



Young women working in the Free Zone Factories.

“FREE” ZONE OR “SLAVE” ZONE?

We join with all well-thinking Jamaican men and women in expressing our grave concern about reports of the slave-like conditions in which thousands of our women are working in the Free Zone as part of the so-called 807 Programme.

There can be few conscious persons unaware of the reports of these women workers being paid less than the National Minimum Wage for grossly long hours of work; lack of canteen and other facilities for rest, and insecurity of employment whereby many are fired after one year's employment or fear staying off the job for even one day in cases of sickness. The Maternity Leave Law is being ignored and women are fired if they become pregnant. We also understand that in order to get one of the jobs, women must first report to their M.P. Then there's the problem of sexual harassment on the job, not to mention 'skin searches' by male security employees at the end of each day.

The other side of the coin is a different story altogether with the Govern-

ment lavishing incentives on the foreign companies that rent the Free Zone factory spaces. They enjoy a 100 percent tax holiday on all profits and zero restrictions on the repatriation of foreign currency, as well as being permitted to operate foreign currency accounts. They are not subject to import licensing, and customs procedures have been reduced to a minimum. In addition, a wide range of items are imported to the Free Zone free of customs, consumption and stamp duties.

We are certainly in favour of earning foreign currency for our country's development, but we are left wondering just how many crumbs stay in Jamaica at all! And look at the price our female workers are having to pay.

On the whole, we do not believe that these foreign Free Zone clients of the Government are the least bit interested in developing Jamaica. As far as we can see, their bottom line is profits, and if they have to cut their profits in order to ensure decent wages and working conditions, they'll just pull up and go

elsewhere — like Malaysia or Taiwan or South Korea and parts of Latin and Central America, where Governments are under even less pressure from the female labour force.

The labour employed in the Free Zones of the world is in the main female labour, precisely because of the position of the woman worker in society, which opens her to a higher level of exploitation than her male counterpart. What are some of the factors involved?

One is the high level of unemployment amongst our young women coupled with the fact that they have little or no history of Trade Union organisation. With so few women in the leadership of our Trade Union movement, moreover, our special interests as women are not being taken up as they should be. Indeed, the Trade Union Movement's traditional definition of worker as 'male breadwinner' persists, along with the everlasting myth that women are primarily housewives and dependent on men.

In practical terms, these incorrect perceptions have led to the view that women can be paid less for their labour, and if any Free Zone client packs up and leaves them out of work overnight it's not really such a problem. Of course when this happens to our male workers, we soon hear an outcry about the women and children dependent on their earnings to survive!

Women are also traditionally less organised in the society so it is more difficult for them to mobilise public opinion around their exploitation.

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TO OUR READERS

Dear All,

In this edition of *SISTREN* Magazine, we're able to report that we've tied down our Editorial Policy, in keeping with our status as a women's cultural organisation working towards social change as a member of Jamaica's community of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The main aspects of our policy are to:-

- make 'public' the 'private' concerns and experiences of women (such as rape, women's health and sexuality, prostitution, etc.) with the aim of promoting action around these issues;
- promote a new image of women and move away from the traditional image of sex object, homemaker and victim;
- raise questions about national, regional and international policies which affect women;
- report on women's activities in the region;
- support the work of progressive women artists;
- help in the creation of new collective cultural forms for people's expression;
- support the building of a Caribbean cultural identity.

So there it is in black and white. As usual, we ask for your comments and criticisms. This feedback continues to be invaluable to us. In the meantime, enjoy this latest issue.

Editor

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IN THE FOCUS



BLESS THIS HOUSE: (Above) Reverend Ernle Gordon, as he blessed our new offices at 20 Kensington Crescent recently.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES TO WATCH FOR

Local launching of the Sistren book "Lionheart Gal" will happen sometime in early December.

House-warming around Christmas time.

PERSONAL NOTES

Deepest respect and appreciation for "Miss Lou", Honourable Louise Bennett-Coverley, on reaching 50 years in theatre.

Congratulations to Friend of Sistren Millie Gordon and WOW's Virginia Henriques - both have new baby boys.

Maternity leave coming up for our Co-ordinator Lana Finikin.

Goodbye for the time being to Beverley Anderson-Manley (Howard University's gain is our loss) and American writer and poet Gloria Hull, back in the States after two years in the English Department at the Mona Campus, U.W.I.

Married: Susan Foster, WOW guitarist/vocalist to Kent Trewick.

Condolences to Lorna Burrell-Haslam and family. Lorna's brother Kerwin, recently died under tragic circumstances in New York.

APPRECIATION FOR SISTREN MAGAZINE

I've been sent by *SISTREN* a very nice issue of a magazine they've put out and it really is important. They talk about women and their problems and they have a series called *WOMEN ON THE STREETS*, about *BEGGING A LIVING*. It's an enquiry, it is an investigation into how women beggars live, how they feel, how they came to be here. Another important story is about the day of a sugar worker in Westmoreland, and it serialises the whole thing - hour after hour".

There are some of us who talk big talk in this country and are completely unconscious as to how people live in this society - people we pretend to speak on behalf of. I commend them on this magazine and I hope I'll see other issues.

Ronnie Thwaites - Public Eye
J.B.C. Radio
July 1, 1986.

Sista Ansa and Granny gone abroad! The magazine *LISTEN REAL LOUD* (Vol. 7, Winter/Spring 1986), a publication of the U.S. Church group American Friends Service Committee, reprinted our cartoon "Sista Ansa and Granny Chat 'bout Peace" from our December '85 issue.

Should women be allowed to bring rape charges against their husbands? Should women's past sexual history be used as evidence against them in a rape trial? For the last few months, women in Trinidad and Tobago have been coming to terms with these questions.

They have been involved in a campaign against the growing acceptance of sexual violence in their society. Last year for example, hundreds of women marched in a candlelight protest against rape. This action was sparked when a nurse, working on inadequately protected hospital premises, was raped. This year, the women's movement on discovering that the draft of a new sexual offences bill was to go before Parliament, organized to publicize it.

The Bill was a controversial piece of legislation which included a measure giving women the right to make charges of rape against their husbands whether they were separated or not. The Bill had many other innovative aspects to it, so much so that at least one women's organization congratulated the Government on its progressive content. For example, the Bill made it an offence for a man who worked in a position of authority over a woman under the age of 18, to have intercourse with her, whether or not she gave her consent. It prevented the court from using a

women with the women's arm of the political organizations.

In Trinidad, about 50% of women are married. Many of the Bill's strongest defenders were happily married women who argued that women have the right to control their own bodies. As one



Reproduced from "No to Sexual Violence"

by Joan French.

TRINIDADIAN WOMEN UNITE TO FIGHT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

woman's past sexual history as evidence against her in a rape trial and it decriminalized homosexuality among consenting adults. However, when the Bill went before Cabinet, many of these progressive elements were struck out. In particular, clause four, which had allowed women to charge their husbands for sexual assault, was removed. The second draft of the Bill even failed to protect women who were separated, from sexual assault by their husbands.

