

C A F R A

N E W S

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION.



CAFRA NEWS.

CAFRA News is the quarterly newsletter and primary networking tool of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA).

Its main purposes are to:

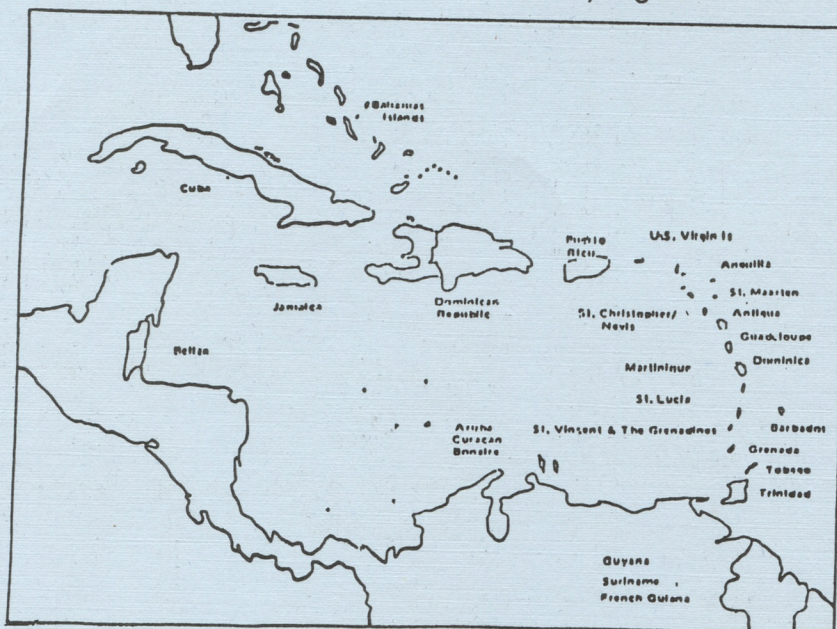
- Inform members and other interested persons about the activities and programmes of the association;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate on key issues of concern to women in the region;
- Promote the sharing of experiences and foster links among individual feminists, activists and

women's organisations;

- Assist in breaking down language barriers in the region
- Stimulate women's creative expression; and
- Contribute to the development of the women's movement regionally and internationally.

We welcome letters, articles, poems, reviews, opinions and artwork for editorial evaluation and selection. The newsletter committee has a final right to edit content and to reject material not appropriate for publication, e.g. that does not further the aims and objectives of CAFRA and promote a spirit of sisterhood; or that is racist, sexist or "maternalist". Individual authors and reviewers are solely responsible for views and opinions expressed in published articles.

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Editor's Note

F

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letters

In this our last issue for 1991, CAFRA News gives an update of CAFRA's main projects, "WICA", "Women and Law" and the "Women's History and Creative Expression".

A report on Women Prisoners in Guyana (p. 22), a commentary on the discriminatory practices re maternity leave for unmarried teachers in St. Lucia (p. 16), raise issues of fundamental concern to Caribbean women, in areas which projects should also impact

Reports on work-shops/seminars attended by CAFRA members in the latter half of this year, include the WINFA (p.11) and NFA work-shops (p.13) and an international environmental congress, "World Women Congress for a Healthy Planet", held in Miami during November (p. 32).

You should enjoy Tina Johnson's "Responding to newspaper articles" (p. 27) extracted from the *Publishing Handbook for Women Writers* now being published by CAFRA. Of interest also is the work of the Antigua Popular Theater Organization (CARIFEM Update p. 35), plans for NGO's commemoration of the Quincentennial, (p. 29), and a report of the newly formed Caribbean NGO Policy Development Centre (p. 31).

The CAFRA office sends wishes for a Xmas season filled with peace and goodwill to all. We hope that 1992 greets everyone in the best of health and prosperity, continuing to grow in sisterhood and in the strength and wisdom to fight the many battles for the more just world that we all desire.

Rowena Kalloo

Creation Fire

Institute of Jamaica
The Cultural Training Centre,
1 Arthur Wint Drive,
Kingston 5, Jamaica.

Sisters,

I was so lucky to get a copy of *Creation Fire* in Barbados in July. It is a powerful anthology and Sharon Chacko's cover art is moving.

I have just begun to savour the poems. Looking into the sister's faces, reading the biographical notes, glancing at poems, I felt a kind of healing. We have been separated by the Middle Passage, colonialism, imperialism, European languages. I felt I was hearing voices of family again after long years of silence. Thank you CAFRA.

I dream of visiting and knowing the other territories, Caribbean culture, recognising similarities, noting differences. Perhaps touching the hands and faces of my sistren. I am looking forward to sharing these poems with my students and colleagues in October.

Sincerely,
Jeanette Campbell



Sharon Chacko, from the cover of *Creation Fire*.

International Women's Health Coalition
24 East 21 Street,
New York, NY 10010.

The other day, I was with friends spending a lazy Sunday afternoon reading poetry, when one of them began reading from *Creation Fire*. The collection is a wonderful idea that many have talked about but few have done. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Congratulations to CAFRA!

Please send me some information about CAFRA; particularly, on the "Women and the Law" division. As you may remember, my personal work is in human rights law, especially as it relates to, or as is often the case, fails to relate to women. I am most interested in

the work being done by women outside the United States. Be well.

Seble Dawit
Special Assistant to the President

Netfa

P.O. Box 995-1002,
San Jose, Costa Rica

Receive our salute, we are a group of black women from the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica, Port Limón. We are descendants from various parts of the West Indies, particularly Jamaica. Even though we speak Spanish our mother language is English. We have a lot in common with women of the Caribbean, and it would be nice if we could meet at some time and share our similarities and differences.

We learnt about you through Marion Bethel and Nelcia Robinson. We are a young group and for a long time we were seeking to find black women's organizations with whom we could share experiences that would help our group. Our main interest and work is focused on the rescue of the black identity in our country.

Would you write to us and give us some more information about your organization, and how we could be part of it? Could we begin networking by sharing informa-

tion? Expecting to hear from you soon,
Carmen Hutchinson Miller
President of NETFA

Netfa is an Ethiopian word which means "a free woman."

Solidarity message

Union for Civil Liberty
109 Suthisarnwinichai Rd.,
Samsennok,
Huaykwang, Bangkok, Thailand 10310

Dear Friends,

We write to express our solidarity with the Women Worker's Union. The Committee for Asian Women informed us of the dismissal of 16 women workers of Civic Textile Company Ltd. of Belmopan which occurred on April 8, 1991. These workers rights must be respected by the manufactures. We heartfully support their strike. If this letter is useful as a tool to make the manufacturer and authorities aware that other countries also watch their actions, please send the copies to them.

Hoping to see a better situation for the dismissed workers.

With best wishes,
In Solidarity,

Mr Phairot Pholphet
Manager
Union for Civil Liberty

Mr Songsak Boongaweenapanont
Co-ordinator Asian Worker in
Solidarity Link
Thailand



Women in Rastafari

St. John's,
Antigua.

I have been working in Antigua with the Rastafari Nyabinghi Theocracy with the aim of contributing to the general organisation of the developing group as well as the exploration of specific issues including women's health and gender relations. In this regard we have been meeting since October 1990; collaborative action by this core group has resulted in the recent rescinding of govern-

ment regulations prohibiting Rastafari children from attending school as well as the nullifying of the Leeward Islands Cricket Association's previous ruling barring dreadlocked players from participating in the game at the regional level.

A meeting with Rastafari and other sisters within the group to initiate a focus on and analysis of the above mentioned issues as well as a consideration of any other issues the sistren wanted to raise was held on Saturday February 24. The objective is to approach these issues wholistically. For example, as far as women's health is concerned, one will have to bear in mind the numerous roles and responsibilities the sistren face and as a consequence, include the spiritual, financial, physical, ideological, emotional and social among the areas to be treated. In addition, this analysis towards action to reinforce the positive aspects of the sistren's lives and transform areas of inadequacy into areas of well-being will be informed by the definition and experience of the "livity" of Rastafari as a total way of life. Resource persons will be drawn from within the community to facilitate this process. This was necessarily a preliminary meeting and we agreed to follow-up with regular weekly meetings.

Furthermore, in order to maintain consistency in respect of the

methodology as well as content of the participatory process, gender relations will be introduced as an issue to be considered by the group as a whole.

Imani Tafari Ama

Imani Tafari Ama is a member of CAFRA and the Antigua Popular Theatre Organization (See CARIFEM Update, p. 36). She has been working on investigating gender relations in Rastafari in the Caribbean.

Young women

50 Lady Musgrave Rd.,
Kingston 10, Jamaica,

I would like to remind you that at the CAFRA General Meeting it was agreed that CAFRA needed to do something practical to actively involve young women in CAFRA. As a not-so-young person who has spent most of her life in the youth movement, I have seen where the women's movement in general does not accommodate young women, and therefore young women do not feel a part of the women's movement.

As someone who has been involved in both the youth movement and the women's movement. I feel that if the women's movement continues to neglect young women it will affect the continuation of the movement beyond the 'old people's club' generation. I do not intend to be disrespectful by using these terms, but this is in reality the way most young women see the movement at present.

I am proposing that CAFRA seek to plan and co-ordinate a regional young women's seminar to hear and address the views of young women in the region in order to bring their issues to bear on the movement.

Please note that if CAFRA should accept this proposal I will be available along with others to practically help in making this event a reality.

Sincerely,
P. Redwood



World YWCA poster, 1985



WICA update - Dominica

Extracted and edited from the WICA Reports to CAFRA by Josephine Dublin, CAFRA's National Representative in Dominica, and Co-ordinator of the WICA Project, Dominica.

Two years ago, under the aegis of the Women in Caribbean Agriculture Project (WICA), CAFRA examined the situation of Caribbean women involved in agriculture in the countries of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and The Commonwealth of Dominica where agricultural production is key to the economy. Women contribute significantly to this sector, yet this contribution goes unrecorded, and is undervalued, and therefore excluded from national statistical data such as the gross domestic product (GDP). The research findings pointed to several issues affecting women in agriculture which needed urgent follow-up action.

In Dominica follow-up action of the WICA research took place through the efforts of CAFRA and local non-governmental organizations namely the Dominica National Council of Women (DNCW), Development Alternatives, Social Action Centre, Huscksters' Association, Dominica Farmers' Union, and SPAT (Small Projects Assistance Team). SPAT was the local facilitating agency for the follow-up. A programme of work was decided on to address the numerous issues



of concern to women in agriculture, and this workplan was implemented in three communities, Marigot, Giraudel, and Grand Bay. The follow-up workplan was influenced by suggestions from women in all three communities. This made it very exciting as participants were an integral part of the whole programme which was participatory in nature.

The activities of the WICA project are managed by a team of three former WICA researchers: Josephine Dublin - Co-ordinator, Martha Joseph - Community worker in Marigot, and Christalene Merrifield in Grand Bay. The other community, Giraudel is serviced by frequent visits by the co-ordinator. The activities are co-ordinated in a truly team spirit.

The community workers, Martha and Christalene, are doing a tremendous job, and even at short notice, they are able to mobilize the women for meetings.

