. One woman said: "You can work in oil for 20 or 30 years, and start with nothing and end up making \$140,000 a year. You can't do that anywhere else." But can she realistically ever expect to move close to that realm? As a cook, she earns \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year and may move into a chief steward position. While it is higher paying and more responsible, the acceptance of women in this position of authority has been questioned. As one woman said: "The men won't take orders from a woman, no matter how well you know your job."

The offshore jobs presently held by women are either the lowest on the salary scale or they are relatively well-paying but specialized services. This is despite the fact that Newfoundland females working offshore tend to have higher levels of formal education than their male co-workers.

The promotional ladder for the range of occupations held by women is truncated. Galley stewards may move to cook; cooks may move to steward. Sample catchers may move to mud-loggers, and to the limited range of geological positions. Medics and technical support services, such as radio operators and weather observers, are occupationally isolated with no direct steps above them.

The relatively small number of jobs in which women work also offer limited occupational mobility. In addition, questions of their ability to do the job or be in positions of authority have thus far prevented women from moving outside the service sector.

While the extent of overt discouragement

has lessened since they started working offshore, it still exists with varying degrees of subtlety. Thus far, the positions discussed are traditionally female jobs — cooking, cleaning and nursing. All that makes them "non-traditional" is their venue. But let us look at attitudes toward women in non-traditional jobs in the most extreme for an oil rig — on the drill floor, which serves as the most effective illustration of the influence of social and cultural factors on women's position. As one industry respondent commented: "I can't imagine any woman in her right mind putting herself in that environment. It's just flat ass tough work."

The offshore workplace is seen as a hostile and rugged environment by both industry insiders and the general public. The offshore oil rig has its own rules, its own values, its own culture, and the drill floor epitomizes that image and its reality. The formal and informal rules are central to doing the job and not jeopardizing safety. Successful rig workers are those who learn rules quickly and adopt them as their own, and this is most sharply defined on the drill floor.

One industry man said: "You can't shit on a woman the same way you can a man. You can put that into whatever sociological jargon you want to. It's authority by intimidation. The tension on the drill floor is intense."

Women find themselves as rather conspicuous novelties amid a sea of men.

Relaxation and leisure time occur inside, where women work and their presence is acceptable and welcomed; there seems to be unanimity that women's presence on the drill floor would not be welcomed, and none of the women interviewed expressed any desire to work there. Their reasons included both the severity of the work and the lack of acceptance by the men and the industry. Most thought that some women would be able to do the work, but all agreed that, as one said: "It'd have to be a pretty brazen woman to do it."

The women did show interest in deckwork, as roustabouts or maintenance crew, but industry officials have not hired women for these positions. At least one blamed women's own reluctance for this: "If they're not willing to approach us, I'm not going to dig them out of their holes. It's more that they've been trained away from

these jobs — that's more important than physical strength. You don't have to be Charles Atlas, but you have to be physically fit." However, women who have demonstrated that they are interested and able to do deckwork say they are passed over. "You've told everybody you want to go outside, and it still ends up with six guys ahead of you. I even stopped asking. It's too discouraging."

spicuous novelties amid a sea of men. One woman described going to the messroom: "The place is blocked — with men. They watch you from the minute you walk in, they watch what you eat, where you sit, how long you stay, how many cups of coffee you have and how you drink it. It's like you're the entertainment."

The role of friend and confidante is one well understood by the women working

should be no less and no more than the men's. They do feel that the social demands on them are greater, but are prepared to accept that. However, many feel that their performance on the job is more closely monitored than men's. Feeling that they have to work to higher standards than their male counterparts discourages and angers many of the women.

Their desire not to be treated differently extends to the area of affirmative action programs. One woman stated this opinion forcefully: "What I don't want to see is people like you, in positions of power, pushing to get women out there whether they're suitable or not. That is only going to make it hard for women out there now."

However, women offshore workers believe they have a responsibility toward other women. As one said: "I didn't go out there to be a pioneer, I wanted a job. But I know that is what I am, and how I, and other women, turn out will affect how many more they will hire."

Women working offshore identify themselves, first and foremost, as workers; their skeptical attitude towards affirmative action, their tendency to set very high standards for themselves, and their willingness to adopt the workplace ideology of individualism are but a few manifestations of this.

Women working offshore identify themselves, first and foremost, as workers . . . they set very high standards for themselves and adopt the workplace ideology of individualism.

Exclusion from deck positions means that many of the mechanical and trades positions are also closed to women; apprentices for these are usually recruited from the deck and the general knowledge that is gained there is necessary to supplement other forms of onshore training.

Just as the organization of labour on the rig remains quite exclusionary, so the politics of social relations keep women in their traditional roles. Women are very conscious of the existence of a well-defined status hierarchy, and of the confusions when hierarchy overlaps with friendship: "There's lots of status things that you have to know about — chains of command that you can't cross. Oh, you talk to everyone, but you have to remember who they are and where they fit in."

An offshore rig has been called a "total institution" and is called a "family" by women working on it. Its culture is one of crosscutting systems of authority and community, enveloped by isolation from home and cheek-to-jowl existence with co-workers. A sense of community develops among 80-odd disparate personalities. One woman said: "We're close. I think some of that may be due to having women out there, but even amongst themselves, they get along really well. I start to miss them when I'm onshore."

