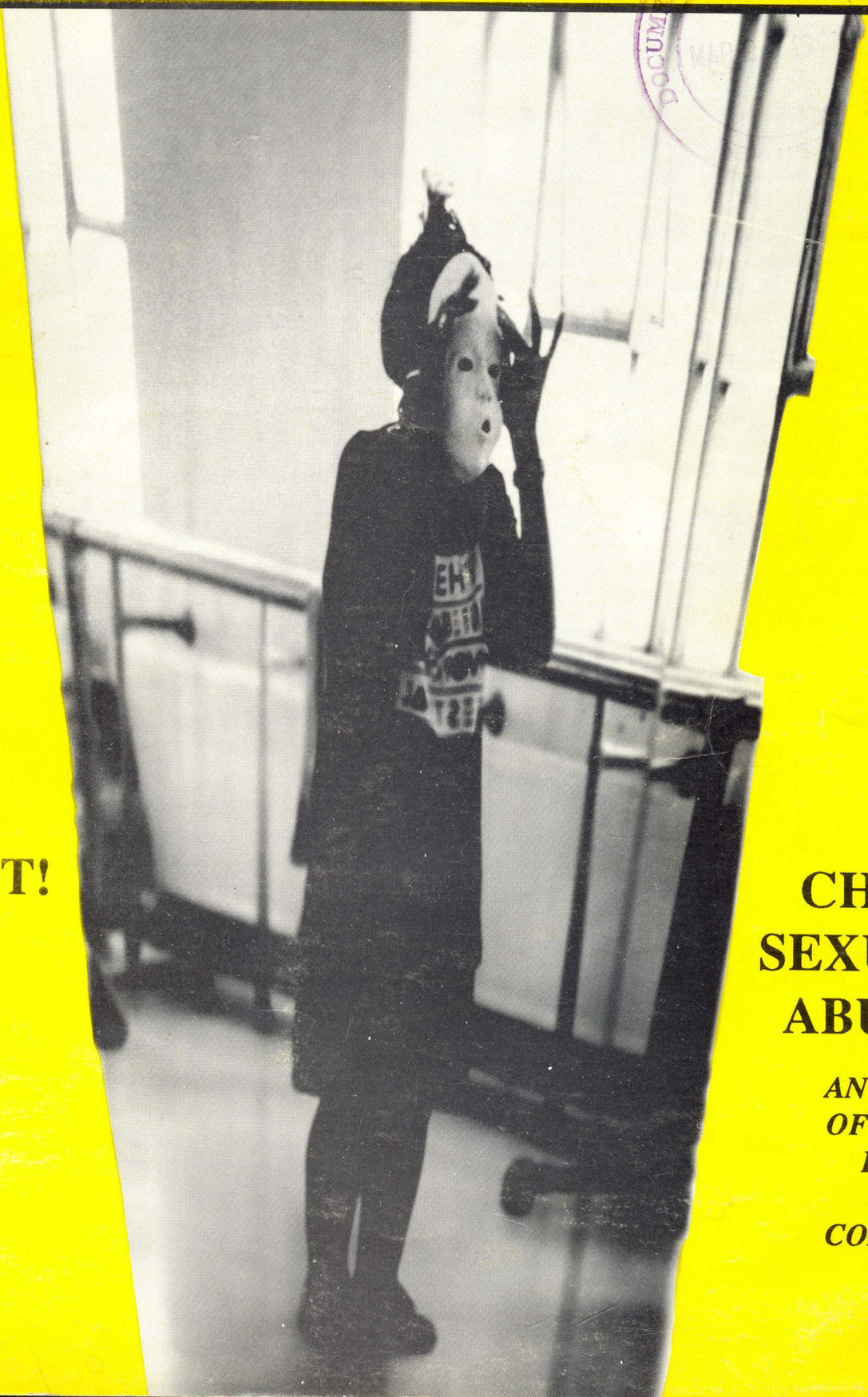


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VOL. 12 NOS. 2 & 3

SIREN

\$12.00



**“BUDGET!
IT NUH
MEK
SENSE”**

**WOMEN'S
SURVIVAL
STRATEGIES**

**CHILD
SEXUAL
ABUSE:**

**AN ISSUE
OF MALE
POWER
AND
CONTROL**

SISTREN OUT DEH!

