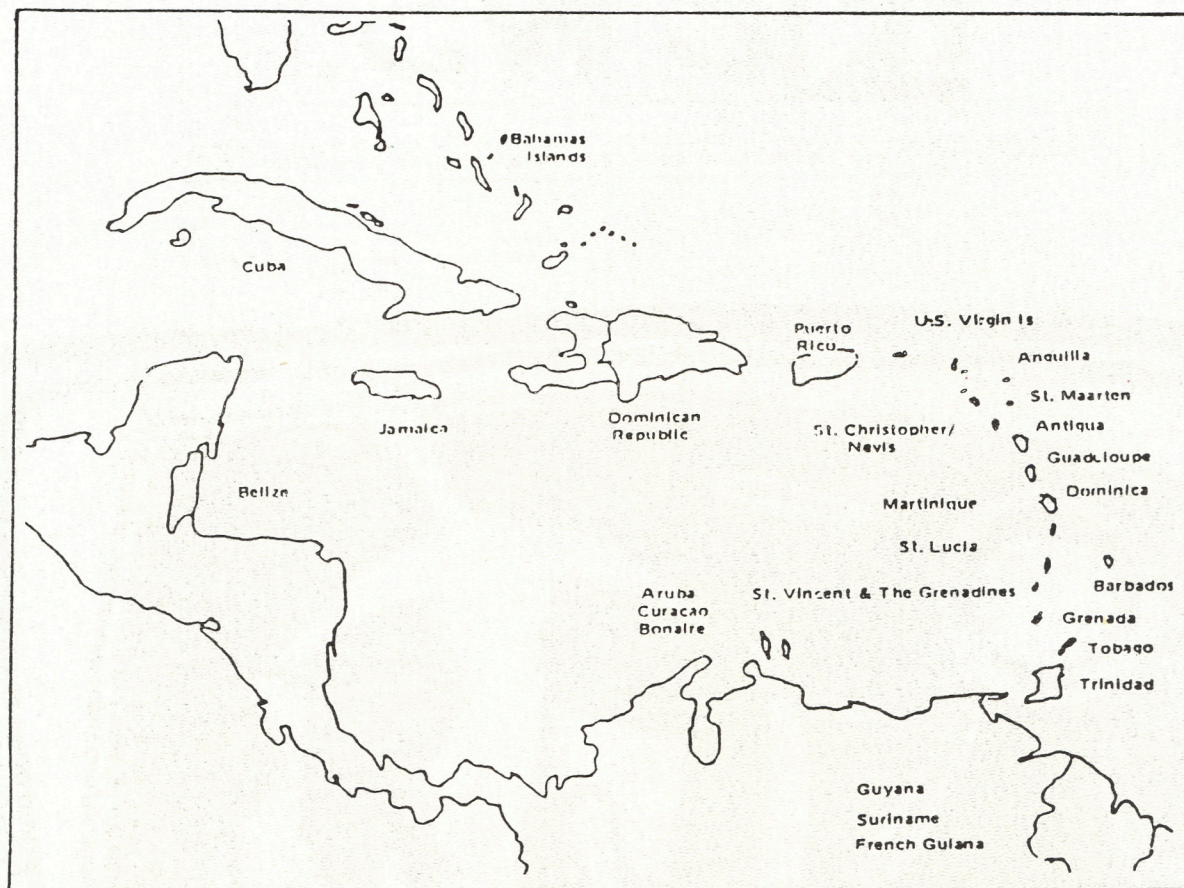


CARFA NEWS.

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION.



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Newsletter Team:

Tina Johnson
Cathy Shepherd
Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen

Cover Illustration:

Tracey Johnson

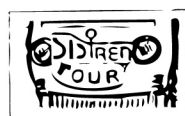
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Editor's Note

F eedback

This issue of CAFRA News was billed as featuring 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture'. For various reasons, this topic has been postponed till December, and we return to the "mixed bag" approach which some of you have said that you prefer to the focus on one particular theme. We will be considering all your comments when deciding which route to take in 1990.

Among the varied contributions in this issue, we are very pleased to feature an important article by Peggy Antrobus of the Women and Development Unit (WAND), Barbados, on the impact of structural adjustment on women. Peggy has been writing and speaking about this topic in many forums lately because she believes that it is vital to get across the message of how current economic policies in the region affect women negatively.

Other articles include a report of the WAND/CAFRA seminar on Feminist Theory for Activists, which seems to have been quite an experience for all involved; reactions to the Sistren tour from some of the territories visited; and background information on why we celebrate November 25 as International Day Against Violence Against Women (the first article we are carrying in Spanish as well as English). We also have our regular features such as "Feedback", "CARIFEM Update" and "On the Bookshelf".

Members and other friends travelling through Trinidad and Tobago please note that we have moved office to 13 Harris Street, Curepe. Our mailing address remains the same - speaking of which, anyone who sent mail to us which might have arrived on 6 September should know that all the air-mail that came in that day was stolen, so if you don't get a reply that may be the reason.

Breaking down language barriers

I wanted to say how much I've enjoyed CAFRA News. I hadn't read it for a while, and then took the last two issues home with me the other day to catch up on the materials that had piled up in our "incoming women's pubs" basket. The discussions were really interesting. It seems the women's movement in the Caribbean is quite dynamic and creative. The newsletter strikes a really good balance between analysis, description and news. And the layout is great too. It must take a tremendous effort from all involved.

I was struck by the discussions at your annual general meeting about language. We're facing similar issues in the Women's Programme. One of our priorities is supposed to be "facilitating links across language barriers" and yet, besides the fact that it is an objectively very difficult thing to achieve, we always seem to be pressed by financial and other constraints to make it secondary. We don't want that to continue to be the case.

As part of our small steps plan, we are trying to improve and extend the circulation of the Spanish and French versions of Voices Rising - could you send us the names of contact groups in the French and Spanish speaking Caribbean that you think might be interested in receiving it? Actually, we are keen

to have more contact with groups throughout the Caribbean.

Lynda Yanz, *The Women's Programme, International Council for Adult Education, 394 Euclid Ave., #308, Toronto, Canada.*

Bi-lingual newsletter?

Congratulations on CAFRA News. As usual, I kept tying back to it, although I was supposed to be doing something else at the time. It is really interesting and enjoyable. The personal glimpses we get from the 'Writers Talking' section contrast well with project-updates that inevitably have to generalise results and talk about 'participants' as one batch of people.

I am very interested on page 16 to know about the 2nd Language Exchange. Before I reached that page, I had already wondered why in earlier pages there had not been a paragraph in another CAFRA-language. This especially occurred to me when Helen and the other Surinamese sisters were interviewed for the 'Writers Talking' section. I realise that the logistics of printing articles or pieces of articles in bilingual manner is really overwhelming given CAFRA News's small team. But sometimes the people who are spoken about can do the translation themselves?

Then with the Ton Beau Capitaine review: I loved the review and the

letters

fact that paragraphs of the French text were printed - but they were kind of 'hidden' after a whole page of pure English review. Anybody with an interest in seeing French would have to plough through so much English to get to it. Is there a way to highlight the fact that there is another language hidden inside the pages of English, so that interested people can have their attention quickly drawn to it?

Would it be possible to find a core of helpful translators from amongst the membership? Would there be time for maybe one article an issue to be sent for translation, and then the copy returned to you?

Hilary Nicholson, Jamaica

Women in Havana

For more than ten years, the International Democratic Federation of Women has been training the leaders of women's organisations from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean through 3-month courses.

We believe that it would be very fruitful for our work if we could exchange and cooperate with you, since our work has many points in common with yours and we are also concerned with women's rights.

We are interested in having information about your research projects, conferences, meetings, scholarships, grants, publications

and anything else which could contribute to an improvement in our work, because at this time we are engaged in a process of change.

Concepcion Dumois, Havana, Cuba

Cayenne ceases publication

It is with regret and sadness that we announce our decision to cease publishing Cayenne. This has been a difficult decision to make. Both the magazine and the experience of working together on it have been so important to us that we avoided for as long as we could the hard fact that it is no longer feasible to continue.

The process of coming to realise that we can no longer produce Cayenne involved prolonged political and personal reflections. We discussed - at length and in depth - the current state of the women's movement, the political and economic climate, and what a socialist feminist publication could and should do.

We still have a lot of questions. Why was it so difficult to stimulate vivid debates in the pages of Cayenne? Why do activists in movements find it so difficult to find the time to sit down and write to share their experiences and analyses? Is Cayenne's failure part and parcel of the crisis the left as a whole faces in developing a coherent overall strategy? Or was the prob-

lem more specifically linked to mistakes and limitations on our part?

A problem that has persisted through the life of Cayenne is the problem of womanpower. We have at most times operated with an editorial collective of three or four women. We managed for five years, but now we are tired. And while we have grown tired, the world in which we live and move has become tougher on us. The escalating cost of living requires us to spend more of our time earning money.

One solution to this problem would be to obtain funding to pay someone full or even part-time as editorial staff. We have looked into this and discovered it to be impossible. There is no government money available these days for a publication calling itself 'socialist-feminist'.

We are proud of Cayenne. We realise that in giving up its burdens we are also giving up the pleasures of its challenge and achievement. We close this chapter of our work together with regret for what Cayenne could have been - because we continue to believe in the need for a regular socialist feminist publication, and our closing coincides with the demise of too many other progressive publications.

Cayenne Collective, Toronto, Canada.

Beginnings in Belize

projects update

Following the successful conclusion of Phase I of the 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture' (WICA) project, Phase II is now underway. This not only includes follow-up activities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica, but also marks the commencement of a similar project in Belize.

The proposal for this project came from the Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA), and during meetings between this organisation and CAFRA in April of this year it was agreed that the focus of the project would be on rural women in comparison to rural men. BRWA began preliminary consultations in Belize to collect basic information insofar as it existed. The focus was on the historical development of agriculture in Belize; the present situation; the contribution of women; and variations in farming patterns according to ethnicity, including the refugee dynamic. At the same time, CAFRA sent BRWA background material used in Phase I.

