

WOMAN

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Struggle

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CHILDREN'S DEATHS LINKED TO MEDICAL RESEARCH

Five children were reported dead and many others taken ill in February of this year as a result of a medical research project conducted in the Philippines. The project is studying the effects of Vitamin A on childhood mortality and its subjects are children between the ages of six months and six years as well as pregnant women

According to a report by a Philippines Support Group in Britain, an organisation called The Medical Action Group, alarmed by the reports of child deaths, asked the Health Ministry to investigate the project. The Ministry's preliminary investigation was carried out on forty-eight people who had been research subjects. Of these one had died and thirty-three developed adverse side effects within twenty-four hours of receiving the dose. The Medical Action Group claims that the research project went ahead without written approval from the Health Ministry Ethics Committee. The Head of the project (from John Hopkins University of the USA) is alleged to have said the project had obtained "verbal approval" from the Ministry during the Marcos regime.

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ATTACKS ON BLACK WOMEN IN FRANCE

The number of rape cases involving Black women have increased recently in France. A sixteen(16) year old Black girl is just one of three Black women who have been raped in broad daylight since the beginning of the year. The young girl was assaulted on a suburban train just outside Paris. She was attacked by three men at midday in the presence of seven other passengers. Although the young girl has identified one of her attackers, no witness has come forward to testify on her behalf.

In France 'non-assistance to a person in danger' is a criminal offence. Officials give this as one of the reasons why witnesses do not come forward to give evidence. A protest against such lack of responsibility by the public was organised by the 'Maison de Femmes' in January attracting about 2,000 demonstrators. Now most feminist organisations are concentrating their efforts on issues surrounding rape.

The number of rape cases reported have almost doubled in the last six years. However, according to 'French Family Planning' only about ten per cent of all rapes are reported. There were 400 rape convictions last year - 5,324 rape cases were actually reported.

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BATTERED LIVES

Research into the state of women's health in the USA reveals that battering is the single largest cause of injury to women in that country. The studies funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, found this cause of injury to be more common than car accidents, rapes and robberies combined.

Researchers also found that of the alcoholic women in the study, 50% had become alcoholic once they had started to be beaten, and that battering preceded both drinking and suicide attempts.

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A CALL TO POLICE MAY STOP ABUSE

Battered wives in the United States dramatically reduce their chances of being beaten when they call the police, according to a U.S. Justice Department report released recently.

The Justice Department survey found that of the married women who did not call the police after their husbands beat them, 41% suffered repeat attacks within six months. When women called police after the assault however, only 15% were beaten again during the next half-year.

Of the women who did not call the police, almost half said they regarded the beating as a "private or personal matter". Only 12% cited fear of reprisal as their reason for not calling authorities. The report noted that even if a man did retaliate against a women for calling the police, the acts of violence he committed "were no more serious than those against women who did not call".

Women's Health Journal 1
(ISIS International) From Los Angeles
Times
August 18, 1986

COLOMBIAN GAY RIGHTS GROUP PROTESTS

"Rites" of Toronto has reported a call by a Colombian group for protests against recent murders of lesbians and gays. "Association National en Defensa del Gay y la Lesbiana claims that paramilitary groups have decided to "exterminate homosexuality" and that fifty people have been murdered. The group also reported that a security campaign has in fact resulted in increased police harrassment of gay people, fuelled by a media campaign which blames them for AIDS.

(Outwrite Issue 59, June, 1987)

CAMPAIGN FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

A campaign entitled "Women and Congress" which started in Brazil a year ago in preparation for elections of the National Congress has culminated in Brasilia. The campaign had brought together senators and representatives of Congress (who will be in charge of writing a new Constitution of Brazil), the National Council of Women's Rights, state councils and women's organisations. The purpose of the campaign

was to enable women, together with their representatives in the National Congress, to present their demands to the constitutional congress.

These demands, approved at the National Conference of Women and Congress, were presented in a Women's letter to Congress. Specific demands in the area of health included: the creation of a single Health System as part of a new national health policy which would implement public health services and would require the state to control and direct services; prohibition of experiments of any kind on men and women, including experimentation with contraceptive methods or other substances which may be harmful to the health, unless the subjects are fully informed as to the possible consequences of the experiments and the experiments are controlled by the community and government; guarantee of a woman's right to control her body and to breastfeed her child; the right to choose motherhood including guaranteed prenatal and postnatal care and the right to prevent or terminate pregnancy without damage to a woman's health.

(Woman's Health Journal 1 (ISIS International, Latin Am. and Caribbean Women's Health Network)

NUCLEAR PROTESTERS WON'T BE TRIED

Seven hundred and forty (740) people arrested on May 10 at a Nuclear Test Site (NTS) in the US are unlikely to be tried. An estimated 3,600 people, three quarters of them women, from 22 states protested at the site, north of Las Vegas, and called for a comprehensive test ban treaty between the US and the USSR. Seven Hundred and forty (740) of them were arrested for trespassing but a dispute between the Department of Energy which runs the NTS and the County Sheriff's Department makes the possibility of a trial remote. Neither side is willing to incur the cost involved in taking the protestors to court.

The week before the action, the District Attorney (prosecutor) of sparsely populated Nye County, which is responsible for policing the area around the NRT, announced that in future protestors at the site will not be tried. He stated that 'this county simply can't afford the expense of trials and of renting buildings to house imprisoned demonstrators.'

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