LOCAL: Sistren ran a series of workshops on group building and leadership for women in Canterbury (Montego Bay) and Seivwright Gardens in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth; Schools Theatre Technique Workshops were held in Prattville (Manchester), Mocho (Clarendon) and at Shortwood Teacher Training College (Kingston); Lana Finikin received training in mediation techniques in the Jamaica-Capital Dispute Resolution Project which involved social workers, lawyers, the police and nongovernmental organisation workers; Theatre Team performed 'Being Used', a new skit on the problem of drugs, on the waterfront, Downtown Kingston; Bess Thompson-Rose and Rebecca Knowles organised a December Outing for Friends of Sistren to Doctor's Cave.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL: Lana Finikin took part in the July CNIRD meeting in Trinidad and Tobago; Rebecca Knowles was part of the National Black Women's Health Collective/WAND workshop in Barbados in August; Jerline Todd was in Chile in August for the ISIS International Communication Workshop; Hilary Nicholson and Joan Ross-Frankson took part in the 5th Encuentro of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Argentina along with some 4,000 other women. Bev Hanson and Annie Blake were in London for the International Workshop Festival.

COMING UP

● The Sisters Celebration Planning Committee needs you (yes, you!) if the March 8, 1991 International Women's Day concert is to move to even greater heights! Check Medlyn at Projects for People (PFP), 92-97356 or 92-92304 or Hilary at Sistren, 92-92457. Meanwhile highlight March 8 in your diaries — and watch the press for details.

● Workshops are being offered to schools and communities, January through March. Current issues: Teenage Parenting and Drugs. Research is being done on Women and the Debt Crisis for future workshops. Popular Theatre Techniques and Group Building workshops are also being offered to communities islandwide which hosted Sistren's 1989 Island Tour. A Community Leaders' Seminar in April will round off this first phase of the 1990 Workshop Programme.

CORNER SHOP

● Ring Ding in a Tight Corner by Honor Ford Smith now also available in Spanish (Entre Aprietos y Alborotos) for distribution in Latin America. Sistren's experiences over 13 years are minutely dissected and analysed, leaving very clear messages about the joys and pitfalls of organising grassroots women

● Textiles: New line of clothes bearing the Sisters Celebration logo as well as old favourites.

● Bumper Stickers: range by Women's Media Watch includes "Nuff Respect to Woman Everytime" and "Say No To Sexual Violence".



Flashing back to Sister's Celebration 1990: Sister Marcia of the I-Threes.



Editor	Joan Ross-Frankson
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The Nuff Niceness Outing!



A good time was had by the bus load of Sistren and friends on their December 16 outing to Montego Bay. Picture shows (back row) Monica, Valerie, Angie and Joyce, (first row) Annie, Nicole, Lana, Damien and Racquel.

Sistren is produced three times a year by the Sistren Theatre Collective as part of its on-going efforts to highlight issues of concern to women in the society. Sistren is a non-profit making collective of women. Other activities include theatre, workshops using Drama-in-Education methodology, and research. Sistren has also experimented with film and video and produced a book of members' life stories, Lionheart Gal. Sistren Textiles is the group's income-earning project. Contact: 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-92457/92-96171).

ACQUAINTED



Hilary Nicholson

SISTREN PROFILE

Nicknamed Sistren's 'Gofer', Hilary has been here, there and everywhere since joining the group in 1978: in technical theatre and workshops, offstage and on, in public relations and as finance team member, on film and video production, and as key fundraiser. Says she, "In Sistren, you can learn all kinds of skills as long as you can handle being thrown in the deep end. My debut as lighting designer/technician came one night on tour when someone put an enormously heavy army spotlight in my inexperienced hands; years as fundraiser have shown me the politricks of international funding."

Hilary came to Sistren from a very different life: wandering the world as a waitress, a social psychologist, a French teacher. When she's not working, Hilary's first

choice is to find the sea!

Her favourite times with Sistren? "Rural theatre shows," she answers without hesitation. "Piling props and drums and people into a pickup and heading out to far, beautiful corners of our island." Helping to start Sistren 'spin-offs', like Sisters Celebration and Women's Media Watch, have left her with other fond memories. "The 13 years have been hectic and filled with rough spots, but I'm proud of the countless things we have initiated; our courage in raising issues nobody else wanted to touch."