WICA Co-ordinator Joan French and CAFRA Co-ordinator Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen visited Belize from June 27-July 2 to review the decisions taken at the April meeting; to hold a workshop with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in agriculture and/or with women; to meet separately with other NGOs and government personnel; and to discuss with Cynthia Ellis and Lucia Engleton of BRWA such matters as project design, time frame and funding and the role that CAFRA would play in the programme.

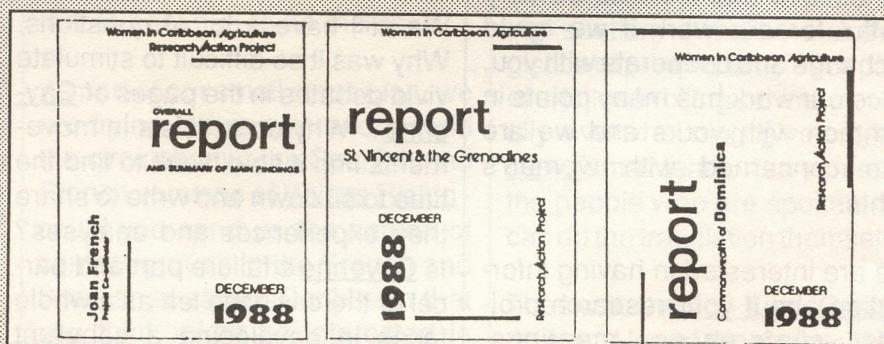
This last discussion included the sharing of information on WICA Phase I and the need for changes in the project design given the specifics of the Belize situation. Training needs were discussed at some length: some of the researchers who would be working in the project were invited to the WAND/CAFRA Women's Studies seminar in Barbados in August (see p. 16), and a seminar in Feminist Theory and Practice for BRWA

personnel will be held in February 1990, for which Joan French will act as resource person. This will be followed by a training programme to deal with issues in a gender approach to research; grappling with concepts of women's work, invisible labour, etc.

The workshop held with potential back-up team members and support personnel was attended by 13 persons from different NGOs and government agencies. Background information about research on women in agriculture in the Caribbean was shared, and the mechanisms for the implementation of the WICA project in Belize were discussed.

The preparatory phase for the project will spread over 1989 and the first part of 1990, with the project going into full gear later next year if the necessary funds are raised.

The reports of the "Women in Caribbean Agriculture" project are now available from the Cafra office at a cost of US\$10.00 each for the country reports, and US\$5.00 for the overall report and summary of main findings (plus postage).



H projects update

istory and Creative Expression

Following meetings held during the recent Creative Writing Seminar, the 'Women's History' project was expanded into 'Women's History and Creative Expression'. Several exciting new projects around the region have recently come under this umbrella.

Short stories

An example of this is the work of Anselma Morgan and Beverly Warren in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They have been inspired to write short stories based on the life histories of women working in agriculture, arising out of interviews they conducted during the course of research for the 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture' project.

In August, Maureen Warner-Lewis was given financial assistance to carry out a series of oral history interviews with several women in Trinidad and Tobago. The aim of the project is "to document the life and work history of an earlier generation of professional women, who began their career at a time when non-white women were not well represented in the professions. These women gave many years of hard and consistent work as teachers, nurses, etc. But, in addition, much of their time was spent in social work and participation in women's organisations of various kinds". The interviews were completed in August, and the tapes were made part of the

University of the West Indies Oral and Pictorial Records Collection, presently housed at the Main Library, U.W.I. St. Augustine. CAFRA will also be receiving copies of the tapes.

In-part funding was also given to Sistren Research's project entitled "Miss Amy and Miss May", to produce a videotape on the lives of Amy Bailey and May Farquharson and their contribution to the struggle for women's rights in Jamaica. On completion, it is intended to make the video available "for exhibition through encounter groups, workshops, seminars, women's meetings, as an educational tool designed to motivate all sectors of women, especially grassroots women, to organise and work together for their common cause".

Several women involved in history projects attended the WAND/CAFRA Seminar on 'Feminist

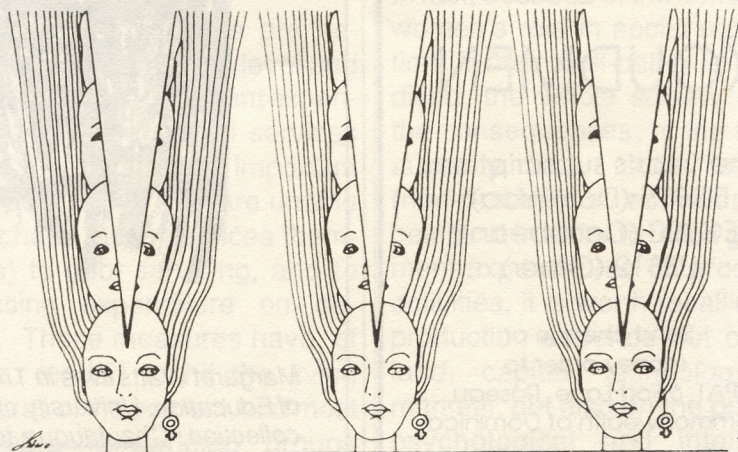
Theory for Activists' in August (see p. 16).

Documentation

We are currently focussing on the documentation of women's history in the region, and we would appreciate hearing from anyone who has not yet contacted us about a project she is working on.

We are also in the process of collecting background information necessary to put together a publishing handbook, as requested by writers at the Creative Writing Seminar. We would appreciate your writing to let us know any experiences you have had with publishers or publishing in your countries.

Since the seminar, writers in at least one country - Suriname - have started meeting as a group to discuss their work and give each other encouragement and support.



— projects update —

We hope to hear of this taking place around the region.

Publishing delay

Apologies to all who are eagerly awaiting the appearance of CAFRA's anthology of Caribbean women's poetry, *Creation Fire*. Unfortunately, the publication date has had to be pushed back again. The myriad tasks - almost all of them done on a voluntary basis - involved in such an undertaking, including collecting biographies and photos from all the contributors, have taken longer than projected. We expect to receive a new publication date from Sister Vision Press shortly.

Do you know what is happening in Dominica?

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The Child in the Flame Tree

by Margaret Watts

I see a flame tree burn in the afternoon sun.
The fire is static; red merges to green in caverns of mystery,
bright and drab,
where dreams dance ecstatic, unseen.

At the tree's heart, dead-centre,
a dark child hangs in gold,
each limb moulded to one of the tree,
silent, growing, engrossed in the art
of a magic rite; unaware I see.

Not for the first time I gaze at this sight;
too often I see the glowing child wed
to the tree, though the sun may be down
and the child in bed.



Tracey Johnson

Margaret Watts lives in Trinidad and Tobago and teaches at the Faculty of Education, University of the West Indies. This poem comes from her collection, *Chautauqua to Chaguanas*, Paria Publishing Co., Port of Spain, 1989.

The Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Women

by Peggy Antrobus

Policies of structural adjustment currently being introduced throughout the Caribbean are a good illustration of how internationally-influenced macro-economic policies impact at the level of the poorest household. They also illuminate the linkages between economic, social, cultural and political factors. In many countries they have become the panacea for the economic problems associated with shortages of foreign exchange, and indeed have become synonymous with development itself, even with economic transformation.

Two years ago, when I first started to analyse the impact of these policies on women, I argued that they represented policies which failed to take women into account (Antrobus, 1987). Today, on further reflection and relating this analysis to feminist theories I am persuaded that, far from not taking women into account, they are actually grounded in a gender ideology which is deeply exploitative of women's time and labour.

What are these policies, and why is gender an important variable in development policy-making and planning? Two phases are usually identified in policies of structural adjustment - an austerity phase, followed by measures intended to stimulate growth. In practice, they often seem to overlap. In the case of Jamaica, struc-

*The Tribune #42
June 1989*

tural adjustment has meant -

- * Concentration on export-oriented production;
- * Cut-backs in social services;
- * Liberalisation of imports; and
- * Removal of food subsidies and price controls on consumer goods.

Disproportionate burden

The austerity measures are essentially a change in the level and composition of government expenditure away from social services (which are particularly important to the poor, since they are unable to purchase these services themselves) to debt servicing, and to increasing expenditure on defence. These measures have, of course, tended to hit the living standards of the poorest, and most vulnerable (powerless) groups more severely than those who are

better able, financially, to cope with them (UNICEF, 1987). According to the UNICEF studies, those most negatively affected among the poor have been women, children and the elderly. However, given the fact that it is women who take responsibility for the care of children and the elderly, it is only fair to acknowledge that it is mainly poor women who bear a disproportionate burden in these circumstances. Indeed, these measures jeopardise women in 3 ways, by

1. Reducing their access to jobs (since women predominate in those sectors most severely hit by the cuts in government expenditures);
2. Limiting their access to services which assist them in the performance of their dual roles in production and social reproduction; and
3. Increasing the demands on their time as they are expected to fill the gaps created by the cuts in services.

In fact, because of the centrality of women's role in social reproduction, if their well-being is jeopardised, the whole society suffers the consequences; at the time of austerity, when social services (non-productive activities) are being cut in order to focus government expenditures on productive activities, it is worth recalling that production depends not only on land, capital, technology and markets, but also on the physical, psychological and intellectual capacities of the labour force - all

structural adjustment

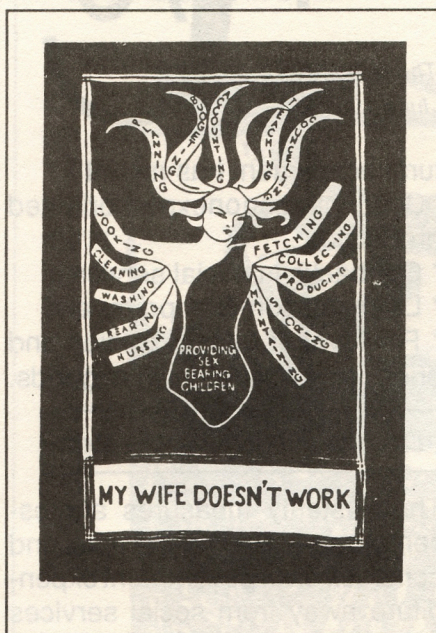
of which are determined largely in the sphere of social reproduction (i.e. in the household where the daily task of caring, feeding and supporting people takes place) in which women's engendered roles are central. Moreover, women's own productivity in the economic sphere is also set back as a result of these policies, if these household maintenance tasks are no longer supported by government services.