Marigot

In Marigot, the group "WICA Roots" was launched. They have done several drama pieces utilizing popular theatre skills to bring across messages of poor oppressed rural women. They have also set up an organic vegetable growing project and are already selling a variety of vegetables which were lacking in the community. The farmers in all three communities are promoting the use of organic farming. The women of Giraudel had always practised

organic farming and their project has been used as an example of the benefits of organic farming for the other communities. Marigot women farmers took part in an exchange visit to Giraudel during a typical workday on farms of women involved with WICA. An evaluation of the exchange revealed that Marigot women had learnt harvesting techniques in pepper and coffee, were exposed to the use of a new and easy to handle tool, the Hoe-Fork, as well as found out more about the usefulness of biogas. In general they strengthened their relationship with other more experienced farmers of Giraudel, while they learnt from them.

Two women from Marigot also attended a SWAP (SPAT's Women in Association for Progress) workshop at La Plain, entitled "Farming as a Buisness" (see box p.8).

Women from all three communities and the Co-ordinator recently attended the WINFA/CAFRA/CNIRD workshop, entitled, "Agricultural Development is Women's Development" which was held in St. Vincent in October (see p.11). The women from Dominica stayed on for an exchange visit with women farmers in St. Vincent, and another such exchange visit is being planned.

Giraudel

In Giraudel the women farmers are exposed to several consciousness raising-issues which they find very enlightening. For example the women's group in Giraudel came together to see a video on "Man Made Farming" which showed several pertinent issues (which also came out in the WICA research) which are of concern to women in agriculture. These included ownership of land, time management re. balancing productive and reproductive work, socialization, and labour and technology. The most important issue for them was developmental education and the lack of paid labour on their farms.

Due to the labour problem on their fields, an exchange labour system has been arranged among the Marigot and Giraudel women.

Grand Bay

Grand Bay boasts a very lively group, well versed in popular theatre techniques and its tools of song, poetry, drama and dance. The Grand Bay group displayed their dramatic skills to the public of Marigot during the launching of "WICA



President of WICA Roots (Marigot) working on a sister's farm in Giraudel

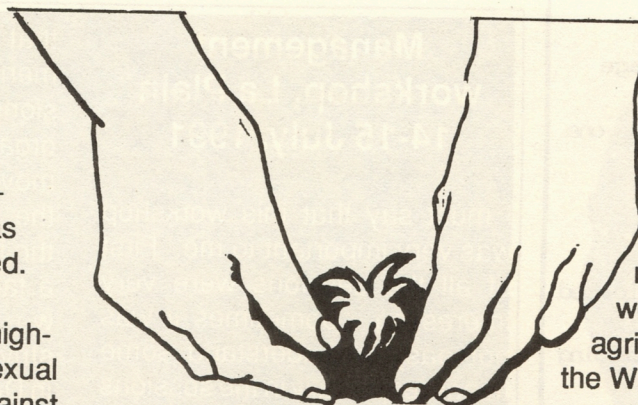
Roots", in Marigot in June. Their two masterpieces were the "Hucksley's Family" and "Banana Crisis" which left such a mark on their audiences, that the actresses are still referred to as the characters they portrayed.

These dramatic activities highlighted socialization, the sexual division of labour, violence against women, decision-making, land tenure patterns, credit problems in agriculture, the devaluation of women's work and women's productive and reproductive roles.

Women in Grand Bay are seriously engaged in subsistence agriculture and are ahead of government's plan to diversify the economy. Three of these women are presently involved in constructing a pig project while other individuals are engaged in the production of vegetables, ground provisions and small livestock.

Moving on stream

The main findings of the WICA research have been highlighted on two radio stations, one in collaboration with DNCW. The radio series, entitled "WICA Update", is heard on the Dominica Broadcasting Station. Programmes aired so far are "About CAFRA, SPAT and WICA project", by Martha Joseph and Josephine Dublin; "Why WICA, it main findings, and WICA in St. Vincent" by



LITERACY, POPULAR EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY: BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

Joan French and Nelcia Robinson; "Credit Schemes for Women" by Gregory Rabess; "Sexual Division of Labour/Socialization" by Jacinta Bannis, "Women and Law" by Roberta Clarke; among many other more general and WICA-related themes.

DNCW's quarterly newsletter also featured "Concerns of WICA" in one issue. SPAT has promised to produce a cartoon booklet. Footage of WICA follow-up activities are being filmed to form part of the video "Femme Te".

In an attempt to influence policy changes re. women in agriculture, a meeting was held with the Permanent Secretary. Present was the woman Programme Officer of SPAT and the Co-ordinator of the WICA follow-up team who lobbied for the need to have integrated into the agriculture policy a concern for women in agriculture. We are also due to meet the Co-ordinator of the Women's Bureau.

In terms of further activities, plans are on stream to extend WICA's follow-up programme to another agricultural community where women are playing a key role. To this end a meeting has been held with women of the Castle Bruce agricultural community, about the WICA findings.

Before the end of 1991, a regional exchange is planned with WICA in St. Vincent, as well as a consultation where CAFRA, the back-up team, and other governmental and non-governmental agencies will be invited to hear the year's report on follow-up activities.

Impacting on many people

The WICA follow-up has not been without its difficulties, nevertheless, the programme has been a desirable and exciting one that has impacted on the lives of many people, women, children, and men.

In the words of one member of Giraudel, "Indeed, I must say that this organization is a worthwhile one for all of us because we spend so much time in the fields, and the educational part of this whole process was lacking in us. I only wish the organizers would keep this going on for as long as they can".

Poem

Certain Kind of Woman

It takes a certain kind of woman to make a marriage and a certain kind to break one my brothers think I am running wild there are worse things you could call me a devoted sister, a dedicated daughter a loyal wife, a self-sacrificing mother

Didn't I try to be those things?

my sisters think I am going to be lonely in my old age there are worse things I could be committing adultery, impressing the neighbours negotiating a second mortgage, waiting for the children to come home

Didn't I do all those things?

my parents are afraid I might trip and fall there are worse things to be afraid of the chains of security, boredom depression, a two-dimensional me

Didn't I confront all those things?

I trip and fall because I am learning to walk alone I run wild because I am enjoying me

for I am - a certain kind of woman.

by Rosanne Brunton.

Management workshop, La Plain 14-15 July, 1991

I must say that this workshop was very important to me. First of all the sessions were very interesting. Sometimes it was not easy to understand some things, especially in the sessions where budgeting was being explained.

In one of the sessions headed communication, we were called on to say our names so that we could all be acquainted with each other. I found everyone very friendly. Also we were asked to sit in pairs and each pair was asked to speak about the good things that they know of themselves. I found this quite a good experience because I think right at this time some of our shyness had gone, especially in me.

At one session we were asked to set our goals, that is, how we were going to spend the next three years. One of my goals in farming, is to be the farmer of the year.

We also touched on management and decision-making. There were many good points which were useful to our group

that came out of the management and decision making sessions: how to plan, negotiate, organise, have an executive and move forward. Our group was the most recently formed and the least active group there. In a farming community like ours we women farmers need to strive to make our group the top in Dominica. We need to get our group more organized, and involve more people, especially young farmers. This is important if our group is not to die as other groups in our community have done.

I would like to encourage more of us to attend similar seminars whenever they come up. Some of us are quite busy but we have to make time to attend because it's educational.

As for me, I think it will allow me to manage my farm better, especially in the area of record keeping. Too often we farmers do not keep records, maybe because we are working for ourselves. But I can tell you that after this seminar I am going to keep some records of what I spend and what I make, so by the end of the year I can know if I have lost or gained.

All in all it was good.

Rose Nelson

Agro processor: Natalie Charles Andrew

*Natalie Charles Andrew first became involved in CAFRA through the WICA project in Dominica. She has been a secondary school teacher, is the author of two books, **Fanm Kouway: Profiles of Seven Rural Women in Dominica's Development**, and **From a Small Beginning**. She is working on her third book, on Mable Cissie Caudeiron. She is a member of the drama group 'Sisters in Solidarity'. She is also involved in agro-processing. At CAFRA's Biennial General Meeting, her numerous agro-products were well received. Here Natalie speaks about her venture into agro-processing and its potential for improving the livelihood of women.*

Natalie: I have become what is called a pioneer agro-processor as a result of Hurricane David.

Hurricane David brought on a crisis in agriculture. There was a food shortage, that lasted for a very long time and because of the way our economy and our policies were set, we had a tough time coming out of the food crisis. That is what forced me to focus on the whole question of food security, and self-sufficiency in food needs.

I began at home with basic kitchen utensils and a dryer and an oven doing experiments with all the things that were being wasted. We used to call banana 'yellow

carpet', and I kept saying " Well, why do we have to walk on bananas when we're poor. It doesn't make sense that people are poor and they're wasting food. You're always going to be poor." I started with bananas and after 6 months I had developed about 132 different by-products from bananas.

I attracted the attention of the experts, that is, the food technologists, people whose work it was to be doing these things but who weren't doing these things, although they were getting a fat wage. They came, as well as certain people from the Health Department and the Government Agricultural division, and they were mightily impressed.

During the National Independence celebrations, they encouraged me, through financial support and by giving me a small work team of women in my community. By National Independence celebrations in 1982, I had developed something like 632 products from breadfruit, banana, pumpkin, breadnut, tania, and dasheen - primary products and secondary products. When I say primary, I mean for example the processing of bananas into flour, while in secondary processing, the flour is used to make a baked good.



Natalie Charles-Andrew

We had an exhibition made up of various categories like seasonings. We made our own curry and poultry seasoning and everything, using all the herbs and spices grown in Dominica. There was a section dealing with staples, flours and pastelles - pastelles made from pumpkin, spinach, banana and so on. Then we had a selection of wines made from almost every fruit that is grown on the island. We had vinegars, baked goods made out of breadfruit flour and ginger; plantain and cinnamon. Then there were preserves and dried fruit, banana raisins, papaya raisins, guava raisins, mango raisins. We used the raisins to make all types of cakes

and cookies and buns. The whole quadrangle in the market was filled with our produce.

Scientists and government officials paid a lot of lip service. My expectation was a follow-up by government and policy-makers because what was highlighted was a very successful showing of Dominica's potential for agro-processing. I felt that if I, entirely out of that field, was able to produce that much - how much more could be done. I thought the government would have taken everything, lock, stock and barrel, secured a processing site, secured the technology and got me on wheels.

Well, of course you know what governments are like. They have strange ways of determining their priorities and most of the time their priorities are not in the interest of people like you and I.....

Where I got responses from were from regional agencies - the CDB (Caribbean Development Bank) and different people from the region who came to Dominica.

I was actually able to set up a mini agro-shed

which I used as a processing site. I was able to equip the place with some processing equipment and that is where I have continued my work. We call ourselves by the name 'Survival'.

We finally got an outlet in the town to sell all our stuff, and at that outlet we sell everything that we process at primary and secondary level. People can actually come and eat those things, and in this way we can sensitize people into accepting products that they've never tasted.

That was a whole new concept in nutrition and food processing. We were not content to start at the level of just making plantain flour and selling to the supermarkets. We made the (secondary) products and sold them.