And, what is her greatest wish for Sistren's future? "I want to see Sistren open the windows wide, wide and let some fresh breezes blow through; let the rain untangle the knots which tie us up..."

PERSONAL NOTES

GOODBYE: to staffers **Joan Edwards** (Workshop Team), **Carla Davis** (Secretary) and **Carol Simpson** (Accounts). All the best in your future endeavours.

CONGRATULATIONS: to **May Farquharson** who was invested with the Order of Jamaica on National Heroes Day, October 15, 1990; to **Pauline Melville** and **Merle Collins** on their new books, 'Shape Shifter' (by Pauline) and 'Rain Darlin' (by Merle), both published by the Women's Press, London; to **Leone Ross**, **Sistren** contributor, who gained First Class Honours and the Dean's Award for Excellence in the Faculty of Arts and General Studies, UWI, Mona campus.

CONDOLENCES: to **Rebecca Knowles** of Theatre Team and **Lauren 'Michael' Williams**, our driver, who both lost their fathers; to **Marion Bernard**, of **Sistren Research**, who lost her grandfather; to **Ms Elsie Bailey**, who lost her sister, Miss Amy; to **Leslie Chang**, **Judy Salmon** and other family members who lost **Phoebe Chang**; to **Dorothy Hollingsworth** of CUSO who lost her brother.

MOVED COUNTRY: **Tina Johnson**, Editor of **CAFRA NEWS** and energetic activist in the regional women's movement; from Trinidad and Tobago to Mexico.

NEW DAWNING: The **DAWN** Secretariat has now officially moved to the **WAND** offices in Barbados, under the Secretary Generalship of **Peggy Antrobus**.

AWARDED: **ADA/FYI** (networking organ of the Association of Development Agencies) received a Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Journalism from the Press Association of Jamaica at its

EDITORIAL

- 5 “Sistren news magazine is under economic pressure so we are trying to re-organise and put ourselves on a business footing. And we need your help. . .”

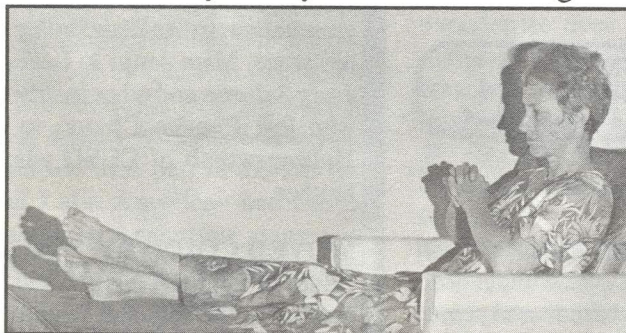
FEATURES

- 8 “The bottom line is that the vast majority of our women are working very hard indeed to secure basic food, shelter and clothing . . .”

Hilary Nicholson and Bess Thompson-Rose talk to four strong, determined women about their survival strategies.

- 12 “1990 saw the passing of two great stalwarts of the Women's Movement . . .”

A salute to Amy Bailey and Phoebe Chang.



- 14 “The Act has made divorce more difficult and painful to the parties . . .”

Suzanne Dodd brings us up to date on the New Divorce Act.

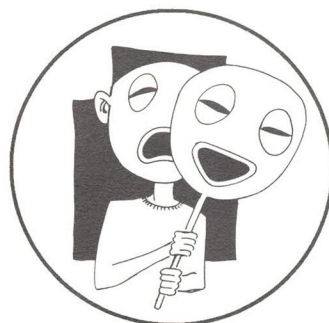
- 15 “As readers and viewers of the media, we can all become active users rather than passive recipients . . .”

Hilary Nicholson uses her pen against "Come and Get Me" media images.

- 16 “Udell is walking tall due to recent training opportunities . . .”

Joan Ross-Frankson say's training courses aimed at Domestic Helpers are building their self-esteem.

SPECIAL REPORT



- 20-31 “Our worst crime is abandoning the fountain of youth. . .”