Cheap female labour

And just as the austerity measures are dependent on the 'super-exploitation' of women's time and labour, so too the model for the promotion of economic growth is dependent on the availability of a large supply of cheap female labour. The most common model for economic growth in Jamaica - and now in some of the other countries of the region - is the promotion of export-oriented production based on generous incentives given to foreign investors. Women predominate in these industries. Indeed women, especially young women, are the preferred labour force which attracts investment in this sector, since they can be paid low wages and are more likely to accept working conditions which would be unacceptable to men (French, 1987).

In the field of agriculture emphasis is also placed on the development of agri-business, and on large-

scale, export-oriented, economic models, to the detriment of small-scale agriculture. The undermining of the productive capacity of indigenous manufacturing and agriculture is perhaps one of the most seriously damaging long-term effect of these policies, especially when it is realised that the small business and small farm sectors provide infinitely more opportunities for employment than do the more highly capitalised, high-technology, type of operation.



Kali for Women

Cut-backs in government expenditure - chiefly in social services - were the central feature of the structural adjustment measures in Jamaica. Real expenditure on the services, which include education, health and social security, fell by

over 44% between 1981 and 1986. In the health services, government also introduced a wide-based system of charges for services offered at public hospitals and health centres which had previously been free (UNICEF, 1987). Expenditure on housing and water also fell dramatically in real terms. In both instances, reduced government expenditure was also accompanied by increased prices. Government water rates also increased by 55% at the time of the January 1984 deflationary policy package, while pressure in the housing market has resulted in large increases in the price of housing: prices in the rural areas, over the period January 1981-June 1985, increased by 115%, while the increase in the metropolitan area was 95%.

In addition to cuts in social services, the Jamaican government also cut expenditure on services which relate to the economic infrastructure. These include items such as transport and communications, roads, agricultural and industrial services.

Increase in malnutrition

The devaluation of the Jamaican dollar at this time with the resulting fall in real wages impacted with special severity on the poorest households, especially as devaluation was accompanied by the removal of food subsidies and controls on the prices of food, as

structural adjustment

well as by increasing unemployment, especially among women (who predominate in the services which were cut). Moreover, the removal of food subsidies was not selective. No attempt was made initially to maintain subsidies on items which are part of the basic diet of the mass of the population, nor to protect producers of crops on which import restrictions were being removed. In short, little attention was paid to the impact of these measures on local levels of consumption and production. One of the effects of this has been an increase in malnutrition, and in the infant mortality rate - a reversal of gains made during the 1970s.

The linkages between macro-economic policies and deterioration in the social sector is clear. In addition, there is the long-term impact of poor nutritional status, and falling standards of education on the

productive capacity of the population. The political consequences are just as disturbing. They include the constraints on traditional democratic practices such as protests against destructive policies, as well as the increasing credibility gap between the electorate and political parties.

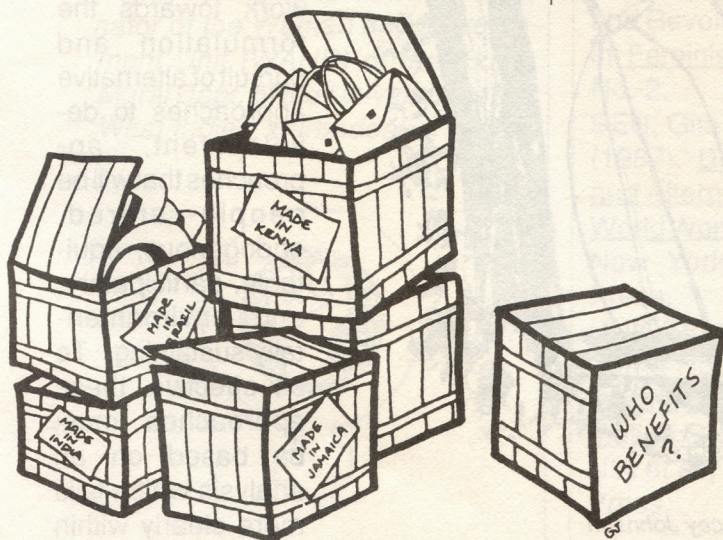
Women's coping strategies

How have women coped with the crisis? In a sense, the current situation is not new to them. Working-class women have always borne the brunt of this type of deprivation - struggling to sustain their families against the overwhelming odds of societies historically based on the privilege of a small group of people at the top of the pyramid of the social structure. In this struggle they have always drawn on networks of kinship and friendship in times of hardship. In

the past few years they have turned to these time-honoured survival strategies, which also include earning income from activities within the informal sector of the economies - trading in food-stuff and manufactured items, domestic work and other services; they have changed consump-

tion patterns, cutting purchases and making do with less; those with access to family land have returned to keeping kitchen gardens; some of those with relatives in North America and Europe have migrated, or depend on remittances from relatives. Most have used multiple strategies to secure the well-being of their children and other dependent family members. These "flexible behaviour patterns and choice(s) among several potential sources of support" (Barrow, 1986:167) are among the strengths of Caribbean working-class women, enabling them to cope with the harshness of their reality.

However, by providing a retreat from an exploitative system these strategies also facilitate the continuation of exploitation and the inequitable distribution of resources. As the analyses of the impact of the structural adjustment programmes have shown, many governments and international agencies have, in fact, taken advantage of women's ability to draw on traditional networks of support to introduce policies which have been particularly devastating to women and those for whose care they have been traditionally responsible. In terms of confronting this ideology, and thus breaking the reproduction of the cycle of poverty: deprivation - powerlessness - acceptance of hardship - survival strategies - continuing exploita-



The Tribune #42, June 1989

structural adjustment

tion - continuing deprivation, it might be useful to distinguish between:

1. strategies designed to ensure day-to-day maintenance, e.g. higglering/wage work, the support of networks of kinship, friendship and community, etc.;
2. strategies designed to determine the elements necessary for longer-term solutions, e.g. participatory research, group consulta-

tions, networking, etc.; and
3. strategies that challenge negative macro-economic policies, e.g. campaigns for public education, legal, social, economic and political change.

Need for feminist analysis

It is also important to distinguish between strategies which meet practical gender needs and those

which address strategic gender interests (Molyneux, 1985). The austerity measures which have been a central feature of the adjustment policies demonstrate the importance of addressing strategic gender interests - those which derive from an analysis of the power relationships between women and men, and women and the state: when strategic interests are ignored - as they were by many

of the Women in Development (WID) programmes of the UN Decade for Women - even practical gains are easily reversed.

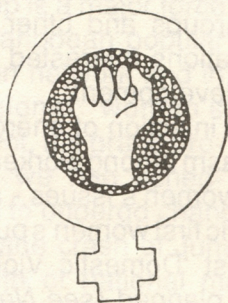
The crisis exacerbated by the adoption of structural adjustment policies provides an opportunity for people to work towards the formulation and pursuit of alternative approaches to development, approaches that will be people-centred, endogenous, equitable, participatory, and environmentally sustaining. To be effective, these approaches must be based on an analysis which falls more clearly within an alternative (so-



Tracey Johnson

cial change) paradigm. Such an analysis must be holistic, and link macro-economic policies to experience at the micro level of the household and community. It must recognise the limitations of purely technical approaches to situations which are clearly embedded in political realities. In short, it must be feminist, i.e. rejecting dualities of private-public domains, personal-political considerations, and seek to validate all of women's work, especially that which is carried out in the household and in subsistence agriculture. Above all, it must recognise that women, particularly poor and working-class women, have a special role to play in these approaches since they have the most to contribute to, and gain from, the realisation of this vision of development (Sen & Grown, 1987).

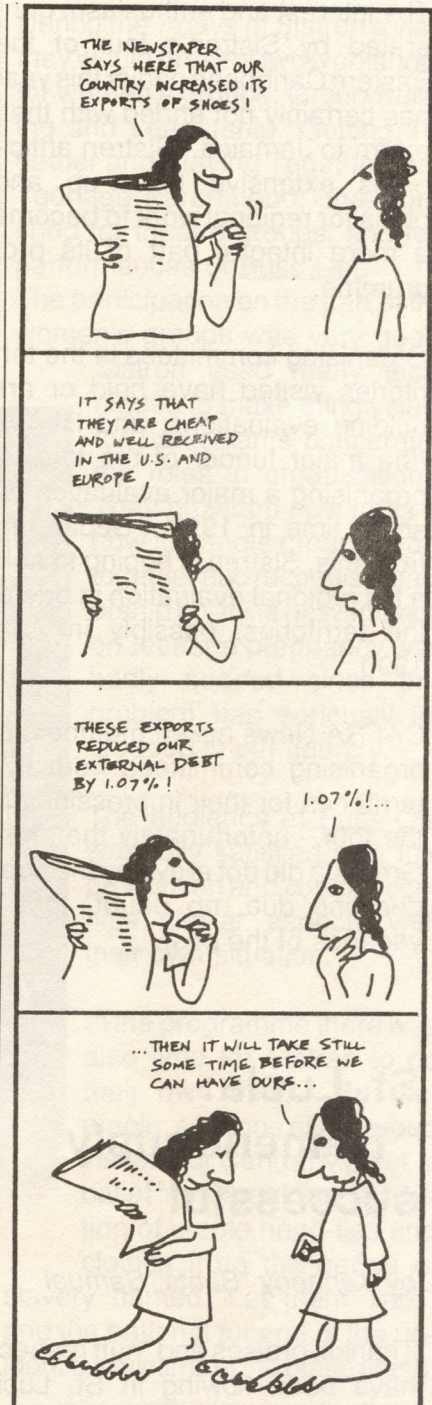
Peggy Antrobus is Tutor/Co-ordinator of the Woman and Development Unit (WAND) of the Extra-Mural Dept. of the University of the West Indies, Barbados.