Since early this year, the struggle has centered around clause four — the right of married women to charge rape in marriage. This issue united women in Trinidad. Single or married, women of all classes, creeds, colours and political backgrounds came forward to demand that clause four be included in the Bill. The issue united young Socialist women with women of the Coterie of Social Workers, one of Trinidad's oldest women's organizations. It united church

woman said, "Marriage is for better, for worse, but we get too much worse". Members of the women's arm of the ruling People's National Movement (PNM), went to Parliament when the Bill was being debated. They wore tags which demanded, "Put back clause four". The speaker ordered them to remove the tags or leave the house. The women of the PNM challenged the stand of their party.

The debate on the issue within the society brought to the surface many of the hidden facts about sexual violence in Trinidadian society. Doctors reported cases of violence on women they had seen in hospital. One nurse reported that a woman who had been sent home the day after having her baby, returned the next day because her husband had burst her stitches in order to have sexual intercourse.

The Bill raised questions about the relations between men and women and

challenged the way in which married women are often treated as the property of their husbands. In their arguments in favour of clause four, women argued that women in common law unions have the right to charge their partners with rape. The fact that they seldom do, is an indication that women are unlikely to abuse the law. A rape trial is often a five-year process and few women want to risk such an ordeal. The women pointed out, that the law as it stood, actually made married women second class citizens. All other women were protected against rape except them. One doctor pointed out that cases of rape in marriage are often the result of drug abuse or alcoholism and clause four would allow such cases to come to light in the law courts.

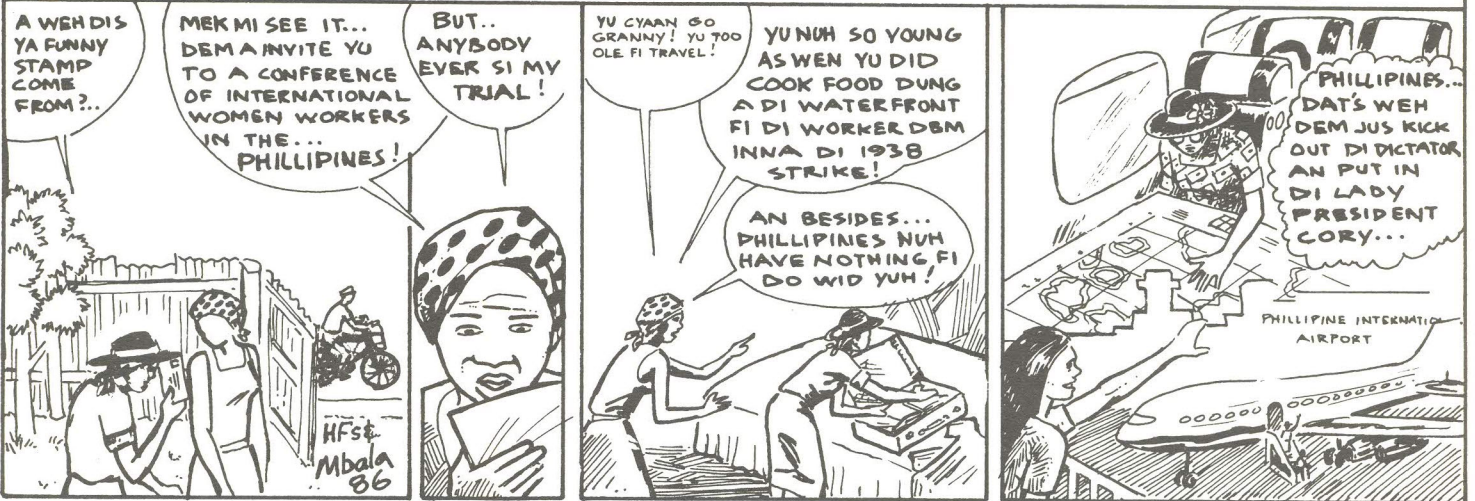
The campaign to put back clause four was led by a broadly constituted action committee which was chaired by Jennifer Baptiste of the Public Sector Association. Rhoda Reddock and Merle Hodge of the Working Women for Social Progress, and Patricia Mohammed of the Rape Crisis Centre were also members. Panels on the issue were held all over the country and well attended. Lynette Seebaran, a woman lawyer, was particularly active, addressing such diverse groups as the Girl Guides, the Lionesses and the Coterie of Social Workers.

After a major panel in the north, the Government announced that clause four was back in the legislation. However, it had been adjusted to permit only women separated from their husbands to bring charges of rape against their husbands. Some regarded this as a victory, but many feel it is a hollow victory as it still does not challenge the property relation in marriage.

Sistren expresses its support for the actions of the women of Trinidad and Tobago. We hope that their consistent fight against the acceptance of sexual violence will not stop here and that it will inspire other Caribbean women to face a problem against which we often feel powerless. We understand that the women of St. Vincent and Barbados have already organized and spoken out against rape in their societies.

(Continued on page 5)

GRANNY AND THE SECRET OF THE MOVING FREE TRADE ZONE



"MUFFET FOR CARIBBEAN FOCUS"



Sistren will be leaving the island for **London, England**, at the end of September to take part in the nine-month long programme of educational and cultural events that's been dubbed **CARIBBEAN FOCUS '86**.

CARIBBEAN FOCUS '86 was initiated by the **Commonwealth Institute**, which is working in collaboration with Commonwealth Caribbean Governments and people of Caribbean descent living in the United Kingdom.

The company will be performing **MUFFET INNA ALL A WE** at several venues between September 30 and October 26 including the **Albany** and **Shaw Theatres**, as well as the **Commonwealth Institute**. **Sistren** will be holding over twenty drama-in-education workshops with women's groups. **"Who Rule"**, a skit on the arms race and how it encourages poverty, will be the centre-piece of several of these workshops.

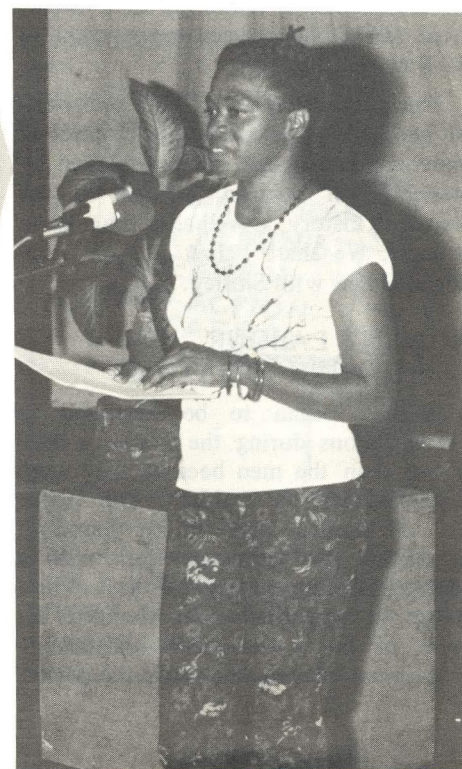
During the tour, **Sistren's** book **LIONHEART GAL** (Women's Press), a collection of life stories of Jamaican women, edited by Artistic Director **Honor Ford-Smith**, will be launched. The cover review of the book is by **Alice Walker**, author of the Pulitzer Prize — winning book **"THE COLOUR PURPLE"**. A major part of the launching will include a mini exhibition of **Sistren Textile** designs based on the stories in **"LIONHEART GAL"**.