Yet, a social etiquette exists which prohibits emotional outbursts. There is a constant tension between camaraderie and maintenance of social distance. All the women interviewed said something similar to the words of one: "You have to live with the same people for 21 days. You can't start fights and you can't get really close to anyone. You just have to get along with everyone equally well."

Women find themselves as rather con-

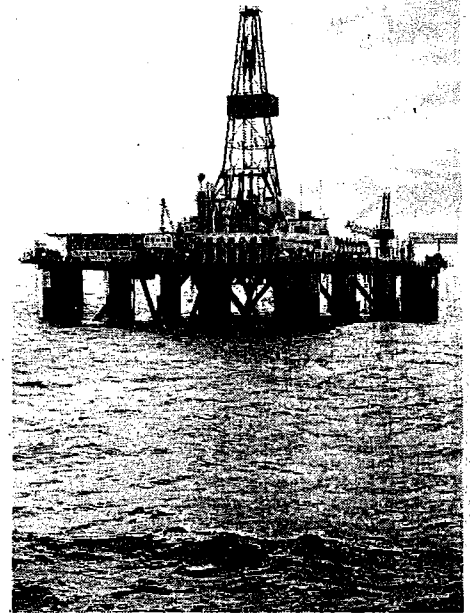
offshore. Most see their presence as important in recreating a sense of home. One said: "These guys can talk to me about things that maybe they wouldn't talk about to other guys. It's not a masculine thing to say: 'Suzy took her first step to day,' but they know they can tell me and I'll be excited with them."

However, acting as social facilitators also places greater stress on women. Other forms of work-related stress develop because of their small numbers. It may take longer and be more difficult for new women workers to gain acceptance. Because of the rarity of female presence and because of sexual tensions and antagonism toward "women doing men's jobs," men may be reticent about befriending new female workers. For women already feeling unwelcome and ostracized, the adjustment to an alien and harsh environment will be the more difficult.

Women must also be able to deal with sexual joking and innuendo. One woman gave some advice: "If you're gonna go offshore, just remember to bring a big, baggy sweater with you. That's a girl's uniform out there. You don't need to be singled out more than you already are." However, perhaps surprisingly, the level of sexual harassment reported by women is probably lower than on the average construction site.

Trying to blend into the crowd is important for other reasons as well. The sense of community and functioning of information networks are, as everywhere, based on similarity and shared experiences. Appearance emphasizing "otherness" may be enough to exclude women from vital support networks.

The need to "blend in" extends to the women's attitudes towards their work. They agreed that their work demands



But they are confined to occupations which are largely offshore extensions of "traditional" shore-based activities; and while they see themselves as workers, they are confronted with a raft of expectations to be nurturant, sympathetic and congenial — a role conflict which can contribute to levels of stress already attendant on work in an isolated total institution in the North Atlantic. □

A Word from You

Zimbabwe network

Sadly, due to our lack of foreign exchange in Zimbabwe, I am unable to renew my subscription to the journal, which I very much regret.

I would be pleased to hear from any readers of the journal who would like to know something about women in Zimbabwe, and who might be interested in networking with us here. Due to foreign currency constraints, we are able to obtain very little literature from overseas — so I would be happy to hear from any women who would like to assist us.

As a local consultant, I am working primarily with NGO's and donor agencies on a variety of rural development programs, many of which have addressed the problems of women in respect of health issues, agricultural and household work,

legal status, income-generating projects and the use of appropriate technology.

*Frances Chinemana
Harare, Zimbabwe*

Congratulations!

Congratulations on surviving to publish a 10th anniversary issue. You will find enclosed a subscription so that the Canadian Institute of Planners can get your message on a regular basis.

Some of your Canadian readers will be interested to know that professional membership in our Institute is no longer restricted to "land use" planners, but has been expanded to include the planning of public facilities, natural resources and services. This was in part a result of pressure from planners who work in these fields, a relatively high proportion of whom are women. We also welcome parti-

cipation through our magazine, *Plan Canada*.

Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

*David H. Sherwood, MCIP
Executive Director
Canadian Institute of Planners*

Don't change W & E

Some comments on the changes proposed for the magazine (*see A Word from Us, last issue*): I personally do not want to see it becoming less "academic": 1) the short, scholarly articles typical of the journal are useful for teaching and passing on to community groups, researchers in government, etc.; 2) other feminist journals exist, both in Quebec and in anglophone Canada, which adopt a more experiential approach to a variety of concerns, including the environment.

I agree with the principle of adopting a wider definition of "environment," but it is important not to get too involved in too many issues. I would not like to see the magazine lose its focus on the physical environment, since no other feminist journal has this valuable "specificity."

*Damaris Rose
INRS-urbanisation,
Université du Québec à Montréal*

TAKING SIDES

A Womb of One's Own

by Barbara Sanford

The discussion of surrogate wombs is not really an environmental issue, except perhaps for the baby inside. But it does have important implications for women, especially low-income women. The current controversy, once one discards the moralist overtones and the ideological obfuscation of free choice, has at its heart the issue of labour power as Marx never imagined it.

While it may be superficially amusing to imagine Karl pondering the categorization of the money exchanged — is it a wage for labour, rent for the spatial location or a price paid for the commodity produced? — the point is that there can be no fair rate of market exchange between people of unequal power, between people who have options and people who do not.

What, after all, is the nature of a woman's choice to bear children for others who can afford to pay, when she herself is likely to be desperate for money? Poverty rarely provides women with reasonable choices of occupation. Why else would women spend their lives scrubbing others' floors and toilets? Such jobs are neither lucrative nor in themselves rewarding.