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Adapted from the pamphlet, "Voices of the People",
Bread for the World Education Fund,
Washington D.C., USA

M

ore on the Tour

sistren

The interest and enthusiasm generated by Sistren's tour of the Eastern Caribbean earlier this year has certainly not ended with their return to Jamaica. Sistren anticipates extensive follow-up and plans for regional work to become a more integral part of its programme.

Organising committees in the territories visited have held or are holding evaluations, and HIVOS (the major funder of the tour) is organising a major evaluation for some time in 1990. Separately from this, Sistren is hoping to hold a full regional evaluation in one of the territories, possibly in April 1990.

CAFRA News asked members of organising committees from five territories for their impressions of the tour - unfortunately that from Grenada did not arrive by the copy deadline due, no doubt, to the vagaries of the post.

St. Lucia: "Tremendously successful"

by Kennedy "Boots" Samuel

Thanks, praises and "nuff respect" have been flowing in St. Lucia following that particular leg of the Sistren Caribbean tour from the

15-22 May. It was a tremendously successful week of conscientization around issues of women and development.

The talented, serious and very cultural sisters of Sistren facilitated

Some very crucial achievements of the tour for devel-



Adapted from Sistren,
Vol. 6, no. 2, Dec. 1984

or participated in workshops, performances, social encounters and community link-up activities that affected a wide cross-section of St. Lucian women, community workers, cultural activists and the general public.

The activities climaxed on the penultimate day of the tour with a grassroots link-up with the culturally rich northern community of Babonneau. There, Sistren was hosted for a day by the Babonneau Mothers and Fathers League. Hundreds of mothers and fathers of this large community turned up to share experiences and cultural forms with the Jamaican sisters. It was a day of deep reflections, warmth, love and fun that typified the spirit of the entire week of activities.

opment work in St. Lucia include:

1. a linking up of a wide cross-section of previously isolated grassroots organisations, community groups and other social organisations interested in women and development;
2. an injection of energy and enthusiasm among workers involved with women's issues - already an historic first women's public march against 'Domestic Violence' has been planned (see *News, News, News* - ed.);
3. the establishment of firm bonds

between St. Lucian women and cultural workers, and Sistren of Jamaica; and
4. the increased interest in Popular Theatre methodology.

This St. Lucian leg of the Sistren Caribbean Tour appears to have been more more than a "leg"; it may have in fact been the "soul" of the tour.

of the 186 passengers died. They included several outstanding football players attached to clubs in Holland, and a cultural music group.

The intention had been that the government would host Sistren. When this had to be cancelled, a small committee was formed to take over the organisation since a

During the 7 days of Sistren's visit, they would present two workshops for women's groups: Group Building and Leadership "Getting Together and Staying Together" and Teenage Parenthood; one workshop for theatre groups; and two performances of *Buss Out*.

The participation on the part of the women's groups was very good.

Sistren used many techniques to make things clear for participants concerning the roles in organisations. They provided new skills in how to handle groups, work together and recognise leadership ability. The workshop on teenage pregnancy was badly needed since this problem has seriously increased in our country.

The audience at *Buss Out* was fully satisfied with this production and could recognise similar aspects with their own situation.

In the programme there was also time for Sistren to do their own thing. For example, sections of the group visited our Central Market, a ballet rehearsal, an exhibition of creole head-ties and clothes from the period of slavery named "Let them Talk", and the national funeral of the unidentified victims of the plane crash.

Sistren was really excited because of a trip to a village of Amerindians

Suriname: Providing new skills

by Helen Kerk

It was Tuesday 20 June when in rainy weather the Sistren Theatre Collective arrived in Suriname, one of the last countries that they would visit on their regional tour.

Although we worked thoroughly on the preparations for the visit, knowing that this group is a major force in the Caribbean popular education network and in the regional women's movement, the grand programme we had scheduled had to undergo changes due to the plane crash of June 7 and the month of national mourning that followed. A plane of our national carrier, the 'Anthony Nesty', crashed near the airport and 177



lot of women's groups and organisations so badly wanted Sistren to come to Suriname. Taking into account that they would have to deal with the costs of the trip, a mini-programme was arranged.

and a village of Bushnegroes. A lot of expressions, dances and plays in these cultures have similarities with the Jamaican culture.

Sistren enjoyed their visit to Suriname very much, particularly their experience with the village people and the food and hospitality of the people of Suriname.

Trinidad and Tobago: Revealing Avenues of Opportunity

by Rawle Gibbons

A visit such as Sistren's affords us the opportunity not only to see the visitors on show but to assess our own comparative situation. In this regard, the questions uppermost in one's mind are: (a) Can we support such a visit?; (b) How does our local fare compare with the foreign work?; and (c) What/how can we gain from this visit?

The process of answering the first question involved planning, mustering support, and releasing information to the public. In the end, some 1,200 people in Trinidad and Tobago saw the Sistren production, "Buss Out". Opening the National Drama Festival on June 1, the Jamaican guests gave easily the most exciting performance of the Festival. The fact that (with

one exception) the group played to capacity audiences throughout meant for us that, despite the fall-off at the Festival level, the audience for good theatre was increasing in the country.

Our capacity to support the visit meant not only attracting audiences but also providing technical and other services. The logistics of moving the group between workshop/rehearsal/performance and social activities settled down after the first couple of days and worked relatively smoothly. On the technical side, the Creative Arts Centre, U.W.I. provided crew and technical support for the performances. This turned out to be something of an achievement for the Centre, which called upon its own Graduate Theatre Company as well as My People Inc. (San Fernando) and a couple of talented, dedicated individuals.

As for the production, "Buss Out", there is no doubt in my mind of its

theatrical success. The production was imaginatively executed with dynamic performances, attractive sets and compulsive music. The audiences' enjoyment was qualified only by the language distance that became a difficulty in Trinidad, though less so in Tobago where the creole "favours" the Jamaican.

The play itself, I believe, needs some attention. The stereotyping of unsympathetic characters (males/upper class) remains a problem in Sistren's work as was evident in the portrayal of the "fronted" middle-class

journalist. "Warrior", the play's protagonist, also suffers from stereotyping and, though played with great conviction and power, needed more shading and movement of personality. The production required more work on its dramatising and less on its theatrics.

It is this, the process behind the

SISTREN

THEATRE COLLECTIVE

VISIT TO TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
MAY 29 - JUNE 12, 1989

Under the kind patronage of
Her Excellency, Ms. Ellen Bogle
Jamaican High Commissioner



RECEPTION AND READINGS FROM
WONHEART GAL
JAMAICAN HIGH COMMISSION
Monday 29 May, 1989

play, that would have been of interest to the local dramatist. Sistren, having created 8 productions, are now quite adept at the process of play-making, which some of our groups are just beginning to explore. The opportunity to share the Sistren methodology was lost, however, due to lack of enthusiasm/action on the part of the National Drama Association, which seemed indifferent to publicizing a workshop offered by the group for this purpose.

The group's workshops with women and the exchange workshop on Carnival also made obvious the absence locally of theatre as an instrument of community development - whether communities of women, abused children, drug addicts. This may be one of the ways forward that Best Village has been seeking. It is certainly one that

the Creative Arts Centre will take.

It is through the effort of making such an encounter possible that avenues of opportunity become apparent. The Sistren visit certainly stimulated us to see some of these. The notion of organising

one's talent for the development of self, community and one's economic well-being is a lesson that we can well put to use. From their various activities - workshops, performances - this lesson remains Sistren's final message.



Patsy Pryce and Pauline Crawford from the workshop team



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The Center of Concern is an independent, interdisciplinary team engaged in social analysis, religious reflection, policy advocacy and public education around questions of social justice, with a particular stress on the international dimension. Grounded in the heritage of Catholic Social Thought, the Center seeks ecumenical and interreligious collaboration and dialogue in the struggle to bring about a more just world.

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Interested candidates should send a cover letter explaining their interest in the position; a resume; relevant writing samples; and names and addresses of 3 or 4 individuals familiar with the candidate's analytical, communications and interpersonal skills and commitment to peace and justice concerns. Candidates should ask these individuals to send recommendation letters directly to the Centre.

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A

Continuous Process of Sharing and Learning

**WAND/CAFRA Seminar on Feminist Theory
Barbados, August 11-25, 1989**

By Joan French

The Barbados Labour Union College is a spacious, spreading but orderly structure surrounded by well-kept grounds that melt into surrounding fields where cows graze and horses trot in the early mists of morning. Away from the hustle and bustle of city life, few spots in the Caribbean have facilities and circumstances so conducive to group activities that require a relaxed atmosphere for reflection.

Scenes from the Seminar

If you visited the college between August 11 and 25, you might have witnessed any of the following scenes:



Groups of 4-10 women sprawled on the grass or sitting on chairs in rough circles under shade trees, hatching some plot for a skit or sharing experiences for distillation on copious newsprint.

Open-air theatre with the audience rolling on the grass in the midst of peals of laughter and shrieks of recognition. On the "stage" sudden actresses in perfect role, acting out scenes from the lives of women as they interact with men, institutions and ideas which seek to limit their development in this male-dominated world.

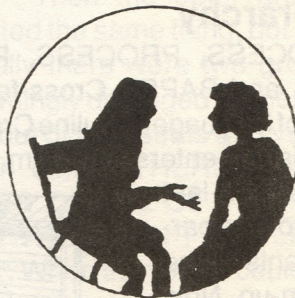
Groups of 6-8 dressed in a weird variety of exercise gear, being taken through their paces by Pauline Crawford in the wee hours of the morning. "Now S-T-R-E-T-C-H! Okay now, we goin' go around the field 4 times. That will warm us up. Then we goin' out onto the road."



Hot discussion and sharing of experiences spilling over into the dining room, bedrooms, on the balconies, upstairs, downstairs, everywhere.

seminar

8.30 p.m., and a motley group of wide denominational and religious histories - Rastafari, Christian, Muslim, Bahai, nothing - huddle together seriously sharing reflections on matters of the spirit.



A presenter, busy with marker and newsprint calling on the experiences of participants and building on them to explain the origins and history of gender bias, and to re-examine accepted ideas about women and work, women and the family, women and sexuality, women and religion, women and the economy, women and organisations, women and ... And Rowena, alert but overwhelmed: "Like mi head goin' to buss!"