So this is where we are at present

and my main reason for coming (to CAFRA's II BGM) is to highlight the work that I've done in agro-processing for the past 10 years, and to let it be known to all the women, the participants, that I intend to organize a kind of extension project for the region, a kind of outreach where I would make myself available to do small workshops and demonstrations for women who are either involved at some level in agro-processing and need more expertise, or who have never been exposed to that sort of thing before as a means of income generation.

I'm saying to women who think that I could be of help, especially disadvantaged women, who are already so insecure about their survival, this is a viable alternative that could be used. I came to this meeting with that in mind, not that I'm not interested in other issues that affect women like les-

bianism and class - we fight those things everyday - but seeing that the survival issues seem to take priority over everything else.... You see, you can't give theories, and even if you come in and see it and write all these articles and everything,



Agricultural Development is Women's Development

it's what goes on the table that matters. The bottom line is, food first. We were talking about diversifying leadership roles, well I see myself as a leader in that area within CAFRA, and as a member of CAFRA, I am hoping that CAFRA will recognize those skills and the possibilities that exist around those skills and that whole area. 🌱

With Farmers in mind



Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development. **Reaping without weeping: a guide to safe management and application of chemicals in agriculture.** St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: CNIRD, 1991.

Cartoon booklet.

Winward Islands Farmers' Association. **Report of the Symposium on Banana, held at the Haddon Hotel, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines on November 15-16, 1990.** Kingstown; WINFA, 1991.

"Agricultural Development is Women's Development" was the theme of the WINFA Workshop which constituted one element of follow-up activity of CAFRA's Women in Caribbean Agriculture (WICA) Project.

Present were representatives of the WICA communities surveyed in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Commonwealth of Dominica, farmers' organizations of WINFA (Winward Islands Farmers' Association) as well as other farmers' organizations. CAFRA and CNIRD (Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development) co-sponsored the workshop, with assistance from the Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC) and the Dominican-based OECS Agricultural Diversification Co-ordinating Unit (ADCU).

Objectives

The workshop's objectives were:



to identify issues that affect women involved in agricultural production;



heighten the awareness of women's contribution to agriculture and rural development;



give female farmers a better appreciation of their role as providers of their families; and



draw up recommendations that would impact on WINFA's



GABRIELA

programming as regards women, and would promote their equal involvement in decision making. Female participants were overwhelmingly in the majority, though it was learnt that invitations were extended to the Presidents (all male) of WINFA member organizations, but only one, the President of the Dominican Farmers' Union attended.

The first session on Friday, 27th Joan French delivered a well presented summary of the WICA research findings. This session was complemented by the use of drama and video presentations highlighting issues in Dominica and St. Vincent. Following this was a general discussion during which female farmers spoke freely and openly about their experi-



Dis ah Hard Wuk

ences in agriculture and with their menfolk.

Issues

Some of the issues highlighted by women in this discussion were, the need for more attention to be paid to marketing outlets for crops produced by women; the fact that Caribbean governments were devoting more attention to tourism to the neglect of agriculture while in fact linkages between the two sectors needed to be emphasised and developed; the need

for women to support each other and protect what they have struggled for and achieved. For example, women noted a tendency among men to try to control organizations started by women once organizations appeared viable. An example of women supporting each other was given by the re-introduction of the "Koudmen" system in Dominica. In this system individuals form themselves into groups to assist each other with labour needs on their farms. Koudmen attempted to eradicate the sexual exploitation of women which occurred

when women hired men to carry out heavy labour.

Other issues included the need for solidarity among small farmers who are continuously being exploited and squeezed out of the market by large producers; the unequal distribution of work between women and men. A contribution by one of the male participants brought home to us women the gravity of the problem - he agreed that men should 'help' with housework and child care but that such chores were really the responsibility of women. To quote him: "some women real terrible, if a man only make the mistake and wash one diaper, next day she bringing the whole bucket of diapers for him to wash."

Constraints

Subsequent to this discussion, the plenary and work group sessions identified the following constraints to women's participation in Caribbean agriculture.

1. The lack of recognition of:
 - ↳ the importance of women, and of farming by women as a profession in itself
 - ↳ leadership skills among women
 - ↳ security/collateral so as to be able to obtain land
2. Male domination:
 - at home, so confining women to domestic commitments only.

- at meetings of farmers' organizations, leading to inappropriate meeting times, failure to discuss problems specific to women or to take the views of women seriously.

3. Financial problems

Recommendations

Recommendations coming out of this meeting were the need to:

- Establish adequate provisions for **child care**, and **meeting times** which were convenient for women;

The need for:

- **Education and training** programmes in the areas of, food and nutrition, and agro-processing;

- Establishment of **women's sections** within farmers' organizations to encourage greater participation by women. A need to articulate the problems/needs of women, find possible solutions, and integrate women's interests within the organization. In this regard specific programmes to improve women's self confidence (e.g. leadership training), and to make men more sensitive to women's problems were recommended;

- **Marketing channels** and **credit union facilities** for women, and the provision of **legal aid**, especially in relation to issues such as land rights.

Priorities

From these recommendations the priority areas were felt to be, establishing women's sections within the national level farmer's organizations that make up WINFA, and a Women's Network of WINFA at the subregional level. National level women organizations were to be represented on the executive, and on the WINFA executive two additional places were to be created for women from the Women's Network.

Specific training programmes to sensitize men on women's issues and to improve women's self-confidence, and their earning capacity.

It was agreed that women themselves must mobilize to ensure that the women's sections were established at the national and subregional level. WINFA's Secretariat was specifically asked to deal with the training programmes.

Both the Vincentian and Dominican women, particularly the former, appeared anxious to 'get going' on the establishment of the women's sections. So much so, that acting on a suggestion from Joan French, both groups met immediately after the workshop.

Gemma Tang Nain
Regional Programme Officer
CNIRD

NFA Farmers' Workshop

Fifty women farmers from member organizations of the National Farmers Association (NFA) of St. Lucia, will share experiences with nine fellow farmers from Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago at a workshop in St. Lucia being held from 28-29 November, 1991

The workshop is jointly organized by the NFA, the Women and Development Unit (WAND) and CAFRA, with WAND and CAFRA being responsible for workshop planning and facilitation. The workshop aims to analyse the concerns of women farmers and come up with an action plan to address them.

Josephine Dublin, Country Coordinator of CAFRA's Women in Caribbean Agriculture (WICA) project in Dominica, has been working closely with Jeanette Bell, WAND Programme Officer in developing the programme, which will use a mix of methods and is likely to be conducted in Patois and English. Other resource persons include Darnley LeBourne and Herbert Roserie of the NFA and Lorna LeBourne of the Ministry of Agriculture.



Update: 'Women and the Law' project

The basic objectives of the 'Women and the Law' project are to create an awareness and understanding of laws which impact upon women in their daily lives and to generate knowledge and information which would enhance the effectiveness of women's legal services and women's rights campaigns.

Generally, this project is seen as benefitting women at all socio-economic levels in society. However it was conceived so that the major beneficiaries will be women who because of socioeconomic factors such as income levels and educational attainment, have been distanced from understanding the law because of its technical language. The project is designed so that agencies involved in its implementation will have outreach programmes which reach rural and low income women in particular.

Project activities

Activities planned to fulfill the aims of the project are:

☞ Preparation of **background papers** identifying legal services available to women and legal issues demanding further action and research in the project countries of Antigua, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

☞ **National Consultations** which will: (1) present to a broad cross-section of governmental and non-governmental agencies and the public, the report based on the background data collected; and (2) to collectively develop a programme of action.

☞ Preparation and production

of **Source books of Laws** in the project territories in a form which can be understood by people at the community level;

☞ Production of **Popular Education Materials**, such as pamphlets, brochures, posters, radio and television programmes and videos. These will come out of workshops with participating non-governmental and governmental agencies; and

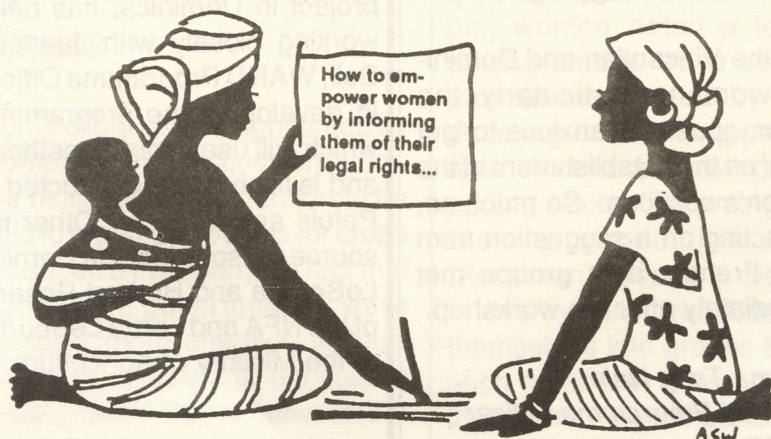
☞ Development and implementation of **training and action programmes** for agencies which work with women with law-related problems.

National Consultations

Since the Regional Meeting on 'Women, Violence and the Law' held in Trinidad and Tobago, in January 1991, work has taken place to allow preparation of background papers and hosting of National Consultations.

Legal researchers identified in the project countries were asked to produce a report on the legal status of women in their respective countries. The reports examined the following areas:

1) **Family Law**: status of children; status of common-law spouse; child custody; child maintenance; divorce; maintenance orders; property rights of spouses (mar-



Anne S Walker, IWTC

ried and common-law); minimum age for marriage; etc.;

2) **Labour Law:** collective bargaining rights; minimum wage; occupational health and safety; maternity leave and benefits; equal pay for equal work; sexual harassment in the work place, etc;

3) **Property Rights;**

4) **Constitutional guarantees** against discrimination on the basis of sex;

5) **Citizenship and Immigration;**

6) **Sexual offences and domestic violence;** and

7) **Succession laws.**

National Consultations on the Legal Status of Women were held in Antigua, Dominica, Grenada and St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Because CAFRA anticipated that the follow-up action to the Report on the Legal Status of Women would be in three broad areas; popular education, para-legal training and legal reform campaigns, the workshop sessions at the consultation focussed on the identification of follow-up action programmes.

Workshop groups were asked to identify three priority legal areas for further action; specify programmes and strategies to ad-



IWTC: Julieta Imberti, adapted from an illustration in La Mujer y La Ley, CEM 1986

dress legal issues identified; identify target groups for training and popular education; and discuss methods for implementing suggested programmes.

At these consultations, the participants also discussed the administration of the project, focusing on the possible collaboration of both governmental and non-governmental sectors. Advisory teams for the execution of the project were selected from the participants and broad time guidelines were discussed.

The commonalities of the legal situation in the countries, as well as the similar nature of the societies were reflected in the fact that in all the countries very similar issues arose in the discussions for follow-up action.

Priorities for legal reform

In all four countries, the question of child maintenance was seen as a priority for legal reform and education. Inadequate maintenance provisions, particularly where children are born out of wedlock, came up at all the consultations. This is not surprising as care of children is solely the mother's responsibility in many instances. For a woman living in poverty, the need for the father to contribute to the care of children is a basic necessity. The absence of such support often means that children will not have adequate access to nutrition, housing and education. This recycling of poverty contributes in great measure to the stress under which low income women in the Caribbean labour.

