

TOO MANY GIRLS IN HIGH SCHOOL? THINK AGAIN PROFESSOR!

Professor Errol Miller has piloted a motion in the Senate to give the same number of High School places to boys and girls. On the surface, this seems like equality. But is it?

First of all, many more girls than

boys qualify to sit the Common Entrance, so it is only natural that more girls pass. Even so, the number of girls who pass is not in proportion to the number who sit the exam. Twice the number of girls qualify to sit the exam,

but a higher proportion of boys pass. While boys make up 38% of the entries, they get 45% of the places. Girls make up 64% of the entries and only get 57% of the places.

One reason why a higher proportion of boys get into high school is that the pass mark for the boys is lower than the pass mark for the girls. The Ministry of Education arranges it this way, because, they say, "boys mature later than girls." This means that girls with high marks can't get into high school, while boys with lower marks get in.

WORKING-CLASS GIRLS SUFFER MOST

The girls who are most discriminated against in all of this are those from primary school. While at the Prep School level more girls than boys sometimes get into high school, at the primary school level a far lower proportion of girls get places. That is why working-class women need to understand the issues clearly, for it is their girl children who will suffer most.

Professor Miller's motion in the Senate is based on the 'findings' of his book "Marginalisation of the Black Male", in which he claims that women have more opportunities than men, not only in education, but in the society as a whole, and therefore men need some "positive discrimination" to even things out.

Professor Miller must be living in a different society from the one we experience as women everyday. The fact is that men control wealth, power, and privilege at every level of our society. It is the black woman more than anyone who is "marginalised".

For every one man unemployed, there are two unemployed women. Young women are the worst off, with 60% unemployment in the 20-24 age group and 80% in the 14-19 age group.

It is from this group of young women that most 807 workers are drawn. Dr. Miller sees this as a 'privilege' since it

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WITHDRAWN FOLLOWING SISTREN PROTEST

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JAMAICA
A HEALTHY CLIMATE FOR BUSINESS

The 'Bottom Line' advertisement produced by the Jamaica National Investment Promotion (JNIP) to lure investors to Jamaica's Free Zone has been withdrawn following a protest by Sistren. See full story on page 7.

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TO OUR READERS

Greetings and welcome to our latest issue. We have a particularly interesting package for you. Cheryl West, has been doing some research on our behalf. She's come up with some shocking revelations about life at the Bellevue Hospital for the women patients (page 3) and raised disturbing questions about young Jamaican girls being recruited to Jordan as domestics (page 5). Our own Honor Ford-Smith got caught up in the March demonstration by Free Zone workers and issues a call to action on their behalf (page 6). Leith Dunn, Co-ordinator for the Association of Development Agencies shares with us some of the experiences she had during a trip to the Philippines (pages 7 and 10). Shirley Campbell, journalist, is our book reviewer for this issue. We also highlight activities which marked International Women's Day at home and abroad and present a pictorial of our **Lionheart Gal** launch for all of you who missed the fun for one reason or another.

Another first for us — we've entered into an agreement with Novelty Trading Company to distribute **Sistren** commercially. In this way we hope to reach a much larger audience. Individuals who purchase the magazine through subscription will continue to obtain it at a reduced cost.

Editor

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor Joan Ross-Frankson
 Editorial Team Beverley Hanson
 Lana Finikin
 Lillian Foster
 Honor Ford-Smith
 Hilary Nicholson
 Jerline Todd
 Photography Patrick Smikle
 Stephanie Martin
 Maurice Frankson
 Cheryl West
 Shar Richenstein
 Joan Ross-Frankson
 Talawa Levy
 Easton Lee
 Design/Art Baldwin Daley
 Typesetting Carol Romney-Shim

IN THE FOCUS



SISTREN TEXTILES are now prominently displayed inside the rear entrance of Sistren Headquarters, where visitors can't miss the bright and unique wall hangings, cushions, T-shirts and curtains. Check it out! Sistren Textiles Manager, Cerene Stephenson is seated among the display.

***SISTREN OF DISTINCTION:** Very proud of Honor Ford-Smith, our Artistic Director, who was recently lauded by the Women's Bureau for her contribution in the field of Culture. Honor was among 19 Women of Distinction honoured for International Women's Day, 1987 at the Bureau's annual award function. Go deh lionhearted gal!*



PERSONAL NOTES

Married: Hilary Robertson of the Women's Working Group to Dr. Freddie Hickling, well-known psychiatrist. Our congratulations to both.

Appointed: Marjorie Lewis-Cooper as OXFAM's Project Officer in Jamaica. Marjorie takes up duties on July 1.

Migrated: Janet Burnett, typist for Sistren Research. You're already sadly missed Janet. All the best.

Received our first copy of *Women in Development*, newsletter of the Women's

Working Group. This, the third issue, has as its theme, 'The Working Group — Activities, Problems, Future Plans'.

On the Move: Sistren Research Team is working on a UNESCO pilot project 'Women's Role In Jamaica's Cultural Development'. Honor Ford-Smith is researcher assisted by journalist/researcher, Imani Tafari Ama.

Date to Remember: May 26. Sistren will host a Creative Writing Workshop for Women at 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, from 6-8 p.m.

I hear her before I see her. "Good morning," she yells cheerfully from the yard below, her piercing voice carrying up the two stories of Bellevue Hospital's administration building. "That's Joyce," Nurse Black, the inservice education co-ordinator, informs me as we descend the stairs. "Good morning nurse. Look at me I've lost 50 gallons of blood. See how thin I am."

"Yes Joyce," Nurse Black replies, her hard earned patience evident; she's worked at Bellevue 20 years.

What's striking about 44-year-old Joyce is her brightness. Everything about her is bright; the quick answers delivered with the ever present smile, the flower decorating her short neatly braided hair, the freshly applied lipstick, the gold looped earrings and the scarf tied and hanging stiffly from her neck. She is tall, slender and neatly dressed in green shorts and top, although her shoes are worn, barely encasing her toes. Under the watchful eye of Nurse Black, I interview Joyce.

Me:

How do you feel about Bellevue?

Joyce:

Bellevue is my home. It's beautiful.

Me:

What is your diagnosis?

Joyce:

Hypo-mania. That's H-Y-P-O Mania. I'm on a three-year cycle.

Me:

How long have you been here?

Joyce:

Since 1970.

Nurse Black:

Not straight through, though. When was your last admission Joyce?

Joyce:

Five years ago. I've been out for short periods, on passes.

Me:

Do you have any children?

Joyce:

No, I lost a baby last year.

Me:

Is there anything you don't like about Bellevue?

Joyce:

I don't like the men. They bother me too much. They like to rape. I've been raped seven times.

Me:

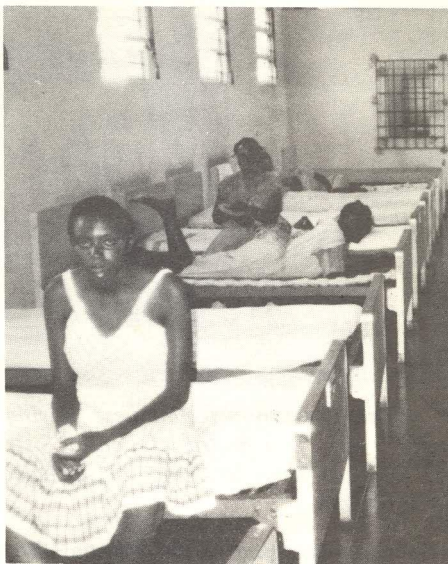
At Bellevue?