Instead they provide wages so low that these women remain desperate enough to continue at it as long as they are able.

And what of bearing other people's children? \$10,000 for 9 months of a hazardous and tiring job does not sound particularly lucrative. The intrinsic rewards of pregnancy and childbirth exist, of course, for women who experience emotional bonding with their unborn child and anticipate the joys of their life together after the birth. Without these hopes and dreams, the rewards are no longer intrinsic. Only the exchange value remains... and wombs appear to be low-rent accommodation for the future children of the affluent who do not want to, or cannot, experience the risks and pain of child-bearing for themselves.

The Orwellian implications are not difficult to imagine: low-income single mothers bearing other people's children in order to feed and clothe their own, while the affluent professional woman can pursue her career and be a mother without the need for maternity leave or its disfiguring and inconvenient side effects.

Perhaps if we were all assured of adequate incomes, adequate housing and meaningful choices in work and leisure, some women would still be willing to bear children for others... though, as a mother, I find this difficult to imagine.

An Invitation to Contributors

We are always looking for new material. Help us to keep up-to-date and in touch by sending:

News of what you or your group are working on;

Observations about what is happening in your area;

Announcements for our events page;

Letters: Let us know what you think!

References and abstracts of books and articles to be noted "In Print";

Reviews (short ones) of books or shows;

Articles (to a maximum of 2,500 words) that you think our readers would like or — better — an outline; we will send back comments and our guidelines.

All submissions (except letters) should be typed, double-spaced. Manuscripts are not normally returned unless specifically requested. We regret that we cannot pay authors.

Graphics: We welcome line drawings, and black and white photographs for illustrations (\$5-10 if we use them). We also invite ideas for cover designs; we offer \$50 for those that we use.

Planning and Women

Sessions at this year's American Planning Association National Conference (New York, April 25-29) which have been arranged by the APA's Planning and Women Division: Low-income co-ops, including lease-back arrangements for the elderly, and mutual housing associations; three sessions on planning for child care in both the public and the private sector; transitional housing; career management for planners. Also of interest to women are sessions on zoning for the changing household; and on planning, women and politics.

National Women's Health Network

The Committee on Occupational and Environmental Health of the NWHN is preparing a *Resource Guide to Women's Occupational and Environmental Health*. We are looking for information on pertinent research projects, reports on grass roots efforts, information on coalition-building, contacts (professionals, researchers, activists, feminists, "barefoot epidemiologists", policy-makers, etc.), publications, etc.

Some of the topics we are interested in include:

- "fetal protection policies"
- reproductive health and toxic exposures
- stress on the job
- sexual harassment as an occupational hazard
- the impact of toxics on breastfeeding
- chemical sensitivity
- the home as toxic haven
- hazards to women in so-called "male occupations"
- women activists and their experiences
- the particular predicaments and efforts of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native women
- genetic screening, epidemiology, and related research efforts — the impacts on women's health and women's rights

Contact:

Lin Nelson, 860 Maryland Ave.,
Syracuse, NY 13210 tele:
315-476-1403

Reggie Kenen, 15 Forester Drive,
Princeton, NJ 08540 tele:
609-924-8196

Susan Klitzman, Institute for Social
Research, Survey Research Ctr.,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor,
MI 48106 tele: 313-764-6526

A First for Regina

A seven-member Task Force on Women's Issues has been established by the municipal council of the City of Regina, Saskatchewan. Its primary responsibility is to review the impact on women of policies, programs and services provided by the City of Regina. The Task Force is composed of four City Councillors and three citizen members, one of whom is a friend of *W & E* — Rashida Nawaz, who can be contacted through the magazine.

Spreading the Word

Joni Seager, co-author with Ann Olson of *Women in the World: An International Atlas* (which is doing very well, we see, having made it on to the London Alternative Bestsellers list!) is now the Associate Editor for North America of *Women's Studies International Forum*. She encourages authors to send her manuscripts for possible publication — particularly articles with an international focus, but all will be considered. Contact her at her other new position: Co-ordinator of Women's Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 02139.

Women and Public Housing

One of the outcomes of the *Women and Safe Shelter* conference organized in Chicago by Women United for a Better Chicago, April 22-26, 1986, is — another housing conference. *Women and Public Housing* is scheduled for May 29-30, 1987 and will focus on the accomplishments of female public housing residents in, for instance, the areas of child and youth development programs, literacy and educational programs, teen pregnancy, gang intervention, daycare, employment training and development.

Women and Public Housing is one project of a Housing Task Force which is also creating a leadership training program for neighbourhood-based women; politically supporting local neighbourhood initiatives which increase housing options for women; and organizing the May 1987 conference. For information on any of the above, and also on tapes of the Women and Safe Shelter conference; a video, "Neighborhood Women... Making a Difference;" and a *Resource Directory for Women Seeking Safe and Affordable Housing/Shelter*, contact Susan Stall, Women United for a Better Chicago, PO Box 578141, Chicago IL 60647 (312) 342-6120.