Sistren Textiles will also be exhibiting the full range of its designs at the **Black Arts Gallery** in North London between October 14 and 21. The tour wraps up on October 26 following which **Sistren** will travel to **Holland** on the invitation of the **Royal Tropical Institute**, to take part in the **Stagedoor Festival**.



MUFFET IN REHEARSAL. Sistren theatre team develops the Muffet themes with Director, Eugene Williams.

FIRST TIME: Beverley Hanson did the first public reading from "Lionheart Gal", at the launching of Elean Thomas' book "Word Rhythms From The Life of a Woman" at the Jamaica School of Drama in early August. The U.K. launching of "Lionheart Gal" is planned for October and the local launch in early December.



TRINIDAD

(Continued from page 3)

One lesson from the Trinidadian struggle is that where women of different backgrounds and political allegiances unite to challenge women's oppression their power to be heard is much greater. Second, as "narrow" and as "secondary"

as the issue of rape in marriage may seem, it is clear that by starting from an issue which the women felt strongly about, the women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago has begun to build an autonomous base from which other issues such as unemployment, class and race can be explored.

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN:



Shirley (standing), as she addressed a Y.W.C.A. luncheon in her honour. Others (left to right), Rupert Lewis, President, Jamaica Anti-Apartheid Movement (JAM), and Winnie Mills, National President, Y.W.C.A. of Jamaica.

STRONG ON RESISTANCE

Mrs. Shirley Masham Talbot is a Black South African woman living in exile in the United Kingdom, but working energetically as a member of the **African National Congress**, for the ultimate liberation of her people from the appalling system of apartheid. Shirley visited Jamaica in June at the invitation of the **Jamaica Anti-Apartheid Movement (JAM)** for its commemoration of the Soweto Uprising.

During her stay, SISTREN interviewed her and got a much higher level of understanding about the role played by black South African women in the country's history, as well as in the present struggle. We share below extracts from our interview with Shirley.

WOMEN'S LABOUR — PAID WITH TOMATOES:

Women began to be organised in Trade Unions during the forties a little earlier than the men because they were "non-pass-carrying natives". The majority of women were to be found in agriculture and domestic work with a very small number in industry. Their status in agriculture has changed because of the Government's settlement programme whereby between the period

1960-80, eight-and-a-half million people were forcibly removed from their ancestral homes, from the farms where they lived and worked, to reserves. Their status now is casual worker. If they want to work they come out in the morning and if they're lucky, they get picked for the day's labour. When they are done, they might get in payment a bucket of tomatoes or a bucket of pineapples. That means they have to go and sit by the roadside and sell the produce. So a woman's day is made that much longer and harder.

In some areas, about 68 percent of the women are unemployed. They work in road gangs, digging ditches, building dams and bridges.

Some women are more lucky and work in the modern factories so have joined trade unions and become more organised. But again there are difficulties. The executives of the unions are usually made up of men so, for example, meetings are set at inconvenient times for the women; at those times when they have to go back home and attend to domestic matters. Then some men don't like their women going out in the evening — either it is not safe or they are having affairs or who is going

to look after the children!

There are other difficulties. You can lose your job due to pregnancy. If you are a nurse and you become pregnant you have to re-apply. There was a case of a school teacher who went into labour and nearly had her child in front of the children because she had concealed her pregnancy. Women tie their tummies with towels which often results in difficult labour. In another situation, some women must take out insurance while working. It has to be paid regularly because if you miss two or three weeks you forfeit the whole amount.

But in some unions, we now have our own sections so some of these difficulties are being overcome.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CURRENT STRUGGLE:

There are a lot of women in the forefront of the struggle.

There are young women amongst the youths confronting the security forces on the streets in the townships.

Women as mothers really support the youngsters. For example, during the Soweto uprising it was Winnie Mandela and other mothers who forged the links between what the youths were doing and kept up with the new force of militancy.

Many of the big marches are organised and led mainly by the women.

The squatter camps are mainly run by women. The men wanted to collect levies from the people in these camps but the women refused. In terms of self-help projects women built a clinic with their bare hands. They are also doing a lot of counselling because once there is no schooling, there is the danger of teenage pregnancies and prostitution and rape.

There is a great movement now to try and harness the energy of all the women's organisations, as they have done in the trade union movement, to form a national, united, women's organisation.

EARLY ORGANISED RESISTANCE:

In terms of organised resistance to the system, especially to the pass laws, women's organisation actually pre-

cedes the formation of national and political organisation. We see the early beginnings of women organised to confront apartheid institutions (late in the last century) when they began to take over as domestic servants. In the early stages, in most areas, especially Johannesburg, most of the domestic servants were men, and the men were forced to carry passes from as early as 1870.

As the women came more into direct production particularly in the 1930's, we see the state trying to extend Passes to women. The women organised and campaigned very vigorously against this. For example where they had to pay money every week to be issued with a new pass, the women would organise themselves and put all the passes in a bag, take them to the Magistrates Office and set them on fire. In the cases where they were arrested, their aim was to flood the jail making it impossible for them to be held or they would refuse bail by their men. In some cases they won these battles not to carry passes and were left alone.

SECRETARIES AND TEAMAKERS IN EARLY NATIONALIST MOVEMENT:

When the ANC was formed in 1912, a lot of our women responded. However, the attitudes of the ANC were no different from that of any other leadership in national movements existing anywhere else in Africa at the time. They



Black South African women often have sole responsibility for feeding and raising families as the men go in search of work in prosperous white areas.

were very middle class, articulate; maybe church people, a few learned people, a few chiefs being part of the leadership, and therefore being more interested in a share of the cake.

So when you look at the early nationalist movement in Africa, women were

not actually thought of as part of that whole nationalist struggle. Yes, they could hold the flags like everybody else and call for Independence, and be secretaries and teamakers. The same thing happened with the ANC (and despite) the politics of the time, and the fact that women were already carving the history of their own resistance and participation, it was not until 1943 that they got the vote in the ANC and became fully fledged members instead of auxiliary members.

THE EARLY WARRIORS: HIDDEN IN HISTORY

It is very difficult to tell what our women were doing before the African communities were conquered, so hidden are their activities in our history. There was an incredible woman named Mantatisi, the Chieftan of the Baklowas in the 1800's when there were a lot of civil wars among the various tribes. Mantatisi, by all accounts, was a powerful strategist who led her army in many successful battles, and who was feared by the early British settlers. She would enter into any negotiations in her own right without fear or favour.

Another great woman, Mu-ja-ji was among the great healers, who convinced people that she could make rain, so she became known as Ma-ja-ji the Rain Queen. Behind the very great Zulu leader Shaka, there was his mother, Nandi. She was very influential in the forming of Shaka's character and had some influence over his actions.

"FREE" ZONE

(Continued from page 1)

We therefore heartily endorse the recent proposals on this matter by the Organisation of Women for Progress (OWP). The main proposal — for a body to be set up comprising Trade Unions, women's organisations and the Medical Association of Jamaica, with the authority to undertake investigations into the conditions of work in the Free Zone and along the industrial estate — is an excellent one. We also support the call of the PNP Women's Movement to be allowed to tour the Free Zone factories.