Joyce:

Yes, about five times.

A TRIP THROUGH BELLEVUE

by Cheryl West



Too few recreational facilities for women.

Me:

Did you tell the nurses?

Joyce:

Sometimes I tell, sometimes I don't bother. I tell most times. Sometimes they give me injection to free me from germs.

(I look at Nurse Black for confirmation. She nods her head, acknowledging the sad truth of Joyce's statement).

Joyce:

Four men tried to rape me once. I had on a belt and took it off and thrashed them. They come with iron bars, stones, knives, so better they rape me than kill me. I don't want to die.

Joyce's situation in many ways is typical of the 587 female patients currently at Bellevue. Women are admitted more frequently with mood disorders like mania and depression, yet, the most common diagnosis for women as well as men is schizophrenia. "Patients are usually brought in by relatives or friends because they have become hard to manage which is usually manifested by aggressive outbursts, loud talking, acting out and boisterous behaviour," says psychiatrist and Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Aggrey Irons. There are less women admissions than men. "Women seem to get looked after by relatives more often than men. We do pick up the female street people more frequently because they are easier to pick up and they stay in hospital easier."

Though it may be true that women stay in the hospital "easier", their lives at Bellevue are far from easy.

BIRTH CONTROL ESSENTIAL

Sexual harassment and exploitation of women patients by male patients are so common, says Irons, "that we have to insist our female patients avail themselves of some type of birth control." (Most are given the Depo Provera injection every three months which is not only easy to administer and monitor but also minimizes hygiene problems, since monthly periods are minimal or non-existent). But even more common is sexual exploitation from ex-patients and strangers wandering in from the community on to the compound. "Because many of our patients are from poor backgrounds, you'll also find some selling their sexual favors for paltry sums of money."

The random sexual exploitation of female patients also contributes to the difficulty in controlling the incidence of venereal disease. Although, no higher than the society at large, says Irons "we treat it but it reoccurs." Nurse Satchell, a charge nurse on the admission ward, adds: "We have vigilant testing but sometimes we don't get test results quickly. Sometimes it takes up to three or four weeks and by then some patients have absconded."

SECURITY WOES

One of the main reasons for exploitation and harassment of patients is inadequate security. Bellevue employs 25 watchmen, but only eight are on duty on any given shift with responsibility for the awesome task of patrolling Bellevue's 130 acres.

Their job is made more difficult because of the many holes in the fencing. On the sea coast border there is no fence at all. Illegal roads made by trespassers driving onto the compound from the unfinished highway are evident. And on the same end, barely hidden behind the children's ward, there's a squatters quarters, complete with a foraging pig.

The openness and accessibility to Bellevue permits not only rape and molestation of patients, but also allows strangers from surrounding communities to exploit them in other ways. "We've had cases," says Nurse Satchell, "where patients are trading shoes, utensils, linen, and clothes for cigarettes or ganja." Community residents (including

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AT THE MEETING PLACE

We had visits from women working with women, many of whom were poets, and we discovered that female poets come in all forms — activists, engineers, feminists, theologians, teachers.

Amongst them was **Professor Dorothee Soelle**, a theologian from **Germany** who is not afraid to raise her voice loudly about controversial topics like the effects of the arms race on Third World women and cultural imperialism. Her poetry tells us to stop our 'introspective strumming on the guitar/play a song about peace/play about our comrades in the struggle.'

We deliberated with **Luisa Vicioso** from **Santo Domingo** how best to ensure that women are the decision-makers in grass roots development projects for women funded by **UNIFEM** of the United Nations, where Luisa is based. Luisa writes her poetry in Spanish.

The '**Raving Beauties**' feminist poets from **England and Wales**, led a workshop with **Sistren** members and **Cheryl West** from **Chicago** has been working with us to upgrade our English skills. **Pat Rodney** who co-ordinates **WAND's** programmes for women in the **Eastern**



Exchanging workshop techniques: 'Raving Beauties', British poets, Sue Jones-Davis and Fanny Viner (2nd & 3rd left) enjoy Sistren's warm-up exercise, 'Emanuel Road' with (l-r) Rebecca Knowles, Director, Jamaica School of Drama, Hertencer Lindsay and Lorna Haslam.

Caribbean discussed with **Sistren** the possibilities for follow-up activities to the **Black Women's Health Workshop** which she helped organise last year for Caribbean women (along with resource persons from the **Black Women's Health Collective of Atlanta**). **Pat** is also active in regional efforts to ensure justice in the **Walter Rodney** case.

Anita Anand from the **Women's Feature Service (WFS)** based in **Rome, Italy** spent a morning with us during her worldwind trip to several Caribbean islands to promote the service. **WFS** provides news features on Third World women, written and edited by women. **Sistren** intends to participate in this excellent venture.

TOO MANY GIRLS IN HIGH SCHOOL?

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has been the main area of new employment creation in recent years. But employers know that because these women are desperate they will put up with low wages and slave labour conditions because that is better than nothing. 60% of female workers earn less than \$100 per week (compared to 48% of male workers). The average weekly earnings of men are much higher than those of women (\$86.9 for men compared to \$68.3 for women in 1985). Many of these women are mothers who must look after themselves and their children as well as aged parents and sometimes unemployed brothers and sisters.

Only 5% of the female workforce is organised in unions. There are almost no women in policy-making positions in the unions. Most unions organise in factories, but only 11.4% of factory workers are women. Most women in the labour force are higglers and domestics who because of the nature of their work, find it difficult to organise.

In the '80s, self-employment has been a necessary outlet for growing unemployment. This has meant mainly higgling for women, while men have gone into ganja and mini-bus operations, etc., where there is much bigger money.

MALE POWER — THE REALITY

Men do not only control more money than women, they control all decision-making and higher management areas in the society. Wealth and political power in the society, from top to bottom is overwhelming in the hands of men. Men make up 78% of employers, 76% of farmers, 65% of self-employed skilled tradesmen and 83% of factory workers who are defined as skilled. They control 68% of top management and top professional positions.

When women try to get out from under, many men resort to their ultimate weapon — violence, including sexual assault. Girls who refuse to "deal" with boys are subjected to gang rape in schools (see, for example, the recent case at **Clarendon College**). Women who

protest against male domination are submitted to this ultimate humiliation. The story is told of a **Free Zone** worker whose gentleman rode up on his bike on her first payday "to collect per pay packet". She dismissed him with a string of Jamaican 'nice' words. "Wonderful," said a middle-class sister, "that is the power of economic independence." "Eh, eh?" replied a working-class sister. "So a weh she a go run weh go? Him goin' bun her ——— when she reach home."

There is one area in which men are indeed marginal, and that is in looking after children and families both in terms of financial support and day-to-day care. This 'marginalisation' works to the advantage of men, who can spend their money at the rum bar or use it to entice desperate or ignorant young women while the mothers of their children bear the family burdens alone.

If **Professor Miller** is looking for a campaign around male marginalisation, this would be a good place to start. Get the men to take up their share of the responsibility for family care and housework, and give the women a chance for a little leisure — and more education.

It started as a "private scheme" 11 years ago. A wealthy Jordanian family needed one girl. Two were sent. Since then, several hundred Jamaican girls have followed, many of them from Girls' Town, a non-residential, training centre for young girls between the ages of 15 and 20. Over two hundred Girls' Town trained girls and women are presently living and working in the Kingdom of Jordan as domestics.