Discrimination against unmarried teachers

Other areas which were identified in all the countries as requiring legal reform included the status of the common-law spouse, violence against women, minimum wage and sexual harassment.

All countries expressed a need for establishing Crisis Centres, and extending legal aid facilities.

Participants also reiterated a concern for action, for legal literacy programmes, and law reform, issues which have been discussed several times over the last decade.

Limitations identified to explain the lack of action included funding constraints, the need for resource persons, and a lack of commitment to sustained social activism. This latter factor was related to the fact that the number of women willing to get involved were few and these women were already involved in several other activities.

The action strategies identified at the national consultations all stressed the need to work directly with women at the community level. In some countries, the approach of training of trainers was seen to be not as productive as working directly with women.

by Roberta Clarke,
CAFRA's 'Women and the Law' project Co-ordinator

The following is an excerpt from an article to the St. Lucian Star by CAFRA member Ingrid Skerritt, in response to the debate on maternity leave for unmarried teachers. Unmarried teachers in St. Lucia are discriminated against by being dismissed from their jobs because of pregnancy.

Resistance to change in the laws (re: issue of maternity leave for unmarried teachers) is not only shown in the formation of a committee to examine the legislation (when none existed for other urgent decisions) but also in the fact that no effort has been made to explain the frame of reference or modus operandi under which that committee is to operate.

Further resistance is seen in the earlier refusal by government to

implement the collective agreement for the period 1983 to 1986 between the employer (government) and the teachers' union to end the practice of dismissal of unmarried teachers because of pregnancy. In fact, by 1985 two union members were fired on that count. One must remember that the state, by virtue in its membership of the International Labour Organization, was a party to the convention 103 of 1982 providing maternity protection for female workers. The very same I.L.O. called for reinstatement of the teachers dismissed in 1985-86, but this was not implemented by government.

Remember that in 1986 government appealed the court's earlier verdict of wrongful dismissal and won its case in October 1987. In

addition, the Women and Development Unit of the University of the West Indies resolution of 1988 urging government to guarantee the right to parenthood of all unmarried women regardless of their occupation was ignored. In that atmosphere what do you expect from a



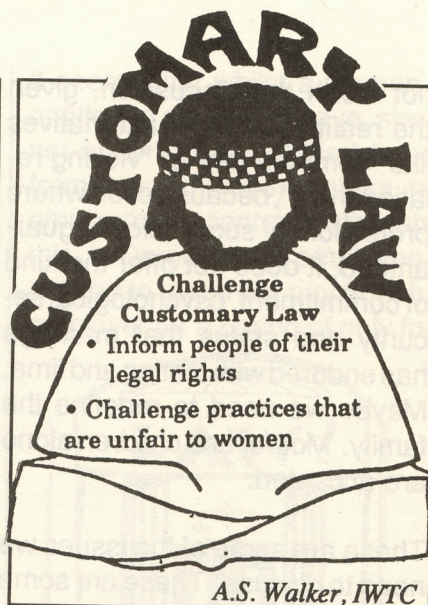
ISIS International

country that has no history of public debate?

Teachers, one must remember, are not regarded as vehicles for increased material wealth in the short run. Our current moral values, however, surround the immediate accumulation of material wealth at whatever cost. Otherwise public debate would not be necessary to gain repeal, where the risk of any unpopular move could be softened by the larger gain.

There will be no debate coming from the 900 or 70% female teachers (who incidentally are represented by a male on the present investigative committee). That should say something about who is waging the teachers' struggle! Nor has there been debate from their union, which, I am sure you understand, thrives on the support and consensus of its members for its programmes. These members, like the general female populace, hold a divided position on the issue (The horror of the facts I will spare you).

One must understand we are dealing with a society where the vast majority of people are not trained to think, who reject the value of objectivity, reason, and reality, and insist on functioning by faith, force and fear; where democracy lacks the necessary checks and balances of public opinion and to my mind, protection



of the judiciary (courts) on political issues.

Figures are not available (even from the union) on the number of teachers who are affected annually by the law. No study can be found on the fertility rate of St. Lucian teachers, married or unmarried, in comparison to islands like Barbados, Trinidad, and Jamaica or other islands where the law does not exist or where it exists but is not enforced. These and other queries raised show that no serious attempt has been made to compile that kind of data, since neither the government, teachers or female populace possess the will.

One thing is certain: that notwithstanding the fact that contracts of employment have to differ depending on the nature of the job, the law is clearly unjust - and could not stand up anywhere in

the civilized world. Its interference with fundamental human freedoms is dangerous and worrying, and is taken lightly by people who do not understand the need to be vigilant about encroachment on their rights, and constitutional freedoms.

A culture cannot exist without a constant stream of ideas and alert independent minds that constantly assume the responsibility for formulating alternative solutions to the many challenges that confront it. We cannot turn our morality into a weapon of enslavement by divorcing it from our reason and the goals of our existence. Based on the wording and the allowances of the present legislation on the Suspension of Unmarried Teachers Act, it seems to me that it is not the abuse of accepted morals that is causing the confusion. The society seems to have no problem with fornication. It is a way of life and therefore not a moral issue, (80% of children here are born out of wedlock).

It is the embarrassment of being discovered through swelling tummies and the exposure to the young of the contradictions of your teachings and that which we practice (all of us) that we abhor. In guilt we need a scapegoat to appease our conscience and appear to be upholding our morals, so the teacher is easy prey.

It seems to me that most people

who wish to have the present legislation upheld argue on the role model concept of the teacher to the child when all else fails. It is a lot to expect in this instance: children must be taught that morals are ideals (that may or may not be attained), a code of values to guide our choices and actions, not a tool of destruction that opposes our lives, breeds guilt, and turns us away from ourselves.

Many questions come to mind: have we set ourselves moral standards of family life that are not in keeping with the reality of our people? Since it is important to the survival of any civilized nation, do we have the guts to engage in dialogue on whether marriage should remain the ideal for good family life? Maybe it is

not worth the discussion, given the realities of other alternatives like "common law" or "visiting relationships", because even where protection of succession is guaranteed, it does not offer the kind of commitment, psychological security and status that marriage has endured with testing and time. Maybe we need to redefine the family. Mother and children alone are accepted.

These are some of the issues we need to discuss. These are some of the challenges for the women's movement of the future.

The Japanese claim that the success of their economy is based in part on their low rate (3%) of illegitimacy and therefore strong family background. Whatever the

argument, it must be clear: Every society needs standards and ideals; whichever one we choose to accept, its philosophy must rest on having a strong social conscience, and must have built into it creative ideas on how it has to be sustained.

It is therefore imperative that new strategies for pressure groups on the ground involve being well informed, possessing the ability to think rationally, putting up a united front for the future based on principle, refining our negotiating and diplomatic skills and sharpening our rebuttals. Q

ON THE BOOKSHELF

Amnesty International. **Women in the front line: human rights violations against women.** London: Amnesty International, 1991.

Details a wide range of abuses inflicted on women and men alike. Includes a 12-point programme to protect women from human rights violations.

Baxamusa, Ramala, ed. **Media reflections on women's movement in India.** Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1990. (Readings on Women Studies Series: 2).

Dossier of newspaper clippings

reflecting how the media in India has responded to issues concerning women activists over the past decade.

Dankelman, Irene. **Women, children and environment: implications for sustainable development.** Prepared for UNCED/UNICEF/UNFPA Symposium "Women and Children First," Geneva, 27-30 May 1991.

ECLAC. Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean/CDCC. **Violence against women: a technical resource directory; preliminary version.** Port of Spain: ECLAC/CDCC, 1991.

Directory of organizations and individuals in 23 Caribbean territo-

ries, working on the issue of violence against women.

Henry, Ralph and Norma Demas. **"Situational analysis of women and children in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990."** Tunapuna: Printed by Gloria V. Ferguson, 1991. "A study sponsored by UNICEF."

Assesses the impact of recent economic policies on women and children in Trinidad and Tobago.

ILO. **ILO standards and women workers.** Geneva: ILO, 1990.

Summaries of selected ILO Conventions and Recommendations:

(cont'd p.35)

Maternity leave and benefits

By Roberta Clarke

Most of the CARICOM countries are signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This convention states that in order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity, measures should be taken (which include sanctions being imposed where necessary), to prevent the dismissal of women on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity leave, or marital status.

It also recommends the introduction of maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances.

Notwithstanding these recommendations contained in the convention, there are only a few countries where maternity leave legislation exists. These are Dominica, Grenada, Belize, Barbados, Jamaica and Montserrat. Women in countries where there is no such legislation obtain these benefits under collective bargaining agreements or through employment contracts.

Even in these countries with legislation, there are several notable deficiencies in relation to maternity pay, amount of leave allowed, and the persons to whom leave is entitled. In Barbados for example,

it seems that whilst a woman is entitled to maternity leave, she is not automatically entitled to pay from her employer unless her employment contract stipulates this. In Dominica, an employee is entitled to maternity pay from her employer for a period of only four



A.S. Walker

weeks following the date on which her leave commences. In Jamaica, maternity pay is payable in respect of the first eight weeks of leave. In Belize, the woman is to be paid at least one third of her regular wage. The woman therefore is not guaranteed her full wage from her employer.

In all these countries as in the

other countries, the National Insurance schemes do provide a maternity allowance to make up for wages lost. It is noteworthy that in order to become entitled to this allowance, the worker must have made the requisite contributions over a period of time. In many cases the need to make regular national insurance contributions severely limits access to national insurance benefits by casual women workers (women who work seasonally, temporarily, or in other such situations).

In St. Lucia, not only is there no legislation on maternity leave, but sections of women are denied their reproductive rights completely. An unmarried female teacher can be dismissed upon her second pregnancy (refer to p. 16 'Discrimination against unmarried teachers.')

Men are also discriminated against in the arena of parental leave. In no CARICOM country are men given parental leave or a grant similar to a maternity grant. A maternity grant is really a token state contribution to the cost of child care. The assumption should be that the cost of child care is borne by both parents. Providing parental leave (beyond that necessary to protect the woman's health) for women only, is discriminatory against men, and has negative consequences for women, as it forces women to disrupt their economically active

Newsnote # 1

The 'Women's History and Creative Expression' Project

role to provide child care, while at the same time denying men the right to participate fully in the care of their children should they wish to do so.

The absence of legislative protection has a severe negative impact upon many women. Women tend to work largely in sectors of the economy that are under-unionized or not unionized at all, i.e., the distribution, service, and manufacturing sectors. Given the absence of trade union representation in economies where there is high unemployment, women are in an extremely vulnerable position, which often leads them to being individually unable to enforce their human right to maternity leave, and to protect themselves from job insecurity, low wages, and exploitative working conditions.

The absence of maternity leave legislation is illustrative of a gender ideology which ascribes human reproduction as being the sole responsibility of women. There is no recognition of maternity as a vital social function, nor of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children.

The 'Women's History and Creative Expression' Project enters its fifth year. This project started with the idea of *Creation Fire* in 1986 and since then it has initiated a number of projects and activities, which are summarized in the box, opposite page.