Circles of women huddled close together, silent and serious, as one sister in the centre of the circle, eyes closed,

allows her trusting body to be rolled and tossed between supporting hands. You would also notice that sisterhood is not always so powerful: that one or two are not too trusting, and remain stiff; that one in particular is not too skilled at giving the support and more than once causes someone to lose ground.

Here and there a lone figure or small group battling with an assigned reading or book from the library: first thing in the morning in the privacy of the bedroom, with or without cigarettes and coffee; in the library at the end of the afternoon session; in the lecture room; or under a tree.

9.00 p.m.: video time. Much huddling around the television. "On Becoming a Woman", "The Unending Day", "Sweet Sugar Rage: a story of women in sugar", "Dangerous Liaisons", "Fatal Attraction", "Tribute to Jackie Creft", "Merle Collins Performs", "Amy Bailey, a Jamaican feminist", and others.



Photos by Karen de Souza

Academia adjusts

Tears and laughter, contention and recognition, frankness and sisterhood, in a continuous process of sharing and learning: such was 'Women and Development Studies III', a collaborative effort between CAFRA and the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies.

What did the participants, drawn mainly from CAFRA's 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture' and 'Women's History' projects, expect?

"To learn more 'bout dis woman ting."

"Me ain' know!"

"Me have an open mind."

"A hope dem really look into dis women in agriculture ting an' don't push it to one side."

What did the organisers intend?

"To engage in a process of examination of feminist theory, critical epistemology, the exploration of strategies and ... " (Ahem!).

Academia had to adjust itself to a constant, demanding critique. If the words were too big, it was, "Bruk it dung!" If the definition of 'feminist' seemed too limiting, it was, "Definition is definition, an' people is people!" If a presentation after lunch was pure lecture, it was, "We sleepy. Change di programme. Mek we sleep after lunch an' come back 4 o'clock," or, "Do di afternoon session anodder way!"

Language and Hierarchy

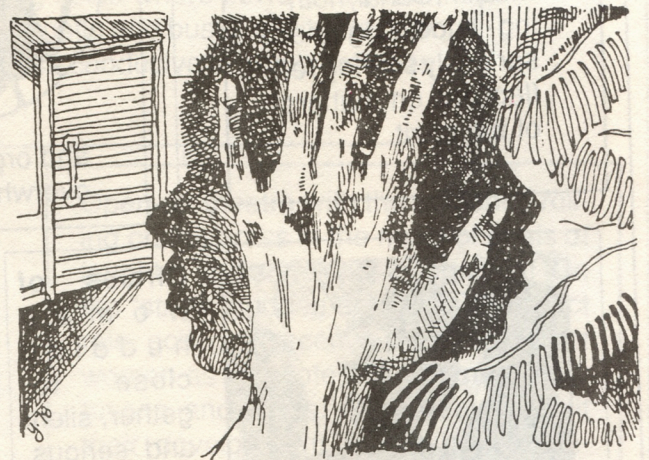
PROCESS, PROCESS, PROCESS and BAPS! Cross-fertilisation of language! Pauline Crawford of Sistren enters the room on the

second-to-last day to lead participants in the warm-up. Now you have to understand that Pauline's native language is superb Jamaican dialect, along the lines of, "Of a fact, inna Jamaica ..."

Well, Miss Crawford enters the room and announces, "Good morning all. I am Pauline Crawford and I will be leading you through the warm-up process this morning. The exercise I have chosen is linked to the theme for the day. Now, before I begin, I would like you to arrange yourselves in two equally proportioned lines ..." It wasn't just the words, it was the manner - a curious half-serious, half cynical take-off of the relationship of language to hierarchy (which, in fact, was the theme for the day).

And Miss Crawford didn't stop there. Totally in keeping with her position in the hierarchy of the day's proceedings, she went on to explain that in the game the bodies would be moving from one

point to the other in the circle, in keeping with the lines of the song, "Show me how di ball gone round". Our bodies would be the ball. "You know: symbol", said with the same curious mixture of mimicry, sense



Cayenne Winter 1988

of achievement and cynicism. The whole room was in stitches of laughter. Pauline completed a perfectly professional performance by asking in perfect English the questions designed to promote further reflection on the "symbolism" of the game. There was no doubt that we had been given a superb introduction to the day's theme: "Hierarchy and transformation".

Now this language thing was really curious. Everyone got evaluation forms to fill out on the last day. Dialect? Not a glimpse. Everything in perfect English. Cross-fertilisation? Schizophrenia? Bilingualism? Expertise? Me no know.

Questionnaire: How will the insights gained at the seminar help you in your work?

Answers: "I can now analyse situations to understand whether I am working in the old system or helping to change it."

"I have gained analytical skills, more knowledge about the origin and history of chauvinism and feminism, and I am better equipped to talk with women."

"I can use my understanding to give women a deeper insight into themselves, the society and the economy."

"It has helped me to understand my role in the family and will help me in working with other women in the community."

"It provided the motivation to read."

Talent unveiled

The strain must have been too much. There was a sudden unanimous demand for a 'Cultural Evening'. Everybody was going to contribute songs, dances, poems, etc. But who would recognise this respectable plan if they came into the room at 10.00 p.m.? One group of women sat facing the other. Then there was a soft chorus from one side, hardly more than a murmur, "There ain't no flies on us. There ain't no flies on us. There must be flies on some of

you guys, but there ain't no flies on us." Then the other group repeated the same thing, but louder. Finally there were two groups of seemingly deranged women jumping out of their seats and yelling at each other: "THERE MUST BE FLIES ON ALL OF YOU GUYS, BUT THERE AIN'T NO FLIES ON US!" When the voices couldn't yell any louder, everyone collapsed in laughter and disorder.

This was after the songs, dances and poems in which Great Talent was unveiled. Hefty Hetty glided through the Punta Rock like a bird that had taken wing. Bertilia, the Silent One, tripped ever so skilfully through a Bel Air. Camille the Cultural contributed an Indo-Calypso dance from Trinidad. Lana, Peggy and Sheila shared poems. Belize, Dominica and Barbados sang. A certain "Up So Feminist" led the gathering in a rendition of "Carry Me Ackee Go a Linstead Market", complete with actions. All this was interspersed with comic acts from Sister Pauline, including a rendition of "On Mockingbird Hill" in a child's voice as she sucked her thumb. "Dedicated", she explained, "to the younger members of the audience, who are often left out in our adult things." Little Zani was persuaded to dance calypso with her mother. But the great highlight of the evening was Sister Kalloo from Trinidad with a calypso commentary on the seminar, sung to the tune of "Santimanitay". For the

benefit of posterity, we reproduce some of the less libellous words below:

"Ah hear so much kind of idea,
Mih head like it want to buss
They say, don't worry lady,
That is a sign of genius!

But yet when it come to solving
How to start at 9 o'clock,
They throw up dey hand,
Analyse whole day,
Then bawl - Santimanitay!

Two weeks later, ah can't think straight,
Mih head not really here,
If ah is a feminist
Is a question most unclear.

What ah know is what ah see,
Is a sisterhood so true,
We women hold hands today,
So Santimanitay!

Diversity; dialogue; deep distress as minds grappled with concept after concept; tears as we recognised the depths of our own repression; entertainment and learning: this and more was the substance of the WAND/CAFRA seminar on "Feminist Theory for Activists" held in Barbados, August 1989 - the first of its kind and a history-making event.

Joan French works with Sistren Research. She is a founding member of CAFRA and Co-ordinator of the 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture' project.

T

The Mirabal Sisters—Fighters Against Tyranny

At the First Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogota, Colombia in July 1981, 25 November was declared the International Day Against Violence Against Women. Since then, women's organisations, the media and several other institutions in the region have commemorated this day in a variety of ways, focussing attention on the increasing incidence of violence against women, analysing the causes of the phenomenon in our societies, and developing approaches to deal with it.

The date was proposed by the delegates from the Dominican Republic as a reminder of what they called "one of the most horrendous crimes ever in the history of Latin America". This was the torture and murder of three sisters by the Trujillo regime on 25 November, 1960. The following account of this story is adapted from a note issued in 1982 by the Committee for the Co-ordination of Women's Organisations in the Dominican Republic (translated from Spanish by UN/ECLAC; re-translated by Julieta Alfonso).

The far-reaching social upheavals in the Dominican Republic have thrown up among the people outstanding examples of women who, despite being economically oppressed, socially underdeveloped and politically sidelined under the existing social arrangements, are the clear, vibrant embodiment of

the needs and interests of the oppressed, exploited group of their time and play a vital role in the revolutionary process.

The Mirabal sisters - Patria, Minerva and Maria-Teresa Mirabal Reyes - are vivid examples of this type of woman.

Patria, the eldest, was born on February 27, 1924. The situation existing in the country on account of Trujillo's dictatorship and the imperialist domination it represented spawned in her, as in her sisters, a passionate unshakeable character as a democrat and an anti-Trujillo freedom fighter, and shaped her sensibility in the face of the acute social problems.

Her house was a haven and a meeting place for co-ordinating and organising the underground June 14 Movement, which was formally launched under her roof on January 10, 1960. When the

movement was uncovered, its leaders and a large majority of its members, among them her husband and 12-year-old son, were imprisoned. Her house was ordered demolished by the enraged Trujillo and all her belongings were confiscated.

Minerva Mirabal was born on March 12, 1927 and was an extremely intelligent woman with a strong personality. Intellectually restless, she was to dabble in history, literature, politics and philosophy, and had a passion for painting. Her early water colours already testify to the deep commitment she would later display in defence of the underprivileged classes.

Spurned advances

Minerva provoked Trujillo's hatred and anger after he attempted unsuccessfully to befriend her. Trujillo was notorious not only for his crimes but also for his inordinate appetite for women, an appetite which he gratified by threatening to imprison or have killed any who dared to say no to him or hesitated to extend the same courtesies to his circle of friends. At the age of 22, when she turned her back on his amorous advances, Minerva was arrested and imprisoned. She was later released.