Set on 3½ acres at Maxfield Park, Girls' Town was founded in 1965 to train girls who lack sufficient skills to obtain employment and to educate and develop them "morally, physically, spiritually and socially". Presently, it has a full-time two-year programme with the first year course consisting of remedial work in English and math as well as courses in civics, social studies and family planning. In addition to the basic academic training, girls choose a specialty in either home economics or dressmaking and needlecraft. Home economics, however, is the most popular. "The majority of girls want to join that department," says Girls' Town Director Joyce Moore-Sinclair. "The bulk of jobs come from there and they get them quicker. They may also get to work in Jordan for three years."

Listening to Moore-Sinclair describe the programme, it's understandable why young women from poor backgrounds with few options, find it appealing. An opportunity to work and travel with a "wealthy family", and to earn \$100 (US) per month with room and board included would be seductive for those who may only get \$52 (J) a week as a Jamaican household helper. How many could resist the idea of living in a standard which, according to Moore-Sinclair, is superior to "90% of the Jamaican middle class". Having visited Jordan for the first time last year, Moore-Sinclair reports that most of the girls had their own rooms or share rooms with maybe one or two other helpers. "They have such comforts as television, video, nice furniture, luxurious baths, and some had individual sitting rooms," she says.

CULTURE SHOCK A MAJOR PROBLEM

Sounds good, but there's another side. Jordanian culture is very different in almost everything, says Joseph Handal, Honorary Consul for Jordan in Jamaica. Jordanian society is a restricted one for women, he explains. It's not "permissible" for a Jordanian woman to go out on dates or to walk on the street at night even for the purpose of getting a

JAMAICAN HELPERS ON THE JORDAN RUN

by Cheryl West

little fresh air, unless she is accompanied by a man.

And for Jamaican girls, unused to that type of restriction, it can be a problem. "It's a puritanical country and some of the restrictions are hard on the girls," acknowledges Moore-Sinclair. "If the girls want to go to the movies, tickets are bought for them, the chauffeur takes them to the theatre, and the chauffeur is there waiting as soon as the movie is over. Consequently, the girls don't feel free." But, Moore-Sinclair quickly adds, "The employers have to tighten the protection. They are responsible if something happens to the girls."

According to Handal, whose office has processed visas for over 1,000 girls going to work as domestics in Jordan, (not all of them trained through Girls' Town) security protection is not the only reason for restricting the movement of the girls. "If a girl got pregnant, or a boy was found visiting the house for her at night it would be an embarrassment on the family. It would bring shame on them," he says.

Moore-Sinclair credits the Girls' Town family planning programme for their low rate "of girls bringing shame" on Jordanian families. "We don't get a lot of pregnancies," she says. "We teach the girls family planning that emphasizes the spiritual, physical, economic and moral side of sex." For girls going to Jordan, a medical is done on them about a week before departure. "But some girls think since they pass the medical, it's all right to have intercourse," Moore-Sinclair says. "They get pregnant while still in Jamaica but it's not discovered until they are in Jordan."

Pregnancy is not the only reason contracts are broken. More often culture shock is the cause. Moore-Sinclair says, "Most girls come from extreme poverty, and then they are dumped in a luxurious place which heightens their depression." She recounted the story of a girl who was placed in a large house in which she was convinced duppies ruled. "She bawled until she was moved to a grandmother who lived in a not-so-elaborate house and where she was much more

comfortable."

An agent in Jordan, the Petridis Tour Company Ltd., is the referral source for the prospective employers. "We send a photo application and a profile on each of the girls and then the girl's qualifications are matched with the employer's needs," explains Moore-Sinclair. A contract is then entered into whereby, among other things, the girl agrees to provide domestic services for the family for no less than three years from the date of her arrival in Jordan. And for each placement, Girls' Town receives a service charge of \$100 (US) although Moore-Sinclair complains of problems in collecting the fee.

Jamaica is not the only place from which girls are imported. Jordanian families employ domestic workers from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and parts of Africa, says Moore-Sinclair. But they prefer Jamaican girls not only because they're English-speaking, but because "they know they are good workers and clean," says Moore-Sinclair. Candidates for the programme are chosen from graduates of the two-year course and also from the intensive three-month training course offered by Girls' Town for older women between the ages of 19 and 35. Thus far, the youngest girl to be sent over was 17 and the oldest woman 45. Says Moore-Sinclair, "I don't like to send anyone over 30. They're too set in their ways. Usually they've already been mistresses of their own homes and find it difficult to take orders. We send girls who can adapt easily."

But if the girls don't "adapt", they are in trouble. Item 7 of the contract reads:

"the employer shall pay for the return ticket to point of hire if she chooses to terminate this contract prior to the final date of termination of contract provided she stayed at least half of her employment period, otherwise she shall pay all expenses incurred for both ways . . ."

Item 8 reads in part:

- a) it is not permissible to any of the two parties to terminate this contract before its expiry.
- b) if the employer finds that the employee is not suitable to work for him given serious and acceptable reasons, he can break the contract and return the employee to her country at her own expense.

And it is expensive. Estimates quoted from travel agencies indicate it would

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SUPPORT THE WOMEN OF THE FREE ZONE

by Honor Ford-Smith

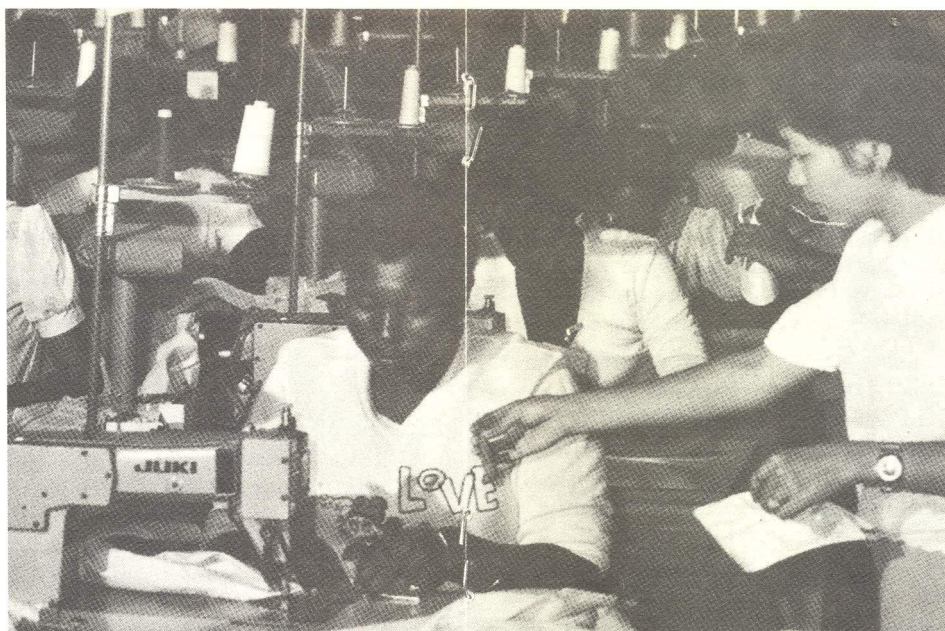
Women of the Free Trade Zone are really an inspiration to the women of Jamaica. Even though only two out of twenty-two factories down there are unionized, women are refusing to put up with bad working conditions and continue to fight for their rights.

In March, the women of East Ocean Textiles demonstrated outside JBC and RJR. Management had tried to force them to do Saturday work by shifting their pay day without letting them know. The women of East Ocean (one of the largest factories in the Free Zone) said "No!" They had domestic responsibilities and when they didn't get paid on Friday, they couldn't get to buy the groceries for their families. The women were very bright and outspoken about their problems. They wanted everyone to know what they were facing during a free zone.