In 1990 Claudia Kadera the Co-ordinator with Sybil Seaforth, left this project, and was replaced by Rowena Kalloo. On June 8-9th 1991, at Mt St Benedict in Trinidad and Tobago, a small meeting was hosted by CAFRA to evaluate the activities of the project, and to make plans for the next three years. Present at this meeting were: Rowena Kalloo, Claudia Kadera, Sybil Seaforth, Anne Marie Sinkia, Cathy Shepherd, Rhoda Reddock, Ancelma Morgan, Danuta Radzik, and Stephanie Pile.

Strategies to implement activities which seemed to be on hold were

discussed. For 1991, these included finishing the boards of *Brave Dange*, implementing the second 35mm photography workshop, writing a proposal for a workshop on children's writing, editing and publishing short stories of Beverly Warren and Ancelma Morgan which were inspired by the WICA project, editing the raw footage of *Red Thread's* slide show on Guyanese women sugar workers, and editing interviews of professional women in Trinidad and Tobago carried out by Stephanie Pile, as well as transcribing taped interviews of professional women in Trinidad and Tobago, carried out by Maureen Warner-Lewis.

In the future we look forward to compiling an anthology of short stories by Caribbean women writers, similar to *Creation Fire*, hosting workshops on Women's Oral History, Writing for Children, and Playwriting for Women



Lionheart Gal, Sistren Newsletter

among others. We also hope to increase the amount of networking we engage in with other women/organizations who are actively working in the field of 'Women's History and Creative Expression'.

Funding for a project which cannot claim to alleviate basic poverty has been difficult. Finding resource persons to carry out local workshops (or provide basic womanpower in some cases) to allow participants to refine and complete their individual projects also presents some difficulties. The most suitable resource persons are not only few in number but also have very packed personal schedules. The evaluation and forward planning meeting attempted to deal with these obstacles by suggesting possible funding sources for investigation, as well as brainstorming for possible resource persons.

It was decided that we keep members and participants of the 'Women's History and Creative Expression' project informed and updated through a newsnote which would be a tear-out section of *CAFRA News*. This is the first of the newsnotes, and hopefully we will be able to produce them quarterly. We hope this newsnote will encourage women to write us about their work in this area.

Rowena Kalloo

Activities to date The Women's History & Creative Expression Project



Publications:

- *Creation Fire: A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry* - published 1990.
- *Publishing Handbook for Caribbean Women Writers*:
- To be published by Dec. 1991.



Workshops:

- Creative Writing Seminar, Mt. St. Benedict, Trinidad and Tobago - May, 1989.
- 35 mm Photography Workshop 1 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 30 March - 6 April, 1990.
- WAND/CAFRA workshop, 'Making our History; Making Change' - Barbados, 10/1987 - it was at this workshop that the women's history component of the Women's History and Creative Expression Project was conceptualized.
- Feminist Theory for Activists, Workshop 1 - WAND/CAFRA workshop - Barbados, 1989.
- Feminist Theory for Activists, Workshop 11 - WAND/CAFRA workshop - Barbados, 1990.
- Seminar on the theory of feminism and the role of popular theatre in promoting its concerns - organized in conjunction with

NAM, facilitated by SISTREN - Grenada, 1988.



Technical assistance and/or Funding donated by CAFRA

- Miss Amy and Miss May - SISTREN video - 1989.
- Interviews of a generation of professional women - by Maureen Warner Lewis, 1990 - Tapes and transcriptions available at the CAFRA office.
- Life stories of prominent women in Trinidad and Tobago - interviews by Stephanie Pile.
- Bravé Dangé: A history of women in Trinidad and Tobago from slavery to Independence in Trinidad and Tobago 1962 - display boards based on Rhoda Reddock's thesis - 1988.
- Women Sugar Workers in Guyana - audiotapes, slides, three booklets - Red Thread project.
- Copies of *Lionheart Gal* and *Sweet Sugar Rage* for distribution to Guyanese women's organizations by Red Thread.
- BRWA Oral History Workshop - 1988.



Women prisoners - a special group

In the latter part of her study of British prisons *Bricks of Shame*, Vivien Stern concludes that "what works badly for men, when automatically applied to women is much worse". A more accurate summary judgement of the incarceration of women would be difficult to find. As in various other walks of life, (be it the job market, the home, interpersonal relations, sports, or even their role in churches), the way society deals with women who break the law is simply an extension of what is considered appropriate for men. As Ms. Stern points out, when the policy turns out to be inappropriate for men it is usually disastrous for women.

All around the world women prisoners are a neglected group. There are always very small numbers of them - usually 5% of the prison populations, i.e. one in twenty prisoners. They are an afterthought in systems run by men for men. Women therefore usually end up in the worst buildings, e.g. Fort Augusta in Jamaica or the old fort in St. Vincent. Even when men get facilities for job training and education, women usually get nothing but a chance to do some sewing and cooking. Men in Jamaica, for example have the opportunity to go to an agricultural farm. Because of their small numbers women end up in one prison far from their homes.

Inappropriate and cruel

Even the most cursory examination of what is taking place in women's prisons in the Caribbean reveals the fact that imprisonment of women, except for the smallest number of instances is a costly, inappropriate and cruel form of punishment. Most of the women in prison should not, in any case, be there. Women in prison are usually there because they are the victims of men in some way,

either by being used by men to carry drugs for them, or for shop lifting so as to feed children for whom fathers are not providing, or they are there for having turned on a brutal and violent male partner. Most of the women in prison have themselves been sexually abused since childhood and need help, not punishment.

Women often find the pain of imprisonment much harder than men - on the outside, women are usually the responsible ones who look after the family and children. In prison they can do nothing for the family outside except worry. Women who come into prison pregnant or with very small babies pose a particular problem -



La Satellite, ISIS International

to bring up a baby in prison is far from ideal. To separate a small baby from its mother is also bad. Such women should only be sent to prison in very exceptional circumstances.

The conclusion to be drawn from this picture is that a revolution in attitudes to women's imprisonment is needed. Most women currently imprisoned should not be there. For the irreducible minimum who have to be incarcerated, we need a different system of very small self-sufficient units with active programmes for training and considerable involvement from outside agencies, especially women's organizations.

Two cases

This short paper will illustrate how these conclusions can be justified with respect to womens' imprisonment in the Caribbean. The aim is less to condemn conditions of imprisonment than to stimulate a search for a more balanced and appropriate policy for dealing with women offenders. The paper therefore, attempts to provide elements for discussions out of which practical recommendations will hopefully emerge. These remarks are structured around two such cases which are dealt with in some detail because they capture all of the elements (referred to above) why women end up in prison. The two cases suffer from the limitation of being drawn from one society, namely Guyana, but while the details may differ, the underlying features are sufficiently common across the Caribbean to serve the purposes of our Conference.

The author of this paper is not an expert or an authority on penal reform, but has dealt for a number of years with women who have been victims of circumstances over which they had little control and found themselves in prison. From the outset I should make clear my bias towards recommendations within existing budgetary constraints since these are more likely to be taken seriously than ambitious and comprehensive recommendations.

Maria's story

The first case, Maria's, is an example of a woman vulnerable to the social circumstances of being an Amerindian woman living in a gold-mining area with all that this implies. Miners from the coastland of Guyana with their lust for gold, for casual pleasure and their contempt for native people have invaded many Amerindian com-



munities. Maria, like most Amerindians, men and women, was unable to cope with the pressures and confusion this intrusion created. Nor was the police force an agency of protection, being itself comprised of coastlanders - it is regarded more as an ally of the intruders.

Maria's crime was to react to this brutal environment of rape and abuse. For this she was charged with the murder of her attacker.

She spent the next five years experiencing how irrelevant the system of justice was to deal with the circumstances in which her crime occurred, or with her as a person to be punished or rehabilitated.

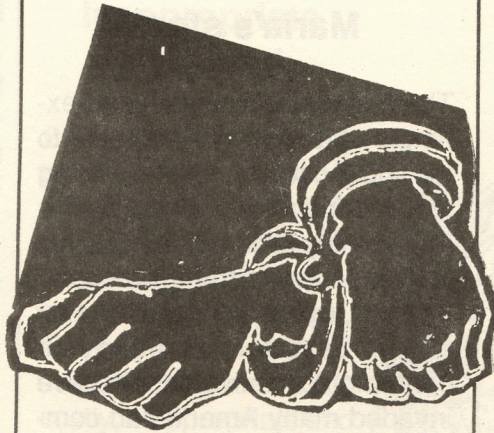
No provision was made at the time of her arrest for the welfare of her children. The solution adopted by the police, namely to threaten another woman - her mother - with prison if she did not take the baby, is eloquent testimony to the fact that the prison system was simply not devised for women. Constant worrying about their babies is a feature of both Maria's and Sylvia's stories and highlights the major additional widespread burden of imprisonment for women. It is yet another feature which a system designed for men and administered by them can never properly accommodate. This decision set the pattern for her imprisonment in which all important decisions are taken by men: the magistrate, the prison Superintendent, the lawyer, the doctor and finally the judge whose instructions to the jury almost hanged her. Not all of these men were sources of suffering, indeed for the most part they were sympathetic and as helpful as the system allowed, but the system was designed for men, a fact which the men did not sufficiently understand or appreciate.

Apart from the chaotic and wasteful administration of justice which

Women prisoners

flew her to the North-West on five occasions and brought her from Berbice to Georgetown on innumerable occasions for trials, prison life for Maria in her early period was probably the most calm and ordered period of her life. The two dresses, polished floors, garden, clean sheets and the handicraft revealed a dimension of prison life which is easily overlooked, namely that it can serve as a refuge from exploitation, especially by men. Compared to the disordered domestic life, the rapes, the death of babies, the procession of men who used her and moved on, the prison experience (as distinct from the lock-ups) was a time of safety and quiet. The positive feature diminished after 1987 with the deterioration of life in prison as a result of over-crowding.

The worst indictment one could make in her case against the prison system is one of neglect. Imprisonment was simply another brutalizing experience, not brutality directed personally at her but brutal simply by virtue of her being a woman in a system intended to punish men. Indeed the prison environment was tailored more for the character of her victim than for herself. As an experience it was not rehabilitatory. Nothing in prison related to the circumstances which led to her incarceration. Her inability to deal with men, the disorientation of Amerindian communities by coastlander influence and her illiteracy



Manushi

were all as intact when she was finally released as when she entered prison. Within a year of her release she had another child by a coastlander.

Sylvia's story

Sylvia's case was different. A confident, attractive young woman whose veneer of being worldly-wise disguised the insecurity of an abandoned childhood. Early liaisons with men substituted for the security of a family and laid the groundwork for what was to be Sylvia's nightmare experience. Sylvia was arrested precisely because the police were searching for information about her former boyfriend. She was raped by policemen as an act of humiliation for her former boyfriend whom the police were looking for. She spent almost two years in prison before murder charges fabricated by the police were dismissed; the charges were pun-

ishment by the police for (Sylvia) having told a female magistrate what had happened to her at the police station. Additional charges of possession of arms and ammunition and robbery under arms heaped on her at the same time are still being heard in the High Court.

The circumstances in Sylvia's case may be more dramatic than average, but the fact of a woman being used as a pawn between police and criminals is commonplace not only in Guyana. Sexual molestation by the police of women in detention is virtually routine. By contrast, contact between male prison warders and female prisoners is reportedly more correct.