At the height of her political career, Minerva was one of the organisers



of the June 14 Movement which led to her rearrest and imprisonment in the La Cuarenta prison, a dreaded torture centre where hundreds of Dominicans were murdered. She was released again in August. One of the henchmen of the Trujillo dictatorship, who was once head of the Military Intelligence Service (SIM) in the North of the country, said that on her arrest "She strode in good-looking, erect, defiant and on her face we could see her anger and her courage."

Maria-Teresa, the youngest sister, was born on October 15, 1936. Growing up in an atmosphere of revolutionary and anti-Trujillo activities and having an acute social conscience, she came to take an active part in the June 14 Movement. She was arrested, imprisoned and released several times during 1960 and was well-known for her firmness and dignity during interrogation by the SIM henchmen.

Tortured and murdered

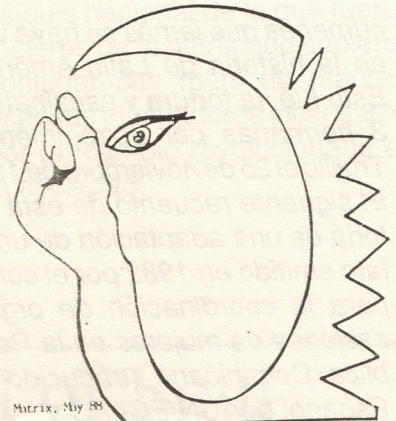
Trujillo once declared to a group of people that he had but two problems: the Church and the Mirabal sisters. And Trujillo was not one to stay his hand. On November 25, 1960 the three sisters, together with the driver of the jeep in which they were travelling, went to visit the imprisoned husbands of the two older sisters. En route, they were intercepted by agents of the

SIM along a lonely stretch of road. They were taken to a nearby field where they were savagely tortured and murdered. Later, their bloody, mangled, battered and lifeless bodies were placed in the jeep which was pushed over the edge of a cliff in a feeble attempt to make it look like an accident.

The whole country was stunned and horrified by the murder of the Mirabal sisters, and the people's desire for a democratic government that would guarantee respect for human dignity was reinforced. The example of the 3 sisters today serves as an inspiration to the progressive revolutionary movement in the country as it fights to stamp out all the justice and oppression synonymous with the ruling oligarchy.

They have been a constant source of encouragement and an example, etched indelibly in the national psyche, of women of the nation who have been able to marry their roles as mother, wife and tireless fighters for revolutionary change in the society.

How are you going to observe International Day Against Violence Against Women? CAFRA News has already heard of plans for a week of activities in Jamaica to commemorate this important day for women. We would like to hear how it is being observed by other countries in the region. Ed.



Las hermanas Mirabal: Luchadoras contra la Tirania

En el 1er encuentro feminista de mujeres latinoamericanas y caribeñas, celebrado en Bogotá en julio 1981, fué declarado el 25 de noviembre día internacional en contra la violencia contra las mujeres. Desde entonces organizaciones de mujeres, medios de comunicación y algunas otras instituciones en la Región han conmemorado este día de diferentes formas, resaltando los crecientes incidentes de violencia en contra las mujeres; analizando las causas del fenómeno en nuestra sociedad y desarrollando formas cómo abordar el fenómeno.

El día fué propuesto por las delegadas de República Dominicana; como un reto a lo que ellas llamaron "uno de los más horrendos

crímenes que jamás se haya visto en la historia de Latin-América". Esto fué, la tortura y asesinato de 3 hermanas por el régimen de Trujillo el 25 de noviembre de 1960. El siguiente recuento de esta historia es una adaptación de un relato emitido en 1982 por el comité para la coordinación de organizaciones de mujeres en la República Dominicana (traducido del Español por UN/ECLAC y retraducido del Inglés por Julieta Alfonso).

Los cataclismos sociales de gran alcance en la República Dominicana han arrojado sobresalientes ejemplos de mujeres; quienes a pesar de ser economicamente oprimidas; socialmente subdesarrolladas y políticamente marginadas bajo los convenios sociales existentes, son la clara y vibrante encarnación de las necesidades e intereses de los grupos explotados de sus épocas y juegan un papel vital en el proceso revolucionario.

Las hermanas Mirabal - Patria, Minerva y María-Teresa Mirabal Reyes - son un vivo ejemplo de este tipo de mujer.

Patria, la mayor de las hermanas, nació el 27 de febrero de 1924. La situación existente en el país a causa de la dictadura de Trujillo y la dominación imperialista creó en ella así; como en sus dos hermanas, un carácter apasionadamente e inmovible

como demócrata y luchadora por la libertad anti-Trujillista y modificó su sensibilidad frente a los agudos problemas sociales.

Su casa fué un paraíso y un lugar de reuniones para coordinar y organizar el movimiento clandestino 14 de Junio el que fuera formalmente puesto en operación bajo su techo, el día 10 de enero de 1960. Cuando este movimiento fué descubierto, sus líderes y la mayoría de sus miembros, su esposo y su hijo de 12 años entre otros, fueron encarcelados. Su casa fué demolida por orden del enfurecido Trujillo y todas sus pertenencias fueron expropiadas.

Minerva Mirabal nació el 12 de marzo de 1927 y fue una mujer de una fuerte personalidad y extremadamente inteligente con muchas inquietudes intelectuales. Ella fue dada a la literatura, política y la filosofía y muy apasionada por la pintura. Sus primeras acuarelas ya testificaban el profundo compromiso que más tarde mostraría en defensa de las clases menos privilegiadas.

Minerva provocó la ira y odio de Trujillo después que él intentara sin éxito alguno favorecerla. Trujillo fue notable no solo por sus crímenes sino también por su excesivo apetito por las mujeres. Un apetito que gratificaba con amenazas de encarcelamiento o con matar a cualquiera que se atreviera a negarsele o vacilara en ofre-



Monde des Femmes, No. 1, June 1988

cer la misma cortesía a su círculo de amistades. A la edad de 22 años cuando ella rechazara sus pretensiones amorosas Minerva fue arrestada y encarcelada. Más tarde puesta en libertad.

A la altura de su carrera política, Minerva fué una de las organizadoras del movimiento 14 de Junio el cual dirigió hasta su rearresto y encarcelamiento en "la cuarenta prision", un decadente centro de tortura donde cientos de dominicanos fueron asesinados. Ella fué liberada de nuevo en agosto del mismo año.

Uno de los secuaces de la dictadura de Trujillo quien estuviera una vez a la cabeza del Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (SIM) en el norte del país, expresó su admiración por Minerva cuando fue arrestada, de esta forma: "Es una mujer bien paracida, con un caminar erguido y desafiante, y en su rostro se puede ver la ira y su coraje".

María-Teresa, la hermana menor, nació el 15 de octubre de 1936. Creció en una atmósfera de ac-

tividades revolucionarias y anti-trujillistas y desarrolló una profunda consciencia social tomando parte activa en el Movimiento 14 de Junio. Ella fué arrestada, encarcelada y liberada varias veces durante el 1960 y fué bien conocida por su entereza y dignidad durante los interrogatorios que le hicieran los sirvientes del SIM.

Trujillo declaró una vez ante un grupo de gente que él solo tenía dos problemas: la Iglesia y las hermanas Mirabal. Y Trujillo no fué un hombre pasivo. En noviembre 25 de 1960, las tres hermanas junto con el chofer del jeep en el que ellas viajaban yendo a visitar los esposos encarcelados de las dos hermanas mayores fueron interceptados por agentes del SIM en un callejón solitario. Fueron llevados a un campo de la vecindad donde fueron salvajemente torturados y asesinados. Mas tarde, sus cuerpos sin vidas, sangrientos, mutilados y golpeados fueron calocados de nuevo en el jeep y empujándolo por el borde de un precipicio intentaron muy debilmente hacerlo parecer un accidente.

El país entero estuvo pasmado y horrorizado por el asesinato de las hermanas Mirabal, y el deseo del pueblo por un gobierno democrático que garantizara el respeto por la dignidad humana fue reforzado. El ejemplo de las 3 hermanas aún hoy día sirve de inspiración al movimiento revolucionario progresivo en el país que

lucha por borrar toda la injusticia y opresión sinónimo de la oligarquía predominante.

Ellas han sido una fuente constante de aliento y un ejemplo indeleblemente grabado en la

psiquis nacional de lo que fueron mujeres de la patria que supieron conjugar sus roles de madres, esposas y luchadoras incansable, por un cambio revolucionario en la sociedad.

The Sisterhood of Soul

by Joyce Peters-McKenzie

yes,
i am the lump of flesh you scorned
at the hairdressing salon last week,
the slut who lives in a shack in the
alley close by the 'ranch' in which
your ever-loving husband plays
'cricket' with 'the boys';
i work in your friend's kitchen,
the same friend who bad-talks you
with me soon after you hang-up the
phone;
we sat on the same bench at primary
school,
but cockeyed fate applied the law of
inequalities;
i left by the same door through which
you
entered the obeahman's hut
but pride/or shame broom-weeded
you
into a doubled-up version of hurried
old age
dark glasses and broad-rimmed
strawhat
playing appropriate roles;
you see me at church sometimes
praying for the sins of the whole
world,
and your face explodes into angry
pouts if ever we skirt each other

at the communion rail,
as if your first class ticket to
london is 'an indefinite visa to
heaven';
my son is at a reformatory,
you pretended that yours was normal
and sent him to his death
from a new york skyscraper;
i am not rich enough to host tea
parties
but i have a heart of gold and can
reach out with love and understand-
ing
to all those who need these
and that includes you;
but, sister, this is a two-way system,
so next time you see me trudging in
the rain
hand-laden and footsoaked,
just hide your bitchiness in a broad
max factor smile and offer me a lift
home;
then and only then will i begin to
understand that together we can build
a nation,
a sisterhood of soul.

Joyce Peters-McKenzie lives in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Women and Disability

by Nathalie Giraudel

Women with disabilities can rarely be seen participating in activities around the island (of Dominica). Yet, if one were to question a disabled woman on her perspective of life, they'd surely discover that her goals and aspirations are not at all different to that of a non-disabled woman. Similarly, many can identify with the difficulties of single parenthood, frustration and discrimination in the field of employment, illiteracy, desertion and abandonment by fathers of their children.

