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SIREN

VOL. 12 NO. 1, 1990



Honouring Miss Amy and Miss May

Free Zone Workers Assess Free Zone Report

THE DAY WE WORE RED UNDIES

ON THE STREETS OR IN THE ARCADES?

SISTREN OUT DEH!

INTERNATIONAL

- Lana Finikin, our Coordinator, was in India in April for a Groots/Working Women seminar on Leadership In Development.
- Pauline Crawford, Joan Edwards and Patsy Price of Workshop Team, were in the Eastern Caribbean for a series of workshops and a WAND/CAFRA workshop on Feminist Theory and Practice in Barbados.
- Bev Hanson was in Zimbabwe with Carol Lawes of Groundwork Theatre Company for a Women in Theatre workshop (see p. 6).
- Honor Ford-Smith, still on our Board of Directors, is in the Eastern Caribbean to evaluate the popular theatre work of ECPTO member groups.
- In June, we'll be at the 4th International Congress of Women, hosted by Hunter College in New York, to run workshops on popular theatre techniques and perform dramatised excerpts from Lionheart Gal.
- Shortly after we'll be in Belize to perform Buss Out!, share popular theatre skills and facilitate design and printing workshops.
- Sistren Textiles took part in the monthly Jampro Craft Fairs over in Montego Bay and is busy following up orders.

BUSSING OUT!

The Buss Out! Island Tour continues (see the press for details). Apart from the community shows, we've also had a lot of requests for workshops from women's groups and students. We're even working on a video (with Phase Three) about the tour which will centre on the adventures, hilarious moments, community responses and hurdles overcome. Best of all, we've met with many community groups for the first time. And, nuff exciting tings a gwaan at di community level. All Stars Youth Club (Spring Hill, Portland), Dynamic

Youth Club (Mavis Bank), Western Cultural Club (Cedar Valley), are all doing drama with community youths, and Teri Williams and the Bluefields Trust have several projects going with fishermen and youths in the Bluefields/Belmont area of Westmoreland.

NEW BOOKLET FROM SISTREN RESEARCH

Wid Dis Ring is a comic book about Jamaican women and their struggles in the 1930s and 40s, especially in relation to Colonial policy and how it affected their lives. It's adapted by Joan French from the study of women's work and organisation in Jamaica, which she did with Honor Ford-Smith, and is aimed at schools, and women and community groups.

AT THE MEETING PLACE

- Odile Donatien from Images Caraibes, organisers of the 2nd Caribbean Film and Video Festival in Martinique, visited us in February. Sistren helped Odile contact Jamaican video and film-makers who will be participating in the Festival, slated for June. We'll be screening two Sistren videos - Miss Amy and Miss May and Muffet Inna All a Wi
- We had many visitors from international donor agencies who wanted information on Sistren's programmes and more generally on women in Jamaica, including: Claudine Correia of UNIFEM in New York; Suzanne Olifee (and her daughter) of CCOOP in Canada; Maxine Shatton of UNESCO in Paris; representatives of UNICEF in Barbados; Trish Kovnats from MATCH, who was here doing excellent workshops with various women's groups on How To Confront Community Development with a Gender Perspective, Jean Christie of Interpares, PARES; Judith Laird of the Banyan Collective in Trinidad, who was here to show her video, Women In Calypso; Trudy Merrill, a science fiction writer who has been involved in Canada's environmental and peace movements.

ANNIVERSARY DINNER

DATE: MAY 25, 1990
TIME: 7.00 PM UNTIL.....
PLACE: CLASSIQUE AMBIANCE
DONATION: \$150.00

Music, Fun, Laughter and Great Food as Sistren members and Friends Celebrate 13 years Together



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Sistren is produced three times a year by the Sistren Theatre Collective as part of its on-going efforts to highlight issues of concern to women in the society. Sistren is a non-profit making collective of women. Other activities include theatre, workshops using Drama-in-Education methodology, and research. Sistren has also experimented with film and video and produced a book of members' life stories, Lionheart Gal. Sistren Textiles is the group's income-earning project. Contact: 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-92457/92-96171).

ACQUAINTED



Joan French

SISTREN PROFILE

Introducing Joan French, one of *Sistren's* longest surviving resource persons! Born in Kingston in 1945, is a former teacher of Spanish. She has two daughters, Simone who is studying at UWI and Monique who is still in high school. Her hobbies are going on trips to the beach and the countryside, watching good movies and staying home and enjoying the domestic life.

Joan started working with *Sistren* in 1979, helping the group to develop structures for decision-making and problem-solving. Later on she became responsible for cultural education sessions on women's issues and current affairs. She's also functioned as Workshop Director and continues as Workshop Advisor. She got involved with research to help develop *Sistren's* plays (from *DOMESTICK* through to *MUFFET INNA ALL A WI*) and to

provide information for workshops and internal education. At the moment she is responsible for *Sistren Research*.

Asked what she has learnt in her years with *Sistren*, Joan says, "It has deepened my experience and understanding of issues related to gender, race and class as well as how difficult it is to challenge unfair power systems and recognise our own power, while at the same time building democracy and protecting human rights.

And, what are her thoughts on *Sistren's* future development? *Sistren* needs to reflect more on where it came from, how it got there, and what it can do to help create the space for other women to also seek empowerment, so that women's issues can become central to the development process.

PERSONAL NOTES

CONDOLENCES: to Carol Simpson, *Sistren's* Junior Accountant, whose mother died suddenly in April. Also to Elean Thomas-Gifford, whose father died after suffering a stroke.

MARRIED: long-time friend of *Sistren*, Jennifer Chang; to Matthew Binns. Congratulations and long years of happiness.

BACK HOME IN HANOVER: Jean Breeze after a hectic tour; to concentrate on writing short stories and poetry.

BREAKING LANGUAGE BARRIERS: Keith Hanson, musician with the *Sistren Buss Out* posse who has launched *Be proud (Of your culture)* on Stage Records which has him singing reggae rock in Wolof, German, Spanish, French, Patwah and English.

A WINNER: Cynthia Wilmot Director of *Miss Amy and Miss May*, the Jamaica recipient of British Airways' *In Flight Magazine High Life Award* for excellence in Journalism in the field of Travel, Aviation and Tourism.

MAKING US PROUD: Dame Nita Barrow, Barbados' new Governor General, only the third woman in the Caribbean to hold the post. Dame Nita, best known for her Diplomatic work, was a founding member and first President of the *Nurses Association of Jamaica*.

FREE AT LAST: *Sistren* joined all freedom loving people of the world in celebrating the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Winnie Mandela's joy at being reunited with her husband.

EDITORIAL

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Roping in the men to make the world a better place.

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Corienne Barnes checks out the new Police Rape Unit



20 “She arrived in Grand Cayman, not knowing where she was going to stay or what to buy~ . . .”

Patrick Smikle studies the progress of a higgler from street to arcade and Lynette Joseph checks the situation on the street.

23 “Mi fi got mi red undies an dis is show number 13. Mi can't tek chance wid di St. Thomas duppy dem . . .”

Hilary Nicholson realtes anecdotes from the "Buss Out!" Island Tour.

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Let's Rope In The Men!

The start of the last decade of the century is a good time for the women's movement, locally, regionally and internationally to reflect on where it has reached and what yet has to be done. And, without that much reflection, it is easy to see that while there has been progress, it has been severely limited by the present policies of structural adjustment courtesy of the IMF.

Debt, devaluation, severe cutbacks in social services, divestment, removal of price controls, liberalisation of import controls at the cost of the local manufacturing industry, and over-encouragement of foreign investment, have all but wiped out the little gains that Caribbean women have made since the United Nations launched its Decade of Women 15 years ago under the banner of Equality, Development and Peace.

Yes, it is true that we have seen some legal improvements such as the Maternity Leave Law, and more of our middle-class women 'have position' in the state bureaucracy, the private sector and in the non-governmental community. There has been increased awareness of the concerns of women, the proliferation of Women's Desks and Women's Programmes and projects galore which far too often do not have the resources necessary to make them work.

But as the DAWN network of Third World women makes clear from studies amassed since 1975, "With few exceptions women's relative access to economic resources, income and employment has worsened, their burdens of work have increased, and their relative and even absolute health, nutrition, and educational status has



declined." Or to sum it up in the words of the United Nations latest study of the current status of women worldwide, the vast majority of us are, "poor, pregnant and powerless".

The fact is we are just going to have to demand better in this decade. And we are going to have to rope in our brothers to help us do so. Our vision of the world is one in which all of us - man, woman and pickney - have the space in which to develop our full potential. That is not just a concern for we women. Neither is sexual violence, child care, or equal pay for work of equal value. By the same token, structural adjustment, the environment, peace and detente are major global issues in which women must become more involved.

Much remains to be done to achieve a world without gender, class or racial prejudices; a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. We women cannot do it in isolation and even as we recognise the need for us to continue to come together to give each other strength, we have to also encourage our men to come together to define their own social selves.

It was so positive for those of us who

took part in a recent regional women's conference organised by the Caribbean Peoples Development Agency (CAR-IPEDA) in Guyana, to engage in gender discussions cheek to cheek with young men from the member agencies. Their willingness to listen, to learn and to help chart ways in which the sisters and the brothers of the region can work together and love together, from a basis of respect and equality, earned them a standing ovation from we the women participants.

