

WOMAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Struggle

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INSISTERHOOD

FORMER ISS PARTICIPANT DETAINED IN SOUTH-AFRICA

Gertrude Fester, a former participant of the Women and Development Programme of the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands, was detained on May 19, 1988, under the notorious Section 29 of South Africa's International Security Act. This marks the beginning of an indefinite period of detention during which there is no provision for access to her. Some detainees held under Section 29 are known to have never been given a chance to consult with their lawyers, family, friends or other support groups. Conditions in apartheid prisons leave much to be desired, especially for women. Moreover, at the time of her detention, Gertrude's health condition was not good. She had high blood pressure, severe rheumatism and a bad flu.

As participant in the 1980/1981 Women and Development Programme, Gertrude was part of the group which launched the Insisterhood Network - an international forum for exchange and dialogue and discussion on strategies to fight against the oppression of women in various parts of the world. Upon return to her home country she became actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement. The United Women's Organisation of which she was a member, was one of the major forces behind the launch of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The women of UWO are of the opinion that the question of women's oppression and exploitation cannot be separated from the struggle against national oppression and the struggle for a non-racial,

non-sexist, democratic South Africa. During the seven years of its existence, UWO has demanded specific attention to the problems of needs of women. Together with other non-racial women's organisations in other parts of South Africa the United Women's Congress (UWCO, which is a merger between UWO and others in the Cape) is working towards the revival of a national women's structure.

Gertrude participates in a wide range of activities, amongst which are those that are linked with her profession as a teacher and in the field of drama. She engages in organising a number of cultural and educational workshops and festivals in the Western Cape, in particular for women. As a teacher she supported the school boycotts by students. She has often expressed a wish to document the history of women's organisation and women's resistance in the Western Cape, for which she could hardly find time and space, given the demand of the struggle.

Insisterhood News Release

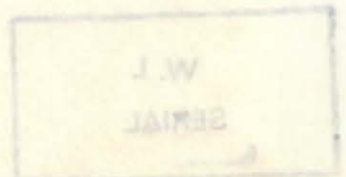
July 1988

ANTI-APARTHEID ACTION IN JAMAICA

A pamphlet appealing to the Jamaican public to bring pressure to bear on companies with links to South Africa doing business in Jamaica is being circulated.

The pamphlet provides a listing of companies which have been identified through research "so that you might express to those companies your opposition to apartheid and encourage these companies to convey this opposition to their parent companies". Several suggestions for action are put forward including telephoning or writing to the chief executive officers, discontinuing purchase of such products, voicing opinions on radio call-in programmes.

"Politeness and Christian love" are approaches advised in the pamphlet "recognising that Jamaicans managing and working in these companies, in all likelihood, share your concern about



our brothers and sisters in South Africa in their struggle against apartheid".

More than 100 companies internationally have severed their links with South Africa. For further information contact: St Peter Claven Church, 33b Waltham Park Road, Kingston 13, Jamaica.

SISTREN PRESENTS TO JAMAICA'S FREE TRADE ZONE

ENQUIRY

The SISTREN Collective presented its case to the Commission of Enquiry into working conditions of women garment workers in the Kingston Free Zone on June 23, 1988. SISTREN's case was presented by Attorney-at-law and Journalist, Susan Dodd.

The St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church was also represented by lawyer/journalist Ronnie Thwaites. CUSO, which funded the "Women in Industry Research Project" made a submission to the Commission on July 12.

(Association of Development
Agencies/For Your Information
Vol. 2 No. 7 July, 1988)

NICARAGUA: DIVORCE EASED

Nicaragua's National Assembly on April 23 approved a bill equalizing the law on divorce.

The previous law, which had passed in 1904, greatly restricted women's ability to obtain a divorce. A woman could obtain a divorce only if she could prove that her husband was living openly with another woman or abandonment if it had lasted for

at least five years and there was no communication from the husband, By contrast, a man could divorce his wife for any act of adultery or for being pregnant by another man when they married.

Now, either spouse can obtain a divorce by presenting a written request to a judge. No grounds for divorce is necessary. The judge must grant the divorce, but can rule on questions of child support, custody, alimony and division of property.

Women had demanded the change in the law when nationwide meetings were held to discuss the drafting of the 1986 constitution.

in Off Our Backs Vol. xviii
No. 7 July 1988

CHINA'S POPULATION AGING

Forty-one per cent of China's population would be aged 65 years and over in 2050 if all families had only one child from now until the beginning of the next century. The long-term effects of a sustained one-child policy have recently been receiving official attention and were one of the reasons for an international symposium on Family Structure and Population Aging in China held at Peking University. In practice it is unlikely that the figure will reach 42 per cent since the more relaxed attitude to second children in the countryside will soften the effects of the recent sharp fall in fertility which is responsible for the aging of the population over the next few decades. China's tradition of family support has meant that care for the elderly was not previously an affair of the State. Smaller families and households, more two-generation families and fewer extended family members in the household mean that the traditional system is under threat. Possible solutions discussed by symposium members were: extending the state pension system from urban areas to the countryside; building homes for the elderly; raising the retirement age and the creation of mutual welfare associations.

Development Forum Vol. xvi No.2

BIRTH TECHNOLOGIES COMMISSION DEBATE

Canadian social activist groups have formed a coalition calling for a royal (governmental) commission to consider the ethical issues involved in reproductive technologies. The Coalition for a Royal Commission on Reproductive Technologies is asking women's groups to endorse it. However, a number of feminists do not support a royal commission as the appropriate vehicle for the debate on new technologies.

The Women Healthsharing Collective has refused to join the coalition. Diana Majury of the collective said using a commission effectively would take an incredible amount of feminist energy and time.

Feminist opinions would be a minority in any such commission. The reproductive technology industry would mobilize a considerable effort to influence the commission's deliberations, Majury told the Vancouver feminist newspaper Kinesis.

Also, some feminists disagree with the coalition's acceptance of reproductive technology as a given.

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