- Joan Ross-Frankson and Cheryl Fletcher on Child Sexual Abuse.
- Paulette Williams examines the threat of AIDS to babies.
- Nancy L. Anderson says we can abolish Common Entrance Examination and have an equitable education system.
- Sex Education and the Mentally Disabled Child.
- Teen pregnancy report highlights need for continuing education.
- Children in institutions and on the streets.

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SISTREN UNDER ECONOMIC PRESSURE

We begin by apologising to our readers for our long absence and saying, warm thanks to those of you who have called or written to say how much you have been missing us. The fact is that events are making it ever more difficult to keep producing **Sistren** within our present confines.

The big problem is money. We, like the rest of Caribbean society cannot ignore the effects of our external debt (US\$4.5 Billion in Jamaica alone) and the even more critical effects of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment policies.

The economic reality of high prices and low wages combined with the social strain of cutbacks in the social services have created enormous burdens on us all, but particularly on we women. If we were once working 15 hours a day on money-work, domestic work and voluntary work, we are now going 20 hours a day to also prop up our broken down health and education systems, secure elusive housing and shop around for 'bargains'. Added to that, black grassroots women's collectives are no longer as 'fashionable' as they use to be with overseas funding agencies. Our funding needs have been overtaken by events in Eastern Europe and concerns for the Global Environment.

Unfortunately when the sun was shining upon we black grassroots women, and money was flowing, we failed to use it to create our own financial independence. The fact is that the cost of producing **Sistren** has now become a major burden: our very limited budget has been shot down by enormous increases, particularly in the printing process. The problem is that very little importance was placed

on marketing strategies or building our distribution side. The energy and zeal displayed by limited human resources (**Sistren** is almost a one-person show) was put into building the look and content of **Sistren** (remember 13 years ago when we were a simple one-page gestetner production?) and not onto the business side.

Let's just take one example. Our mailing list has swelled over the years. Any one who expressed an interest, or paid one year's subscription was placed upon it, and their names have stayed there. **But although many of our subscribers don't bother to pay, they are the first to ring up when their copy does not arrive in the post!** Its is time to take stock. We are actively pursuing efforts to put **Sistren** on a business footing. It simply has to pay for itself or go out of existence. So it is that we are now seeking marketing expertise and editorial assistance. It also means asking the assistance of you our readers.

Enclosed you will find a simple questionnaire (very simple because we certainly don't want to burden you and we do want to get a response). Apart from asking you what you want to see improved in the product, we're also seeking more tangible signs of commitment. In straight talk (especially to those of you who have **not** paid your subscription fees), do you want **Sistren** or not and if you do are you prepared to send your regular subscription?

In the meantime, we continue to be committed to bringing out a publication focussing on feminist and gender issues, which we maintain is not merely women's business.



MY SMALL

BLAZING CONTRIBUTIONS



GOOD TO MEET YOU! That's what Esminé "Miss Tiny" Antoine (centre) seems to be saying as she greets Mr Rafael

Diaz, Chairman of Grace Kennedy and Company Ltd at the 1990 Jamaica launch of Nesha Haniff's book "Blaze A Fire: Sig-

nificant Contributions of Caribbean Women." Miss Tiny, an Informal Commercial Importer and nightclub owner, is one of four Jamaican women featured in the book. The others are Edna Manley, sculptor; Louise Bennett, actress, dub poet and comedienne; and well known entrepreneur Mabel Tenn, who helped build Grace Kennedy. At left is broadcaster/actress, Fae Ellington who read extracts from the book during the launch. Guest speaker was educator, Fay Saunders, who lauded the book for highlighting the contributions of unsung Caribbean women including banana farmers, cane cutters, rice planters, higglers, nurses, teachers and civil servants. "The invisible, the silent majority, are the ones we have the need to give the greatest amount of praise," she said. Author Haniff said her book was written with young people in mind and her hope was to see it, along with Women's Studies, included in the CXC syllabus.

MULTI-PURPOSE CENTRE



Women helping themselves is the hallmark of a new multi-purpose centre on Smatt Road in Port Antonio. The centre started last year by offering day care services to some 50 children (shown in picture) and has since launched a series of skills training programmes including driving, horticulture, small appliance repair and waitering. It began to take shape in 1974 as a Labour Day project of the People's National Party Women's Movement. The Women's Bureau then acted as facilitator, contracting the Women's Construction Collective to supervise some 10 women who worked on site as masons and carpenters. It is being operated by the Portland Parish Action Committee on Women's Affairs. See what we can do for each other when we all pull together?!