A **Sistren** member tells the story of being in a bar one Sunday when one of the men present announced to his drinking partners that he was going home because it was his turn to cook the dinner. Those gathered sought to slaughter the 'Maama-man'. She jumped into the fray (as we **Sistren** are wont to do!) to defend him. He withstood the barrage. How many of our men are able to when confronted by their backward peers? They need to strengthen each other too. If it is that women help to 'marginalise' men, then it is more true that men are the greatest marginalisers of themselves. Those who are enlightened must be encouraged to let their voices be heard.

As the most oppressed, we have been forced to defend and protect ourselves by forming coalitions among ourselves. Let us help them to do the same for they are also oppressed by societies that equate their efforts to be gentle, to be sensitive and to be human as some kind of weakness. Let us not allow them to marginalise themselves any longer. Let us resolve to help them help themselves to develop maturity and real strength. Then we can all resolve to make this world a better place - together.

MY SMALL



ALL SMILES FOR SECRETARIES WEEK

Secretaries, Administrative Assistants and their bosses from the Association of Development Agencies and other NGOs were out in full force to celebrate Secretaries Week (April 22-27). In the three years since the **ADA/NGO Secretaries and Administrative Assistants Group** was formed, it has moved from strength to strength. This year they brought in their bosses to a one-day workshop to examine their situation with a view to begin working out how they can work better together.

Many issues were aired and will form the basis of a survey to be conducted by **Maxine Henry-Wilson** of the University of the West Indies. Pictured at their annual luncheon sharing a joke with guest speaker, **Mabel Tenn**, a Director of Grace Kennedy Group of Companies (standing) are members of the head table from left to right, **Dorothy Hollingsworth** of CUSO, **Sharon Bernard** of ADA, **Medlyn Phillips** of PFP, **Peta-Anne Baker**, ADA Coordinator and **Ingrid Scot** of CUSO.

TIME NOW WOMAN

FI STAP SUFFA

A time now woman fi stap suffa
For dem a di life beara
Mi seh it hard
And wi a bawl
Di cry a fi life
A misery and strife
Get outa a di way
An Mek wi survive
A tribulation wi still a bear
FREEDOM !!
Wi dung wid oppression and
discrimination
But, wi ever strong
Wen mi look pon dem wid di load pan
dem back
bwoy, mi seh dem wise
Di road is rough and tough
But woman, nuh give up
Mi seh wi strong
An wi mus get along
A time now woman fi stop suffa

The Creative Writing Group
(Sistren Research)

A RIGHT ROYAL HANDSHAKE!

A rare moment came for **Sistren's Bev Hanson** when she greeted and shook hands with **President Robert Mugabe** during her recent trip to Zimbabwe. "It felt regal!" she says. The question is, has she washed that hand yet! Bev was on her first visit to Africa for a Women in Theatre Workshop, along with **Carol Lawes** of Groundwork Theatre Company. Says Bev, "It felt so good to have happened into Africa at a time when the world is watching and waiting to see what will happen in South Africa following the release of Nelson Mandela." Her most memorable moments (apart from that handshake!); singing in the combe (bus) from township to township; climbing the Great Zimbabwe Ruins; being with the South African participants and listening to their freedom songs.



CORNER



PROOF OF THE PUDDING: *Nalda invites graduation guests to sample the goodies. Inset: Al, the lone graduating male.*

CREATIVE COOKS

Al Campbell is enthusiastic about the Grace Kitchens Creative Homemakers Cooking Programme. Al, a gardener, was the only man among 35 graduates (most of them domestic helpers) of the tenth course since the programme was introduced in 1986. "I enjoy the course and learning a little something extra. I would recommend it," he says. The programme, which is free of cost, combines nutrition, personal and kitchen hygiene, menu planning and meal presentation in a way that encourages creativity and innovation. Nalda Green echoed Al's enthusiasm in her address on behalf of the Graduates in a ceremony following their course. "We have found out how much education can expose us to new people and new ideas and help us to become more rounded people. We will all look forward to new opportunities to learn with eagerness."

The only problem with the programme? It's over subscribed way into next year! Get on the waiting list at Grace Kitchens and Consumer Centre, 33 Hope Road, Kingston 10.

PROJECTING POSITIVES



Bernal plans

Margaret Bernal, the new head at the Women's Bureau, is planning to concentrate her future efforts on a public education campaign and training programmes aimed at projecting positive images of Jamaican women. The Bureau continues its on-going work under Bernal's leadership; research into the so-

cial and economic conditions of women with a view to giving whatever assistance possible, and the development of projects started by women islandwide. Bernal's plans will add another dimension. "I think we have to go on an all out campaign to honour our women; to create new role models for our young women and emphasise the contribution women are making in our society." In the pipeline? A massive media campaign using posters, skits and dramatic presentations.



THRIFT SHOP IN A BUS

At last, that old bus shell at the back of the grounds of the Women's Centre on Trafalgar Road in Kingston is in business - thrifty business for women! The Association of Women's Organisations in Jamaica (AWOJA) refurbished the bus, which was donated by businesswoman, Joan Porteus (seen cutting the ribbon). It will be used to house AWOJA's thrift shop which was established shortly after Hurricane Gilbert passed through in 1988, to meet the need of many low-income women for cheap, quality clothing and household goods. So start going through your wardrobes and cupboards and make your donations. Karlene Mattis (seen at right) heads a group of dedicated volunteers on the Thrift Shop Committee who sort, organise and maintain quality. At left is Mrs Pam MacNeil who heads the Women's Centre, and who did not hesitate to donate the space for the bus.

Freezone Women Assess

by Sarah Power

The Free Zone Enquiry Report from sole Enquirer, Dan Kelly was finally made available to women's groups in January through the Bureau of Women's Affairs. The government has still not discussed the Report in the House or officially responded to it. It is interesting to note that nine out of the 11 recommendations of the Women's Action Committee, as written up in SISTREN Magazine last fall, are contained in the Report. The two not mentioned were the ones referring to formally appointing workers to ensure greater job security and compensating employees for length and type of service if there is a dismissal.

Members of the St. Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group met in early March to review the Free Zone Enquiry Report, especially the recommendations. Researcher, Linnette Vassell, has prepared a critique of the Report for the women's Action Committee. The following is a summary of responses and criticisms made by the St. Peter Claver group and Vassell, to the recommendations and other issues contained in the Report.

● Advisory Council

Report: Set up an Advisory Council be set up rather than a Joint Industrial Council at this time as the Kingston Free Zone manufacturers say they do not want to be a part of a Joint Industrial Council.

Workers: We are in agreement with the establishment of an Advisory Council to arbitrate and regulate the garment industry, but wonder whether a useful one will come to pass given the unco-operative attitude of many Free Zone manufacturers.

● Liason Officer

Report: Appoint a liason officer from the Ministry of Labour be appointed to monitor and file reports on the working conditions

in the garment industry but particularly in the Kingston Free Zone.

Workers: A good idea provided the person appointed work to enforce the Factories Act and the Industrial Safety Regulations at the Free Zone. Most of the breaches of the Industrial Safety Regulations noted in Vol II No 2, 1989 of *Sistren Magazine* are still outstanding.

● Industrial Engineer

Report: Appoint an industrial engineer to act as a consultant in helping factories set production quotas.

Workers: It would be better for each factory to work to improve their production quotas by upgrading training to enable workers to reach higher production levels, rather than bringing in an outsider.

● Orientation Programme

Report: Training and orientation sessions about Jamaican customs and industrial relations for foreign supervisors and other personnel, especially those from the Far East.

Workers: We fully agree. Supervisors from the Far East do not understand the work ethic and work attitudes of Jamaicans as they are quite different to their own.

● Grievance Procedure



Report: Outline of a 4-step grievance procedure and a recommendation that workers receive leadership training to

make them more effective representatives on worker councils.

Workers: Presently if a problem cannot be settled with their supervisor, which is often the case, workers go directly to the personnel manager, accountant or factory manager and get results. The Worker Councils that exist now often do not act in the best interests of workers but rather agree too much with management. Ideally, grievances should be settled between employee representatives and management representatives but only if employee representatives are elected by workers rather than appointed by management. Strong agreement with proposals for leadership training.

● Joint Consultation

Report: Establish Joint Consultative Committees of employees and employers to allow workers a voice in decisions about the running of the factory.

Workers: In agreement, but also noted that some factories have these under the name of Advisory Councils. Also feel management should have general meetings with all workers on important matters rather than with just a few representatives.

● Jamaican Management Personnel

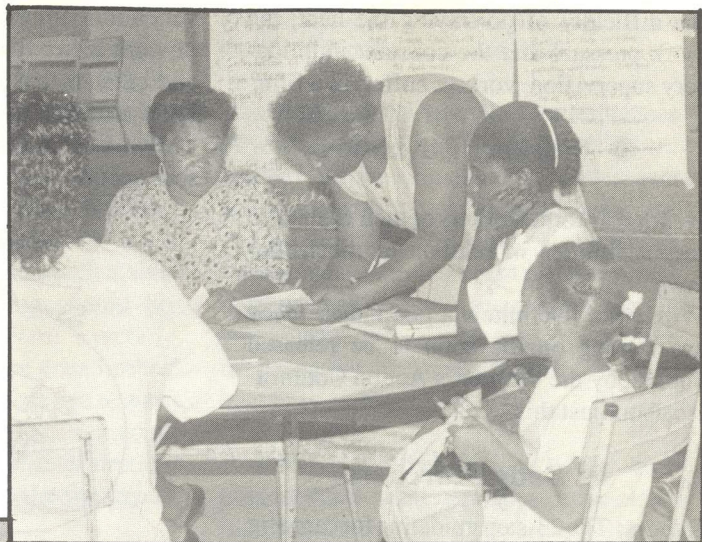
Report: Have more senior Jamaican personnel in management.