While they were at JBC, a car of BITU organizers pulled up. They said they had not come to tell the women to join the BITU, but to support their struggles. By the time the march of women had reached Heroes Circle, the BITU organizer, one of the only men in the crowd, was at the head of the demonstration leading the clapping and chanting — "No Sat-day pay! We no waan no Sat-day pay!"

He lead them to the BITU headquarters and at that point the demonstration split. The majority of the workers went into the BITU offices, others stood off to one side and said — "A no dis we did come fah — We did fi go a Gleaner." Some wanted to go to the NWU. Some said the whole demonstration was BITU organized anyway — stirred up by the union's agitators within the factories. Others said dem never know dat and as far as dem was concern it was fi-dem demonstration — "Because you feels it knows it and we a feel it."

Meanwhile, inside the BITU HQ, the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Hugh Shearer was congratulating the women



On the job at the Kingston Free Zone.

on winning their demands. He said he had spoken with the management at East Ocean Textiles and they had backed down on the pay day issue. Mr. Shearer told the women they should join a union if they wanted to safeguard their rights. He outlined the procedure for bringing a union into a factory — and encouraged them to join BITU as individuals. One woman asked "So when yuh gwine gi wi di union Sir?" And a young organizer immediately went into a call-and-response chant. "You waan di Union . . . Now! We going gi yuh di Union now!"

Some women were still confused. Which union should we join? Suppose we up here join and the other women don't — will we lose our jobs? What have the old established unions done for women workers? How come so few women are in the leadership of Trade Unions? If the Unions are really on the side of women, then how come women are still the worst paid workers in Jamaica?

Mr. Shearer is right when he says that women in the Free Zone need to organize and unionize. But some of the questions the women raise need answers now. Women have specific problems and specific needs. Trade Unions could not have paid much attention to these if only 5% of women workers are unionized. Women are still forced to work in low-paying jobs because of their sex. Traditional unions continue to see women as dependent housewives and therefore fight for the family man, not the working woman. How can women change this state of affairs?

A CALL TO ACTION

The Free Zone women have begun to answer that question. By their actions, they are saying women can organize themselves to win more power for themselves in order to change the unequal relations between men and women and for better conditions for women. We support that but women in traditional unions can take a leaf out of their book. They can do a lot to organize themselves to challenge obstacles to their full equality within the traditional unions. Women in Unions can build their own power base too.

We also can do plenty.

For a start, we can support the call for a Women's Action Committee. This committee was proposed after the December '86 Workshop on women in the garment industry. The committee was to have been made up of women's organizations, trade unions, the churches and other bodies — it was to have acted as a watch-dog on the Free Zone situation and facilitate the organisation of women in the Zone. To date, we've heard nothing more about this Committee. If progressive organizations want to see women more forward, then we need to see that this resolution is acted on. So write to the media or the Joint Trade Union Research Development Centre (JTURDC) asking what's happened to the committee and calling for its formation.

The situation of women in the Free Zone is offering Jamaican women a strategic base for organization which

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JNIP 'BOTTOM LINE' AD WITHDRAWN FOLLOWING SISTREN PROTEST

Jamaica National Investment Promotion's Managing Director, Corrine McLarty says an ad described by **Sistren** as 'outrageous' has been withdrawn. The ad, which was brought to **Sistren**'s attention after being carried by the **New York Times** is a JNIP promotion aimed at attracting investment to Jamaica's garment industry.

In a letter to Mrs. McLarty, the **Sistren** editorial team asked what criteria had induced JNIP to 'promote our women workers in this outrageous manner'. The letter noted that the JNIP was a government department and

as such should not be bolstering negative images of Jamaican women.

In a meeting with Mrs. McLarty, she told **Sistren** representatives, Beverley Hanson and Joan Ross-Frankson, "Since you people feel that it is denegrating for women . . . we have discontinued the ad because we don't want to get caught up in any controversy."

Mrs. McLarty, however, did not agree with the observations made by **Sistren** saying she couldn't think of anyone else who had made similar interpretations about the ad.

"The idea of the ad was to seek attention and then to sell Jamaica as a location for production, and not to offend. This

ad has been the most successful ad that we have had in terms of the response and the investment interest it has provoked . . ."

"The Bottom-Line . . . is a commonly used expression. No business person who sees that ad would think of it in terms of anything being offered in addition to their profit. I don't think anybody else has thought of such an interpretation."

Asked whether the **Sistren** protest would be taken into account in plans for future ads, Mrs. McLarty said, "We would probably take that sort of thing into consideration in developing a future ad. I could not give any undertaking that somebody else isn't going to do something else. I don't think you can legislate against what you want to say or don't want to say. Each time you are developing an ad you view it on its own merit . . ."

SUPPORT THE WOMEN OF THE FREE ZONE

(Continued from page 6)

we've rarely had before. If we take it, and use it, we may be able to make important gains for women. If we don't support the Free Zone women, if we sit back and let things ride or leave it to the men to decide what the women want, we may lose a big chance and end up sucking salt then wooden spoon — more oppressed then ever.

FREE ZONES IN THE CARIBBEAN

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF ZONES/AREAS
Barbados	1
Belize	1
Dominican Republic	4
Haiti	1
Jamaica	2
Puerto Rico	1
The Bahamas	1
Bermuda	1
Netherlands Antilles	2
St. Lucia	1
Dominica	2
St. Kitts/Nevis	2

NOTE:

Compiled from UNIDO documents and other source documents by Leith Dunn, Researcher JTURDC/CUSO Women in Industry.

MICRO-CHIP TECHNOLOGY MEETING

by Leith Dunn

Forty-five women workers, organizers and activists from Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, North and Central America met in Manila, the Philippines, from October 5-15, 1986 to develop strategies for dealing with the impact of the international division of labour on women in the micro-chip and (to a lesser extent) the garment industries.

Participants visited industrial and agricultural zones in Manila and other parts of the country, met with women workers and labour organizers to learn about living and working conditions in the Philippines, and shared strategies for organizing.

Among the places visited were the Bataan Export Processing Zone where workers have strong unions and an impressive history of militant labour struggles and strikes. Olongapo, the site of the US naval base with its 12,000 prostitutes, was a living testimony of the decadence of capitalism and the exploitation of women — a site to which the US exports garbage for processing!

Some participants met with miners and women sugar workers to learn about

their struggles for better wages and working conditions. An important part of the exposure tour was the stark contrast between the very rich with their yacht clubs, and palaces, and the very poor living on Smokey Mountain, Manila's massive dump heap, who daily sort garbage to eat or sell.

Participants met with representatives of several women's organizations including the KMK (Women Workers Movement), AMBA BALA (a federation of labour unions), the Centre for Women's Resources, GABRIELA (an umbrella organization of women) and the Women's Worker's Centre.

During work sessions women working for the same companies in different countries compared working conditions, wages, health and safety regulations, unionisation and methods of organising.

New trends in the international division of labour were examined and plans were made to exchange information and do more research on the micro-chip companies that increasingly used 'cheap' labour in developing countries.

Possibilities for exchange among women to teach/learn labour organising methods were explored. A twin basis was laid for a strong international solidarity network of women working on the global assembly line in the electronics and garment industries.

The programme was co-ordinated by the Womens Programme of the International Council for Adult Education based in Toronto.



SISTERS CELEBRATION LEADING LADIES: (L-r) Pam Hall, Carlene Davies and Judy Mowatt . . . had the audience rocking.



ROCKING THE NIGHT AWAY: Sistren members and friends enjoy the music from the sidelines.