CORNER

"FIRST" APPOINTMENTS



Today, women are assuming roles as career women and entrepreneurs in addition to being wives and mothers. While they remain experts at managing the household budget, many are inexperienced in the more formal methods of money management via investment. The need exists among women who are wage earners as well as those who are emerging as entrepreneurs. The Eagle Financial Network, recognising a growing need among women for investment counselling, has appointed Gillian Glean Walker to do just that. Gillian believes many women with good ideas do not know how to go about setting up businesses, how to obtain financing and in general, how to negotiate the apparent maze of requirements needed to transform their ideas into reality. She is particularly excited about this aspect of her job. "I believe that I have a great opportunity to make a positive contribution to the development process in Jamaica. With the current moves toward deregulation, more and more Jamaicans should begin to understand more about the world of finance and investment to take advantage of the many opportunities that will be opening up. I am beginning this by concentrating on women, but we will extend our services to everyone as we build."

Another male bastion has fallen!! After 47 years, the Police Federation has opened the doors of the Central Executive to a female -- Woman Constable Yvonne Wright. Yvonne, 1990 champion female athlete for Area 7 of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, is excited about creating history in the JCF, seeing her role as that of speaking out on behalf of police women, particularly in relation to accommodation, promotions and maternity benefits. This "Feds First" follows last year's appointment of the first female Deputy Commissioner of Police, Winifred Hall Wray.

WOMEN DOMINATE CDA EXECUTIVE

Members of the Combined Disabilities Association (CDA) have elected a record number of women to their Board of Directors. Seven of the nine members elected at CDA's annual general meeting are women including Chairperson, Monica Bartley, a government statistician. Monica (seated centre) was re-elected unopposed to serve her second term. Others posing for the camera are (seated left-right) Delores Williams (treasurer), Henrietta Davis (Secretary), and (standing left-right) Derrick Palmer, Audrey Craig, Maureen Burns, Mary Mitchell (vice-Chairperson) and Clinton Raymond. Absent: Kathleen Webb and Huntley Forrester, who was coopted to serve.



"BUDGET! IT

by Hilary Nicholson &
Bess Thompson-Rose

Working Hard For Our Money!

Over the past decade, thousands of women have come to rely on selling from little tables and 'trays' on practically (or so it seems) every street corner, plaza, bus terminus, school gate and sporting or musical event (ever watchful of the dreaded MPM Inspectors whose job it is to move them on). But, according to community sources, there's now a tendency for many of these women to opt for setting up business in their own communities, just a stone's throw from home. And, while they sell the odd orange, cigarette or sweetie, or beg from neighbours and passersby, it is their children who venture further afield to sell everything from peanuts, popcorn and peppered shrimps to pencils, lipstick and plastic toys.

It makes economic sense. Apart from (often) being better salespersons, the children still have the energy and enthusiasm to run, skip and jump from location to location, whereas a woman needs bus fare and a 'decent frock' once she's out on the street.

In a significant number of cases, these women from low income communities find that many of the jobs open to them pay so little it's not worth the transportation hassles, lunch money and clothes to do them. They say it pays better to await the next barrel from overseas. As the dollar devalues the contents bring in better and better returns.

The pattern is repeated in many Caribbean territories. In Guyana, for example, drastic devaluation of the local currency has enabled those in the 'barrel industry' to make hundreds if not thousands of dollars profit. Apparently our taste for foreign goods is insatiable. Shoes, 'earspring', clothing and

other foreign 'goodies' have better earning potential than those skills and professions that require stretching out one's hand for wages and salaries that have been restricted as part of the IMF/World Bank programme of structural adjustment.

But for women, economic constraints are not the worst aspect of structural adjustment: they also have increased responsibilities for caring for the very young, the elderly and the sick. Now this is work the society considers 'non-productive', but work nonetheless which is an integral part of the nation's survival in the face of IMF demands on our governments to cut back expenditure on the social services such as health and education.