Workers: Very enthusiastic. For some the enthusiasm related to possibilities for upward mobility and for others it was based on a desire for managements that would be more in touch with, and supportive of, workers.

● Factory Conditions



The Freezone Report



Posing After They Assessed: Members of the St. Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group who were involved in the collective assessment pose for the camera. Inset: getting down to business at the group's monthly general meeting.

Report: The Factories Act is sufficient to monitor conditions in the Free Zone factories but it needs to be more strictly enforced.

Workers: Adamant that the Act needs to be more strictly enforced, as gross breaches persist, including blocked fire exits. And as Vassell points out in her report, the long list of breaches of the Factory Act shows how the government through the Ministry of Labour has been lax in protecting the work force at the Kingston Free Zone even as they have been promoting the expansion of Free Zones for national economic development. Is it not time to call for prosecutions for the continuing violations, in order ensure that health, safety and general working conditions are improved to recommended standards?

● Sanitary Conveniences

Report: Emphasized the need to upgrade water supply and sewage disposal systems to allow for properly functioning sanitary conveniences. This is crucial in the view of Mr. Kelly if the government is to continue to encourage labour intensive industry.

Workers: In full agreement. Clean, working sanitary conveniences are essential to having a sense of pride in one's environment and work. One woman spoke of how she quit work at a garment factory because the toilets were so bad. Vassell pointed out that no where in the Report do factory owners complain of water problems in carrying out production although one did mention he had trouble getting water to wash his hands in the management toilet.

Will adequate water supply only become a crucial matter if manufacturing is adversely affected? What about the pride and health of the workers?

● Public Education



Report: More education to the general public about operations in the Free Zones needed. Concretely, Mr. Kelly suggested that the insides of the Free Zones be filmed and shown widely to the public.

Workers: This could be useful but note

the difficulty of portraying the heat, the work pressure and the constant intimidatory supervision workers suffer, in a film.

● Workers Education

Report: Inform workers of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the labour laws.

Workers: Definitely a good idea. They are waiting on the soon to be released booklet by the Women's Action Committee about just this.

● Body Searchers

Report: The 23-step guideline for carrying out body searches submitted to the Enquiry by Dr. Cecil Goodridge of the Free Zone Corporation is suitable for handling this sensitive area.

Workers: Workers from different factories, have had different experiences with body searches. Some are searched twice a day, everyday and hence resent it very much. Others say they are only searched on a random basis. Searches should only be carried out if security had a reason to suspect someone of stealing something. The amount of stealing is not so high as to warrant searching everybody, everyday. It is a

very humiliating experience. Many places of work suffer from theft from employees and other means have been used besides body searches to deal with the problem. The women also noted the irony of having seen security staff stealing!

● Minimum Wage



Report: A minimum wage for the Free Zone has to be set by the Minimum Wage Advisory Commission. Put in place fair and achievable quota systems so the workers can make liveable incomes.

Workers: Agree with the recent submission of the Women's Action Committee to the Commission that the minimum wage be set at \$250 per week. The minimum wage should only be necessary for those times when workers are not able to meet production pay levels e.g. not enough work, working on a new operation or in training.

● Training

Report: Develop a comprehensive training programme that would help at high levels.

Workers: Training has improved in the last four years, but there is still room for more, especially ongoing training. For example as new styles come in workers are often not given instruction in how best to sew that style so as to do it more quickly. Instead of sending only supervisors for training on new machines and styles, the best workers should also be sent. Supervisors are often busy and it is workers who show each other how best to do different operations.

● Work Schedule Adjustment

Report: Each factory should work out its own flexible work schedule to allow workers to do their personal business. Example: a factory in the Montego Bay Free Zone where shifts of 10 hours have been adopted so that workers can do their own business on Fridays.

Workers: Wholehearted agreement. The pressure to work overtime and Saturdays, as well as not being allowed time off during

SETTING THE MINIMUM WAGE

The Women's Action Committee (WAC) is recommending a minimum wage of \$250 per week for all workers except domestic workers, and of \$168 per week for domestic workers. The present minimum wage is \$100 for all workers except domestic workers, whose minimum wage is \$84 per week.

WAC's recommendation to the Minimum Wage Commission, is based on the weekly basic costs of a single mother with four children - a total of \$280 per week for food, rent, household items, such

as soap and cooking gas, plus transportation costs for the mother alone. This budget does **not** include the children's school busfare and lunch money **nor** clothing and medical expenses. WAC urged the Commission to consider this recommendation, which gives an annual income of only \$13,000 (less to domestic workers) as an absolute minimum, particularly since it was made before the most recent devaluation and price increases.

WAC comprises fifteen organisations and seven concerned individuals. The recommendation to the

Minimum Wage Commission was contained in a letter signed by executive members of the Bureau of Women's Affairs, CUSO, the St. Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group, Sistren Research and the University and Allied Workers Union (UAWU).

Shortly after the WAC made its proposals public, the Trade Union Movement publicised its recommendation of \$230 per week for workers generally and \$160 per week for domestic workers.

\$

the day, leaves workers no time at all to manage their personal business.

● Lunch

Report: Companies should subsidize lunch costs as part of their production incentive scheme.

Workers: The cost of a box lunch is now \$8 in the Free Zone canteens compared to \$6 on the road. Both are a lot to pay everyday. Going on to the road to get food often makes workers late but they do so as the cost is cheaper. Subsidized lunches would help alleviate this problem.

● Size of Factory



Report: Assumes that smaller factories and smaller industrial estates would lead to greater peace and harmony at the work place.

Workers: There have been unpleasant working experiences in both large and small factories. It is the attitude of management that makes or breaks a situation. If the facilities, pay and working relationship with management are good, large size factories can work. However, in large size factories management is often better able to provide greater benefits to their workers.

● Health Programmes



Report: Subsidies for optical care and eye glasses and comprehensive medical schemes for all workers. This could be made possible if Health Insurance Companies were encouraged to come up with quotes for the entire industry.

Workers: A couple of Free Zone factories have medical and life insurance schemes which are well used. A comprehensive medical and optical scheme should be available in all factories. WAC's recommendation about optical care goes further to say that there should be free eye testing periodically and that the cost of remedial treatment in relation to eye deterioration from work should be paid by the employer.

● Cost Benefit Analysis

Report: Government should carry out a cost benefit analysis of the Free Zone Programme, in collaboration with, the private sector and the unions.

Workers: What would such a study reveal? We do not see that workers or Jamaica are benefitting very much at this time.

● Other Issues



The meeting also discussed a number of other issues talked about in the Enquiry Report but not mentioned in the recommendations.

Medical Facilities: Several women mentioned how they had to wait a long time to be seen at the medical post and often it was without the drugs they needed. Others complained that they were not greeted with a proper attitude by the nurse there. They did not think it fair that they had to punch out when they went to the medical post, especially if they had to wait a long time. This is contradictory to the Report's sum-

mation that the medical post was well run and drugs were easily available.

Ventilation and Dust: The consequences of working in a dust filled factory are very evident. As one woman put it: "Unless you are a very strong person health wise you end up quitting." She and several of her friends have allergies, constant sore throats or sinus conditions as a result of working in garment factories. Others said they have tried wearing dust masks but this makes the heat unbearable.

Protective Clothing: Mr. Kelly concluded that workers need protective clothing to wear over their clothes but did not make this a recommendation. All of the women said this is a must. They are forced to keep replacing their clothes as they wear out quickly from the work.



Fatigue and Frustration in Industrial Work: Those at the meeting took exception to Mr. Kelly's thesis that fatigue and worker dissatisfaction were a result of the frustrating nature of industrial work rather than the nature of management. One woman spoke of how it used to be enjoyable to work in her factory before this new management as they were allowed to talk to each other as they worked. Now the pressure is greatly increased, there are less people working and management expects more work than before. It is not just the money that makes a job a good one, they said but the atmosphere of the work place and how you feel working there. It is important to have a good relationship with the top management of the factory.

Overtime: The women said that if the production pay was decent, there would be no need for overtime as they would work

harder to meet production quotas. One worker said her factory had just increased the production pay in order to eliminate overtime. Others spoke of their reluctance to work overtime as they were already too tired at the end of a regular day, they were left with no personal time, and when tax ed overtime pay is hardly worthwhile.

Indiscipline: The women wondered where the manufacturers got a figure 9,000 hours per day lost from lateness, leaving early and absenteeism without excuse in their submission to the Enquiry. They lose pay or it is taken from their sick pay if they are late and are fired if they do not show up regularly. Some factories lock out workers if they are late returning from break or lunch. The women said that good production rates would encourage workers to be on time and stay at work. One factory has just started an attendance bonus of 5% of whatever you work rather than the usual set dollar amount.