Women and Man-Made Environment

A Conference on Feminist Geography and Urban Planning
Amsterdam, September 22-25, 1986

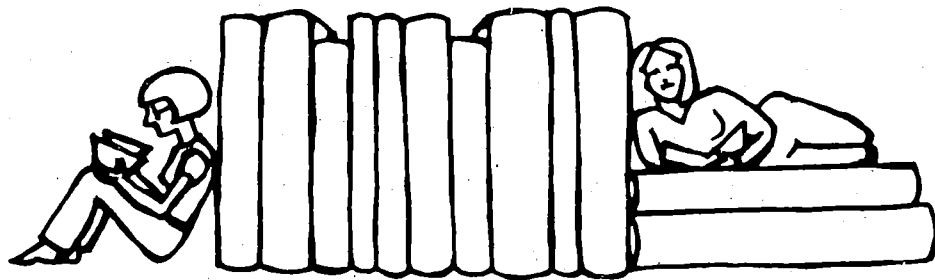
The University of Amsterdam organizers used a novel approach to an international discussion of the effect of gender relations on women and their residential environment. Eight morning lectures were given by English social geographers, members of the Women and Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers (the group which wrote *Geography and Gender: an Introduction to Feminist Geography*, which was used as a reader for the conference); each of these papers was critiqued in the afternoon sessions by a Dutch co-speaker, a device which lent structure to the discussions while facilitating the introduction of Dutch perspectives.

A Reader was compiled specifically for the conference, and publication is also planned of the papers presented. For information on both these collections, contact Women and Man-Made Environment, Universiteit van Amsterdam (ISG), Jodenbreestraat 23, 1011 NH Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Birthing Environments

I am seeking information related to my master's thesis in architecture in which I question current North American birthing environments. I am studying the social, cultural, medical and psychological/environmental factors that surround birth, with the aim of developing a Canadian model for an alternative birthing centre.

A major problem is finding up-to-date Canadian information that compares women's experiences and medical outcomes from the midwife-assisted/home birth model versus the doctor-managed hospital model. Anyone with information or interest, please contact me: Joann Lowell, 1230 Church St. #1, Halifax NS B3J 2E8.



BARBARA SANDORD

No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children

Connie Guberman and Margie Wolfe,
editors

Toronto: The Women's Press, 1985. 165
pp. \$9.95. ISBN 0-88961-098-3

Reviewed by Nalini Singh

A favourite story of mine goes something like this: An increase in the number of rapes occurred in Israel, and the topic came up for discussion in the Knesset. A curfew for women was suggested for their protection. "Why?" asked Golda Meir, "they're not raping anyone."

That the victims of these violent acts have been held accountable, and that the men who commit them have therefore been excused, is nothing new. The editors have compiled this collection of articles about rape, child battery, wife abuse, sexual harassment, pornography and child sexual assault with the intent of illustrating the range, commonalities and interconnectedness of violence against women and children. As well as providing basic information and statistics, the authors examine and discount the many myths surrounding their particular issue, and attempt to get to the very roots of the ubiquitous practice of faulting the innocent and exonerating the guilty. They discuss strategies for dealing with this "social horror" and ways in which we can work towards change.

One of the major underlying themes is that the men who do these things do so, not because of their hormonal make-up, or because evolution decreed it so, or because they are sick and perverted, but because they can. Violence, in its many forms and expressions, is an integral part of the world in which we live. Violence is a form of social control and in any society based on inequalities, control is of the essence. In an excellent introduction, the editors begin to discuss the linkage of the subjects under discussion both to each other, and to sexist, classist, racist and homophobic society. They stress that we must understand the limitations of the concepts of violence

as purely physical and as anomalous behaviour. To do so is to widen our perspective about the extent to which inhumanity and injustice prevail. Homelessness, poverty, malnourishment, attitudes towards elderly people — these are also forms of violence, and should be seen as part of the larger picture along with "accepted" violent behavior.

All the contributors to this book are feminist and while they may not share a common political perspective, there are many points of agreement. One of the points of great importance is the problem of working with the state. Laws, the professionalization of the issues of rape, abused women and incest, ordinances and directives from attorneys general, make it

*All the reforms in the world
do very little if the attitudes
that lead to and condone
violence remain in people who
interpret and enforce these
reforms.*

seem that our concerns are acknowledged and addressed. Yet, they will not give control to the survivors of violence, or change the root causes. Patriarchal, capitalist states do not legislate their own elimination.

Many examples throughout the book show that all the reforms in the world do very little if the attitudes that lead to and condone violence remain in people who interpret and enforce these reforms. As Kamini Maraj Graham says in her article about sexual harassment, "The practice cannot be eliminated so long as the structure remains as it is." In one of the best contributions, the Toronto Rape Crisis

Centre Collective talks at length about the dangers and intricacies of government funding, appropriation of feminist concerns by the many "helping" systems and agencies, reformist politics and the danger of focussing solely on band-aid work. Susan G. Cole examines the ambivalent relationship between feminists who work in the area of child sexual assault and the Children's Aid Society, and points out that their principles still centre around the preservation of the family — "the institution whose protection often perpetuates the conditions that engender child abuse in the first place." Addressing the issue of state censorship of pornography, Mariana Valverde asks what is the use of banning pornography if the desire for it is constantly being recreated in our culture; and she looks at exactly who is affected by state controls.