IWD

For the 3rd consecutive year, Sistren presented 'Sisters Celebration' a cultural show aimed at women who would not normally be able to afford such quality entertainment. This year the concert was dedicated to the Free Zone women. The show, which was staged on the grounds of the Cultural Training Centre, was tightly organised and flowed through without a hitch following a 'Jamaica Time' start. M.C. Fae Ellington-Smellie kept up the entertainment between acts.



Celebrating with the Sisters for the third year running, Edi Fitzroy giving it his all on behalf of Jamaican woman. Hail all the brothers on the show – Joe Ruglass, Bello and Blacka, Poets In Unity, Unique Vision, Ossie D & Stevie G, Mbala. The Stella Maris Dancers were also appreciated by the audience.

CELEBRATING WOMANHOOD AND FEMINISM

ACROSS THE WORLD

by Anita Anand

On a day in early March in the year 1911, a fire broke out in New York's Triangle Shirt Factory.

Management had locked all the doors to prevent theft and had jammed the factory's female textile workers and machines together to cut costs and boost production.

To escape the flames, the women had no alternative but to jump from the windows. A total of 175 women died, and almost every family in New York's lower east side, the working class immigrant area of the city, was affected by the tragedy.

March 8 that year witnessed a mass funeral and the largest-ever demonstration in the history of New York City — a silent parade, which was to become a symbol for the labour movement, not only in the United States, but worldwide.

The scene shifts to Kingston, Jamaica, 76 years later. On a day in early March 1987, women workers at the East Ocean Textiles Company of Hong Kong take to the streets in a spontaneous demonstration to protest the imposition of

new conditions of work. (See story p. 6).

Times have indeed changed since the 175 shirt makers in New York jumped to their deaths, but the silent mass demonstration in their honour has given shape to an annual event.

Every March, on the eighth of the month, International Women's Day is celebrated, bringing together women from all walks of life to celebrate womanhood and feminism. The day has taken on a special significance reflecting the geographical, political, economic and cultural legacies of nations, as well as the diversities and genius of the women's movement.

As the women workers were taking to the streets of Kingston in protest, their counterparts all over the world were engaging in other activities.

In Kampala, Uganda, women came out with spades, hoes and brooms to clean up Kisenyi, one of the capital's unhealthiest slums. Twenty-five kilometres north, they celebrated the day by helping rebuild houses demolished during the Civil War.

In the southern cone of Latin America, Chilean women under Pinochet's military dictatorship held their first Women's Day demonstration since the state of siege was lifted earlier this year.

In Zimbabwe, women adopted the theme of the U.N. Year of Shelter to discuss creative ways of obtaining housing for themselves and their families. The consensus was that housing authorities and financial institutions should relax the rules that currently make it impossible for women to have a roof over their heads.

The focus of International Women's Day in Brazil, South America's largest country, was on media events. In Sao Paulo, for example, the state-owned television station aired a mini-series on "Plural Feminism", a portrait of the reality of women in the nation.

In many countries, both north and south, women marched on March 8.

They marched for peace, against nuclear energy, for better working conditions, for protection against physical violence and to celebrate themselves. They wrote and sang songs, made banners, shouted slogans, laughed and had fun.

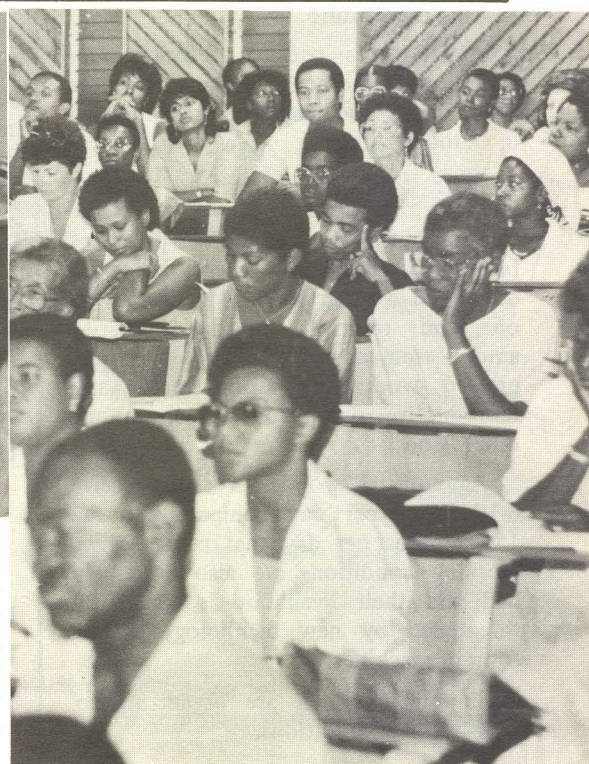
The death of 175 women in 1911 was a long time ago.

Yet, the commemoration of that tragic event is important lest the advances that women have made since then be mistaken for things that always were, and as a reminder of all they have yet to achieve.

WOMEN'S FEATURE SERVICE



SISTREN AT IWD SYMPOSIUM ON 'ISSUES CONCERNING WOMEN': Our Editor, Joan Ross-Frankson (at podium) presented a paper on Prostitution and the Economic Crisis in Jamaica at the UWI Department of Government/Freidrich Ebert Stiftung-sponsored symposium. Journalist, Sylvia Lee (2nd left) presented a paper on Media Images of Caribbean Women and ADA Co-ordinator, Leith Dunn's paper exposed a volume of facts on Free Zones. Others, looking on (l-r), Claire Forrester, a discussant and chairperson, Maxine Henry-Wilson. At right, a section of the audience listen attentively.



FILIPINO WOMEN ON THE MOVE

by Leith Dunn

A Women's Political Party called KAIBA, which means Women for the Motherland in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines, was launched on October 12, 1986 in Manila. Over 500 women from different sectors all over the country, came together to start an important forum for women to organize and train themselves to be active in politics.

Marta Gomez, the newly elected General Secretary of KAIBA says that the party is committed to the development of women as a powerful political force in the Philippines and to the creation of a democratic and sovereign country in which there is justice, human rights and self-reliance and where leaders are accountable to the people.

Flags of different colours represented women delegates from various sectors: urban poor, small farmers, academics, industrial workers and others. Craft items, food and literature from all over the country added to the feeling of festivity. The power and organizational skills of the Filipino women were present as they took this important step in shaping their future.

AMIHAN, a national federation of agricultural women workers in the Philippines, also had its first congress in October 1986!

Sixty women from 11 peasant women's organizations met to discuss social, political and economic problems faced by peasant women. Delegates developed a programme of action based on land reform, building solidarity among women peasants and other oppressed workers, ensuring health and reproductive rights for women among other issues.

Agricultural women workers receive 8-10 pesos per day compared to the 15-20 pesos per day that men receive. Working conditions are also extremely bad and their livelihood is constantly threatened by new technology in the form of machines.

Filippino women are organizing to improve their conditions.

SISTREN PROFILE



Lana Finikin, Sistren Co-ordinator.

Introducing Sistren Co-ordinator and founding member, **Lana Finikin**. Thirty-three-year-old Lana has four children — Donald 14, Locksley 12, Nkrumah (Nicky) 11, and four-month-old Nicole.

Lana's hobbies include listening to music, especially reggae and soft music "which carries a message and true meaning and which helps to express my moods."

She says Sistren has helped advance her in several different areas of her life. "My consciousness has definitely been raised about myself as a woman and an

individual. I have also furthered my administrative skills from Book-keeping to Accounts; Company Stage Manager to Co-ordinator, with the help of my fellow sisters who have inspired me."