Conclusions

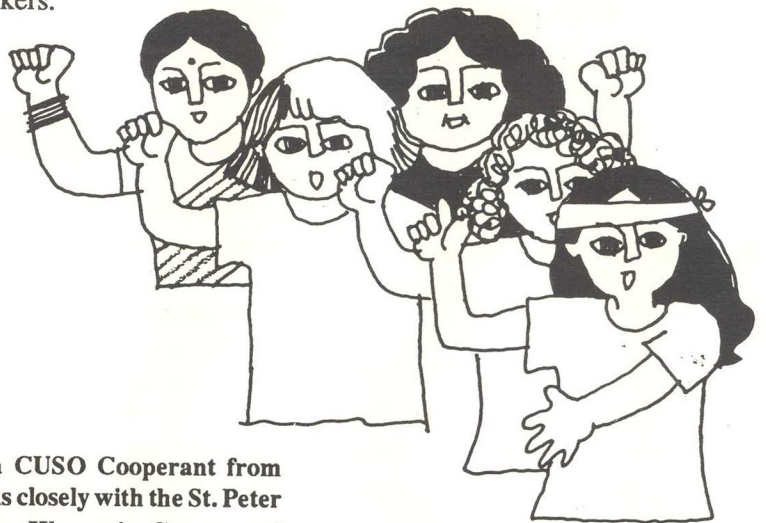


Ms. Vassell concludes, as do the women of the St. Peter Claver Women's Group, that the Board of Enquiry has moved the discussion from conditions only to include a broader spectrum of views about the problems and possibilities there. But from the assessment of the workers, it would seem Mr. Kelly did not gather sufficient information from a broad enough cross section of workers to be able to come up with analy-

ses that reflect the situation as they see it. Mr. Kelly did not seek out information by calling witnesses to appear before the Board. He relied strictly on the evidence that was submitted to him and the interview of management in various factories according to Miss Vassell's reading of the Report.

And the report recommendations? Unfortunately, they are tentative suggestions not mandatory statements. Some do suggest remedies to the grievances of the workers but in general, vague terms are used. The specifics of how to move from present conditions to the recommended changes are not clearly laid out. It seems Mr. Kelly did not fully get to the bottom of the difference of opinions between management and workers on many issues and so was left to say things such as "this matter has to be addressed", "steps must be taken", without making firm conclusions.

Granted, the situation varies greatly from factory to factory, but more consideration definitely could have been made of the issues of work related expenses, stress, overtime, job security and persistently poor working conditions in many of the factories in the Kingston Free Zone. The vagueness of the recommendations leaves the government with further work to do - that is, if it intends to take concrete steps to improve the industrial relations and working conditions in the countries Free Trade Zones. We hope they are about this business now and that we will soon hear a government response to the Report. And we hope the response will be a time table for action on behalf of the workers.



Sarah Power is a CUSO Cooperant from Canada who works closely with the St. Peter Claver Free Zone Women's Group and Housing Co-operative. Sarah is an expert in Co-operative Housing.

Structural Adjustment is a Women's Issue

by Peggy Antrobus

The policies of structural adjustment show very clearly the link between the economic, cultural, social, and political reality of people's lives, and especially women's reality.

These policies also tell us something about the place of Third World countries in the global economic and financial systems. And about the linkages between international agencies like the World Bank, the IMF and the official AID agencies; our governments and the poorest sectors of our societies, especially poor women, who are the poorest of the poor. International studies, from the World Bank to the United Nations, acknowledge that the people who suffer the most from these policies are the poor - women, children and the elderly. But who is it who looks after the children and the elderly?

Women Bear the Brunt

I say it is women who bear the brunt of these policies, and it is women who will have to fight to oppose them.

The Debt Crisis has devastated the economies of Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, and brought untold suffering to thousands. Some people have argued for the debt to be written off; for 'debt forgiveness'. It will not solve the problem in the long run. At best it may bring short-term relief. Unless we change the terms under which goods are exchanged between countries, we will simply end up in the

same situation again. As Jamaica's Prime Minister, Michael Manley used to say: Every year the cost of tractors, fertiliser, seeds, freight, insurance, etc. goes up and every year the prices we get for our raw materials, our sugar, our cocoa, goes down. The gap grows wider.

Economic Crisis Worsens

Our countries face an on-going economic crisis, which according to the World Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), will worsen in the next year. (I think throughout the 1990s, since we stand to lose important markets in Europe and North America as a result of trading blocks which are being established there to protect their economies.)

Examining Prospects

This year women's organisations have a special opportunity to step into the centre of the debate on the Caribbean of the future. Our governments - and special credit must go to the government of Trinidad and Tobago - have presented us with a gift. They have mandated a series of conferences and consultations and set up a Caribbean Commission to examine prospects for the Caribbean in the 21st century. A Regional Tripartite Conference will take place in November following regional consultations with such themes as Development and Management of Human Resources, International Relations and Sustainable Development

(the latest 'buzz' word, which includes a focus on environmental issues).

National conferences are on-going with the focus on the essence of structural adjustment - economic growth and productivity, i.e. spend/ consume less, earn/ produce more, cut social services and promote growth. As if economic growth can be separated from social and cultural considerations!

Development Alternatives

More and more people have come to question these models and to seek development alternatives. In the Caribbean, a number of NGOs have been exploring these alternatives in a parallel series of consultations, in order to come up with their own positions and to devise ways of influencing the official conferences. Women's organisations are encouraged to identify their own concerns and priorities and seek to have them reflected in the broader NGO positions.

As unpromising as it seems that our viewpoint will have an impact on the conferences and on the Commission, I think we must participate. Structural Adjustment is, after all, a women's issue.

Peggy Antrobus is the Director of WAND (Women and Development Unit, UWI, Barbados) and member of the Planning Committee for the National Conferences on the Caribbean into the 21st Century. The above is extracted from a speech she gave at Working Women's 5th Anniversary celebration in Trinidad and Tobago, January 27, 1990.

PHOTO FEATURE:

I.W.D. Went On And On

Did you say International Women's Day!?!??

Not this year, sah. This year, the women's movement in town and country pulled out all stops. Activities started with the traditional church service on Sunday March 4, and ended with a ladies jazz jam on March 28! In between there were awards for our early feminists (see page 16), tea parties, a book exhibition on women and work, a visit to women in prison, film shows (and special movies on TV), clinics, panel discussions, the opening of a day care centre at the Ministry of Labour and the long awaited opening of the AWOJA Thrift Shop (see page 7), as well as the very popular annual Sisters Celebration Concert. Here are a few glimpses of the atmosphere of goodwill, excitement and 'niceness' as Jamaican sisters (and brothers) marked this special time for Jamaican women.



Sisters Celebration audience applauds with zest.



HUGS AND AWARDS FOR THE VETERANS: Joan French and Lana Finikin of the Sisters Celebration Organising Committee dole out affectionate hugs to the veterans of the concert from top clockwise; Edi Fitzroy (the King veteran who has been there from the first show); Fae Ellington; Unique Vision Band; Mutabaruka and Judy Mowatt. This year's concert honoured women in the Health Services.

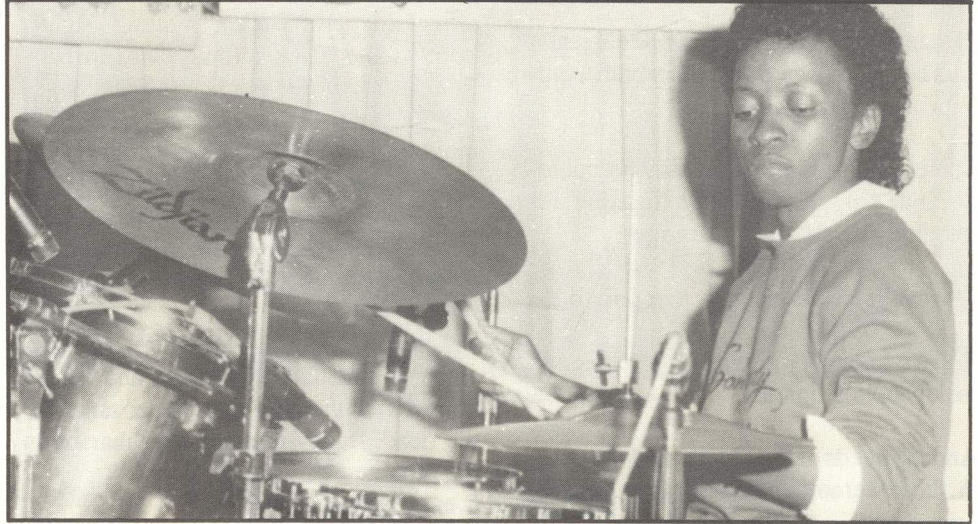


Encouraging Young Talent: Fae Ellington, Sisters Celebration's incomparable compare, shares the mike with a young friend.

And . . .



LADIES JAZZ JAM: Closing a Women's Month to remember, the best of our Women in Jazz jammed at Mutual Life, clockwise from top right, Marjorie Whyllie, Dotha Blackwood and Myrna Hague.

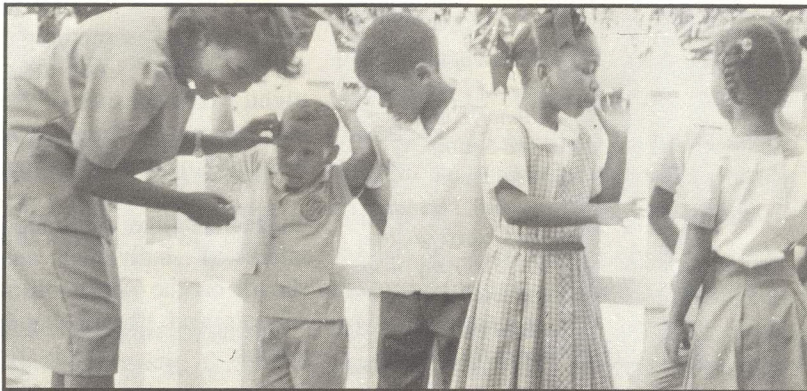


FOR WINNIE: 'Madame' Rose Leon, Jamaica's first female minister of government sends a message to Winnie Mandela via the Bureau of Women's Affairs. Hundreds of women and men island-wide signed the book in solidarity with Winnie Mandela, opened by the Bureau following the release of Nelson Mandela, and kept open at Bureau events for IWD.



