

WOMAN

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Struggle

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MILITARISATION NO

Speaking on a panel at the University of Guyana recently, Janet Jagan, President of the Progressive Women's Organisation and editor of the Mirror asked if women benefit in a highly militarised society where the allocation for security has increased from 1985 to 1986 by \$27.4 million while current expenditure for health has been reduced in the same period by \$8.9 million.

Jagan maintained that Guyanese women enjoy few rights, despite their constitutional right to work, because of the high rate of unemployment. When women do work they hold jobs at the lowest level of remuneration: as domestic workers, weeders, cleaners, waitresses, field-workers.

Other panelists included Viola Burnham, Laxmie Kallicharran, Iris Sukdeo and Faith Harding. Joycelyne Lonke, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana chaired the sessions with the student body. Subjects included: "Women and the Development of the Family", "Women and Education", "Women in Political Administration" and "Sexual Inequality and the Conditions of Women in Guyana".

Women Unite Issue #2 1986

FLIGHT ATTENDANTS STRIKE SUPPORTED BY WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Organisations of women in the USA including the National Organisation of Women (NOW), and the Coalition of Labour Union Women are supporting action by the Independent Federation of Flight Attendants (IFFA).

Six thousand IFFA members began a strike in March this year while the organisation took Trans World Airways to court for bad faith bargaining.

TWA had called on the IFFA, composed of 85% women to accept a pay cut of 22%. The justification given: "You don't have the same financial responsibility as the other employees. You provide secondary incomes and are not the breadwinners."

In fact, many of the flight attendants are breadwinners. 60% are married, 40% have children, several are single parents.

The attendants problems are related to TWA's request for a 15% wage reduction from the mostly male International Association of Machinists along with a 34% wage and benefit cut from TWA's pilots. Added to the 22% reduction, alterations in working conditions instituted by the company will mean longer hours of work and less rest between flights for less money.

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CHINESE WRITER DIES

Ding Ling, China's best known woman writer, died in Beijing in March at 82. She was the author of over 300 short stories, plays, essays, and novels about women's struggles in love and work. Ding Ling devoted her life to radical activities and writing, and was often arrested and imprisoned. In 1949, after criticizing the Party comrades for treating women less than equal, she was attacked as a bourgeois feminist. She was then forced to recant both her criticism and some of her early works. Her story 'Diary of Miss Sphy', published in 1938, for example, was severely criticized by Communist Party officials because the main character expresses erotic longings and is alienated from others. In 1949, Ding Ling published her much acclaimed novel, *The Sun Shines Over the Sanggan River*, and she soon became editor of *People's Literature* magazine. But in 1957 she was again criticized and forbidden to publish. She was made to teach adult literacy classes for the next 13 years. She was imprisoned in 1970 at the age of 67. Released by the Den Xiaoping government in 1977, she held a high position in the Writer's Union until her death.

Sojourner in Womanews

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ABORTION DEBATE IN NICARAGUA

An article in the Sandinista daily newspaper, *Barricada*, carried the headline: "A question directed to the enemies of the legal abortion - Have you thought about what it is like to be a woman?" The article was part of two lively debates in Nicaragua being led by the revolutionary women's organisation AMNLAE on the issues of abortion and homosexuality.

"The two issues are linked because...they have their origins in what the Freudians call Libido and what we call, in everyday Spanish, sexuality; that is, the intimate expression of life and liberty of every human being."

The abortion debate opened up at the Third Nicaraguan-North American Medical Sciences colloquium. A paper was presented that studied complications from abortions treated in hospitals. Current legislation only allows therapeutic abortions. Furthermore, only the "spouse" can request the interruption of a pregnancy - and the majority of women requesting abortions do not have husbands.

Recommendations were proposed for the Ministry of Health to revise its family planning and contraceptive programs and to re-examine abortion legislation. Nicaraguans feel that solutions will not appear overnight since the problem is not only with laws but with people's attitudes.

The discussion on homosexuality arose from an anti-gay comment in a newspaper article. One reader rejected the comment saying, "Is this...(comment) in accordance with the Future Nicaraguan Constitution, in which all discrimination for religious, racial and other reasons is rejected?" The author responded that homosexuality was "unnatural" since the "goal" of sexuality is reproduction. The reader then answered: "That reproduction of the human species is a goal of sexuality is common knowledge. That it is its only goal is not so clear."

The Guardian in Womanews

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WOMEN PROTEST STRIP SEARCHING

Women in Armagh Jail in the North of Ireland are routinely being subjected to degrading and humiliating strip searches. Since November 1982, nearly 2,500 strip searches have been endured by women as young as 15 and as old as 70, many of whom are unconvicted prisoners awaiting trial.

The British Government defends strip-searching on the grounds of security, but the women are escorted by armed guards any time they are out of jail. The women say that strip-searching is done solely to degrade and break the women prisoners before their trial.

The Insurgent in Womanews

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MOTHERS OF THE DISAPPEARED: EL SALVADOR

The El Salvador Committee for Human Rights has issued a new catalogue of arrests and tortures of individual members of the Committee of Mothers of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador and other human rights workers. These are accused of 'subversive' activities.

The Committee is appealing to the international public to write letters of protest, telex or telegram the President of El Salvador, S. E. Napoleon Duarte, to protest the situation.

Spare Rib #168 July 1986