Unlike Maria, Sylvia spent a considerable amount of time in police lock-ups and the women's transit prison in La Penitence which are the most sordid and debasing centres of confinement in the entire prison system. These frightening and primitive places controlled by the police, not the prison system across the region, constitute a powerful argument for totally new procedures to protect women against the police.

Sylvia was lucky that the details of her case were known early to a support group which attended court during the interminable Preliminary Hearing on the murder charge. Without external interest

in the case the magistrate would surely have bowed to the wishes of the police and found a case existed against her. Instead, his sop to the police was to charge her with possession of arms and ammunition. And so the saga continues.

It is evident from these two cases that the focus of reform activities with respect to women and imprisonment must not be restricted to the prison itself. In Maria's case the social context of Amerindian communities and the exploitation of women in them has its counterparts in most Caribbean territories. Social and economic pressures which force women to abandon the care of young children and the treatment of women by the police are other aspects of the problem of women in prison which the penal system is incapable of resolving.

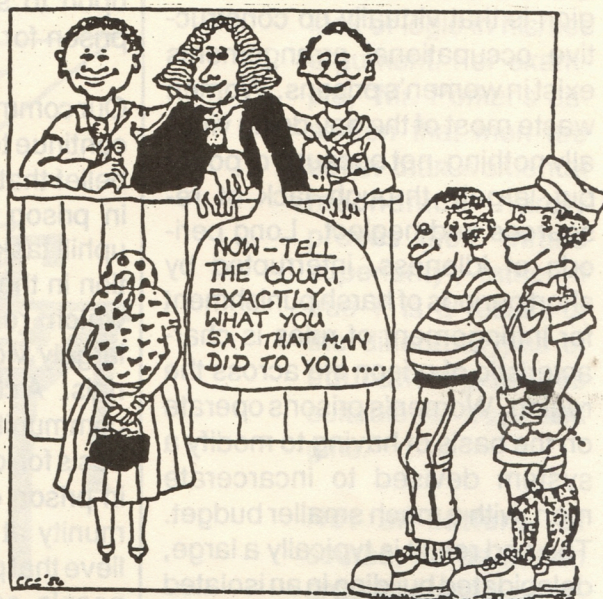
It may be suggested that these two cases are too extreme to be typical examples. It should be borne in mind, however, that from the public's point of view these were two women accused of murder. If it can be demonstrated that if the cases of women charged with serious offences reveal how unjust and inappropriate the prison system is, how much more is the injustice in cases of pilfering, drug possession and other minor offences for which women find themselves imprisoned.

Poverty and imprisonment

Had a local human rights group not provided lawyers, both of these women would have been found guilty. Most women in prison are not legally represented at their trials. Indeed, the relationship between poverty and imprisonment is very high. Lawyers were contracted for large amounts of money and in both cases made little effort to provide even a minimal defence. The endless delays, deference to the police by magistrates and lack of proper legal counsel, together create a situation in which court proceedings constitute in themselves cruel and inhuman treatment of women.

Deterioration in prison conditions usually relates to two causes, overcrowding and inadequate economic resources. Caribbean prisons in general do not suffer from overcrowding, the situation in Guyana is not typical in this respect. However, the very specific cause of a rapid rise in the prison population there

from seven or eight prisoners in 1985 to over a hundred in 1987 is likely to be replicated across the region. In that year a Narcotic Act came into effect carrying a mandatory minimum three-year prison term for all drug related convictions, even possession of minute quantities of marijuana. Of the 63 prisoners currently in the women's prison of Guyana, 52 are there for drug-related offences. Pressure for similar legislation is being applied across the region by the United States government. Only last month a senior State Department official, ironically a woman, publicly praised the Guyana government for its tough legislation - the single most influential factor contributing to the dreadful state of Guyana's prisons.



Women's Parade, Zimbabwe

Economic hardship in the society in general is rapidly reflected in prison conditions. It is clear that the next decade in the Caribbean is likely to be one of increasing economic austerity, a disturbing consideration especially when linked with rising prison populations.

Overcrowding is a determining factor in whether prison life is helpful and rehabilitative or simply a dreadful experience for women. The contrast between the regime first encountered by Maria and that which followed was the result of a rapid rise in numbers. As stated before, most women's prisons in the region do not suffer from overcrowding, although this situation could change as rapidly as it did in Guyana.

A general problem across the region is that virtually no constructive occupational arrangements exist in women's prisons. Women waste most of the day doing virtually nothing, not because of policy but largely through lack of resources and neglect. Long periods of idleness, interrupted by short periods of harsh punishment for infringement of rules is characteristic of prison life across the region. Women's prisons operate on the basis of having to modify a system devised to incarcerate men, with a much smaller budget. The end result is typically a large, delapidated building in an isolated place with virtually no facilities,

tacked on to the end of a male prison. The women's facility in Trinidad and Tobago should be mentioned as a contrast to this general rule. This prison has a more congenial atmosphere, better facilities for occupation and training and a caring staff. Hopefully it will be able to resist the dangers to these standards which overcrowding might bring in its train.

A socio-economic problem

A new dimension to the overcrowding problem in Caribbean prison is provided by illegal immigrants. There is no justification for prison being used as a solution for what is clearly a socio-economic problem rather than a crime and magistrates must be prevailed upon to stop sending people to prison for this 'offence'.

Our communities in the Caribbean continue to harbour the traditional belief that a person who ends up in prison is 'bad'. There is an uphill task to change this perception in the case of women to one which recognizes them to be largely victims rather than criminals. A change in attitudes in the community at large is the only basis for long-term improvements in prison conditions. If the community at large continues to believe that prisons are places to put people society wants to forget, the society is in the end going to

require bigger and bigger prisons, because prisons as forgotten places produce more and more criminals. With respect to women, such an attitude also delays the possibility of the society ever realizing that it is the very idea of having women's prisons which must be forgotten, not the prisoners themselves.

This paper may be criticized for appearing to argue that there is no such thing as a woman criminal, or that females do not commit crimes. Women, of course, do commit crimes and there are some women for whom imprisonment is justifiable. We believe, however, that this number of women is very small, so small that the penal system should not be constructed on their cases. Imprisonment is not a reasonable punishment for the vast number of women who find themselves before the courts.

Paper presented at the Caribbean Rights Conference on "Improving Prison Conditions in the Caribbean", Hilton Hotel, Trinidad, May, 1991.

By Merle Mendonca.
Merle Mendonca works with the Guyana Human Rights Association, Lot 27, Brickdam, Georgetown.



Responding to newspaper articles

by Tina Johnson

You're hopping mad. You've just read an article in the paper that incensed you. Maybe it was the one which implied that women are by nature inferior to men, or was it that one that reported favourably on the draining of swamplands for a new industrial zone? Whatever the topic was that is so important to you, are you just going to sit there and fume? Or are you going to put pen to paper and take the writer to task for his sexist views, his/her lack of understanding of environmental issues, or whatever?

Right. Get out the pen and paper. But before you rush off the virulent attack that you feel this writer so richly deserves, you need to think about how you're going to make your response effective. After all, there's no point in writing to the newspapers if either the letter will not be printed, or it will not be read beyond the opening sentence by most of the paper's readers. What you have to say may be important, but it also has to be presented in a palatable way.

Let's take the example of the sexist article given above. If you rush off a strident this-man-is-so-ignorant-what-

does-he-think-it-is-the-dark-ages? letter, chances are that most readers are going to sigh wearily and turn to the next letter. On the other hand, if you keep your letter light-hearted and even inject a note of humour, you still won't necessarily convince anyone, but may at least keep most people reading to the end and give them food for thought. This is obviously your main aim.

First of all, your letter should state what you are responding to, and you should briefly sum up the argument you are opposing before you demolish it. This also serves to refresh the minds of those readers who saw the original story. For example, "I was rather taken aback to read in Mr. Brown's article entitled 'Good Riddance to Mangroves' (*The News*, 15/5/91)

that swamplands serve no useful purpose." You may note that this opening sentence also manages to suggest that you are about to disagree with Mr. Brown, without being personal or insulting. Compare: "Mr Brown, who wrote in 'Good Riddance to Mangroves' (*The News* 15/5/91) that swamplands serve no useful purpose, is clearly uneducated or just plain stupid."

Having stated or implied that you disagree with the writer, you now need some arguments to back up your viewpoint. Try to be precise and avoid generalizations like "experts agree that" or "statistics show that". If you can, give examples of specific studies that have been done on the subject. Use the writer's own words where possible to point out inconsistencies, errors and/or the lack of logic in his/her argument. For example, "Mr. Porker's assertion that men are better than women at mechanics hardly proves their 'innate superiority', rather—if true—it is a result of the different types of education seen as suitable for boys and girls."

Not all letters, of course, will be written arguing against a previously published po-



G. Jung, IWTC

sition. It's also important to write in support of other people's opinions to show that they are not alone in their views. You may feel less inspired to write when you agree with someone than when you disagree, but sometimes a lot of letters expressing the same sentiment in different ways can be very effective. During the debate of the Sexual Offences Bill in Trinidad and Tobago in 1986, for example, letters in the press almost certainly prevented an important clause from being thrown out of the Bill.

You also need to think about the audience that you are writing for, which is probably quite a mixed one if the paper is a national daily. Are you making yourself clearly understood, or are you trying to show off your level of education by using words which you think will impress the reader but are more likely to have him/her turning to the next page? Simple language is the most effective, especially if the article that you are responding to was written in a more high-flown style. Quotations should be used sparingly—dropping in a really apt quote can be effective, but avoid anything obscure.

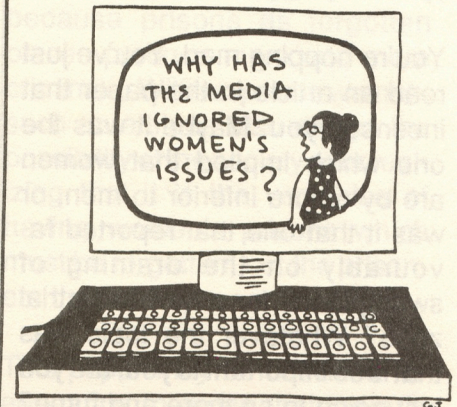
And try to keep to the point. Don't ramble, and don't use the letter to cover several different issues about which you are concerned but which are not connected to each other. If there's another

pressing topic on your mind, write another letter.

How long should your letter be? Sometimes one line is all that's needed to deflate a windbag, on other occasions several pages hardly seem to be enough. If it's too long, though, it probably won't be printed—at least, not in its entirety. Generally speaking, a letter should not be much more than 500 words in order to keep both to the point and readers' interest, and it can certainly be shorter. If you really need to write a much longer piece to make all your arguments, you may be better off submitting it as an article rather than having it mercilessly edited to fit in the small space available on the letters' page. If the original article was provocative, you can write a covering note asking for "equal space" for an opposing point of view. Provided the editor thinks the debate will interest readers—and, of course, this depends to a large extent on your writing—it should work.

Why is it important for you to write at all? Because a lot of people believe almost everything they see in print, especially if written by an "expert", and they need to know that there is another point of view; and people do read the letters pages and are influenced by the opinions that they find there.