However, we are not optimistic that this Government will take action to redress the situation unless it is given a united push. We would therefore urge the Free Zone workers themselves, the women's organisations, trade unions, political parties and opinion-makers generally, to take a stand on the matter and give the Government that push. Indi-

vidual women, not organised under any particular umbrella, must also show their concern by finding out the facts and writing letters to their MP's and the media. Without this sort of widespread campaign, we fear that the 'Free' Zone will continue as a 'Slave' Zone with little or no change for as long as the foreign corporations choose to be here on their terms.



AN EVENT FOR WOMEN
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26

* FASHION SHOW *
* PANEL DISCUSSION *
* GUEST ARTIST *

WATCH THE PRESS FOR DETAILS

WANT TO DO RESEARCH TO HELP WOMEN?



Contact:
Rawwinda Baksh-Soodeen
c/o Dept. of Language and Linguistics
U.W.I., St. Augustine
Trinidad, W.I.



PEACE AND I TWO SIDES

WOMEN WORKING FOR PEACE

Writer and poet, Christine Craig, has called on Jamaican women to develop a sense of "women power" and "sisterhood" in order to ensure that the next generation inherits peace and prosperity instead of violence and a poverty/dependence mentality.

Addressing the topic **WOMEN WORKING FOR PEACE** at this year's annual general meeting of the YMCA, Ms. Craig said "We women know in our personal lives that independence brings responsibilities, often onerous, but we also know that it is a growth process (which) results in true maturity . . . Dependence is impoverishing us and exposing us to the threat of intense militarism . . . keeping us paralysed while our health and education systems break down and housing becomes an impossible luxury".

ARMS RACE NEWS SUPPRESSED

"The arms race and underdevelopment" she asserted, "are two halves of one equation".

She blamed the apparent lack of concern on the part of Jamaicans about the threat of the arms race and the build up of nuclear power, as mainly the result of non-media coverage.

"One of the reasons for suppressing news of the arms race is that our traditional ally, the USA, is in the forefront of the arms race . . . Their refusal to give up Star Wars has led to continued stalemate in disarmament talks. The USSR plan is for phased nuclear disarmament within 15 years. It is important for us in the non-aligned group to understand the position of the super powers in the arms race, but this is difficult as our media is dominated by American prepared news, the focus of which is that it is necessary for the USA to 'protect' the 'free world' by building up military capacity".

In this context, Ms. Craig called on all Jamaicans to support the initiatives of the Jamaica Peace Council and the Caribbean Conference of Churches to establish a zone of Peace in the region.



Pauline discovers the link between poverty and the arms race – a scene from the SISTREN skit on Peace first performed at the Y.W.C.A. Annual General Meeting.

HUMAN RIGHTS – AN INTEGRAL PART OF PEACE

She further pointed out that the question of human rights was also an integral part of working for peace.

"Jamaica is not at war but . . . violent crimes are on the increase, and the society is seeing a proliferation of guns, from the nervous householder to the youngster hyped up on drugs. The police are in a difficult position but there seems to be mounting evidence that some members of the Force take it on themselves to act as judge and jury".

In addition, Ms. Craig felt that "the steady diet of vulgar, violent and sadistic films being shown in our cinemas and on television" were "seriously undermining" our efforts for peace.

She also pointed to other human rights abuses in the society, including sexual abuse and incest, and expressed concern about the education system being in crisis.

"Our hopes for peace lie in a future of committed, educated Jamaicans. Illiterate, frustrated, alienated young people lie at the heart of underdevelopment", she said.

DEVELOPMENT OF ONE COIN



BOMBS OR BREAD?

Weapons kill in more ways than one. The arms trade is a major cause of world poverty and war makes a country poor, just as poverty in its turn can be one of the factors leading to war.

Poor countries spend three times as much on arms as they receive in aid.

Arms sales to the Third World have doubled every five years, and these sales represent 65 percent of the world arms trade, according to SIPRI, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. For example, 32 countries, most of them in the Third World, spend more on defence than on education and health care.

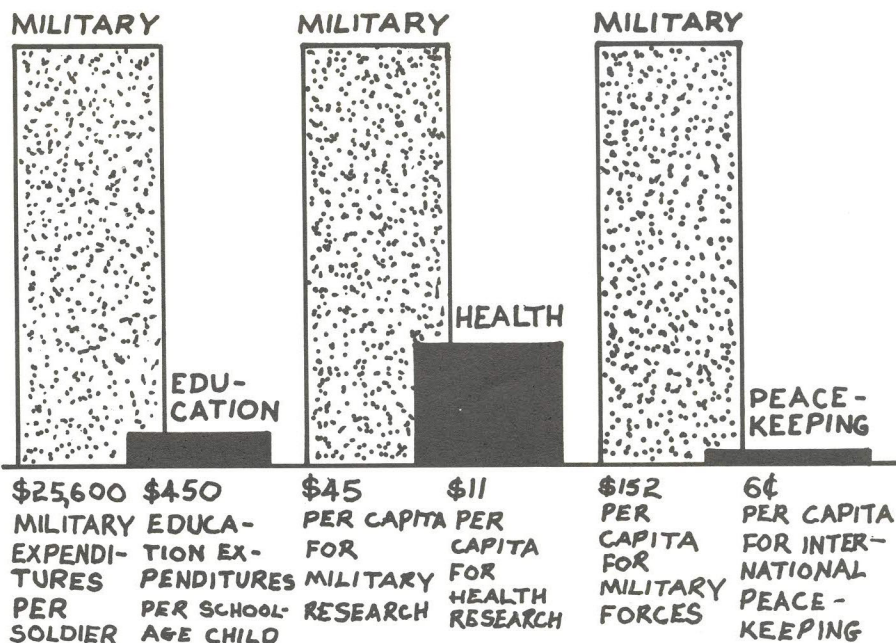
It is a sad fact that US\$17 billion a year, about as much as the world spends on armaments every two weeks, could provide everyone in the world with adequate food, water, education, health and housing (United Nations estimate).

Reprinted from
CHRISTIAN AID FACT SHEET

THE MEGATONNAGE IN THE WORLD'S STOCK-PILE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS ENOUGH TO KILL 58 BILLION PEOPLE, OR TO KILL EVERY PERSON NOW LIVING 12 TIMES...



WORLD BUDGETARY PRIORITIES - 1980's



From: WORLD MILITARY AND SOCIAL EXPENDITURES, 1985,
by Ruth Leger Sivard,
World Priorities, Washington D.C., 1985



THERE IS ONE SOLDIER PER 43 PEOPLE IN THE WORLD,
ONE PHYSICIAN FOR 1,030 PEOPLE...



PEACE INFORMATION CONTACTS

- JAMAICA PEACE COMMITTEE
23 Liguanea Mews
Kingston 6.
- JAMAICA COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
131 Tower Street
Kingston.
- CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES
14 South Avenue
Kingston 10.
- Y.W.C.A.
2h Camp Road
Kingston 5.