Unfortunately though, society's perception of a disabled woman in most cases is such that her whole ego is sometimes shattered, since they perceive her to be helpless, inferior and totally incapable of anything positive or productive, and associate her only with things spiritual.

As we come into contact with disabled women across the island, it is interesting to hear of their experiences at home, in the community and at work. A few examples are: "At home I was never taught to do anything for myself. My upbringing was completely different to that of the other members of my family. Never was I prepared for adulthood. I was in the dark".

"Another of my problems was in finding a job. In spite of my quali-



fications I was always turned away when I sought employment. I was hardly given a chance even to fail, and I believe that was because of my disability".

The worst humiliation that a disabled woman can experience is when she finds herself pregnant. She is condemned by members of the public, considered unjustified in bearing children and imposing yet another burden on herself, and the constant speculation (is) that this baby is bound to be born disabled.

Disabled women also know the pain of abandonment by fathers of the children and the hardships of raising children single-handedly. Many have to rely on the good heart of their families for maintenance of such children.

The cry for "Equality, Development

and Peace" is also the dream of disabled women. However, this dream cannot be achieved if society continues to associate disability with institutional care and isolation rather than interaction and integration.

It is obvious that there is much to be done in getting society aware of the full potential of disabled women. However, this can only be achieved through our own efforts, and we need to see more disabled women coming forward and 'taking the bull by the horns'. We know best what we want, and unless we are prepared to break down the barriers inhibiting us from excelling to our fullest capacity, I am afraid that the situation is going to remain the same for a long time to come.

(Reprinted from *Koudmen*, May 1989)

The Black Brazilian Experience

1o Encontro de Mulheres Negras de Baixada Santista of Santos, Brazil
11-14 May, 1989

by Rhoda Reddock

Participation in the above-mentioned meeting provided the opportunity for me as a black women's movement activist and scholar to do a number of things. First, it facilitated the possibility of understanding in a clear and specific way the experiences of one of the largest sectors of Afro-Latin peoples on the South American continent.

On previous visits to Latin America - Colombia (1986) and Ecuador (1982) - as an academic and scholar I had little opportunity to meet or talk with black women or black people as they appeared to be marginal to the very societies in which they were living. On this occasion I was able to go directly to the black women, to share their concerns, experiences and knowledge and so come away with a more complete understanding of the situation of Latin American women.

The second gain from this visit was one of learning. This meeting, unlike many that we organise in the English-speaking Caribbean, catered not only for the intellect but also for the other creative energies of women. For example, while the morning sessions were

allocated for more academic-type presentations and discussions, the late evening was left for creative/self-development-type activities such as Afro-Brazilian Dance, Clay Modelling, Self-Reflection, African Head-wrapping, and so on. This is an aspect usually ignored by groups in our sub-region and one to which we should pay more attention.

Candomble Artifacts

Another important aspect of the meeting overall was the aesthetic arrangement of the surroundings. The overall theme was that of Candomble, the Orisha-based religion of the majority of Afro-Brazilian people in which women are central participants. The artifacts of the Candomble ceremony - baskets, clay jars, candles, straw, etc. - were beautifully arranged throughout the centre, providing a pleasing and meaningful atmosphere within which to hold our discussions. This was also something from which those of us living in the English-speaking Caribbean can learn a lot.

The striking feature of the participation at this meeting was the large proportion of mother-daughter units in attendance. At least 20 per cent of the participants fell into this category. After some questioning on my part, I discovered that in Brazil mother-daughter relationships are usually extremely close, thus facilitating a degree of

openness between them that is not usual in my own society. This suggested to me that the generation gap in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement was less great than it is in our region, a factor which definitely gave me some food for thought.

Panel Discussions

Panel presentations were made each morning (3 days) on a variety of themes. Most of them were quite general and some even vague. This was to a large extent a reflection of the lack of information on the reality of black women in Brazil (this point was also true for indigenous women). The presentations and the discussions that followed pointed clearly to the need for more in-depth research, analysis and education on the history and present conditions of black women in Brazil.

Some of the topics discussed were



Women's World
18, June 1988

black brazil

Work, AIDS Feminism, Health and Education as they affect Black Women; and the Quilombos of Baixada.

Work: It was noted that discrimination in employment was rampant against blacks in general but especially for black women who were paid the lowest salaries. Employment agencies state clearly that they do not want blacks, although most employers try to use technical rather than racist justifications for discrimination.

AIDS: The town of Santos (where the meeting was being held) is supposed to be the city with the highest rate of AIDS in Brazil. This is possibly as a result of the fact that it is the largest port in South America. So far, adequate safeguards have not been put in place for the security/safety of blood although it is feared that 61 per cent of the population may be carrying the virus. Government and municipal departments state that they have no money to cater for the disease.

Feminism: The mobilisation and organisation of women is quite difficult as it is not easy for them to attend meetings, and so on.

Nevertheless, last year (1988) marked the 100th year of the emancipation of blacks, and women had taken the opportunity to organise the first National Meeting of Black Women in Brazil in Rio de Janeiro. Women needed the strength to continue.

Health: It was noted that the important issue of health was often forgotten in meetings of black women where the emphasis was usually on discrimination. But good health is important to every aspect of life. At present there is no information available on the health of black women as the Commission on the Status of Women has not paid any attention to this.



Using the case of the U.S.A., data on the specific health issues related to black women were highlighted.

Education: According to the speaker, the education of black women is really a sad situation in Brazil. In the past, education was the preserve of the sons of the white Portuguese. The Africans, who were enslaved for 300 years, had little or no access to education.

Today there continues to be much discrimination in Brazil, where most black women work as domestics and black boys do shoe shining. Only 1 per cent of black women have university education, and only 25 per cent are literate.

Quilombos Baixada: A Quilombo was any settlement of five or more ex-slaves who had run away. Similar settlements existed throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean. The first Quilombo was established in Brazil in 1575, and there were eleven in the state of Sao Paulo, six of them in Santos.

The famous Quilombo of Jabaquara was situated in the very area where the meeting was taking place. It was an agglomeration of other Quilombos, as runaways from other parts of Brazil were brought here, and the total number of ex-slaves who inhabited it is between 3,000 and 10,000.

Lively discussion

The third day concentrated on the experiences of blacks and black women outside of Brazil. Representatives of three countries were present: West Germany, Canada and Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, the Black Women Deputy, Benedita de Silva, spoke on all the issues still facing black women in Brazil. This generated a very lively discussion.

At the end of the meeting, a plenary discussion was held. This comprised verbal evaluations of the experience and the approval of recommendations put forward from workshops on the various subject areas.

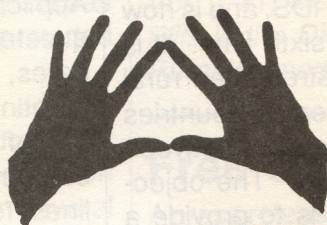
All in all, this was a stimulating event. The time spent in Brazil was much too short for any adequate appraisal of the situation, but clearly the women's movement is a leading force in the Black movement of Brazil.

Dr. Rhoda Reddock is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies St. Augustine campus, and a member of the CAFRA Secretariat.



Rhoda with two members of the Coletivo de Mulheres Negras de Brixada Santista in Santos, Brazil

The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education



Two new books from the Case Studies Series published in English and Spanish

The Moon Also Has Her Own Light The Struggle to Build a Women's Consciousness Among Nicaraguan Farmworkers

Asociacion de Trabajadores del Campo

Jointly prepared by ATC (Nicaraguan Farmworkers Union) and the International Council for Adult Education Women's Programme, this study focusses on how popular education has been used as a tool to promote discussion, increase consciousness, and promote women's leadership within the union. It also reflects

on the effect this process has had on the work and home life of the agricultural workers and, in a broader sense, on the struggles of the Nicaraguan women's movement to keep women's emancipation in the forefront of the revolution. 1989 64 pp. CAN\$6.50

Strategic Contradictions Funding and Organisational Democracy in Sistren 1977-1988

Sistren

Honor Ford-Smith gives a detailed account of the group's historical and organisational development, and analyses the limitations of its social impact. The conclusions she draws, as well as her suggestions for more effective organisation in the future, are a major contribution to discussions of feminists organising. 1989 100 pp. CAN\$8.50

Available from ICAE Women's Programme, c/o Participatory Research Group, 394 Euclid Avenue, Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 2S9.

M eetings, Conferences, Fellowships

1990-1991

Radcliffe College and the Carnegie Corporation of New York announce a Distinguished Visitor programme at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute open to mid-career and senior women researchers or practitioners from developing countries. Applicants must submit both a project proposal including supporting documentation, and a personal statement describing their proposed plan of study and the importance of a visit to Radcliffe to their work. Projects should focus on issues such as maternal and child health, education, the family, housing, employment or science and technology. Deadline: February 1, 1990. For more information and application forms, write the Institute at 34 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 021138, U.S.A.

March 1990

'World Conference on Slavery and Society in History' organised by Arewa House, Centre for Research and Historical Documentation, Ahmadu Bello University, P.M.B. 2006, Kaduna, Nigeria from 26-30 March, 1990. The conference will look at causes of slavery in traditional societies around the world; slavery and religion in world history; African religion and slavery; and European slavery and slave trading. Objectives include: clarification of misconceptions sur-

rounding the phenomenon of slavery, and the role of various religious and ethnic groups in Nigeria in particular; reevaluation of the view that Islam was a promoter of slavery; and conceptual and linguistic clarification of the concepts of Slavery, Apartheid, Debt Bondage, Pawning, Caste System, Indentured Labour, etc. For further information, contact the Convener, Dr. Bashir Ikara, Director of Arewa House.