Lana's ambition for the future includes becoming a more competent Accountant. She says she also wishes to use her management skills to be "a better Co-ordinator for the Collective and to help with the development of other women's organisations and young women's groups."

NOW AVAILABLE FROM SISTREN

PUBLICATIONS:

- LIONHEART GAL: Life stories of Jamaican women. Sistren Theatre Collective with Honor Ford-Smith . . . 282 pp/\$55.00.
- SISTREN SONG: Popular Theatre in Jamaica, illustrated . . . 24 pp/\$15.00

AUDIO-VISUALS:

- LIONHEART GAL: Dramatised readings from the book with traditional and original Sistren songs . . . cassette tape 90 min/\$30.00.
- SWEET SUGAR RAGE: Video on Sistren's popular education work with female sugar workers. VHS or U-matic . . . 42 min. rental or purchase.

RESEARCH PAPERS:

- 'Female Labour in the Third World with special reference to the Caribbean' . . . Joan French/\$3.00.
- 'Colonial Policy Towards Women After The 1938 Uprising' . . . Joan French/\$10.00.
- 'Una Marson: Black Nationalist and Feminist' . . . Honor Ford-Smith/\$5.00.

**"DUTTY TUFF"
SPARKS FORMATION OF
WOMEN'S GROUP**

Dear Sisters,

I write with greetings and thanks from the girls of Manning's School who as an immediate result of your exhibition "Dutty Tuff", began our own Women's Association. Girls have been concerned about women's issues for some time and viewing your work brought our discussions to a head.

We would like to be placed on your mailing list for future information as The Manning's School Women's Association to ensure that materials relevant to our aims and objectives would reach us as well as being filtered through the official channels of school communication.

With every good wish for the continuation of your work.

Mrs. R. Palmer
Manning's School, Savanna-la-Mar



THE 'STAR'S' NAKED WOMEN

Dear Sistren,

I wonder why after an absence of six months the editor of the "Star" Newspaper has decided to resume publishing pictures of naked and near naked women in the paper? I'm sure there was no apparent drop in sales during this welcome absence, and I had hoped that the staff of the paper were taking a responsible social stance on the matter of how women are viewed in the society. The connection between viewing women as objects solely for men's pleasure and the increasing incidence of rape and sexual abuse cannot be denied.

The Gleaner Company has a monopoly of newspapers published in this country and as such a responsibility to reflect its readership. The majority of the population (over 50% women), including the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of these men at the "Star" plus the well thinking men and the children, gain nothing from being compelled to see these exploitative pictures alongside the news they wish to read.

Those men who need this sort of titillation in order to function as men, can find publications geared more particularly to their needs.

Yours truly,
Samere Tansley
Kingston 9.

FROM OUR MAILBAG

LIONHEART GAL APPRECIATED

Dear Sistren,

Got the copy of 'Lionheart Gal' and am absolutely bowled over by it. Wish I had copies to give to everyone for Christmas. Honor's introduction was particularly good — brilliant in fact. It quite inspired me to get started on my own writing. It will also be an excellent reference for my study. Congrats.

Peggy Antrobus
Tutor/Co-ordinator WAND
Mass., U.S.A.



Dear Sistren,

My copy of 'Lionheart Gal' reached me recently and I was really pleased to receive it. My congratulations to you all. Also, whatever is happening, be encouraged because what you all are doing is very valuable for our history, our movement and our women.

Elaine 'Molly' Wallace
Berlin, GDR.

Alice Walker
California, U.S.A.

Dear Sistren,

Thank you for a sky-rocketing launching of **Lionheart Gal**. A marked impression was made on my ten-year-old daughter. May the strength of Sistren grow in each and every one of us.

Cynthia Ferguson
University Bookshop
Mona (7)



ALICE WALKER WRITES

Dear Sistren,

Thank you for inviting me to Jamaica to help launch 'Lionheart Gal'. By the time you receive this you will have had your programme — I hope it was a great success.

Though I am unable to come to Jamaica, I am working with the producers of **SISTERFIRE 1987** to bring Sistren to the United States for the Festival when I would love to introduce you. I will be there on Sunday, June 28.

My sincere regrets to you all, along with my appreciation for the work you are doing — and love.

IN TRIBUTE TO THE SISTREN

by Christopher Cunningham

*She knew but would not tell me
That it was she who ran the house.
It was her well kept secret
That kept me going on.*

*She refused to let me know
That it was not the kind of paint that kept the walls clean
And that the miracle soap I bought couldn't snap the stain out of clothes
That the new pressure cooker can't season meat
Or that the kitchen floor is just as hard to shine.*

