

WOMAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Struggle

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FIGHTING FOR FORESTS

Between 1900 and 1965 half of the forests in so called developing countries were cleared. Large scale deforestation of the planet is the outcome of many factors including policies and practices intended for commercial purposes, often by consortia of national and multinational companies. However, it is the role of the poor in deforestation through population growth and the need for fuel which is more popularly understood. In fact, the poor are beginning to organize to protect the fragile environments in which they live. In Sarawak, Malazia, thousands of indigenous people have formed human blockades in an attempt to stop the destruction of their ancestral forests by logging companies. A similar incident (the Haida) blockade occurred in Canada.

Poor farmers, fishermen and forest dwellers know that their livelihoods are tied to a healthy environment. More and more, environmentalists are recognising that these people are the key agents in environmental preservation. The poor, threatened by outside interests and ecological disasters, are mobilizing a twenty-nine year old Sarawak mother has said: "The forest is our source of survival. Without the forest we will all be dead and now there's hardly any left. That's why we will stay at this blockade until they listen to us. We want them to leave our land".

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CHARCOAL PRODUCERS IN ST.LUCIA TAKE UP ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

In St. Lucia charcoal producing families are working with environmentalists from the Eastern Caribbean Natural Areas Management Programme to save the island's mangrove swamps. Concerned about the steady destruction of the coastline by charcoal production, these groups are co-operating to create change that is both

economically and ecologically sound. They are planting other trees for charcoal and are working to manage the forest resources more carefully. In one area the local people established a nature reserve on an island where two unique species of reptile live. Young people were trained as nature guides. This ecological tourist attraction has brought new revenue to the community.

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NURSES DEMONSTRATE TO PROTECT BRITAIN'S NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

February 3rd was an historic day for UK nurses as they spearheaded a twenty-four hour strike in the National Health Service. Manchester nurses had struck six weeks earlier and forced the government to climb down over their plans to cut special duty payments which can be up to a third of a nurse's wage. The anger is about what is happening to the service because of chronic underfunding added to longstanding grievances over pay and conditions. As more and more wards closed and waiting lists increased, nurses took action. "Our aim in taking this strike action is to publicise what is happening in the Health Service, says a London Hospital National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) nurse's leaflet. "We are at a point where the future of the Health Service is at stake. The government has provocatively stated there will be no more money for the NHS, despite billions of pounds being available for tax cuts to the rich. Low paid workers like us and the unemployed won't see this money. We are fighting now to influence the political debate on the NHS. What we want is free care on demand, adequate funding for our good and worthwhile health care system, and a decent living wage for all its employees."

"It's not safe to get ill in this country anymore" according to a striking teaching hospital nurse. "I wouldn't feel safe if something serious happened to me. Patients are dying in this hospital's casualty department waiting for a bed. Because of weekend bed closures we discharge patients who are not well enough to go home, or push beds over the hospital trying to find a place for someone who needs to stay in. Honestly, we can't go on like this much longer. We have to do something, and taking strike action was the best way we had of letting people know just how desperate the situation is."

WOMEN SELF-DEFENSE SQUADS IN PERU

Women in the poor and overcrowded neighbourhood of San Juan de Miraflores in Lima have had enough of domestic violence at the hands of their men and have organised themselves into Women's Mutual Self Defence groups.

Every woman in the group carries a powerful whistle with which to summon other women in an emergency. And it works - the men back off.

The women decided to organise because nobody would defend them if they were attacked by their partners in their own homes. Now the number of violent incidents had decreased because husbands are forced to think twice before they beat their wives. "The macho men around here call us 'husband beaters' because we are ready to defend any woman being assaulted" says the president of one of the groups.

(Info from Outwrite, UK, No.59)

UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE TO BE COMPENSATED FOR ATTACK

George Washington University must pay \$800,000.00 in damages to an employee who was raped in the university's parking lot, according to a U.S. District Court jury.

According to the woman's attorney, the parking garage in question had been open for a month when his client was raped. She and two other women had already complained to the university that the lot was too dark and that they had been harassed by construction workers there. The morning the woman was raped, she had waited in her car for ten or fifteen minutes in the hope that another car would enter the lot. As soon as she gave up and got out of the car, she was attacked. The university, which has argued that she was "contributorily negligent" for getting out of her car when she was apprehensive, plans to appeal the decision. (After all, she could have brought breakfast, a long novel, and a thermos of coffee, and lived in the front seat until an escort arrived.)

(Info. from the Washington Post, 7/3/87)

Off Our Backs Vol.xvii November 1987

FIRST MUSEUM FOR WOMEN ARTISTS OPENS IN THE USA

The first museum in the United States devoted solely to women artists is now open in Washington, D.C. The National Museum of Women in the Arts officially opened on April 1987 with the premier of a major exhibition, "American Women Artists, 1984 - 1930". It is both the inaugural exhibition for the museum and the first major travelling exhibition of American women artists.

The inaugural exhibition featured 124 paintings and sculptures and included such acknowledged masters as Mary Cassatt, the only American ever to exhibit with the Impressionists at the Paris Salon exhibitions, and Georgia O'Keefe, considered one of the most prominent and successful American artists of the 20th Century.

In addition, a great number of lesser known artists were featured, furthering the museum's goal of recognising previously overlooked women artists of exceptional stature.

Women's World, Isis Women's Int. Cross-Cultural Exchange. #15, September 1987

Info. from WomeNews, Pennsylvania
Commission for Women, USA

GREEK WOMEN WALK HOME

On Sunday 22 November, hundreds of Greek Cypriot women, protesting against the division of their island, braved unmarked minefields to cross a UN-controlled buffer zone and reach the occupied north, for the first time in thirteen years.

The women, in a twenty-six bus convoy organised by Women Walk Home, had played cat-and-mouse with the 2,300 strong UN force, before reaching an unguarded section of the buffer strip.

About 350 women penetrated more than 50 yards into the north, where they talked to Turkish Cypriot journalists, before dispersing peacefully

Despite previous attempts, this was the first time demonstrators had crossed the 138 mile long strip, since it was set up as a buffer zone after the 1974 Turkish invasion.

Helen Soteriou, an organiser of Women Walk Home, said, "We wanted to try and pass here. We wanted to do what we have done to show the world that the Turkish Army is preventing Cypriots moving freely in their own country - they are partitioning this country."

Info. from Parikjaki, Outwrite No.62, Feb, '88

WOMEN PROTEST DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-seven women working in the National Father Memorial Hall, Taipei, Taiwan have filed a suit case against their employer for discriminative stipulations in their contracts. Their contracts specify that all women employees who are pregnant or reach 30 years old should resign from office. A few of the women are facing this fate of forced resignation as they are approaching 30. Women's groups in Taiwan have been expressing concern and support to the case.

Info from Press News, August 1987