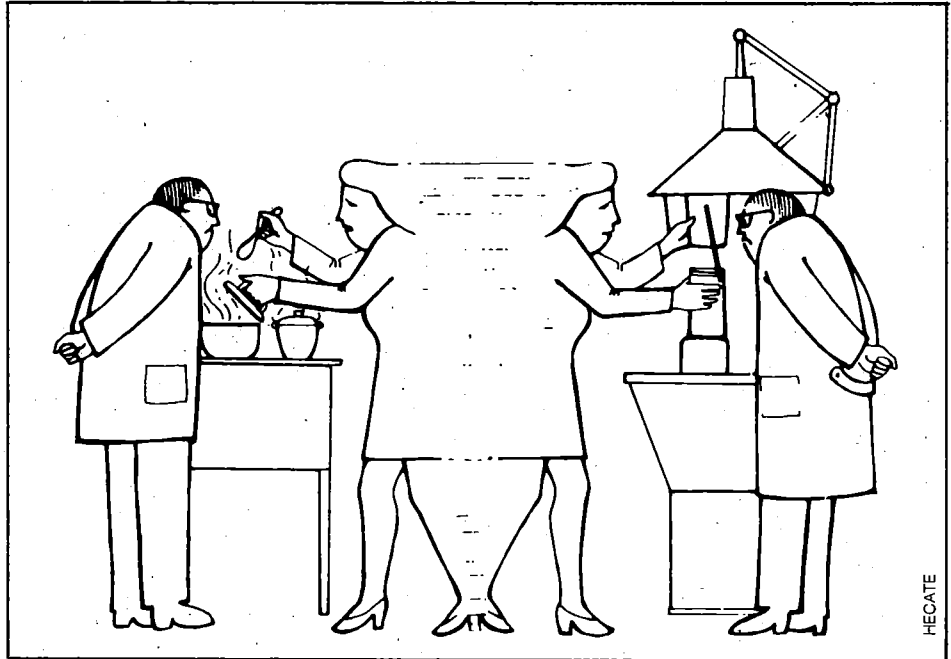
Some articles are more thorough than others in examining the interconnectedness, and there are some gaps. For example, the piece about wife assault does not talk about immigrant women who are abused and the difficulties they may face because of language barriers, the cultural assumptions of those to whom they go for help, and so on. As the Rape Crisis Collective points out, colour and class have a great deal to do with who gets processed through the legal system. Also, more discussion around the concept of romantic love is needed. We are taught that women's love necessitates nurturance and emotional caretaking at all cost, and that love is all-forgiving and all-understanding. This applies to all women, not only those who are physically assaulted; physical abuse can be seen as an extreme point on the continuum of self-sacrificial love. There are women who despite economic advantage, support by family and friends, and so on remain in battering relationships, because they love their abusers.

The article on sexual harassment does not discuss the problems women of colour face at work, at school and on the streets because just as women are seen as lesser than men, so colour is seen as lesser than white. This is especially of concern for immigrant women who are on work visas, or have no status at all; this makes them especially vulnerable targets for their employers. Sexual harassment of domestic workers is one example that comes to mind. An article on elder abuse would have been very relevant to this collection. It is estimated that 100,000 elderly Canadians are abused yearly; many of these are women over 75.* Abuse can come from not only mates, but from their children and institutions for the aged. Age-ism is one of the many -isms that afflict our society and just as children are seen as not very important when it comes to rights and place in society, so it is with elderly people.

While women and men are valued very differently at all ages, old women are seen to have outlived their usefulness as breeders—their major role in life—while men still have something to contribute.

In general, these articles are interesting and informative, and raise many complex issues for those of us who work di-

... colour and class have a great deal to do with who gets processed through the legal system ...



rectly with survivors of violence and for everyone involved in working to change ourselves and our world so that it can be a place where books like this become unnecessary. For now, however, it is very clear that there is no safe place, and the material in this book is important for us to look at as we struggle to deal with the roots of violence, how we cope with it now and what still needs to be done. □

*Statistics from the Toronto Mayor's Committee on Aging.

Nalini Singh is a graduate of the University of Toronto in Women's Studies and is presently a member of the collective of Nelli's Hostel for Women in Toronto.

Hard Choices: How Women Decide About Work, Career and Motherhood
Kathleen Gerson
Berkeley: University of California Press,
1985. 312 pp. \$9.95

Reviewed by Susan Prentice

Hard Choices: How Women Decide about Work, Career and Motherhood is at the same time an intensely personal as well as a theoretical exploration by Gerson of how women mediate that essential split of contemporary life: the managing of public and private life. Through an in-depth study of 63 women from the Bay-San Francisco area, Gerson's study provides accounts of how different women, in diverse situations, assume the divisions of labours that they do. Gerson argues, as an organizing principle, that within "the context of structural constraint, women

actively build their lives out of the materials provided by larger social forces, and in so doing they in turn shape and under propitious circumstances reshape the world that has shaped them."

Moving easily in this accessible work between social theory about gender and life choices to the actual voices of the women she interviewed, Gerson documents the diversity and variety of women's experiences. She is primarily con-

domesticity and some of which lead away from it... Instead, the possibility for change, if not the fact of it, remains in adulthood" (p. 121).

Her notion of women's adult lives as un-fixed, with fluid possibilities, echoes an important theme in current feminist theory. A recent book, *New Futures: Changing Women's Education** argues similarly (p. 137) that "women's lifelines tend to be criss-crossed, blurred, seem-

"the adult life course is neither a predetermined outcome of childhood, nor a series of orderly predictable steps from one stage to the next... the possibility for change, if not the fact of it, remains in adulthood."

cerned with how women assume domestic, or non-domestic, arrangements in adulthood, and then how they arrange the circumstances of their lives to support those arrangements. The book records how some women with domestic childhood orientations moved towards non-domestic life choices as adults, and others experienced the reverse movement. The comparative analysis reveals that

"the adult life course is neither a predetermined outcome of childhood experience, nor a series of orderly, predictable steps from one stage to the next... There are many paths women can take, some of which lead toward

ingly confused and although we have identified the multiplicity of women's roles, these are not separately valued, but jumbled together in the sole role of homemakers. Men's life patterns tend to run in parallel, and rarely come together; work is separated from home and home from leisure, so men's lives are divided in terms of roles and status; they have space but little connection between these different parts."