Apart from increased economic and work burdens, women often feel they don't have a right to certain information: information about our bodies, (our reproductive mechanisms in particular); information about our rights in relation to sexual violence, to marriage (common law or otherwise) and to property; information about their rights as workers.

So given these awesome constraints, how are women actually coping on a day-to-day basis?

The traditional 'pardner' system of saving is the most widely used way of meeting utility bills, getting the children outfitted for the start of the school year and any other situation where large sums of cash are needed. Women have also been forced into using home-remedies (bush tea etc) on sick members of the family to avoid exorbitantly priced drugs (another result of structural adjustment). Those who are free of very young children and have some sort of 'marketable' skill, cope by taking on two, three, four different jobs at one time.

The bottom line is that the vast majority of our women are working very hard indeed to secure basic food, shelter and clothing for their families and themselves. Life, after, all must go on. The following stories show some of the determination and matter-of-fact bravery being displayed by our women in these times, to make ends meet against all odds.

CONFRONTING THE HOUSING CRISIS

Empty shells of unfinished houses look like grey concrete ghosts scattered around neglected communities across the island - leftovers from Ministry of Construction schemes, some from the '70s, still awaiting completion.

But, in one hidden corner, a number of single women, who for years have sought to put a roof over their children's heads, have put these forgotten structures to good use. They have done repairs, installed secondhand fixtures, doors, windows - and moved in. After going to much effort to turn the shells into homes, they were told by officialdom to move over and make way for projected planning. However the "plans" they were warned of,

have not materialised and the women have continued to improve their homes. They are matter-of-fact about the ping-pong political power games that have plagued their community for years and played on their insecurity. This time, the women are not waiting for politicians to tell them what to do. They are determined to create their own solution to their housing crises. And, in all fairness, how many more years could they be expected to watch from their woefully inadequate tenement yards as weeds take over the half-built houses?

(Names are not included as the women asked for strict confidentiality given the precarious nature of their 'project': Ed)

NUH MEK SENSE"