GREETINGS: Sharing a sisterly hug at a forum hosted by the Women's Bureau are Minister of Labour, Welfare and Sports, Portia Simpson (right) and communications specialist, Elaine Wint-Leslie.

A BOON FOR MOTHERS IN LABOUR: The Ministry of Labour opened a Day Care centre for the children of it's employees.



A Cameo Comes To Live

by Suzanne Francis-Hinds

Two Jamaican women, one black the other white, both dressed in the style of the 1950s, pose formally for the tinted photograph set in a Cameo frame.

The camera zooms in close as one elegantly turns her head towards the other and begins to speak:

"Someone has written that May Farquharson and Amy Bailey were fighting for women's liberation 60 years ago."

"Oh really, we never knew that phrase."

"But we knew about women's rights and black people's rights."

"And the needs of the elderly and the poor. Oh, those weren't popular ideas in Jamaica in our time."

Actresses Pauline Crawford and Honor Ford-Smith are playing the parts of mid-century activists Amy Bailey and May

Farquharson in a docu-drama produced by **Sistren Research**.

Ford-Smith plays Farquharson, a feisty woman born to the white ruling class in colonial Jamaica, who worked as a nurse in World War II, then came home to fight a less popular battle for the needy and the old.

Crawford plays Bailey, a sturdy fighter born to the black middle class in rural Jamaica. A trained teacher, she challenged the Governor of Jamaica on the employment of trained black stenographers, and used her own savings to establish a Housecraft Training Centre which prepared more than 6,000 Jamaican women to do domestic work at a professional level.

"They called you a traitor to your class when you demanded pension and decent housing for the poor and higher taxes for the rich," Bailey reminds Farquharson in the film.

"And they called you a traitor to your race when you campaigned for birth control," Farquharson replies. "We were a dangerous team Amy B."

"No wonder we became friends May Farquharson. It was inevitable."

The two women, now elderly and in ill-health, are interviewed in the video documentary, and this material is inter-cut with dramatised re-enactments of aspects of their lives and work. Two youngsters Kadia King and Lynley Thomas, play Bailey and Farquharson in their youth, adding depth to the re-enactments.

Joan French, who heads **Sistren Research** says that one important aspect of the video's production is its recognition of the contribution made by the two women, while they are alive to see it.

"It is an important part of the work of **Sistren Research** to be able to capture the past and show its impact on the present," French says.

And she says that the marketing strategy for the video will reflect this aim: "we want it to get to women, especially, who need a sense of history and a sense of confidence to help them deal with the present."

Cynthia Wilmot, who produced and directed *Miss Amy and Miss May*, notes that it is only one small drop in the ocean.

"The subject matter is limitless," she says. "The big problem is getting the money to do it, and the distribution."

Wilmot complains that the state-owned Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), the island's only TV station, asks full Commercial rates for the time used to air local productions — something most producers cannot afford. Yet, the station's staple nightly fare consists of North American soap operas. She believes there needs to be a re-thinking of JBC Policy.

In the meantime, the video is being sold to interested individuals and groups, and shown on the non-traditional circuit: in schools and libraries and to women's groups.



Women of the video: (l-r) Wilmot, King, Ford-Smith, Farquharson (seated), Thomas and Crawford. Inset: Miss Amy, who was unable to attend the launch due to ill-health.

Wilmot looks forward to exploring the stories of more Jamaicans whose work made a difference to their society, if the funds can be found.

"You could make a film like ours for about US\$15,000, which is not a lot," she says. "Video has made a great difference. It's cheaper, it's instant, and it can all be done and processed locally."

She adds: "I really feel that we're frightened off by the idea that we have to make something that's world perfect. But we read our newspapers because they're ours — not the New York Times. You have to start. That's how you learn."

This particular start has evoked a good deal of interest. Locally, there have been a requests for copies from a wide cross-section of the population. Overseas, women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe greeted it enthusiastically at a recent meeting in Brazil, and exchange their own efforts to document the lives of their own national heroines.

Speaking at a launch ceremony for the video, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lucille Mair, said the video highlights some of the finest qualities of Jamaican Society:

"Amy Bailey and May Farquharson belong to a procession of Jamaican Women, who have for centuries shaped our society in fundamental ways. Such women from our distant and our recent past have not been afraid to break down the barriers of race, class and sex."

Neither Bailey nor Farquharson feels that they changed the world, and they acknowledge, in the film, that while things have changed for some people — especially women — for others things are even worse.

But no one, seeing the video, doubts that they had an impact:

"We worked for causes," Farquharson says. "We didn't care what people thought. People said it was a waste of time and maybe it was. But maybe we did make people think."

Suzanne Francis-Hinds heads the Caribbean Desk of Women's Feature Service.



Lights, camera, action at Fort George

On Location With 'Miss Amy and Miss May'

by Trevor Brown

There's an amusing story told about a chauvinist rooster who caused more than his fair share of trouble on the set of *Miss Amy and Miss May*. Whenever an impassioned speech was made by one of the actresses concerning the inequality of the sexes in a male dominated society such as ours, the damn rooster responded with a loud, indignant, "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" After a particularly hard time reshooting one scene time after time with the rooster getting louder and more obnoxious, a crew member

went off into the bush to find it. The rooster was well and truly silenced — for the time being at any rate!

Such amusing incidents added colour and laughter to gruelling location work during the making of the video docu-drama, *Miss Amy and Miss May*.

The idea for the video began to take shape some three years ago while Director, veteran journalist, Cynthia Wilmot, was making a video about the late Dr Lenworth Jacobs, a pioneer in Family Planning. Both Jacobs and his wife suggested she talk with Amy Bailey and

cont'd on pg. 18

May Farquarson, who had been amongst the earliest pioneers in the field. Cynthia recalls, "I went to both of them and I took along my camera intending to record about five minutes, but I ended up taping each woman for four hours, as I was totally fascinated by their history, their vivacity, their lives. One was 94, the other 95. They were very 'with it'. They knew what was happening in the world. They were still in there fighting."

From there things began to happen. The link with **Sistren Research** came over a beer with Honor Ford-Smith, who had also been doing research on both women. Honor and Cynthia soon realised they shared a common respect for the Misses Amy and May, and one small step later they were collaborating with an equally enthusiastic Joan French. It was decided that the video docudrama would be a **Sistren Research** project. Cynthia envisaged Honor in the role of Miss May, while Pauline Crawford, who had already portrayed Miss Amy (with the elder woman's stamp of approval), seemed natural for that role.

Sistren Research started looking



Wilmot and Ford-Smith pulling together the script.

for the funds and Honor and Cynthia began pulling a script together. They spent about 10 days bouncing around ideas at Cynthia's beachfront cottage out in Bull Bay, away from the distractions of Kingston. And, they kept the faith. Little by little the funds started to come in.

Just before shooting was to start, money became available to make the downpayment on technical services. Shooting took place at the ancestral home of May Farquarson at Fort George. It was an ideal backdrop with remaining family heirlooms and photographs giving the production a real period atmosphere.

The production was greatly assisted by the extra effort made by all involved. Designer, Beti Campbell who was responsible for the costuming, scrounged through the cupboards of elderly relatives and friends for hats, gloves and other accessories of the period, and Miss May allowed the use of her own clothes. **Phase Three**, described by Cynthia as "a very sympathetic, enterprising and imaginative production house", headed by Marcia Forbes, gave very low rates.

Whyllie Lopez, a musician now close to 90 years old and living in Miami, did not hesitate in donating his music from the period to the project.

Cynthia says the production work provided for her a very rich and rewarding experience. "Neither of the actresses had been in a film production before (and) the production was hectic. All the main people involved had all sorts of other commitments, rushing here and there. At one point, there were equally strong views as to whether we should do it now or put it off - until when we did not know!"

The view to make the video while Miss Amy and Miss May were alive won out in the end. And, how rewarding that decision has been! Shortly after the work was completed and seen by several influential persons, Miss Amy Bailey and Miss May Farquarson were awarded the Order of Jamaica, the nation's highest honour, for their struggles on behalf of Jamaican women. The sweat, tears and anxiety had been more than worth it!

Hopefully, the example of those local and foreign organisations who made funds available for the making of **Miss Amy and Miss May**, will be followed by others, so that more productions on the lives of the nation's heroines will become possible.

Trevor Brown is a freelance writer and communication consultants.

Editor's Note:

The Video of MISS AMY AND MISS MAY is available from SISTREN RESEARCH, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5. Tel: (809) 92-92457/92-96171.

Police Rape Unit: A Step In The Right Direction

by Corienne Barnes

W report incidents of rape are being given a space in which they no longer have to endure the trauma of relating their ordeal in privacy.

Since December 1, last year, when the Unit was established in spacious surroundings on Ruthven Road in Kingston, women have had the chance to talk about the crime against them behind closed doors with female officers of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.

The Unit was established out of the realisation that most women who have fallen victim to the heinous crime are reluctant to report their cases because of the insensitive treatment they receive at police stations, where just about anyone who is around can listen in. It is headed by Deputy Superintendent Ethlyn Graham-Powell and staffed by six other officers, all of whom are women.