Poetry
~~~~~

*She did not tell me  
That baby Mark wakes up at two o'clock every morning —  
Just about the time I begin to snore  
Or that the days of the milkman are over  
And Miss Chin's shop is packed every Sunday  
No, I never knew.*

*I never knew that she was the MA in my macho —  
And I was just the rest  
I didn't know  
That I was stronger because she was carrying the heavier weight  
Or that I was faster because she was tired.*

*I did not know  
But I found out when she died.*

*(Thanks for the thoughts Christopher. As women we betray ourselves, our baby-fathers/  
husbands, sons and brothers, when we encourage their ignorance about domestic labour.  
— Ed).*



# CARIBBEAN WOMEN ORGANISING

## BELIZEAN WOMEN: BY THEIR OWN HANDS

by Honor Ford-Smith

Women in Belize are getting organized and getting results. Nothing showed this more clearly than one significant event in January this year — the first annual conference of the Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA).

There's no organization in Jamaica quite like the BRWA. It's a new organization formed in 1986 to bring together grass roots women from the country parts of Belize, rural women of all different cultures and races. BRWA brings them together to fight for their rights and to build women's economic power. Its leadership is made up of rural women and women farmers — a rare thing in women's organizations. Already the organization has provided Belizean women farmers with a truck to market their produce; it has co-organized an annual cultural market day where women from all over Belize meet to enjoy each others products and to celebrate Belizean cultural identity. BRWA has also promoted a health education programme for women, while at the same time building up its organizational base in the community.

The meeting in Dangrigga, Belize, on January 24 to 26, brought together women of Creole, Garifuna, Latino, Mayan and Mestizo descent. In Belize right now that's no easy feat. You see, since slavery Belize has been a black majority country. But since the war and civil conflict in Central America, over the last few years, something like 30,000 refugees have poured into Belize. Some of these are American Indians. Others are Latinos or other races. These refugees fleeing the war or political repression in their country, squat on idle land in Belize. They take lower wages than Belizeans. This means that sometimes black Belizeans who have been in Belize since slavery days feel that the refugees are undermining their organizations and their chances for a better life. In addition to these new arrivals, there is a Mayan Indian community, a group of people who have been in Belize since before Columbus arrived and before slavery. Mayans speak their own language and often keep within

their own traditional communities. Most Mayan men don't allow their wives to go out unescorted. There is also a Black Carib or Garifuna community in Belize. To this day, they keep up their Arawak, African and Carib customs and have preserved their culture. For example, they are still growing traditional cassava; fishing for their own food and celebrating their cultural heritage in special rites throughout the year.



*Garifuna women from Belize in traditional dress present a skit.*

The BRWA meeting brought together all these groups. The delegates stayed in the houses of the Garifuna women in Dangrigga. At the meeting, women conducted sessions in three and sometimes four languages at the same time with hardly any official translation facilities. Many women didn't have the latest styles. But that didn't stop them from coming out. Mayan women came in traditional woven shirts and skirts, others proudly came barefoot or in old clothes; some were glamorous, others ordinary, but all came out in eagerness to share with their sisters. They spoke out about how they banned their bellies and sacrificed to send their children to school. They spoke out about how hard it is to own land when you're poor. They said that the government is selling off the best land to the big foreign investors like Coca Cola, but if Belizean small farmers want to buy it they are told that its forest reserve. They spoke out about flooding problems and how it harms their homes and their produce. They

spoke about processing the food they grow themselves so they can market it and save having to buy imported foreign food. Most of these women were proud to be farmers. How energetic they seemed! They had such faith in the worth of food producers.

The meeting analysed problems facing the organization. How sometimes when you form a group and you work hard to build it up and then suddenly Badapps!

something goes wrong because of class, colour or petty competitiveness and jealousy. "But" they said, "we have to talk about these problems together and not give up on them." At the end of the meeting the women finalized the legal articles for their association. When they left they had clearer plans for the future.

Since the January meeting, the BRWA has joined with other Belizean women's organizations to host a health fair and begun work on a rural women's self help economic project in addition to supporting craft and food processing projects around the country. SISTREN wishes them all support.

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## "WOMEN FOR CARIBBEAN LIBERATION"

Plans are underway for the First General Assembly of 'Women for Caribbean Liberation' to be convened during International Women's Week, 1988. The



inaugural meeting of 'Women for Caribbean Liberation' was held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines from February 9 to 12. Representatives of women's groups from Puerto Rico, Haiti, Belize, Panama, Jamaica, Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent, Trinidad, Suriname, Guyana and the Caribbean community in North America finalised objectives for the grouping

and set up an organisational structure.

Main objective of the group is to increase unity between organisations of Caribbean women, and to promote understanding between men and women of the region. 'Women for Caribbean Liberation' will also actively oppose economic developments that target the Caribbean and its women as a source

## A TRIP THROUGH BELLEVUE

(Continued from page 3)

the children) cause additional problems: stoning and taunting of patients, stealing patient's clothes off clotheslines, dumping of garbage and allowing animals to graze on Bellevue property.

## JAMAICAN HELPERS ON THE JORDAN RUN

(Continued from page 5)

cost a girl buying a ticket from Jordan one way to Jamaica as much as \$1,452 (US).

### NO EVALUATION CONDUCTED

When the girls get home, either early or at the expiration of their contract, no follow-up is done to record or evaluate their experiences. "We don't see them unless someone sees them out somewhere or we see them downtown," Moore-Sinclair says. Moreover, during the eleven years of the programme's operation, no comprehensive report has ever been completed. According to Moore-Sinclair, "We don't have that kind of resources. It's not necessary. We are here to train and help the girls find jobs and that's what we do."

### REPORTS OF BAD TREATMENT

But there have been allegations of mistreatment. One travel agent said she knew a Jamaican girl who went over to Jordan and was not allowed to go anywhere or speak to anyone. She did not receive any pay till she was ready to return to Jamaica three years later. "She told me it's not what it seems. When you get over there it's a different story." Negative reports have also been carried from time to time by the *Gleaner* and the *Star* and aired on radio call-in programmes.

Bristling at the mention of the pro-

### THE WARDS

A trip through Bellevue is painful, especially the children's ward, where the first sight observed was a young naked woman rolling around aimlessly in the dirt, oblivious to her surroundings. The children's ward houses 36 female and male, physically and mentally handicapped patients ranging in age from 10-28. None of them, according to the nurses, will ever leave Bellevue. Only

gramme's adverse publicity, Moore-Sinclair insists that no girl has come back and reported abuse directly to Girls' Town. "You aren't going to find a job the way you want it anywhere in the world," she snaps.

She maintains that the adverse publicity is based on "lies told by girls denied into the programme or who don't know much about it." Handal also insists that no girl has come into the Consulate office to complain about ill treatment while in Jordan.

The Jordanian Consulate would like to see the governments of Jamaica and Jordan enter into an arrangement to oversee the programme in order "to streamline it," says Handal. "If the programme was under government control, it would be quicker and easier to make contact if there are problems."

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Presently, Girls' Town falls under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Moore-Sinclair refers to the Jordan project as a 'private scheme'.

Unfortunately, our deadline came upon us before we could seek clarification from the Ministry about its knowledge of the "Jordan Run" scheme, and some of the questions raised in the above report. We'll be seeking answers for our next issue. Girls' Town did give us contact addresses for a few participants in the scheme, but we've had no luck locating any of them through those addresses. We hope to hear from those of you who've gone to Jordan on the scheme so we can help in assessing the positives and negatives of one of the "job options" being offered to young, unskilled and economically deprived Jamaican women.

of cheap labour, while working for alternative ideas and programmes.

The elected Co-ordinator is Arah Hector of the Antigua Women's Movement. Write to her at P.O. Box 847, St. John's, Antigua, for more detailed information about 'Women for Caribbean Liberation'.