Dissatisfied with the conceptual frameworks provided by current theories on gender, Gerson briefly reviews three models, the "structural coercion approach" the "voluntarist approach", and

the "developmental approach." Despite her theoretical confusion which conflates a radical feminist position and a critique of patriarchal capitalism under the "structural coercion approach," Gerson's critique that structural explanations tend to make the active agency of women invisible is correct. Her misreading of socialist-feminist theory, however, peculiarly common in many American feminists, leads her to reject a model which — to date — offers some of the richest insights into the organization of social life. A further serious criticism of her study must be raised: the absence of women of colour. Gerson argues that "despite the sample's racial homogeneity and bias upward in class position, these respondents illustrate dynamics that apply to their generation as a whole" (p. 217). Black feminists and other women of colour have challenged white women to confront the racism of models that, in a society rigidly organized along lines of race, sex and

class, makes the important structural and personal experiences of women of colour marginal to its theoretical insights.

Because Gerson's study is American, the reality of American political life colours her discussion. For example, in her chapter on "Combining Work and Motherhood," she outlines two coping strategies used by these women she terms "reluctant mothers." First, they limited family size, and secondly, they insisted on male participation in parenting. In contrast, a Canadian or European discussion would need in addition to discuss far more extensively, for example, the provision of child care services and of parental leave policies. As a daycare advocate, I was struck by Gerson's silence around the possibility of collectivizing a portion of the labour of childcare as a viable strategy. The possibility of a universal childcare system for aiding families in the difficult management of the home/work split is nearly invisible in *Hard Choices*, a re-

flection perhaps of the poverty of radical vision induced and reinforced by the inadequate American social services system.

Hard Choices provides an important and intimate glimpse into the lived experiences of women struggling to mediate the contradictions and conflicts of work, career and motherhood. With its blend of theoretical and grounded material, it is a rich resource for women considering the same questions. □

*Mary Hughes and Mary Kennedy, *New Futures: Changing Women's Education*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.

Susan Prentice is a member of the Women's Press in Toronto, and a member of Action Daycare.

Divisions of Labour

R.E. Pahl

Oxford: Blackwell, 1984. \$23.50

Reviewed by Richard Harris

This book should interest anyone who wants to understand the changing places of women and men in modern capitalist societies. The author, a British sociologist, wants to know how men and women, living in households, organize themselves to get work done. He rejects the idea that paid employment is the only, or necessarily the most important, type of work. Instead he takes a broader approach and considers, in addition, informal sector labour and self-provisioning (including housework). It is this breadth which sets Pahl's book apart from other recent studies.

Pahl believes that to understand the present division of labour we must know the past. He devotes the first half of his book to a review of the ways in which household work strategies in Britain have changed since the 13th century. He shows that, until the 19th century, paid work was unimportant and insecure. Both men and women spent their time at a variety of tasks. With the rise of capitalism and the growth of cities, however, the informal sector was whittled down. Wage employment (usually for men) became more important and more regular, while women became largely confined to the home. Pahl argues that the result, the "traditional" household, is in fact quite a recent phenomenon, reaching its apotheosis in the affluent 1950s and 1960s. In this long perspective, the current trend away from

"traditional" work roles is shown to be less revolutionary than it has seemed to those involved. This is important since most of us try to justify our actions in terms of precedent. Pahl's historical review strengthens the position of those who believe that things should and can change. He demonstrates that there is more than one tradition to be defended.

The second half of the book contains a case study based on field surveys and

Pahl shows how social polarization is actually being felt, and handled, by men and women in their households.

interviews that Pahl carried out on the Isle of Sheppey (just east of London) in the late seventies. Here he looks at the household work strategies followed by men and women in different class and housing situations. His research is innovative in that it characterizes households by the employment situation of both the man and the woman (rather than just the man, as is still usual). He also makes new and important connections between housing tenure and self-provisioning. Some of his findings were predictable and confirm the findings of other recent researchers. Women do more housework than men, especially when there are young children

in the household. Low income households rely most heavily upon the informal sector. Owners do more work around the home than tenants, and in this way can make some of their own wealth.

Other findings surprised me and, apparently, the author too. It turns out that the more affluent households in Pahl's survey were also the ones who were most likely to do their own repair and renovation work. In part this is because they are more likely to own their own home. Even when they are owners, however, the unemployed often could not afford to buy tools and materials with which to work. Here, as in other respects, paid employment and self-provisioning turn out to be complementary rather than alternative household strategies. To those that have shall be given.

It has been said that Britain, like other western countries, is becoming polarized into rich and poor. The evidence usually given has been abstractly statistical in character, but Pahl shows how social polarization is actually being felt, and handled, by men and women within their households. His account has some weaknesses. It is sometimes rather heavy going, and the survey data and interviews might have been more closely woven together. But these are quite minor quibbles. This compassionate and well-conceived book tells us something new about the present and puts it in the context of the past. In the process he has given women — and men — much to think about. □

Richard Harris is Assistant Professor of Geography, Scarborough College, University of Toronto.