Graham-Powell says, "Women welcome the change and we feel that in this kind of atmosphere, victims will feel to come forward and make a report. The officers who serve them have been specially selected and trained to deal with these cases, and although we are not professional counsellors, we do counsel as the need arises."

Counselling is also offered to relatives of the victims so that they can be more sensitive to the situation and help strengthen their loved one. The more complicated cases, however, are referred to professional counsellors at

the Women's Crisis Centre run by Woman Inc.

When statements are received at the Rape Unit they are forwarded to the police station in the area where the crime has been committed and follow-up work is done there with the aim of apprehending the rapist. One drawback in the operation is that victims at this time still have to undergo their medical examination at the station where their case is being investigated. But the staff of the Rape Unit is working towards the day when they can be examined and treated at the Ruthven Road haven and examination rooms are already targeted.

Right now though, the staff is happy that the Unit exists and that they are able to offer a basic service which they can develop further. The Unit is open all day and late into the evening and it's hoped that before long the service

offered will be available 24 hours a day.

Says Graham-Powell, "I have a courteous staff here. These officers are always ready to help. No woman is turned away. Even if they arrive at a time when we are packing up to leave, we stop and deal with the case."

Obviously the Rape Unit is a very positive step in the right direction. And, Graham-Powell and her staff make you feel confident that if they have anything to do with related decision-making, it will go from strength to strength. But it is only one small oasis in Kingston, difficult to access by rural women. There is still a far way to go to ensure all rape victims get justice -and sensitivity.

Corienne Barnes is a recent graduate of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communications (CARIMAC).



The Leaps of Letilda

by Patrick Smikle

“I wouldn’t say ICIs* make a lot of money. Some do well but that all depend on how they get started.”

The speaker is Letilda Seiveright, a business-like, modestly dressed woman. The place is Letilda’s little shop in the Constant Spring Arcade in uptown Kingston. It is mid-morning and Letilda is taking a break having just finished checking the layout of the wide array of consumer goods that she offers.

Letilda knows about higglering. She started 16 years ago with \$20.00 which she used to purchase lipsticks from a downtown Kingston factory at \$2.00 each. She peddled them at a modest profit on the sidewalk in front of a department store in uptown Tropical Plaza. “In no time them sell off!” she recalls. Six hours later, having made four trips between factory and plaza, Letilda was on her way home with milk to put in the cornmeal porridge which had become the routine evening meal for her children. “A couldn’t afford anything else and a know the porridge good for them.” She still had a few dollars left over so she bought more lipsticks the next day. Within a few days, she was able to provide her children with a little callaloo to go with the porridge. Letilda is coming from a large family - the fourth of 14 children. “My

mother had so many kids she couldn’t manage us.” She was forced to leave school at age 12 to try and support herself as a domestic helper. But when in early childhood she found herself with two children to support, she realised that the meagre wages of a domestic helper wouldn’t stretch. The time had come for Letilda to make a leap.

Her early excursion into higglering was moderately successful. She studied the market, taking careful note of what goods were being sold by higglers downtown that were not available uptown. And, she targeted schoolgirls as her main customers. Competition was not extensive, and there was no problem from the owners of the store outside which she was making her pitch.

But over time the national economic situation deteriorated, forcing more and more people into higglering, overcrowding the sidewalks and earning the hostility of the store owners. Letilda now had additional mouths to feed. The time had come for another leap.

Her savings in hand, Letilda walked boldly into a travel agency and enquired where she could buy goods cheap. Less than a week later, she arrived in Grand Cayman, the balance of her savings after airfare having been converted to US dollars and not knowing where she was going to stay or what she was going to buy.

Today, some 12 years later, Letilda has visited and shopped in Haiti, Curacao and Panama. She has picked up enough Spanish from listening and “one little book that I buy”, enabling her to shop on her own in Panama. She has become an expert on cheap hotels and guest houses. She knows where to get the best bargains and how to avoid being ripped off. She has helped other ICIs to get started in the same way that she received help and advice, especially on those early trips to Haiti.

So, Is Letilda one of those higglers who has done well? She occupies one of the Bay Farm Villas in a crime and violence prone section of Olympic Gardens in Kingston. “During elections it was like Vietnam!” Most importantly for her, she is able to support her six children. “I have no help; no man live in my house.” The little shop she occupies in the Constant Spring Arcade is well stocked and laid out, but the \$1,000.00 a month for rent and electricity is sometimes difficult to find.

Letilda acknowledges that her situation is much improved compared to what it was when she started out. And, she is proud of her little shop. “There is more security,” she points out, and life is much easier with the availability of sanitary conveniences. In the early days, selling from the sidewalk, “Yuh had to train yourself to do everything from home in the morning.” She does not

*Informal Commercial Importers



Working hard for her money: Letilda in her shop

think there has been any significant downturn in sales as a result of the move from the sidewalk to the Arcade. What she would like to see though, is ICIs coming together to advertise the shops collectively and draw more customers; (“The advertising expensive yuh know”). She has two other major concerns - customs duties and new regulations whereby ICIs have to get Tax Compliance Certificates in order to travel.

Are customs duties that high? She is indignant. “Is not dues that! Is like yuh buying back the goods. Even if yuh bring a little present for the children, them search yuh handbag

and charge dues on it!”

But it is the tax compliance arrangements she finds most oppressive. With its introduction, especially the assessments for back taxes, most ICIs are having difficulty keeping their businesses afloat. “The government should really do something to help us with this thing,” she asserts.

At this point in our conversation, Letilda’s first customer for the day enters. “Can I help yuh, Ma’am?” The tone is business-like; not in any way ‘licky-licky’. “I need a pair of flat leather shoes. Can you help me?”

“I can more than help yuh.”

When the customer complains that \$250.00 is too expensive, she is told in a brief but friendly way about how expensive leather shoes are, and directed to cheaper shows in the store. Realising the camera is pointing at her, Letilda strikes a pose. The flash goes off and she returns to her customer. The woman leaves without making a purchase, and Letilda again poses for the camera.

Her parting words; “Remember to put in what a say about the customs dues and that tax thing. It really killing us!”

Patrick Smikle is a freelance journalist.

Sidewalk Higglers Sing The Blues

by Lynette Joseph

“Come, get your ribbons” the woman shouts, standing amid the noise and heat of the city street. “Darling, young lady, buy one of these lovely outfits I’m selling,” says another.

But as the customer approaches, the sellers’ look of anticipation at a likely sale is replaced by fear. One grabs her garment and runs, shouting: “Oh Lord, the MPM Police again.”

‘MPM police’, (employed by Metropolitan Parks and Markets, the government agency responsible for cleaning the streets, maintaining parks and running markets) constitute a daily hazard for the growing number of higglers who ply their trade on the streets rather than inside government-built arcades.

25 year old Lurlene Murray started higgling five years ago when she lost a steady job as a waitress at a club. Her desire was to maintain herself and her two children.

***“MPM ‘police’
are a daily
hazard for
higglers on the
streets . . .”***

She took \$1,000 in savings and purchased vests and pants from a local manufacturer. Retail sales of these goods earned her a ‘reasonable’ living of some \$200 per week. Until ‘MPM Police’ confiscated her goods in 1988. Business came to a halt.

For one year Murray stayed away from selling and tried to find a steady job. She failed. In October, with \$50 borrowed from her sister, she returned to selling on the streets — this time, table cloths and place mats.

Her position is still precarious. Determined to keep vendors to specified areas, the MPM’s security agents are engaged in a daily cat-and-mouse game with vendors like Murray.

“How do they expect people to follow the rules and still earn a living?” asks Murray. Her efforts to elude the authorities are costly. Her earnings may be \$20 per day — or nothing.

Clover Gordon, 45 years old, started selling in 1979, when her last child was a toddler. She had to find money to support her baby daughter and a 16 year old son, because her husband was ill-treating her.

At first, she bought ripe bananas and oranges from the downtown markets. She sold them to shoppers on King Street, earning up to \$40 per day, which she considered good.

Now, she buys haberdashery from other higglers who purchase stocks overseas and sell in MPM arcades. In the arcades, where stalls must be rented, there is less access to people passing on the street, Gordon complains. Further, her competitors on the inside would include the very suppliers of her goods.

But inside the arcade Dahlia and her friend Cynthia say people think that higglers just “walk around and shop” when they go on trips overseas. “It’s hard and expensive work,” she asserts.

She explains that for three days shopping, the higgler must pay airfare, taxi fares, delivery service from the shopping zones to the airport, storage fees, hotel bills and custom duties which, she claims, are sometimes imposed arbitrarily. The higgler must also buy food, while shopping. Back in

Jamaica, there is rental of at least \$20 per week for a space in the arcade, taxi fares to transport goods to the stall, and lunch everyday.

“Yet sometimes all one week, two weeks, we hardly get any sales”, says Cynthia.

Cynthia and Dahlia also worry a great deal about “unfair” taxation.

“Most times, government don’t know where the money come from to start our

***“Shopping
overseas is hard
and expensive
work . . .”***

business”, Cynthia says bitterly. “They don’t set anything in place where you can get loans to start business, yet they tax you on every cent you earn.”

Why not buy goods from local wholesalers, and save expenses incurred overseas? The two women say that their customers prefer foreign items to local ones.

“We have to give the people what they want if we want to make money” one says, “but sometimes it’s as if we are giving away our labour and getting more and more pressure in return. What we want is definitely less pressure.”

WFS/IPS

Lynette Joseph is a freelance journalist.