If you're writing on a topic that is controversial, you may wonder whether or not to use your own



IWTC

name or a pseudonym. Unless you are likely to lose your job or worse, it seems to me that using a false name is a bit of a cop-out. Have the courage of your convictions—putting your name to the letter says that here's a person who's prepared to stand by what she is saying.

A final word about immediacy. Having decided to write a letter, it is important to do it as soon as possible while the topic is still current. There's no point clipping the article from the papers and putting it in a drawer until you "have the time" to get around to it. When you find it looking for something else a month later, the papers are no longer going to be interested in letters on that subject. Do cut out the article so that you have it at hand to refer to, but don't take more than a day or two to mull over your response. Then get it on paper and into the post.

N GO Quincentennial Commemorations

1992 is to be the quincentennial anniversary of Christopher Columbus' "arrival" in the Americas. As countries through-out the world prepare to commemorate this event, Caribbean regional NGO's have questioned the significance of the quincentennial for Caribbean peoples.

Regional NGO's at a consultation on the commemoration of the quincentennial in Dominica, July 16-17, 1991 reflected on the quincentennial in the following words:

- What has 500 years of an encounter with a major power meant to our indigenous peoples?

- What has it meant to the descendants of African slaves ?

- What of the future of a Europe/ Americas encounter?

As Columbus' ships sail for a second time - 500 years later, we need to reflect on the words **survival, resistance, and challenge.**

Through resistance we have survived 500 years of genocide, slavery, exploitation and colonialism.

In 1992 and beyond the Caribbean faces new challenges, not through the Niña, Pinta, and Santa

Maria, but through Star Wars, satellites and fortress Europe. These represent the protective cover for a new phase of global consolidation of powerful minority economic interests, whose design and plans are putting the world's people at greater risk than ever before.

This is especially true of the indigenous black populations of the world who are threatened by a deepening of processes of domination, colonization and exploitation.

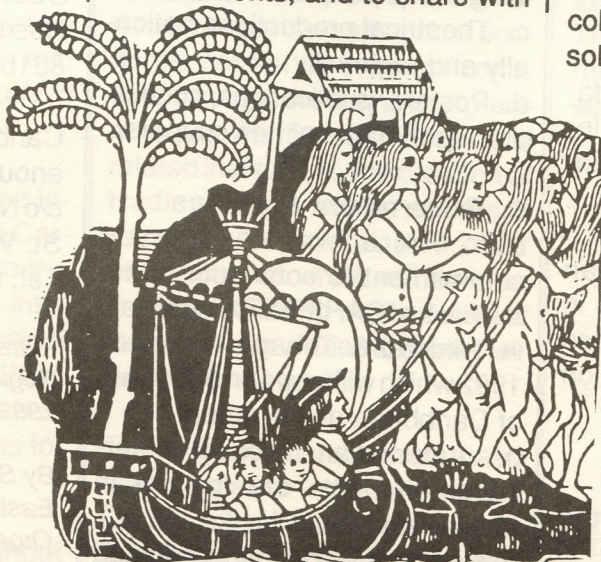
Regional NGO's therefore plan to organize activities and take action which would ensure a proper understanding of the true experiences of Caribbean peoples over the 500 years: to creatively chronicle and document these experiences, to highlight our (Caribbean peoples) own achievements, and to share with

the world our own perspective on the encounter.

Major focus

NGOs' major areas of focus will be:

1. The struggles of survival of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean. Here they intend to emphasize the experience of Caribbean peoples in the pre-Columbian period.
2. The consequences of the systems of slavery and indentureship.
3. The contribution of Africa to Caribbean culture and development.
4. The contribution of Asian peoples to Caribbean development.
5. The challenges of reinforced colonization and the global consolidation of capital as expressed in current international initiatives which are impacting adversely on Caribbean societies, e.g., Global Trading Blocs, structural adjustment policies and the role of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the issues arising in present deliberations around the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the role of Transnational



NACLA report on the Americas

Corporations and cultural monopoly and distortions as promoted by international corporate media interests.

6. Caribbean Cultural diversity.
7. Impact and influence of Caribbean peoples on the ideas, thoughts, actions and creation of the world. In this regard we shall focus on leading examples in the spheres of science, economics, politics and activism, culture, sports, music, religion.

NGO initiatives

Major NGO initiatives being planned on the "Encounter" include

- 1. Conferences:**
 - a. A Caribbean - Latin American - North American Conference of Black theologians in the Bahamas in August 1992.
 - b. A conference of representatives of Amerindians, Blacks, Indians and Chinese, etc, to be convened in Haiti in May '92.
 - c. Caribbean/African/American Dialogue (CAAD) Conference in the Bahamas - "Survivors across the middle passage: affirmation and change" in August 1992.
- 2. Research:**
 - a. Historical research on the Caribs in Dominica.
 - b. Wider research on the Indig-

enous peoples of the Caribbean re: status, location, etc., by the umbrella organization, Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP), supported by Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD).

3. Lecture tour throughout the Caribbean sponsored by the Caribbean Peoples' Development Agency (CARIPEDA).

- 4. Haiti:**
 - a. Activities to be held in Haiti to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Haitian revolution, sponsored by Unesco and the Haitian Government.
 - b. Contributing to the formation of Haitian Friendship Associations throughout the region.

5. Publications:

- a. A directory of relevant videos
- b. A video docu-drama on the indigenous peoples
- c. Theatrical productions nationally and regionally
- d. Posters, publications, comics, articles in national newspapers.

6. Government Activities

- a. There was expressed commitment to contribute to the success of CARIFESTA to be held in Trinidad & Tobago in August 1992 which will focus on 500 years of Caribbean achievement.
- b. Amerindian Unesco conferences on 'rights' and 'culture' in Mexico and Canada.
- c. Regional Trade Fair in Trinidad

- & Tobago in 1992
- d. Seville Trade Fair (international)

Monitoring committees

The NGO monitoring committee for the quincentennial comprises the following groups and individuals:

Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC)
Joan French, P.O. Box 616,
Bridgetown, Barbados. Tel. 809-427-2681.

CUSO Eastern Caribbean
Ingrid O'Marde, P.O. Box 1611,
Barnard Hill, Castries, St. Lucia.
Tel. 809-45-26518.

Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organization (ECPTO)
Secretariat, P.O. Box 268,
Roseau, Dominica. Tel. 809-44-85167.

Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP)
c/o Nelcia Robinson, Grenville St.,
St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
Tel. 809-45-72219/62341.

Extracted from the "Statement from Regional NGO Consultations on the 1992 Quincentennial and Beyond".

*By Sobers Esprit
Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organization (ECPTO), Dominica.*



Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre

Nineteen (19) Caribbean Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) came together to establish the Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC). Initially called the Caribbean Policy Unit, the CPDC aims to help NGO's in the region build their capacity for policy analysis and develop skills and strategies for influencing regional and national policy.

The area of policy identified for priority attention in the Centre's 1991-1992 programme is the region's Debt Crisis and the structural adjustment policies which are increasingly being applied in the region. The Centre has developed a programme of activities around this issue which includes: media programmes, exposure and dissemination at a regional level of materials on the subject, and the staging of a major NGO planning and strategy meeting in October. An economic education workshop is also planned for NGOs and community organizations early in 1992.

Other areas being addressed include the implications for the Caribbean of current changes in the world economy, Caribbean Integration and Identity, with special reference to the work of the West Indian Commission, and appropriate development strategies for the region.

The Centre co-ordinated the input of regional NGOs into the recent

CARICOM Regional Economics Conference, and a publication containing NGO interventions at the conference is being prepared. The Centre will continue its efforts to bring NGO views to the region's governments through CARICOM.

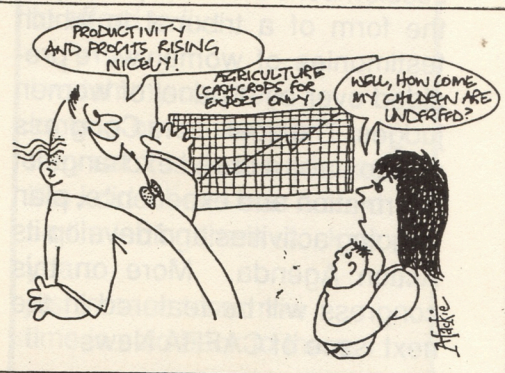
The Centre is also helping to monitor NGO activities in relation to the Columbus Quincentennial which the region's governments have decided to mark in 1992. The NGO focus for the Quincentennial is to expose the impact of 500 years of contact with European culture on the lives, livelihoods and cultures of the indigenous peoples and the African and Asian people brought to the Caribbean as slaves and indentured labourers. The Caribbean contribution to world culture will be highlighted. The NGOs will also explore the meaning of 1992 for the Caribbean, given the moves towards a United Europe, the renewed thrust towards global economic control by western countries through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and related institutions, the creation of trading blocs under western transnational control, and other developments which will have an important bearing on the ability of ex-colonial countries to meet their development goals.

The organizations which have come together to establish the Centre reflect a range of Caribbean languages: English, French, Dutch, Spanish, Creole,

Papiamentu and other African-European languages which have developed in the region.

The Centre is presently housed at the headquarters of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) in Barbados. The CCC, as well as the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD), the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), and the Caribbean People's Development Agency (CARIPEDA), are members of the Steering Committee which guides the work of the Centre.

The Co-ordinator of the CPDC is Ms. Joan French. Ms. French was, until she accepted the post of Co-ordinator of the CPDC, Co-ordinator of CAFRA's project on Women in Agriculture. Ms. French who is from Jamaica has had a long association with the Sistren Theatre Collective, and was until recently Director of Sistren Research.



Lisa Mackle/1992



World women's congress for a healthy planet

8-12 November, 1991

Miami, Florida, U.S.A

The World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet took place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Miami, 8-12 Nov., 1991. Participating were 1500 women - many from the developing countries. The Caribbean was represented by members of WAND, CAFRA, Red Thread, the Youth Council of Jamaica, as well as organisations in Suriname, Puerto Rico, and Belize. The workshops and plenary sessions led to the development of an action agenda, "Women's Action Agenda 21", for use before and after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to be held 1-12 June, 1992 in Brazil. This agenda was presented to the UNCED Secretary General, Maurice Strong on the last day of the Congress.

The Women's Congress focussed on one major theme each day while covering several sub-topics in numerous workshops, and video sessions during the afternoon sessions. The morning session consisted of a plenary in the form of a tribunal in which testimonies of women were presided over by a panel of women judges. The goal of the Congress was to have a broad exchange of information and experience, plan ongoing activities and develop its Action Agenda. More on this congress will be featured in the next issue of CAFRA News

The agenda was as follows:

- 8 Nov. Opening Ceremony.
- 9 Nov. Theme: A Women's Code of Earth Ethics
- 10 Nov. Theme: Saving, Restoring and Enhancing Natural Systems; Positive Development.
- 11 Nov. Theme: Science, Technology, and Population
- 12 Nov. Action Agenda presented to Summit of women heads of government, UN officials and other world leaders.

What are women doing now about the environment?

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) lists the following :



BOYCOTTS

Women and children consumers persuaded McDonald's fast-food chain to recycle food containers, and a tuna boycott convinced the three top U.S. tuna producers to halt the sale of fish caught in dolphin-trapping dragnets.