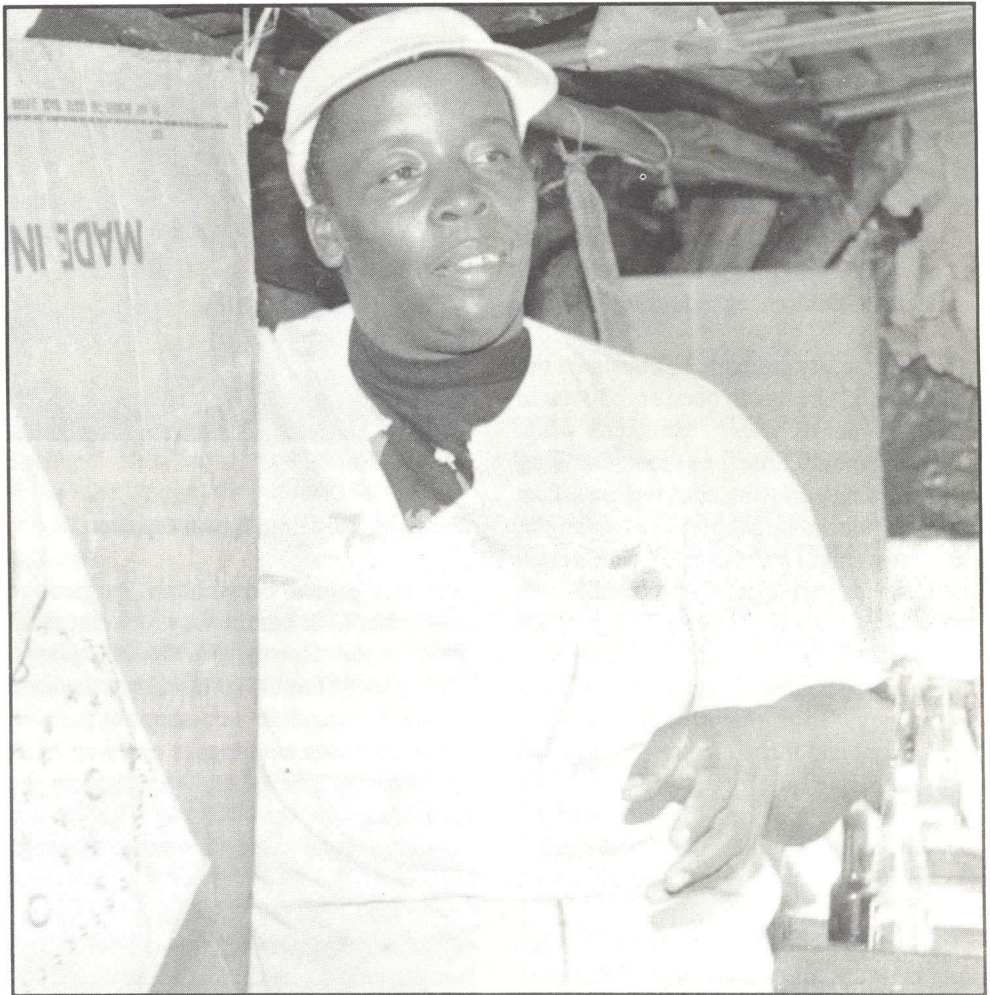
No Money For Free Time

Thirty-six year-old "B" otherwise known as "Fattie", runs a popular cooked food business from her wooden cart off Lady Musgrave Road. She serves over 50 box lunches a day mostly to regular customers - yet each day she has to dismantle her stall and push her heavy cart home over a mile to below Cross Roads. Next day "B" starts all over again, setting up her stall with poles, tarpaulin, zinc, water containers and cooking items. And at the end of the day the cart has to be pushed back up the road.

Her eldest son helps by carrying the big cooking pots and pans on a bicycle. "B's" husband helps in the morning and she has a well organised system of purchasing and preparing food to make sure her clients eat good meals even though her roadside "kitchen" lacks all modern conveniences. She carries fuel for her "stove", and ice for her "fridge". Every evening "B" buys meat which she seasons and half cooks for the next day. She goes to market twice a day; for vegetables in the evenings, for fresh fruits and jelly coconuts early in the morning.

"I get up 5 a.m. and rush for a shower, get the children ready for school, hurry to market, buy my things, carry them up in a van, stop off at Cross Roads fi mek sure the children pass through and gone to school, put up the stall, pack out my things and start cook fi catch the lunch crowd." "B" smiles a lot; the more she talks about her work - the more she smiles.

How did "B" get started in business? "When my husband lost his work is me one used to hustle. I start with \$20, buy a quarter bushel of peanuts, bake them, tie them out and give mi likkle youth. Him carry home \$50. I use \$10 fi give them dinner and use the rest buy jelly and a bundle of cane; and we built our first cart.



My husband never so money-wise so I stop sell peanut and come help him with the cane and from that to this...but it hectic."

Asked about savings, "B" laughed again. "I throw pardner but me caan touch nothing name luxury." She does some sewing for her church sisters at nights or Sunday evenings ("Sunday mi haffi round de fireside same way").

Each month "B" finds \$500 to pay the mortgage on her house: She's rightly proud of how she ventured out to an auction for a house she had never set eyes on; not even knowing what an auction was. "Mi never walk with no money, but I find myself bidding \$36,000. When the man shouted 'sold' me nearly drop!" With less than

\$3,000 in her savings, half the downpayment to seal the bid, she applied for a bank loan. "Then seh dem nuh lend money fi buy house, dem only lend fi buy car, but mi did need a roof." Finally she worked out a plan with a building society. "But when I finally get to see the house. It did mash up, bruk down and you coulda drop tru' the floor. We dig it out and fix it up. We carry marl; we haul sand. De pickney wuk, we wuk..." The children are very understanding about the monthly repayments and the savings they have to make. "Sometimes we just drink porridge - but when we have food, a good food!" More easy laughter from "B" when she's asked about leisure: "I couldn't tell you when last I had free time. Anyway there's no money left over, even fi go matinee."

18 Hours a Day; 7 Days a Week

Janet Brown lives in the heart of Bowerbank, a "temporary" community relocated from Trenchtown in the mid 70's. It's a maze of one-room wooden units squeezed into a dusty area on the eastern border of Bellevue Hospital. Like many residents of Bowerbank, Janet has extended her tiny unit with board and zinc. For two years now she has operated a small shop from her home which provides a living for herself and her six children, ages four to 18 years.