Rebecca Knowles (standing), represents the "strength" of the U.S.A. in crushing tiny Grenada (represented by Pauline) in Sistren Peace skit.

FLOOD RELIEF

Sistren members helped sort out and distribute clothes donated to the **Jamaica Council of Churches** for flood victims. We also purchased and distributed quantities of flour, cornmeal, sardines and soap to women in the worst-hit sections of **Clarendon**. The women in the relief centres told us of their difficulties in getting a fair share of food and bedding for themselves and their children. An 86-year-old said she had not eaten for two days because "I ca'an fight fi food at my age". Others were forced to sleep on the bare ground with neither mattress or blanket. Many were without any form of under clothing. Younger women also complained of sexual harassment.



Conditions were particularly hard for the women and children in the flood relief centres.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Honor Ford-Smith travelled to Sweden in June for a Seminar organised by the **International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)** on "The Role of International Aid in Adult Education".



COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR: All eyes are on "Granny" (**Honor Ford-Smith**, in mask, far left), at the **Association of Development Agencies (ADA)** Communications Seminar held in July in the board room of the **CCC** offices. **Honor's** contribution to the seminar demonstrated the use of the role-play technique in drawing out participants and getting answers to difficult questions. Seminar participants attended from **ADA** member agencies, including **Sistren**, **Projects for People**, **Social Action Centre**, **Cansave** and the **CCC**.

SISTREN MOVEMENTS

Honor gained a better understanding of other Third World NGO's and their impact as well as how West European Agencies operated, and on her return passed on this information to **Sistren** through a role-play she devised. **Honor** also gave a full written report on the Seminar to the **Agency of Development Agencies (ADA)** to be circulated to other members of the NGO community.

Many of the representatives of the development agencies at the seminar urged these agencies to pay more attention to the NGO's because of their links with mass movements, their articulation of the need for social change, success in making gains for the people and use of innovative educational strategies.

Women's organisations were especially highlighted for their impact. Examples included **WAND** for its role in prompting Governments to establish Women's Bureaus and **COMO** for forcing Free Zone factories in Mexico to set up health rooms with nurses.

Other participants came from **Bangladesh**, **Zimbabwe**, **Chile**, **India**, **Phillipines**, **St. Lucia** and the **U.S.**

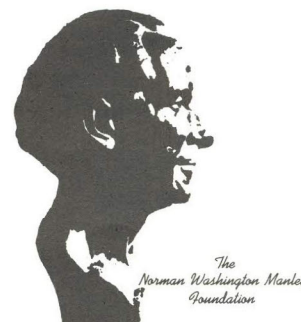
CONTRACEPTIVE PRACTICES

Discussions have been initiated by the **UWI Women's Study Group** into

women's problems related to reproduction.

Rebecca Knowles, **Pauline Crawford** and **Joan French** from the Workshop team, along with Artistic Director, **Honor Ford-Smith**, took part in the discussion on behalf of **Sistren**. Organisers were **Hermionne McKenzie**, **Wilma Bailey**, **Joan Rawlins** and **Alafia Samuels** of the **Women's Study Group**. Women doctors present included **Wynant Patterson** and **Barbara Johnson**.

A major problem raised was the lack of communication between women and their doctors, with women often ignorant of their diagnosis, being too afraid to ask for clarification, or too shy to fully explain their problem in the first place. Teenage pregnancy, abortion, contraception and women's general health problems were discussed with an emphasis on exchange of experiences. Hope for some follow-up on this in a broader form.



NORMAN WASHINGTON MANLEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"Through its work in theatre, in workshops and in its textile printing project, and the consistent striving for a personal development through collective action, **Sistren** is a living and vibrant model of community development". That was how the **Norman Washington Manley Foundation** saluted **SISTREN** at its seventeenth **Annual Award for Excellence** function at the **Creative Arts Centre** on July 22.

Sistren presented excerpts from "Muffet" at the function, where **Sybil Francis**, a social worker, received the Award for Excellence in the Field of Community Development.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN TOUR

Workshop team members **Pauline Crawford**, **Rebecca Knowles** and **Joan French** toured **Dominica**, **Barbados** and **St. Lucia** in July. In **Dominica**, the

(Continued on page 13)

Paulette Thompson — Avionics Foreman in the Maintenance Department of Air Jamaica — is small in stature but alive with a dynamism that has helped her chart new waters with absolute confidence working in a man's world.

This 36-year-old former Excelsior ball-of-energy is almost matter-of-fact when she speaks about a career which lists a number of firsts for women working in the field of mechanics in Jamaica and the world. Paulette left school in 1967, having excelled in the sciences, and applied for the post of technician at the Jamaica Telephone Company. First indication of things to come — the telegram asking her to come for the aptitude test was addressed to MR. Paulette Thompson. Second slap — despite passing the aptitude test with flying colours, she was told not to bother with the second test because the work was strictly for men only.

Undaunted, Paulette successfully applied to Cable & Wireless (as it then was), and thus became the first female technician to be employed by the multinational company worldwide. When she left, four-and-a-half years later, another female had been taken on and the Telephone Company had also started hiring female technicians at that stage.

From Cable & Wireless, Paulette did brief spells with two small companies before becoming the first female Avionics technician at Air Jamaica. At the time, female Avionics technicians were few and far between in the world.

“When I went on my first course to Air Canada, they didn't have female technicians. It wasn't until 1979/80 that Air Canada employed female technicians. That first course was a joke! The men on the course didn't know what to do. They were afraid of swearing because I was there!”

She also had a similar experience in Toulouse, France, where she went on a course in 1982. “Although Air France had a female pilot, you hardly find women in male-dominated fields there. When I used to go over to the factory on the production line that was another joke. They would stop work just to look at me, and the fact that I was a BLACK woman made them look even more”.

Paulette has very strong views about the way to handle yourself as a female when working with men. “Don't belittle yourself, because if you do they lose respect and are inclined to become facetious, rude and take advantage of a situation. As for the work, you have to prove yourself and strive to do better

than them at all times. Socially — you don't have to sit down with them and talk the same things that they talk to get on with them. If they say things you don't like, move away and leave it. If you don't want to move, stand up and listen, but never exchange words and swear words with them”.