The Day We Wore Red Undies

Anecdotes from "Buss Out" Island Tour

by Hilary Nicholson

They told us the St. Thomas duppies are a force to reckon with so we made sure to pack an extra bottle of "Whites". We wound our way through the dusty barren hills where still there is a reminder (warning?) that this was Three-Finger Jack's hideout, and finally we joined the Yallahs River valley where the real climb began. The pick-up rattled along in front of our car, carrying an unsightly load of broken lumber, ragged cardboard, torn burlap, some old canvas bags and a huge worn suitcase, literally bursting at the seams. When the light mountain rain began, we such care, to cover the load with plastic. The truck was carrying precious theatre props, tools of our trade.

One hour later and some 3,500 feet higher, we were re-creating **Warrior's** yard and Chiggerfoot Lane - the ghetto where **Buss Out** is enacted - out of this same 'rubble'. The venue was Woburn Lawn pre-school in the Blue Mountains. When Mbala and Keith and Joy warmed up the drums in the dusk before the show, the music seemed to echo from Bethel Gap to Cedar Valley to Middle Peak, 4,000 feet above us. The community crowded into the school: young mothers with babies, youths, elders and children in neat rows in the front, bordering the floorspace we had cleared as a 'stage'.

"Mi figot mi red undies!" Bev whispered to Annie backstage. Undaunted, with typical stage-manager efficiency, Annie improvised: in no time a red headtie was in place, folded like a diaper under Bev's **Psycho** costume.

"This is show number 13 and yuh know what dat mean! We have 21 more to do, an a whole heap a parish fi visit so we caan tek no chance wid de St. Thomas duppy dem. Everybody have on red?"

How serious was she? A quick check confirmed that even our no-nonsense stage manager was in red so I asked if my black bra and panties were adequate protection. Lillian quickly sprinkled a little more white rum in my direction, just to be on the safe side.

Lights dimmed to silent darkness on stage and drums boomed for the start of the show. Candles are lit for the Wake scene. We start to sing. Suddenly an overwhelmingly loud hum reverberates through the little building and disappears as suddenly as it began. What on earth was that? Why did I shiver? Two actresses lift and turn the 'bed' where **Warrior's** 'dead child' lies ("him stiff doh, eeh? him dead fi true?") but the lights don't come up on stage. Is this a blackout - an 'outage' J.P.S. stylee? We continue the Wake which is lit by four candles, but the audience can hardly see. Someone offers a hurricane lamp. And the people wait patiently in the dark shadows. Did the dup-

pies prefer us to work in darkness? Our hosts set up a small generator and we figured they knew best!

The Buss Out action unfolds and the community takes in every detail. There is utter silence at times, raucous participation at others. **Warrior** changes her costume on stage from black to red and a tiny boy shouts, "Tek off everyting!" Loud laughter of self recognition from the youths when we role-play Boys taunting Girls, or when Bev as a lewd Old Man tries to take advantage of **Warrior**, his young employee. Women in the audience loudly encourage her to leave: "leff him! Betta out deh!"

"Go look a new wuk. Yuh caan mek him treat yuh so, nasty ole wretch!"

When **Warrior** stands up for herself at this point in the play, and walks out on the **Old Man** despite her desperate need for a job the audience breaks into spontaneous ap-



Youths enjoy the show

plause. (In gimme-me-bit, Clarendon, and at Shortwood, people jumped up and cheered **Warrior**).

Warrior bends low, arches her back, groans, then yells in pain. Slowly, tenderly, she draws the long length of red cloth towards her, from where it lay stretching 10 feet in front of her. Silence, then a child says from the audience: "is baby pain she a feel?" Sometimes this symbolic birth is not recognized as such, even by adults, not until **Warrior** gathers the bundle of cloth to her, hugging and rocking it. The Woburn Lawn children haven't missed a thing! Later in the play, when the Chiggerfoot Lane posse imagine how they would boycott the buses in order to denounce the mistreatment of school children, there is loud support for the boycott from the audience.

We sang the accompanying DJ rap:

"..dem have big onces

roomy ones
patty pan too
tek up schooler
tek up fatty
tek ole people too" - - and the audience went wild!

This is what **Buss Out** is all about: we portray familiar and not-so-familiar insidious constraints facing women and youth: forms of sexual violence and discrimination, oppressive social norms and class barriers, And we suggest some ways to overcome these constraints and 'buss out'. If the audience shouts out their own ideas of 'bussing out' then we know we are getting through.

The central theme of the play is a life and death struggle for housing, a theme with which rural and urban audiences all identify. Within the story, **Buss Out** explores

man-woman relationships, and it challenges traditional socialisation of girl-children which often stunts our creativity. Sexual violence emerges as a problem that brings a degree of togetherness between the grassroots and the middleclass woman.

'Miss G' wriggles her way into the tenement yard. Some Chiggerfoot Lane Residents want her around because she appears to know

'Miss G', the middle-class woman, wriggles her way into the tenement yard. Some Chiggerfoot Lane Residents want her around because she appears to know more about their rights, than they themselves know. **Warrior** mistrusts her motives and sparks fly. The landowner's Rude Boy draws her ratchet knife and **Warrior** takes him on, using her broom. The two of them circle and stalk one another with weapons drawn, and the tension rises. Suddenly, a middle aged man from the audiences in a criss white shirt appears onstage with us.

"Give me the knife; give me that knife," he repeats in a slow deliberate tone, with his hand outstretched to Rude Boy. "We don't use knives in here. I am an officer of the law!"

The action of the play has come to a sudden halt. Annie, our diminutive but very convincing Rude Boy, is by now covering behind **Warrior**. Does this kindly looking gentleman really take Annie, and the impending 'fight' for real? Didi as **Warrior** and two others on stage, quietly explain that nobody will be harmed, and this is just a play, and gradually the concerned gentleman is eased back to his seat. On stage we try to contain our astonishment, giggles, and awe: it seems those St. Thomas duppies are playing tricks again!

After the performance, the strike and pack-up is swift and smooth. A team from our hosts, the Western Cultural Youth Club, carry props, drums, boxes, lumber, down the steep rocky slope to a little flat area where the vehicles are parked. Cups of steaming soup are served continuously until the last car pulls out. It has been some of the best community organising we've experienced so far!



Rolling The drums: Mbala and Keith Hanson provide the rhythms



Feeling "Baby Pain": Warrior (Beverley Elliot) with the symbolic red cloth

In this, the third month of our **Buss Out Island Tour** we have gone to eight parishes. We've been hosted by communities as varied as Accompong, Orocabessa, Mavis Bank and Comfort Castle in the Rio Grande Valley. Other hosts have included schools, community councils, teacher training colleges, a fishermen's coop, youth clubs and young popular theatre groups. The reception we receive is just as varied. In Gimme-bit (Clarendon) the community built a raised, roofed, performance area using their prized stock of precious zinc, and more than 700 adults and children filled the seats. On the other hand, the crowd in Annotto Bay was so rowdy we had to cut short the play.

The venue was a movie-theatre: the children ran up and down uncontrollably amongst peanut and sweet vendors, and the only time we caught the attention of the children and youths was when there was some form of fight, or beating or suggestion of violence on stage, at which time they screamed and yelled in excitement. Is this because we were in a movie theatre where

people come to watch gunfire, killing, blood and gore regularly, (Kung fu and Karate at best) accompanied by deafening sound effects or sound systems? Yet, audiences in Seaview Gardens, a community which has to cope with more than its share of violence, identified with, and followed WARRIOR's story attentively. The problem, we decided, was the venue: there is respect for (events in) community centres and schools but none less so for movie theatres.

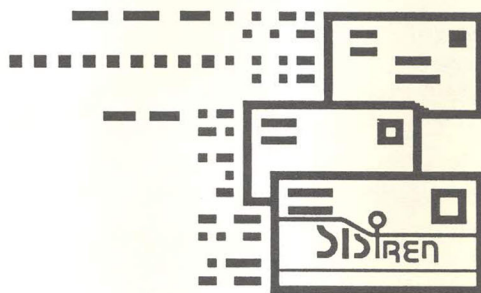
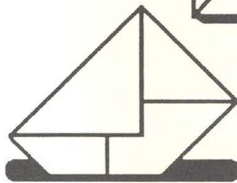
As a catalyst for community organising, The **Buss Out** Tour serves an extra purpose, over and above ours aims as they relate to popular education and gender issues. Communities organize the venue, the publicity, ticket sales, transport and food for the **Buss Out** crew and cast. In return, we have assisted hosts to raise money for various local self-help projects. For the **Buss Out** posse, there are endless lessons to learn - none more so than respect for traditional values and cultural forms (not only duppies) in the very far-reaching districts which have invited **Sistren** to visit. As well as visiting old friends, we are making

new links during this island tour, with communities from Bluefields in Westmoreland, to Hectors River in Portland, and getting to know our own Jamaica like never before. Many schools and communities invite us back to conduct a workshop in which we introduce popular theatre techniques, based on improvisations done by the communities themselves.

A favourite picture in my mind's eye is the bright full moon which lit our midnight departure from Accompong, and the gang of boys having the time of their lives dressing up in the same newspaper-costumes we had used on stage an hour earlier. Those boys now knew that popular theatre comes alive when you use the most everyday bits-and-pieces, along with your own home-made energy and creativity.

Hilliary Nicholson is a **Sistren Resource Person** and member of the group's Theatre Team.