Shelter

**"Housing and the Family:
The Marginalization of Non-Family
Households in Britain"**

Sophie Watson
*International Journal of Urban and
Regional Research* 10 (1): 8-28, 1986

British housing provision and policy, in both the private and public sector, is based on the nuclear family. The result, suggests Watson, is the marginalization of non-family households, and a domestic role for women which reinforces patriarchal relations and subordination. Watson reviews a demographic profile of British households, examines housing provision and policy, and discusses how both public and private sector housing establishes some family forms as "normal", and marginalizes others.

**"Women and Environment: Shelter,
Urbanization and Change —
A Feminist Perspective"**

Fran Hosken
*Women's International Network (WIN)
News*, 13 (1) Winter 1987: 8-28

A comprehensive and far-reaching review of the women and shelter issue from an international perspective. Galvanized by the United Nations' International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, Hosken reviews current issues in the shelter debate. Access to land and property, urban immigration, urban technology, industrialization, transportation and mobility, family form and social factors are all key considerations in understanding women's particular relationship to homelessness. Hosken proposes a fourteen-point criterion for sites and services projects, based on a feminist analysis. From equal access in land ownership and credit, to structures of community organization, from design standards to commercial activity, Hosken argues that housing developments must be radically redesigned.

**Women and Housing: An Annotated
Bibliography**

Sylvia Novac
CPL Bibliography 178, October 1986. 26 pp. \$9

Good bibliography on the literature of the last five years on housing for women from a feminist perspective. Deals only with western nations, and does not cover specific issues such as shelters, transitional or housing for the elderly.

Order from Council of Planning Libra-

rians, 1313 East 60th St., Chicago IL 60637.

Immigrant Women in Canada
Report prepared for the Canadian
Advisory Council on the Status of Women,
1986, 60 pp.

The particular needs and realities of immigrant women are often invisible. To redress this, the CACSW has prepared *Immigrant Women in Canada*, focussing on issues such as immigration policy and practice, labour force conditions, language training, and childcare.

Available free from: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Box 1541, Station B Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R5.

Third World

**Women in the Third World: A Resource
Directory**

Third World Resources, 464 19th St., Oakland CA, USA 94611, 1986. 144 pp.

The global connections between women are crucial for the struggle to establish equality. *Women in the Third World*, a paperback directory devoted to exploring the issues and concerns of Third World women, is a key resource. Indexed, annotated, and cross-referenced listings of organizations, print and audio-visual resources make the directory an essential for every feminist library.

International Women's Development Agency

The International Women's Development Agency, one of only a handful of women's aid agencies, was founded in 1986. The organization is designed to support development programs planned and managed by women's voluntary organizations, and to provide consultancy services on women and development issues to governmental and non-governmental organizations. The new agency will be financed by earnings from consultancies, private donations and some governmental funding. The IWDA has already launched a primary health care project providing training to Muslim women and poor urban women in Mindanao, Philippines, and is seeking funding for a rural women's agricultural training program in Tanzania and a sanitation and water project in Honduras.

International Women's Development Agency, P.O. Box 372, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067, Australia.



QUEHACERES



The Dutch Experience

(continued from page 13)

urban concept which advocates the mixing of land uses and which actively promotes easy accessibility to a wide range of facilities and services. By locating small industrial estates among residential areas, and by integrating commercial units with houses (in a one to seventy ratio), planners have attempted to address the two main economic goals of emancipation policy. Local employment opportunities, both in industry and in neighbourhood-based shops and services, facilitate female participation in the paid labour force and thereby permit greater economic independence. This organization of space also reduces the time and complexity of performing necessary domestic functions. Although this does not guarantee a redistribution of paid and unpaid labour, it does make such a redistribution possible by altering some of the spatial constructs which have traditionally reinforced the status quo.

The mixing of urban functions has also helped to fulfill the third objective of emancipation policy by eliminating some situations which are conducive to sexual violence. Most obviously, it has reduced the tendency for certain areas to be vacated at predictable times of the day. Additional efforts to make the environment safer for women include the location of dwellings on the ground floor of building blocks, the absence of tall bushes between sidewalks and roads or cycling paths, and the location of bus stops such that 75 per cent of all homes in Almere are within 400 meters of a stop.

While the planning of Almere reflects a growing awareness of women's needs, significant problems remain. The fact that 65 per cent of the population is employed outside of Almere perpetuates time/distance constraints that subtly reinforce traditional divisions of labour; it is usually men who do high prestige work in Amsterdam, and it is women who are the intended beneficiaries of planning that facilitates the combination of local employment with domestic duties. The subtle perpetuation of long-standing spatial constraints is also evident in the fact that over 80 per cent of Almere's houses are designed for traditional nuclear families even though less than half of all Dutch households have retained this form. This situation demonstrates that the needs of the growing number of women who have modified their traditional roles as wives and mothers continue to be ignored. It also illustrates the continued prominence of male perceptions of how society, and the space in which it functions, should be organized. □

ANNMARIE WIERZBICKI

Women and Work

Women's Work, Men's Work: Sex Segregation on the Job

B. Reskin and H. Hartmann (eds)

Report of the Committee on Women's Employment and Related Social Issues, National Academy Press, Washington DC, 1986. 173 pp. \$15.50

Employment segregation by sex has grave consequences for women, men and families, but women bear the greatest burden. This is the major finding of the Report of the fourteen-member Committee on Women's Employment and Related Social Issues, of the National Research Council of America. Based on their findings that women face discrimination and institutional barriers in their education, training and employment that narrows their opportunities, the Committee sketch broad policy recommendations to redress the situation. They call for an enhanced role for the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to enforce visiting

legislation, as well as more flexible employee policies on the part of employers. Reskin and Hartmann conclude that changes in family responsibilities, and family supports such as childcare, are also needed to improve women's condition. Despite the weakness of the recommendations, the data and research base of the Report make an important contribution to the field of women and work.