The field of Avionics is a very important one being that branch of aviation which maintains the electrical and electronic parts of the air plane such as the instruments used by the pilots for navigation and steering. This work at Air Jamaica is carried out under the Civil Aviation Authority of England, through

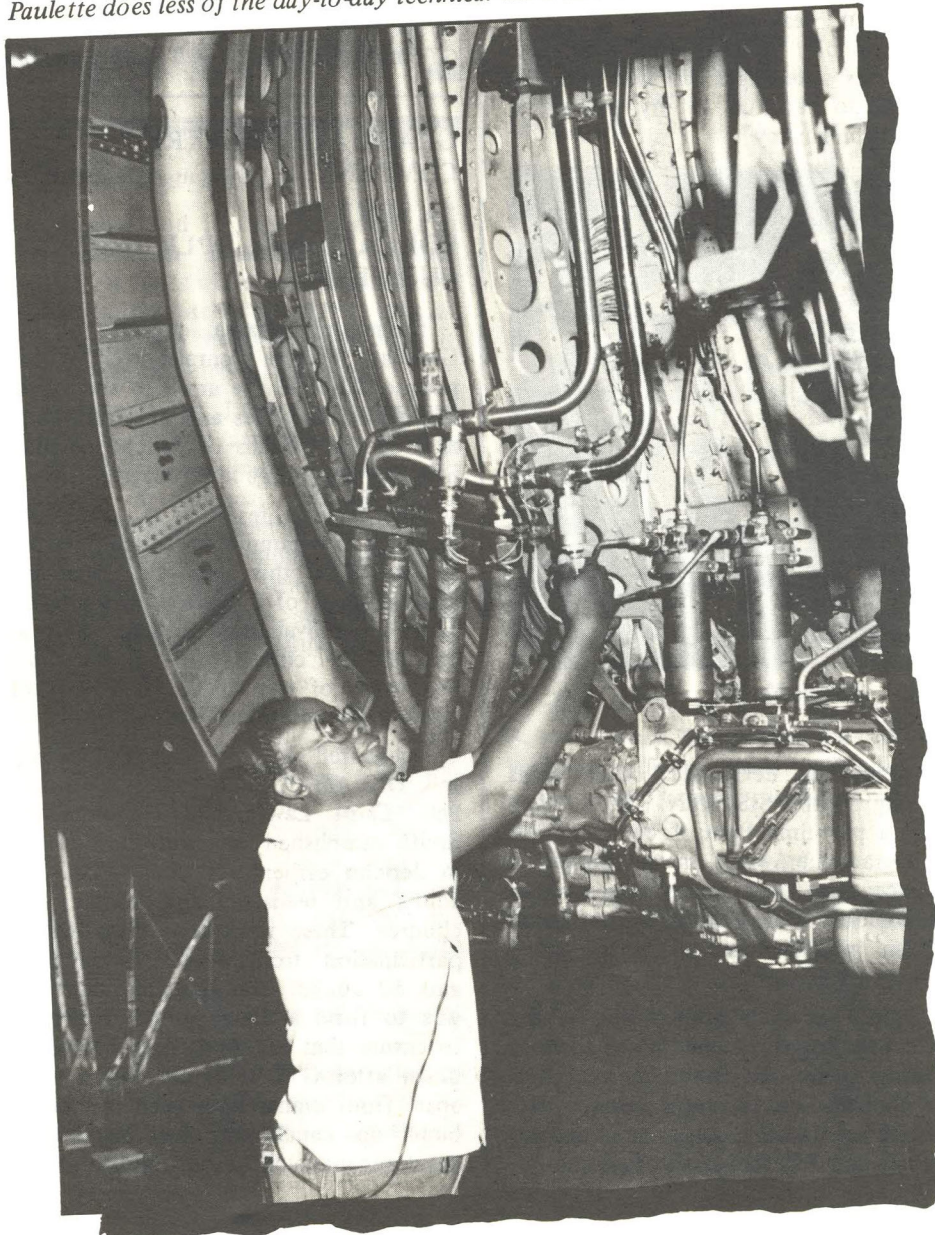
a surveyor who monitors the standard of maintenance on a regular timetable.

Paulette is proud of the high standard set at Air Jamaica. “Our mechanics and avionics mechanics have to get licences, do exams and keep current. In the United States, for example, the Federal Aviation Authority just requires you to sit one examination. Under the Civil Aviation system, it's more stringent. You have to have three year's experience on the aircraft before you can sit any licensed exam, and after that basic training, you have to do specialist training on different types of aircraft”, says Paulette.

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“THE PIONEERING SPIRIT”

Paulette does less of the day-to-day technical work now that she's a foreman.



CARIBBEAN POPULAR THEATRE PROFILES

SISTREN PROFILE:

Meet **Lorna Burrell-Haslam**, thirty-one year old **SISTREN** founding member and one of the Collective's leading actresses.

Lorna says her personal development has been greatly assisted by working in an all-female collective. "It's like extended family relations, particularly since we're all coming from the same background", she says. "I've been able to educate myself on what is happening in and outside of our society. **Sistren** has helped to build in me the courage of a strong black woman".

"The group has also helped me to help other women who aren't as fortunate to have someone to talk out their problems with; help them to have a better understanding of how to confront and deal with their problems. For example, young girls who, like myself, as a teenager did not have the courage to face up to my parents at times of pregnancy".



Lorna Burrell-Haslam, Rude Boy in Muffet.

Lorna has developed other skills working with **SISTREN**. She's been doing a part-time Basic Accounts course to upgrade her work on the **SISTREN Finance team**, and hopes to go on to the Diploma level. For the future, **Lorna** is also interested in taking up social work.

'**Burrell**' as she's often called by the Collective, has three children — all boys — ranging in age from one-year and ten months to fourteen years. Her hobbies are dancing, going to the movies and meeting different types of people.



GTC member Winston Bell leading warm-up exercises in Jericho children's workshop.

GRADUATE THEATRE COMPANY:

"A SORT OF EDUCATIONAL UPLIFTMENT BUSINESS"

Community drama, courtesy of the Graduate Theatre Company (GTC), has given a "shot in the arm" to the organizational capabilities and cultural awareness of the citizens of **Jericho**, a quiet little farming village in **Hanover**.

One tangible result of a community outreach programme in Jericho started by the GTC this year, has been the establishment of a development project, **Jericho Survival Incorporated**. And as one elderly citizen said in describing the work of the GTC, "Is a sort of educational upliftment business".

Sponsored by the Dutch Embassy and OXFAM, GTC members, **Winston Bell**, **Carol Lawes** and **Honor Ford-Smith** established two workshop groups in **Jericho** earlier this year — one for adults and teenagers and another for children. These workshops drew regular participation from about 70 children and 50 adults. The principle objective was to form a drama group. However, to ensure that the work does not break down after GTC pulls out, other skills apart from drama have been tackled to build up capabilities for community development such as community organ-

isation and how to understand and work with officialdom.

It was through this work that the **Jericho** citizens identified water-shortage as the main problem affecting community life. The research encouraged by GTC in the workshops enabled the citizens to discover the reason for the problem, design skits around it and come up with solutions.

Jericho Survival Incorporated has not only taken on the responsibility of tackling the water problem and other similar community issues, but also the sponsorship and organisation of sports programmes and other recreational activities for the youth and children.

Interest in the GTC **Jericho** Programmes was especially high among the youth, which has fitted in well with the current aims of the GTC team. A 1984 assessment of their work concluded there was a need to focus on youth, while not eliminating work with other social groupings such as women and farmers.

The 1986 **Jericho Programme** marks a new phase of the GTC's work. The group had done important work in its first three years (1981-84) of existence in over 70 Secondary Schools across the island, interpreting through drama,

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Rebecca Knowles and Pauline Crawford in Dominica Workshop.



Award for pioneering work from the Women's Bureau in 1985.

(Continued from page 11)

She is also proud of Air Jamaica's maintenance record and becomes justifiably annoyed at attacks on the Company in this area.