FROM OUR MAILBAG



We would appreciate your support and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Jane de Sousa
Cape Town, South Africa
March 15, 1990

Editor's Note: Dear Jane, we were very interested to get your letter and to hear about the work you are doing. We have put your organisation on our mailing list and ask in return only that you continue to exchange information and materials with us. We have also forwarded to you the information and materials you requested, as well as back issues of Sistren containing relevant information to your project. Our best wishes for the growth and development of your organisation.

KEEPING PATWAH ALIVE IN COSTA RICA

Dear Sistren,

A friend has lent me a copy of *Sistren* (Vol. 10, No. 1-88) and it is very interesting besides well made. The contents are of special interest to me as I live on a farm in the Eastern Atlantic coast of Costa Rica where most people are of Jamaican origin and Jamaican creole is spoken.

On behalf of *La Asociacion Pro-Nino de Puerto Viejo de Limon*, of which I am Board Secretary, and the bilingual Montessori, a community initiative, non-profit pre-school it directs, I wish to solicit your donation of a subscription to *Sistren* for the bi-lingual public library we are building. Your message

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - A GREAT CHALLENGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sistren,

In South Africa, our divided society is characterised by a high degree of violence. The embodiment of state repression in apartheid legislation, the use of police and military force to quell opposition, the stress and crime induced by economic oppression and social dislocation leads to the permeation of violence into the lives of many men, women and children. Violence is becoming an increasingly acceptable means of maintaining control and resolving conflict.

It is with acknowledgement of the high level of violence in our broader society that we address the problem of violence against women. Whilst women are exposed to the general violence and oppression described above, they are also exposed to violent behaviour directed specifically at them by men; sexual harassment, assault (battering) and rape. Violence against women is one of the great challenges facing a changing South Africa today. Although it is one of our largest crimes, it has to date received little attention. Ending violence in our country will not be complete until battering, rape and sexual abuse are prevented.

In order to address the needs of battered women a project called **Coordinated Action For Battered Women** has been started. I belong to the Direct Service Provision Group of this project and am responsible for the production of a manual to guide community groups and women interested in this

issue. However in the absence of similar local groups with whom to consult and with the lack of available literature, we are eager to share the experiences of women in similar projects. I understand that your group has published an excellent booklet on sexual abuse called **No To Sexual Violence** We would greatly appreciate a copy of this booklet, as well as:

- a) case studies/information on group work with battered women (group exercises, workshop methods, content, etc.);
- b) information on similar projects, particularly in low income communities;
- c) information on strategies to address the problem, and,
- d) names, addresses and contact persons of any women's organisations in your area working on the problem.

would be most meaningful to our community.

The statutes of La Asociacion include the preservation of cultural traditions. We attempt to do this through the pre-school and library, with the hope of soon extending our services to teaching English to older pupils, be they school age or adults. This is the community's request, and especially that we obtain literature from Jamaica in order to keep alive the practice of reading and writing in English and Creole.

Until a decade ago, this community always hired a teacher from Jamaica. However, since teacher Cranston's death and the onset of monilia (a fungal disease that has drastically reduced the cacao harvests which were the prime source of income for most residents), it has become impossible to continue this practice. Without the available resources to bring someone else from Jamaica, La Asociacion has taken up the challenge. Your magazine would be so significant an instrument in this project. We also ask you to either send us the addresses of other similar publications produced in Jamaica, or send them a copy of this letter in the hope they will establish communication with us. Thank you for your attention to this petition.

Acting in the name of
La Asociacion,
Sally R. Felton
February 8, 1990

Editor's Note: Dear Sally, we have, with pleasure, put La Asociacion on our mailing list and passed your letter to another publishing house in Kingston. We wish you and your community all the best in your endeavors and hope you will keep us in touch with developments.

CRITICAL WORK

Dear Sistren,

I purchased a copy of the docu-drama **Miss Amy and Miss May** yesterday and immediately viewed it with a group of women and men. I am writing to let you know that I think it is a critical work that will help to lay the basis of the emancipation of women as well as provide us with a better understanding of our modern political period. The acting is excellent and I am writing Cynthia Wilmot separately about her superb production and direction.

Congrats to all at **Sistren**, and in particular Pauline and Honor, for all you have done to present us with this excellent work. It is good to be alive to witness a production like this - about women, by women, for women and therefore for all humankind.

Yours in sisterhood,
Beverley Anderson-Manley
Special Advisor on Women to the government.
March 29, 1990

EDUCATION AND INSPIRATION

Dear Sistren,

I received a copy of your magazine from my Theatre Professor at Smith College and enjoyed reading it tremendously. I am currently working on a term paper about women/women's movements in the Caribbean, so the information has been extremely useful. I also sent a letter and contribution to **Teens In Action**, hoping that we could correspond about issues which are important to us as women in various parts of the world.

Is it possible for you to send me information about your group and other women's groups in the Caribbean? There are so many questions that I know you could answer better than any book I might find in the library! For example, what aspects of Caribbean culture either help or hinder women joining together? Do you think that by now there is a feminist consciousness throughout the Caribbean? Are women from certain classes likely to become involved in these movements because of better access, etc?

The class that I am writing the paper for (Women of the African Diaspora) has been such a wonderful opportunity for me to learn about women in so many different cultures. After learning so much generally I am eager to hear women's own, specific stories, and I'm hoping to possibly visit and study in the Caribbean for part or all of my third year. I hope that I will hear from you soon as my paper is due in a few weeks! I think that what you are doing, and how you are doing it, is absolutely incredible - you have educated and inspired me already! I would be honoured for you to think of me as one of your sisters.

Thank you so much,
Stacy Teicher
Northampton, MA. USA
April 9

*Editor's note: Dear Stacy, A package is on its way to you which among other materials contains all the back issues of **Sistren**. We would also recommend you to our book, **Lionheart Gal**, a collection of the life stories of **Sistren** members, compiled and edited by **Honor Ford-Smith**. The Publisher for North America and Canada is **Sistren Vision**.*

NOTES

SISTA ANSA^{AN} GRANNY

A CHAT BOUT...

MS. AMY
AN
MS. MAY

... AND SO MISS AMY BAILEY AND MISS MAY FARQUARSON WILL BE AWARDED THE ORDER OF JAMAICA FOR THEIR STRUGGLES ON BEHALF OF JAMAICAN WOMEN ...

YES CHILE! EVERYBODY DID KNOW MISS AMY AN MISS MAY. DEM WAS STRONG OOMAN WHO NEVA FRAID FI NOBODY - NOT EVEN GOVERNOR AN HIGH SOCIETY PEOPLE! DEM WAS PIONEER FI TRUE. WEH MI DID LOVE WAS HOW AMY BLACK AN MAY, SHE WHITE BUT DEM WAS CLOSE, CLOSE FREN - AN DAT WAS SOMETING TO BEHOLD INNA DEM DAYS !!!

SO IS WAH DEM REALLY DO GRANNY?

WELL, ANSA, DEM WAS WHAT YOU WOULD CALL UNLADYLIKE INNA DEM TIME! A WHOLE HEAPA MAN DID WAAN DEM FI SHUT DEM MOUT 'A STAY HOME AN BE 'GENTEEL'. BUT DEM WASN'T INTO DAT!!

EVERY MINUTE WI WOULD SA DEM LETTER AN DEM ARTICLE INNA DI GLEANER...

Dear Editor,

FROM Ms AMY

DI GLEANER

1938 RIOT BRUK OUTE

A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL by Ms MAY

PETITION EMPLOY BLACK BUSTENGRAPHERS

DEM WOULD HARASS DI GOVERNMENT PEOPLE DEM...

GOVERNOR MRS GOVERNOR

DEM WOULD HARGANIZE OOMAN FI TEK CIVIC ACTION AN FI TEK CONTROL A DEM BODY...

HOUSECRAFT TRAINING CENTRE

PERSONAL SAVINGS DUN!!

NICE ONE AMY!

DEM WOULD SPEAK PON PUBLIC PLATFORM

PENSION + HOUSING FOR THE POOR HIGHER TAXES FOR THE RICH!!

BIRTH CONTROL NOW!!

HURRAY! HURRAY! HURRAY! HURRAY!

WHITE MIDDLE CLASS

TRAITOR MAY!

TRAITOR AMY!

BLACKS

DEM WOULD RAISE NUFF NUFF HEMBARASSING QUESTION BOUT COLOUR PREJUDICE, WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND CLASS BIAS.

MOYNE COMMISSION LONDON, HENGLAND

THE BRITISH SHOULD NOT CALL JAMAICAN WORKERS LAZY!! THEY HAVE POOR LIVING CONDITIONS, HOUSING, HEALTH AND EDUCATION SERVICES. THE BRITISH ARE NOT UPHOLDING THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR.

DEM DID HARD GRANNY!! ESPECIALLY FI DEM COLONIAL TIME DEH EEEH?!

YES CHILE. MI SI PLENTY, PLENTY INNA MY TIME AN MEK MI TELL YU DEM WAS TWO A DI BEST. DEM SPIRIT WAS FIMI SPIRIT. WI COULDA USE SOME A DAT SPIRIT TODAY, CAUSE IS NUFF PROBLEM OOMAN AN BLACK PEOPLE STILL HAFFI SOLVE...

A TRUE GRANNY. WE YOUNGER ONE CAN LEARN PLENTY FROM DI OLDER HEAD DEM. DAT IS WHY MI GLAD SEH DEM GET DI AWARD. WI HAVE TWO ODDA SMADDY FI LOOK UP TO INNA I ISTORY, AN DEM IS OOMAN! DAT GOOD