Playing with our Health: Hazards in the Automated Office

Marcy Cohen and Margaret White

Women's Skill Development Society, 4340 Carson St., Burnaby BC V5J 2X9. \$10 for single copies; \$7 for orders of 10 or more.

A new, solution-oriented booklet written to provide clerical workers with accurate and up-to-date information on the health hazards of VDTs, ways to get recognition of health-related problems, and ways to reduce risks. Also just published by the Women's Skill Development Society, "Taking control of our Future: Clerical Workers and New Technology."

Feminist Scholarship

New Books on Women and Feminism

Susan Searing
Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin, 728 State St., Madison WI, 53706. Available free.

Searing provides a vital resource for feminist scholars, with *New Books on Women and Feminism*, a regular up-to-date, comprehensive listing of books, periodicals and non-print materials. *New Books on Women and Feminism* is a valuable aid to researchers interested in the most current materials.

Searing also publishes *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*, and *Feminist Periodicals*, two equally essential resources.

Feminist Perspectives in Rural Geography: An Introduction

Jo Little

Journal of Rural Studies 2(1) 1986: 1-8.

Gender, and gender role theory, is crucial to an understanding of the economic and social relations within rural, as well as urban environments. Little's paper offers a broadbased introduction to the development of feminist perspective in rural geography, examining the value and scope of feminist approaches to the study of the rural economy and society.

Challenges to All-Female Organizations

Harvard Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review, Winter 1986.

The importance of all-female organizations in the struggle for women's equality is an accepted fact among feminists. Others, however, see all-female organizations as a "reverse sexism". This article reviews the role of single-sex organizations in meeting the special needs of girls and women, arguing that they are especially important in counteracting the effects of past discrimination. More importantly, it describes various legal challenges facing such organizations, and suggests ways of defeating the measures.

Campus Troublemakers: Academic Women in Protest

Athena Theodore

Houston: Cap and Gown Press, 1986. 320 pp. \$15.95

By virtue of their privilege, academic women are often in the forefront of feminist organizing. Theodore provides an overview of the struggle for sex equity

by American women in higher education. She addresses institutional obstacles to equality, resistance by administrators and male faculty peers, lack of help from government bureaucracy, and sexism in the courts and legal profession. *Campus Troublemakers* also provides a fascinating glimpse into the personal and professional lives of academic women fighting for equality.

Helping Ourselves to Power: A Handbook for Women on the Skills of Public Life

Sue Slipman

London: Pergamon Press, 1986, 130 pp.

Helping Ourselves to Power is a valuable self-help manual for women engaging with "public life". The book is a practical guide to theory and practice, designed to increase women's confidence and competency with issues from press releases to public speaking. Tackling issues from skills of chairing meetings to organizing large public events, Slipman offers level-headed tips for both the novice and the experienced.



New Journal

Gender & Society, the new official journal of Sociologists for Women in Society, will start publication in March 1987. To be published quarterly by Sage Publications, it will be a refereed, scholarly journal, and is supported by a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation. The journal's focus will be the analysis of gender from a social structural perspective. The first editor is Judith Lorber of City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center; book review editor is Eleanor M. Miller, Dept. of Sociology, University of Wisconsin. The journal's address: c/o Judith Lorber, Dept. of Sociology, CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd St., New York NY 10036 (212) 790-4419.

Recent Research

These PhD theses are listed (with their order numbers) from *Dissertation Abstracts*; trace them through your university library

The effects of housing and race upon depression and life satisfaction of elderly females
Shelly Ann Rice Wyckoff, George Peabody College for Teachers at Vanderbilt University, 1983 (DA 8412751)

Battered women in counselling and shelter programs

Eleanor Kremen, Columbia University, 1984 (DER84-27416)

The support networks of battered women before and after shelter residence

Sandra Seeland Alcorn, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1984 (DA 8426237)

Women and food: housework and the production of family life

Marjorie L. Devault, Northwestern University, 1984 (DER85-02366)

Women's unemployment a domestic occupation? A reconsideration of women's employment, unemployment and domesticity

F. Evans, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1984

Women and the economic crisis: the impact of uneven development on domestic and wage labour in Canada

Patsy L. Armstrong, Carleton University, 1984

Immigrant women and the state: a study of the social organization of knowledge

Roxanna Ng, University of Toronto, 1984

Conversations with homeless women. A sociological examination

Esther S. Merves, Ohio State University, 1986 (DA8618818)

Humanized effects of labour rooms on expectant mothers

Shawna Strobel, University of Minnesota, 1984 (DA 8501890)

Day care and the single parent family: An analysis of single parent families' interactions and experiences

Jannah Jill Hurn, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984 (DA 8422087)

The sexual division of leisure: Meanings, perceptions and the distribution of time

Susan Mary Shaw, Carleton University, 1983

**Women & Environments
c/o Centre for Urban
and Community Studies
Room 426
455 Spadina Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2G8
Canada**