two are verbal, four of the females are on the "injection", all the children are on anti-psychotic drugs, and almost half spend their days naked because "they won't keep on any clothes".

On other wards, keeping on clothes is not as much an issue as the availability of clothes. Many patients are without shoes, many women without bras and panties.

There are also not enough working toilets. "One of the major problems is maintenance," says Irons. Indeed! On one female ward I was warned by a patient not to go in the bathroom because "it was bad in dere" and I would "catch germs". She didn't exaggerate; it was deplorable. Water from leaking toilets covered the floor, the shower stalls were corroded and filthy; the stench unbearable.

Lack of structured activities is another problem. On one of the admission wards, while a number of male patients supervised by the student nurses were outside engaged in dominoes or ping-pong, most of the women were lying indoors on their beds. Some slept while some muttered to themselves; one informed the nurses that she was ready to run away, another insisted on receiving her injection, while another fought off swarming flies from a frail, elderly woman sleeping in the bed next to her. Still others walked around listlessly in a daze. "We don't have enough activities for them," says the charge nurse. "We can't get the materials needed. They used to make patch rugs. Now, we don't have much for them to do."

But why is Bellevue in the shape it's in? It's not because of an uncaring staff; quite the contrary. It is because, simply put, there's not enough money.

"It costs about \$50.00 per day to keep a patient in hospital like this properly," says Irons. "Bellevue is allocated 17 million by the government. We're about six million short to do the job properly."

However, a trip through Bellevue makes one question whether six million would be nearly enough.



## FORUM TO SPEAK OUT

by Shirley Campbell

## WATCHERS &amp; SEEKERS

Creative Writing by Black Women  
in Britain edited by  
Rhonda Cobham & Merle Collins.  
Published by The Women's Press Ltd.,  
1987.

This collection of poems, short stories, autobiographies and illustrations is a welcome addition to the spate of publications providing a forum for women to "speak out".

The issues of the black woman's struggle for social and professional acceptance, man/woman relations, the exploitation of female sexuality, the isolation and loneliness which may result from rejection of male domination, the miracle of childbirth, the sameness of experiences from grandmother, to mother to daughter, all find expression in these 157 pages.

The dilemma of youth, the need for peace, anti-nuclear war sentiments and anti-apartheid protest also provide subject matters for these 21 artistes whose writings are shaped by their experiences between "Back Home and Home". Between the Caribbean — Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana, Grenada, Antigua — Africa, China, India, Pakistan and the 'motherland' Britain. A Britain in which, in their struggle for justice, they face a hostile environment in which "Black is a political word", and they must "Beware of the position (racism)", which has its seeds "in the crevices of your history".

Throughout the collection the essential message is for the woman (not confined to black women of any single class) to struggle against all odds. "Black woman out dere you have to Fight Back/Just come forward with a double attack/No boder weep/On no kitchen mat . . . Jus attack." The sentiment is also expressed in *Woman Talk* "Talk about the pleasure/Talk about the pain" . . . and "Sisterwoman . . . find peace".

However, finding peace does not come easily. It is a path riddled with disappointments and loneliness as in the autobiographical piece *The Bed Sitting Room*. Sympathy is evoked when in moments of weakness she wishes to end it by catching a man to "retire to the kitchen". Or when "The waiting game was no more fun/She

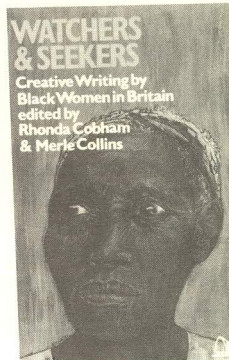
picked up herself/and walked out the door/She was forty/and her life had just begun".

The themes are powerfully reinforced by the imagery of rich, tropical foods, the religious folk culture and the musical rhythms (reggae, calypso, dub poetry) captured in the free flow of the language.

"I'm all watermelon/and star-apple and plum/when you touch me". Mother is the ". . . fishes red gill", "the flame tree's spread", "the crab's leg", "the fried plantain smell/replenishing, replenishing". The language is stoutly defended in poems such as *No Dialects Please* "To think how still they so dunce/and so frighten we power/dat they have to hide behind a language".

While very serious, these writings are also funny. You can't help laughing out loud when Divine Providence intervenes in *Jerry Perm Poem* to stop "grease . . . lost in my mouth" when "down came all the rain . . . Thank you Lord,/With all my heart/for rainy afternoons".

If a single weakness is to be identified



in this work it is a tendency to apologise for the struggle for equality. "Frality is Not my name/yet/On the other hand I am not a big strong, black woman/iron hard and carrying/all the sorrows of the world on my back". "I am a woman and I'm angry/At having to behave in ways female/I'd like to climb rocks and build a bridge/To shoot the menstrual cycle up a spaceship". These sentiments are no doubt evoked by *Images* which from birth say "Subdue your excellence/if you want to keep your identity/as woman/and this will continue until woman/workers "claim their worth", reshaping values towards the "reality that we will create/if only/only if/we insist on equal worth".

*Watchers and Seeker* represents a part of the process of reshaping this reality.



*ALTERNATIVE READING* is what Donna Singh says the public can find at her new shop *The Other Book Store* at 29½ Munroe Road (6). Donna says the aim of *The Other Book Store* is to provide books that address diverse political, cultural and social issues at reasonable prices. She says she's particularly proud of her women's section and feels she's providing a service that is needed. "It's my small way of encouraging more broad debate in Jamaica . . . to improve our intellectual life . . ."



# CREATING VISION FROM STRUGGLE

## TRIBUTE TO HON. EDNA MANLEY

Edna Manley was a great inspiration and support to us. Her whole life was for the arts and a new Jamaica. As a young woman in the rigidly conventional colonial society of the thirties, we can imagine the tremendous strength of purpose and courage it must have taken to remain committed to her artistic work — in spite of the bitter criticism and isolation she must have experienced. Later, it must have taken even more tenacity for her, as a woman to combine her political work with the less glamorous duties of mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

This sense of determination to create vision from struggle, reflects itself in her work. From "Negro Aroused" to "Horse of the Morning" her artistic imagination linked social vision with social critique. In her sculpture and drawing, in her teaching and in her personal life — she pioneered a concept of the arts as socially committed and as instruments of challenge. In so doing, she laid the basis for a new relationship between the Caribbean artist and his or her society. It is this relationship which our generation and those that come after will continue to re-examine and to fulfill — if the arts are to have any meaning in the present crisis in our region.

At a personal level Mrs. Manley always supported our work even when it was most criticized. Our last memory of her is that of her presence at our house opening in December. The doctor had told her not to come. In spite of this, she was one of the first guests to arrive. She commented on our screen prints, was excited by Lionheart Gal and disappointed not to be able to join in the Jonkonnu jump-up. She was among those artists interested in the link between the political and the artistic which our work explores.

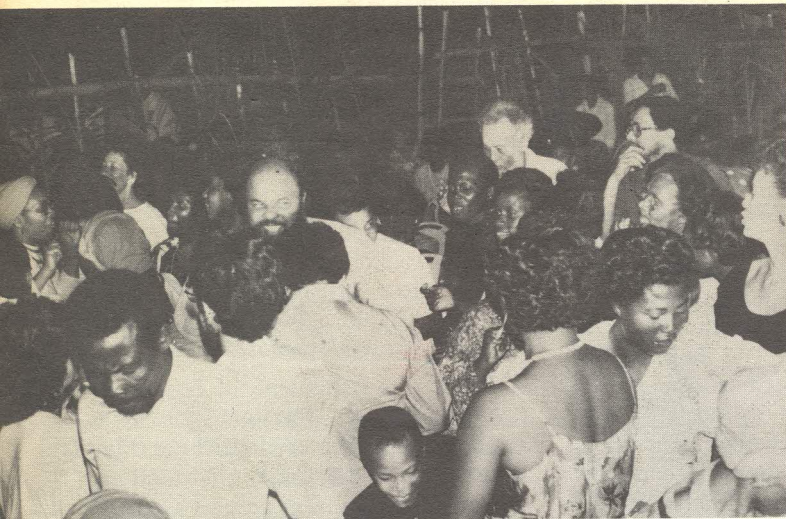
From the standpoint of her generation she provided for us a sense of reassurance that we were indeed contributing to an important Caribbean tradition.

We will never forget her sensitivity and her sincere support, and we pledge that in our lives and our work we will try as women cultural workers to continue the tradition she pioneered in Jamaica and the Caribbean.



*The artist constantly rejuvenated by the youth, Edna Manley regularly sought out the company and views of young people, teaching them and learning from them, in a two-way flow.*





Pulsating Kumina drums brought the audience to its feet for a grand finale jump-up.



Presentation to the most Lionhearted Gal of them all. Pauline Crawford (back to camera) presents to Ms. Lou a framed copy of her famous poem **Dutty Tuff**.



It's impossible to keep a straight face when Communicator, Barbara Gloudon reads from her newspaper columns of the seventies – **Stella Seh**. Sistren members applauding Mrs. Gloudon's performances are (l-r) Lana Finikin, Rebecca Knowles, Honor Ford-Smith, Lorna Haslam and Joan French.

## LIONHEART GAL LAUNCHED

Sistren's Headquarters was alive with an 'Old Time Jamaica' flavour for the **Lionheart Gal Celebration** which marked the local launch of 'Lionheart Gal' (The Women's Press). An archway of coconut boughs, a "backyard" style bamboo booth, old time pickins' and kumina drumming, was the perfect setting in which to celebrate Jamaica's rich tradition of women writers. Guest of Honour was the indomitable **Louise Bennett-Coverley**, 'Miss Lou', whose pioneering work has largely been responsible for Jamaica's pride in their language. Other women writers honoured were **Una Marson**, and **Barbara Gloudon**. A special drum tribute honoured the memory of **Edna Manley**.



Lana Finikin and Cerene Stephenson sing 'John Gaan a Farin' to introduce **Lionheart Gal** reading 'Di Boots Dat Mek Pure Noise'.



Song, dance and dramatised readings were all part of the mix of entertainment at the **Lionheart Gal** launch.