CLEANUPS

In the USSR, Siberian women organized efforts to clean up Lake Baikal, the world's largest body of fresh water. Zoologist Maria V. Cherkasova helped set up protests against Central Asia's Katun River Dam project, which threatened the destruction of the local ecology.



EMISSIONS

Women in Bhopal, India, continue to protest Union Carbide's operations, and in Quito, Ecuador, women have organized to protest local factories' chemical emissions.



REEFS

Biologist Janet Gibson led the campaign to set up the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, which protects the world's second largest barrier reef, in Belize.



TREES

Wangari Maathai and the National Council of Women led Kenya's famed Green Belt movement, planting more than 10 million trees and setting up more than 600 income-producing nurseries.



REGIONAL AND LOCAL MEETINGS

National Consultation on the Environment and Development:

Trinidad and Tobago, June 1991.

In Trinidad and Tobago women participated actively in the National Consultation on the Environment and Development which was organized by the Ministry of the Environment. The objective of this consultation was to solicit contributions from a wide range of sectors in the society. Contri-

butions by women reflected their continuing work in all the major government and non-governmental environmental organizations. Despite this fact, only one woman, the alternate chairperson, sat on the Cabinet appointed Task Force on the Environment and Development, and a gender perspective did not form part of the discussion.

Rowena Kalloo, CAFRA's Newsletter editor, put forward the point that women did have special relationships with their environment, and contributed to balancing the resources of their environment in a way which would allow sustainable development. She then asked the question as to what strategies/research were the government about to initiate to gain insights into women's interaction with their environment and allow women to participate more fully in promoting sustainable development?

The response of women at the consultation to these issues was positive. Many of them came forward to express their solidarity with the view that for sustainable development and the conservation of the environment to be successful, the full participation of women is required.

Dawn Regional Meeting:
May 20-25, 1991 Barbados.

Kathleen Dyer Williams of the Women and Development Stud-

ies group at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, attended the session on the environment of the DAWN REGIONAL MEETING, held in Barbados in May 1991. Its main focus was 'Gender and the Environment' since it was noted that environmental research has dealt mainly with technology and the environment, but not necessarily with humanity and the environment. The discussions linked livelihood to the environmental issue. For example, slash and burn techniques are environmentally degrading but are often the only known means for some farmers to earn a livelihood, and these farmers need to be presented with viable alternatives.

A number of other problems were identified as specific to the Caribbean and the South. Recommendations coming out of the discussions were that:

(1) The South needs to set its own agenda for dealing with environmental issues and not merely adopt that of the North.

(2) There needs to be consciousness raising especially on how individuals can assist in environmental protection, e.g. by awareness of consumption, etc.

(3) There is a need to collect hard data on the problems on environment in the South, especially the relationship between gender and environment.

Lost Tomorrow

by Paula C.J. Thomas

my children can't play
in the rain anymore
can't play in the rain
like i did
when i was a child
- the present is being polluted
men are poisoning the atmosphere
they're ensuring the future
doesn't exist

they want us to watch our
children
gasping for air tomorrow
when today they're slowly
trying to take away
the last free need
even my sister's child
in Guatemala has

my children can't play
in the rain anymore
can't play in the rain
like i did
when i was a child
nothing is safe
men are trying to sell our souls
back to us
pretty soon we wouldn't be able
to afford to live

i watch my children
looking out at the rain
they can't taste the drizzles
like i did when i was a child
so i'm letting them stock up on
years
just in case tomorrow
time is sold back to them.

Call for Submissions

Kala Pani: Crossing the Blackwater

The title of this work refers to the belief that once one has crossed that area of the unknown represented by the black waters of the Indian Ocean, one becomes changed and polluted. The concept is being employed here as an overall metaphor for the process of migration from India, whether voluntarily or through the forced marches of indentureship. The contents will be an explication of the process and the results of this crossing told largely in fictional form through short stories, poetry, oral testimony or belles-lettres. Short essays may also be included.

The work is a two-volume collection of literature written by women of Indian extraction who live in the Indian diaspora. Volume 1 will cover writers in Europe and the Americas (including the Caribbean). Volume 11 will cover writers in Africa and the Pacific Rim (including Fiji and Mauritius). The selection of work to be included will be decided upon by a process of adjudication.

The purpose of the work is to present, under one set of covers, the creative rendering of experience by women of Indian extraction in the diaspora. The effect of this will be to place different versions of reality side by side so that they complement and speak to and of each other. The purpose is also to discover and to assist in the emergence of this category of

writer; so far there has been a relative silence, in literary terms, about the experience of such women in the diaspora. Perhaps, because of the position of such



women in the patriarchal domain which they inhabit, their separation from the means of publication and from the possibilities of becoming "real" writers is a significant barrier to their emergence. Ideally, the work contributed should be previously unpublished, but this is not a binding restriction.

The collection is intended to be a work of literary and creative value and will address a present gap in world literature, especially the literature of migration. It is also

intended to provide a significant tool in the continuing struggle to abolish the stereotype of the docile Indian woman, and to allow the more accurate and varied picture to surface.

Deadline for submissions:

January 15, 1992

To: *Kala Pani*, P.O. Box 103, Station 'E', Toronto, Ontario, M6H 4E1, Canada.

Ramabai Espinet
Editor

From: **Sister Vision Press**
P.O. Box 217, Stn "E",
Toronto, Ont., Canada
M6H 4E2

Ramabai, Espinet.

Nuclear Seasons

An anthology of poetry.

Ramabai Espinet is Trinidadian by birth and has lived in Canada for many years. She is a poet and a fiction and essay writer. Her poetry has been anthologized and published in journals. She is the editor of *Creation Fire*, a CAFRA anthology of Caribbean women's poetry.

Carifem update

Antigua

The Antigua Popular Theatre Organization (APTO).

by Joan Underwood-Dennis
Treasurer of the APTO

The Antigua Popular Theatre Organization (APTO) is a non-profit organization which seeks to raise consciousness about issues of concern to the population of Antigua and Barbuda. This agency engages target audiences in popular theatre - the process of drama-in-education - among other teaching methodologies. This participatory approach is considered ideal by practitioners who

work towards the realization of the empowerment of those with whom they work. The target groups include women, the uninformed/illiterate, the sick, the elderly, youth and children. APTO therefore seeks to promote what the Brazilian educator, Paulo Friere recommends as a political necessity for underdeveloped nations: conscientization or the process of action for change through popular education.

APTO is also a member of the Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organization (ECPTO), which represents a network of community animators. These animators challenge traditional structures of power by promoting

the pooling of the resources in order to maximize their creative efficiency at the community level.

APTO was officially founded in October 1988. The group's inception was the direct result of a series of workshops sponsored by ECPTO and the Harambee Open Air Theatre. These workshops were organized specifically to expose individuals in Antigua to the process of Popular Theatre and to lay the ground work for the formation of a national Popular Theatre Organization.

As a result of these initiatives by ECPTO and Harambee, a small group of individuals came together (cont'd p.36)

ON THE BOOKSHELF

(cont'd from page 18)

☞ Kessler, Shelly. **Third World women in agriculture: an annotated bibliography.** New York: National Council for Research on Women, 1985.

☞ Oever, Pietronella van den. **"Women's roles, population issues, poverty and environmental degradation."** Prepared for UNCED/ UNICEF/UNFPA Symposium "Women and Children First," Geneva, 27-30 May 1991.

☞ Patwa, Subhadra, ed. **Law and gender justice.** Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1990.

(Readings on Women Studies Series: 4).

Newspaper reports, articles and other documents, document the struggle waged by women's groups in India for legal reform from 1986-1990.

☞ Robinson, Neltcia and Obediah McDonald. **Belling the cat.** Kingstown: Women's Affairs Division, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Culture & Women's Affairs, 1991.

Cartoon story, addressing the issue of violence against women.

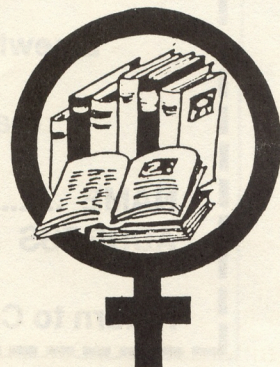
☞ Sanjanwala, Jyotsna, ed. **Women's perspective on the environment.** Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, 1990. (Readings on Women Studies Series: 6)

Details struggles waged in

India, to stem the destruction of the environment.

☞ Shepherd, Ann, **Caribbean woman's voice: a selection of works.** Bridgetown: Caribbean Congress of Labour, 1991.

Compilation of poems written by participants in the Congress' specialized training project for women members.



and outlined the following aims and objectives:

- to preserve indigenous art forms and culture
- to utilize popular education to achieve empowerment of the marginalized
- to forge linkages with other local and regional NGO's with corresponding aims and objectives.

Health Outreach

APTO has developed a working relationship with the health clinics on the island. During May 1989, a series of workshop were held with women in a number of communities. These sessions were geared towards making women aware of the health care services available for the early detection of cancerous and pre-cancerous lesions of

the cervix. During the said year, and as a direct result of the "awareness" sessions, the government laboratory reported a 69% increase in the number of women screened for cancer of the cervix. The education programme was continued in 1990 with even greater success, and an increase of 139% over the previous year was reported.

Collaborations

APTO has been collaborating with the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) in the mobilization of a Gray's Farm/Greenbay Community Group known as the Gray's Green Theatre Group.

APTO also facilitated a training workshop for the community ani-

matoms/facilitators from communities in which the Antigua Programme Center (APC) has been working. The objective of the workshop was to expose participants to creative and effective communication techniques for motivating and maintaining community groups. Between October and December 1990, APTO entered into a collaborative relationship with CCF. This work included co-facilitating a number of workshops in the Green Valley Child Care Project and the Pilgrim Holiness Project. Role play, lectures and games acted as vehicles for communication. Participants were also encouraged to creatively use the space of the group towards achieving independence of the welfare support which CCF provides as a short term measure.

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Organization: 35 units of local currency

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NAME

ADDRESS

Return to CAFRA, P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

We are a network of individual researchers and activists and women's organisations who define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of oppression in the society, and are working actively for change.

Membership spans the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking countries of the region as well as the diaspora. It is open to women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives.

A brochure outlining the aims and objectives of the association is available on request.

Structure of the Association

The decision-making bodies of CAFRA are: (i) The biennial **General Meeting** of the membership of the association; (ii) The annual meeting of National Representatives, a representative of the diaspora, Project Co-ordinators and the Secretariat (also called the **Regional Committee**); (iii) Bi-annual meetings of a **Consultative Committee**, made up of one representative from each of the four major language groups in the region, the Project Co-ordinators and the Secretariat; and (iv) **The Secretariat**, made up of the Co-ordinator, the Financial Officer, the Administrative Assistant and a few members of the feminist movement in Trinidad and Tobago.

Annual Membership Fee

Individuals: 25 units in currency of residence

Organisations: 35 units in currency of residence

(Payable by cheque, money order or cash in currency of residence or US\$)

Founding members

Peggy Antrobus
Sonia Cuales
Joan French

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen
Honor Ford-Smith
Rhoda Reddock