"I think our maintenance is very good. If you look at our record so far — Air Jamaica has been flying for 18 years and (knock wood) we have not had any crashes. Once one of our aircraft ran off the runway in bad weather in Canada but that had nothing to do with maintenance of the aircraft. Recently I read where Eastern was fined millions of dollars for bad maintenance practices. But John Public in Jamaica does not know that this type of thing happens and it would happen to us too if we were not maintaining standards"

Paulette's pioneering work has been recognised not only in the many radio and television interviews she has done over the years, but just last year she was honoured by the Women's Bureau at its 1985 Women of Distinction Awards ceremony. Having reached this

far, Paulette says her career ambition would be to reach the level of Vice-President for Maintenance and Technical Services or even President of Air Jamaica thus breaking further new ground for other young women to emulate. Having talked with Paulette, SISTREN has no doubt she can make it. ■

(Continued from page 12)

the English and History programmes of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). It was work approved of and highly appreciated by CXC officials as it stimulated students to go back to their books with new enthusiasm.

However, after 1984, the group was forced to turn its attention to survival, when the Government, through the Institute of Jamaica, reneged on an earlier funding agreement. Undaunted, GTC pressed on obtaining grants from local private sector firms and CUSO to boost the "in-kind" support of the Jamaica School of Drama, its parent organisation.

The Company's work ranged from conducting workshops, and performing television advertisements for the Ministry of Health and the National Planning Board — to regional tours of Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, Dominica and Cayman, staging shows and conducting workshops for teachers and theatre workers on how to use drama in education.

The Jericho programme however, highlights an important aspect of GTC's work which hitherto had been untapped — that of concentrating its effort for the upliftment of a particular community over a reasonable time period. ■

(Continued from page 10)

Sistren team worked with a mixed group between the ages of seventeen and forty plus.

All participants were involved in community development organisations associated with the **Small Project Assistance Team (SPAT)** which hosted **Sistren**.

Pauline went from **Dominica** to **St. Lucia** on the invitation of the **Folk Research Centre Committee**. Themes taken up in the workshops she conducted included **Teenage Pregnancy**, the **IMF** and its effects on women and the threat of nuclear war.

Meanwhile, in **Barbados**, **Rebecca** took part in a workshop on health sponsored by the **Women and Development Unit (WAND)** of the **UWI** and the **National Black Women's Health Project**. Here workshop participants were encouraged to speak out on their health problems and to examine how these problems were linked to wider social, economic and political issues.

The workshop culminated in a mass rally at **Queen's Park** where well-known American human rights activist, **Angela Davis**, was the main speaker. **Becky** said her knees were shaking when she was asked to sing **WOMAN TIME** to the audience, but she squared off her shoulders and had them calling for more!

ACADEMICS CONFERENCE: VENEZUELA

Artistic Director, **Honor-Ford Smith**, and Popular Education Consultant, **Joan French**, presented papers at a major conference of Caribbean Academics, in **Caracas, Venezuela**, May 28-30.

Both papers are from a research project on **Women, Labour and Organisation in Jamaica between 1900 and 1944**, undertaken by **Honor** and **Joan** through the **Institute of Social Studies** in the **Hague, Netherlands**.

Honor's paper was entitled "**Una Marson, Black Nationalist and Jamaican Feminist Writer**", with particular emphasis on Marson's work during the 1920's and 30's.

Joan's paper "**Colonial Policy Towards Women after the 1938 Uprising: The Case of Jamaica**", dealt with how colonial policy served to rationalise the ejection of women from the labour force after the 1938 uprising.

The conference is organised periodically by the **Caribbean Studies Association**, a grouping of academics from the English, French and Spanish speaking territories of the region. ■



Lorna Goodison: hints at less traditional images of woman.

A review by Honor Ford-Smith

"I Am Becoming My Mother", Lorna Goodison's newest book of poetry, is good reading. It's the kind of poetry that sets you thinking about your own ancestry and how it echoes with the social history of these islands. You wonder about your mother's sacrifices,

GOODISON: THE NURTURER

"I Am Becoming My Mother"
(NEW BEACON BOOKS)

by Lorna Goodison

your father's rakishness and your great-grandmother's sexual experiences. You see between the simple sweeping clichés of our history, to a celebration of the creativity of Caribbean people.

Goodison's poems deal with the relationship between mother and boy-child and the awareness it brings of life's richness and its dangers. They recount the actions of women who struggle against racism — Rosa Parks, Winnie Mandela and Nanny. The language combines images of the herbs, spices, flowers and weeds of the Caribbean with its rivers, seas and mountains. It mixes fabrics and trimmings with the razzle dazzle and brassiness of circuses and the syncopation of jazz. Goodison blends the crisp, ironic tones of middle class Caribbean speech with a mellow rural Patwah.

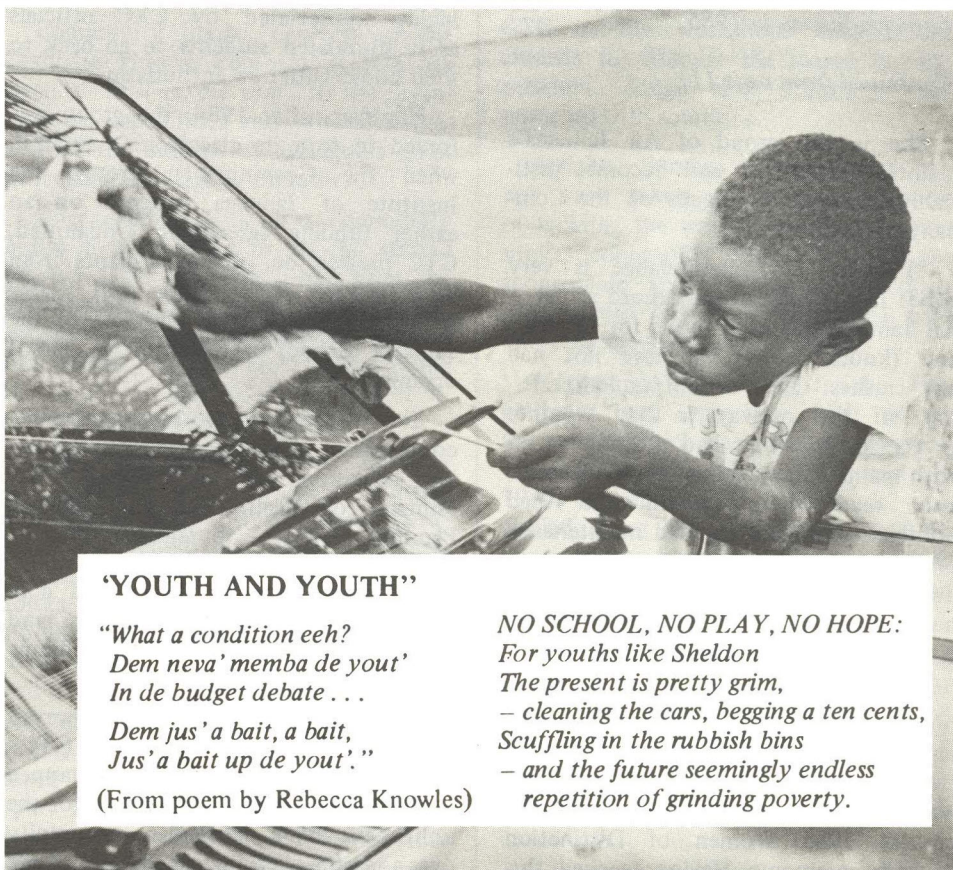
The collection is a coming to terms

with self and an establishment of identity. It is more soothing than questioning. Like motherhood is traditionally supposed to, it nurtures the reader. Its great strength is that as the poetry of a woman, it offers to other women the nurturing that women traditionally lavish on things, men or children.