April-July 1990

A three-month course in Rural Development and Rural Policy is being held at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex from 23 April-20 July, 1990. This course has become an established part of the teaching programme at the IDS, and is now being run for the sixth time. It is intended to help strengthen rural research in developing countries and to build stronger links between research and policy. The objective of the course is to provide a practical training in multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral rural research. The emphasis throughout is on practical work based on case studies and simulation exercises, and the course includes a 10-day field visit to Wales. It is designed as in-service training for practising planners, researchers and research managers in the agriculture, education and energy sectors. Women are particularly

encouraged to apply. Unfortunately, IDS cannot fund participants and you are strongly advised to seek funding as early as possible. Applications should be submitted not later than three months before the start of the course. For further information write to IDS at the University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RE, England.

Travel Grants

ACLS Travel Grants to International Meetings Abroad enables scholars in humanities and humanities-related disciplines to participate in international meetings outside North America. Persons must read papers or have a major, official role in conference. Application forms must be requested from ACLS, giving names, dates, place and sponsorship of meeting, as well as brief description of applicant's scholarly interests and role in meeting. Deadlines for submission of application: October 1 for meetings January-June; March 1 for meetings July-December. To request forms, contact: ACLS Travel Grant Office, 228 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017-3398, U.S.A.

Networking: A pooling of Strengths and Resources

by Cynthia Ellis

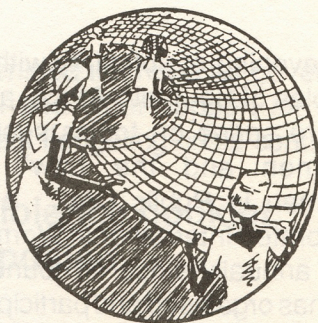
As the word suggests, networking is like a net working. If you look at a net, there are several strands moving in different directions and creating a whole. Sisters, we are the strands weaving in with each other to take care of our problems and to tackle challenges together. Through networking we can also share our joys and successes. Each strand reaches out in order to pull in nourishing and nurturing food.

The women's movement of the world gives us important examples of how to network. This begins with the belief that positive change will happen if we reach out and support each other.

Women have identified their areas of strength, and have provided support around these.

All some sisters have done, for example, is to provide information about where to get help on several issues. There is then a place where you know that you can get information. In addition to this, the information is sent out far and wide, especially to those groups and individuals who touch the lives of several other sisters.

The net continues to unfold and reaches out wider. It has been through networking by sisters in the world that funds have been made available for programmes to



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improve life conditions. The basic understanding is sharing, giving and receiving.

Once the net works, we can have the space to be creative and to explore new dreams and new projects. Each individual, group and organisation has its own special strength. In this way we can create our own jobs, and write music, poetry, songs and plays. Let's hold on, sisters, hold on.

Taken from The Belize Woman, Vol. 3 #1, March 1989. Cynthia Ellis is the Director of the Belize Rural Women's Association.

Free Choice

A press release from the Women's Progressive Organisation, Guyana.

The Women's Progressive Organisation wishes to express its views on the question of abortion, which has become a point of deep concern in our country and in most parts of the world. The WPO has for long expressed its opinion of 'free choice'. The choice lies with the woman concerned; it is her decision.

The major concern to all is the manner in which abortions are performed. Once the state does not make abortions illegal, the fear of back street butchery of women can be excluded. This is, of course, a major problem, particularly among low income or unemployed women who cannot afford the high cost of abortions done by doctors in private hospitals, clinics or offices. The latest information is that an abortion in Guyana now costs about \$800.

There are many reasons why abortions become necessary. Sometimes it involves the whole future of a woman. Abortions are not meant to be a form of birth control. However, when they become necessary, there should be the availability of competent, hygienic and low cost operations. At all costs, abortions performed by persons other than doctors must be prevented, and this can be effective when the state accepts that abortions are a woman's right and should be conducted under acceptable conditions at costs that can be met by those in need.

For it is a fact that legal or illegal, rich women can have abortions under the best conditions.

We would urge the government to accept the reality of the needs of the masses of women and make suitable provisions.

Carifem Update

Trinidad and Tobago

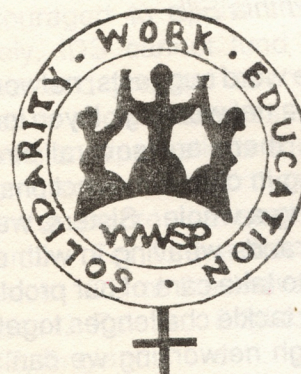
Seeking equality and justice

Women Working for Social Progress ("Workingwomen"), based in Tunapuna to the East of Port of Spain, has been working as a pressure group for four and a half years. Its aims are: to focus national attention on the obstacles which hinder the development of the full potential of women and their full contribution to national life; to educate, unite and organise women for the struggle against these obstacles; to work for the building of a just society; and to join the struggle for cultural sovereignty and the building of a strong sense of our Caribbean identity.

The group organises public education events, such as the first forum of the Sexual Offences Bill,

an evening of solidarity with the peoples of Southern Africa, and a lecture series on topics such as "Women and the Law" and "Women in Public Life". It has celebrated International Women's Day annually since its founding, and has organised and participated in public demonstrations, for example, a candle-lit vigil and march to commemorate International Day Against Violence Against Women.

Workingwomen seeks to play a role in the decision-making process by making submissions to national commissions, and has worked - to a certain extent - through the national media by sending in articles, letters and statements. The fact that these were not always published, or were stuck in a remote corner of the newspaper, led Workingwomen to start producing its own newspaper, The Workingwoman, in August 1987.



The long-term aim of the organisation is to set up a women's centre to be a permanent meeting place for women, and a centre for activities such as legal aid, self-defence awareness, a reading room, popular education and crisis counselling.

Women Working for Social Progress can be contacted at Carters Lane, off Evans Street, Curepe, Trinidad and Tobago.



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N ews, News, News

St. Lucian Women March Against Violence

On 19 August, 1989 women for the first time took to the streets of Castries in public protest against an issue of concern to them. The march - against domestic violence - was stimulated by an incident in which a woman was murdered by her common-law husband after she had made a report of incest to the police and asked for police protection.

Preceded by a rally at Vigie Sports Complex, involving a cultural presentation and speeches, the march attracted a massive turn-out of women and some men, much more than expected by the organisers. It also attracted a crowd of on-lookers and, despite some heckling, the atmosphere was favourable and progressive. In fact, it was seen as something of a test of the public's response to women's issues, and several organisations rallied around the cause.

Since then, reactions to the march have been mainly favourable in the press and on radio call-in programmes, with the action of women taking to the streets having itself become a focus of public debate. All in all, this event has led to a new spirit of co-operation among women's organisations.

Also, women's expressed concern about domestic violence has un-

derlined the need for governmental and other support for St. Lucia's fledgeling crisis centre.

Violence booklet updated

Sistren has updated and revised its booklet "No to Sexual Violence". It now contains more information on taking precautions against and surviving violence and on the law, and also provides a directory of existing facilities in Jamaica for victims of sexual violence. The design and layout are both markedly improved. The 31-page booklet can be ordered from Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5,



Jamaica at a cost of JA\$12.00 each for batches of 10 or more, and JA\$15.00 for orders of less than 10 copies. (Note: the cover illustration was drawn by Sharon Chacko whose batik, "The Tree of Life" will appear on the cover of CAFRA's anthology of Caribbean women's poetry, *Creation Fire*).

On the Bookshelf

As promised in the last issue, the following is a list of periodicals which the CAFRA office receives on a regular basis:

ADA/FYI: Association of Development Agencies/For Your Information

Association of Development Agencies, 10 South Avenue, Kingston 10, Jamaica.

Asian Women Workers' Newsletter
Committee for Asian Women, 57 Peking Road, 4/F, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Belize Woman

Belize Rural Women's Association, P.O. Box 196, Belmopan, Belize.

Caribbean Contact

Caribbean Conference of Churches, P.O. Box 616, Bridgetown, Barbados.

CD: Consumers and Development
International Organisation of Consumer Unions, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Casilla de Correo 10993, Suc. 2, Montevideo, Uruguay

Concerning Women and Development

Women and Development Unit (WAND), Extra Mural Dept., The U.W.I., Pinelands, St. Michael, Barbados.

DAWN Informs

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Rua Fernandes 32, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22.270 Botafogo, Brazil.

IFDA Dossier

International Foundation for Development Alternatives, 4 Place du Marche, 1260 Nyon, Switzerland.

INSTRAW News

INSTRAW, P.O. Box 21747, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Informativo Mujer

Centro de Documentacion y Estudios, Area Mujer, Farina, c.c. 2558, Asuncion, Paraguay.

Inter Pares Bulletin

Inter Pares, 58 Arthur Street, Ottawa, Canada K1R 7B9

Koudmen: Issues in Dominican Development

Small Projects' Assistance Team, 6 Fort Lane, Roseau, Dominica.

News and Letters

News and Letters Committee, 59 E. Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605, U.S.A.

ORPeP Newsletter

U.W.I. Oral and Pictorial Records Programme, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

Quehaceres

Centro de Investigacion para la Accion Feminina (CIPAF), Luis F. Thomen no. 358, Ensanche Quisqueya, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Regionews from Managua

Apartado c-163, Managua, Nicaragua.

Sojourner: the Women's Forum

380 Green St., Cambridge, MA 02139, U.S.A.

Sistren

Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica.

Spearhead

Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR), P.O. Box 571, Belize City, Belize.

The Tribune

International Women's Tribune Centre, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Voices Rising

International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Women's Programme, Suite 308, 394 Euclid Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 2S9.

Woman Speak!

Women and Development Unit (WAND), Extra Mural Dept., The U.W.I., Pinelands, St. Michael, Barbados.

The Womanist

Catalyst Research and Communications, 541 Sussex Drive, Suite 201, Ottawa, Canada K1N 6Z6

Women in Action

Isis International, Via San Saba 5, 00153 Rome, Italy.

Women Struggle: International News

Women and Development Unit (WAND), Extra Mural Dept., The U.W.I., Pinelands, St. Michael, Barbados.

Women Unite for Democracy, Equality and Social Progress

New Guyana Co. Ltd., 8 Industrial Site, Ruimveldt, Georgetown, Guyana.

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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 exploitation 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.

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Individuals: 25 units in currency of residence
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A brochure outlining the aims and objectives of the association, as well as its priority areas, is available on request.

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