But some of the poems hint at an angry woman who has trouble with that endless nurturing or who is hurt by the fact that she gets none in return; a woman who despairs with repeated departures of disappointing lovers. This woman totters near to madness, becomes a kind of hermit or sours in loneliness. These are less traditional images of women. As yet they only lurk in Goodison's poems, not as carefully explored as the nurturer. Perhaps next time, this contradictory woman will be fleshed out more vividly.



Do you agree with this image of Jamaica and Jamaican women? If not, then write the newspapers, call **Public Eye** or **Hotline** and protest the circulation of this pornography as an advertisement of our country.



'YOUTH AND YOUTH'

"What a condition eeh?
Dem neva' memba de you'
In de budget debate . . .

Dem jus' a bait, a bait,
Jus' a bait up de you'."

(From poem by Rebecca Knowles)

NO SCHOOL, NO PLAY, NO HOPE:
For youths like Sheldon
The present is pretty grim,
— cleaning the cars, begging a ten cents,
Scuffling in the rubbish bins
— and the future seemingly endless
repetition of grinding poverty.

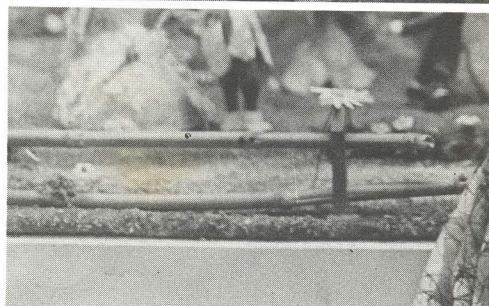
Art School Women Graduates:

FRESHNESS, PROMISE AND TRADITIONAL IMAGES

Seventeen women artists were among the 1986 Graduating Class of 43 at the Jamaica School of Art, chalking up in several cases, honours and credits in Painting, Ceramics, Art Education, Textiles and Graphics. The 1986 class did not have a woman amongst the sculpture students.

Of the best, the work was fresh and bright with good promise for the future. SISTREN, however, was rather disappointed to see the extent to which the young women in the area of Graphics continued to rely on the traditional images of women in their work.

Talent there was in this area, but less originality that we would have hoped for, and very little indication that the world of advertising will soon get the shaking-up it needs.



ORIGINAL: Bahamian Miralee Knowles exhibited a most original piece composed of animal characters made of bread, for which she earned an Honours Degree in Art Education. 31-year-old Miralee has been teaching for 10 years but took the course in order to better equip herself to meet the classroom needs. She says her first responsibility now is to encourage female students to go into the arts. "We have the talent for it and it only needs to be developed".



TOPS IN CERAMICS: 23-year-old Ingrid Richardson is devoted to her craft and wants to further her studies in Italy before setting up a studio here in Jamaica. She doesn't think being a woman can hold her back in her chosen field. "It has to do with your mind. You don't say, 'I'm a woman, I can't lift this'. If you want to lift it you can".



TRADITIONAL IMAGES were the order of the day in the area of Graphics. Carolyn Long, the top women graphics artist in the group, did, however, have good technique and a sharp eye for colour. Picture shows an item from her advertising campaign for "the Cocktail Place".

WOMAN TIME LONG TIME

THE 1980'S MEET THE 1930'S

It's feedback time for the Sistren Research Project. In July, the research team of Joan French and Honor Ford-Smith with the collaboration of the UWI Women's Studies Group and History Department held a seminar on the UWI Campus. They presented an overview of their findings to university staff, researchers and students, some of whom had previously read the 367 page research document and made encouraging as well as helpful, critical comments.

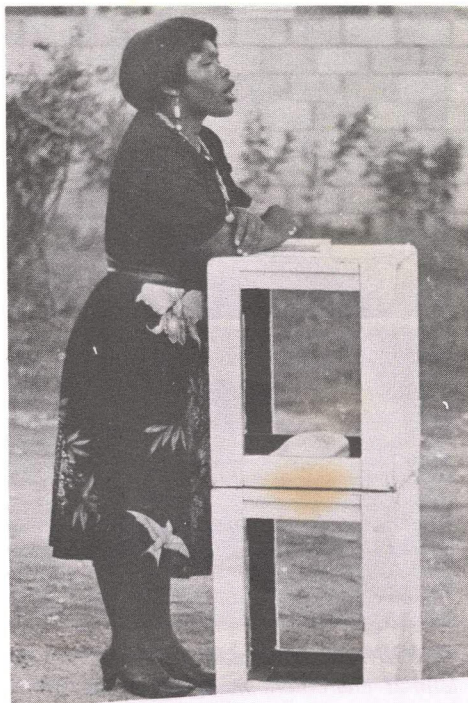
The occasion was graced by the presence of 90-year-old May Farquharson who was determined not to miss the opportunity to comment on the early women's movement in which she had been so active.

Most exciting however, was the workshop held for women activists and grassroots women on the grounds of Sistren Headquarters. Here the audience was treated to dramatisations of four characters from the early women's movement. Amy Ashwood Garvey (1st wife of Marcus Garvey), was played by Sister Samad, well-known Garveyite and friend of Sistren; Amy Bailey by Sistren's Pauline Crawford; Adina Spencer, a working-class activist by Joan French, and Molly Huggins of Jamaica Federation of Women fame, by Honor Ford-Smith. Beverly Elliott was supporting actress and stage manager.

The presence of Amy Bailey herself was one of the highlights of the evening.

Garveyite, Sister Samad in role-play as Amy Ashwood Garvey.

Workshop participants comprised women activists and grassroots women as well as a few men.



Miss Amy enjoys "Miss Amy": Early Jamaican Feminist, Amy Bailey thoroughly enjoyed Pauline Crawford's dramatisation of her. In a letter to Joan French following the event, Miss Amy said in part, "... It was an eye-opener to me of many things I really was not aware of. I wish I was forty years younger to do my bit with you I and others began what you and your group are continuing. The best success".



After the dramatisations, the audience became active participants. They were divided into groups and given papers outlining the colonial policy towards women after 1938. Each group was asked to respond to these recommendations as if they were one of the characters. Then a member of the group relayed the response in role for the other participants. "Dem ya recommendations no have nутten fi do wid me. Dem neva ask me wha' me want" said Sheron Gordon as she confidently presented the response of the Adina Spencer group.

The Sistren Research exhibition "Dutty Tuff" on the history of women's work and organisation in Jamaica since the early 20th century was on display and attracted much interest. The exhibition is available to libraries and institutions on request.

The Research Team plans to hold further workshops in 1987 to disseminate its findings. The team is currently working on a series of booklets in popular form for distribution to women's groups and other institutions.