The community supports her business but to be viable, she has to open at 5:30 am to catch "breakfast sales." She sells while preparing the children for school; combing hair, pressing uniforms, cooking breakfast. She rarely closes up shop before 11 at night: "It's my living; I have to sell." She's open for business seven days a week although she closes her shop "early" (4 pm) on Sundays to get a little rest. She has a deep freeze and specialises in chicken back, liver and kidney. "I don't have the money to buy beef, oxtail and those meats. I go to town three, four, five time for the week to buy my goods because it's not a big shop where I can buy goods to sell for the whole week." On a good week she can make nearly \$500.

Clearly Janet is tied to the shop for very long hours to make ends meet. "The only little rest I get is when I get away from



here and stop think about the shop."

She has joined Bowerbank Progressive Movement, a community development club as she describes it. Janet explains, "We plan to fundraise to set up a day care centre." Attending workshops at the club on Wednesday evenings is one way Janet manages to get away, even though the workshops are held in Bowerbank's basic school, a stone's throw from her shop.

Janet feels budgetting really doesn't make sense when you live from day to day. But she does save in six different pardners, and is a pardner banker herself. "Pardners is

this community's savings." She also has a bank savings account but hasn't been near it for four years. Pardner drawdowns cover her major expenses: clothes for the children, uniforms and books for school, and something for the house from time to time.

Despite having the shop, Janet is forced to pick up one-off jobs around the community to make ends meet. Recently she worked at Bellevue cleaning up the wards and UNICEF is sponsoring a survey in the community in which women residents of Bowerbank will be carrying out the research. Janet is in training for that project now.

Where does relaxation fit into all this? Janet says she doesn't go out much anymore; "Maybe once in a while to a show..." Her plans to improve her situation centre on acquiring another deep freeze. She could then expand her business; buy meat "fresher and cheaper" from the country. She is checking out how to qualify for a loan.

Janet is proud about the effort she has put into building up her little business. She has support from the community and never has problems with thieves. None of the shopkeepers inside Bowerbank do: "Dem respect we." Yet Bowerbank is a temporary community due for relocation. Nobody owns the land or units and the residents could all be relocated any moment. How long will it then take Janet to build back the community respect, the support, the business itself?

Three Jobs On The Go

At 6 am Carmen Hanson is already up, cooking or washing - the activities she saves for early mornings or late at nights. The hours in-between are filled with the three different jobs she has to do to make ends meet; typing part-time, selling part-time and working at the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre, where she registers clients.

Carmen sells clothes, shoes and cosmetics at offices, business places and homes all over Kingston - Mountain View, Rockfort, Allman Town, Greenwich Town,

Marverly, Duhaney Park and as far as Burntside Valley in Red Hills. She has built up a clientele over the years but to reach them involves plenty walking and busfares and she rarely finishes before 9 or 10 at night.

So she cooks from early: mostly vegetables, fish, porridge, and soup. She does not love "dry food". Sometimes she cooks a little liver, cow-head, kidney, chicken. "I hardly buy red meat. I cook enough that I can have my breakfast, carry something for lunch and leave back some for dinner. I

buy things from overnight and season it up because I don't have a fridge, and I make my own juice - like ginger, cucumber, carrot, pumpkin, or just lemonade." This way Carmen makes savings and eats healthy.

Forty-year-old Carmen is a mother of five (and grandmother of nine) - but they're all grown and the youngest, at 17, is with her father. Carmen enjoys being on her own but still has little time for herself. On Saturdays she is at the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre for a few hours, then she sets out selling and collecting money

owed to her, until 7 or 8 p.m. when she finally reaches the market to buy her ground provisions. Sunday is her day for housework. By 4 p.m. when she finishes, she's too tired to go out: she enjoys staying home and reading, sewing and watching TV. "Mi 'fraid fi go out unless is with someone with a transport. I don't like to take taxi at nights because of the violence yuh know. I must know there is transportation to go home."

To make some extra earnings, Carmen used to stay up at night make irishmoss, soursop,

sorrel or ginger and cucumber juices. But over the last year the price of ingredients - especially milk - has shot up and the returns aren't worthwhile. Anyway she says, "It too hectic."

Last year Carmen had to move to a place where rent is cheaper. Like others we spoke to, he doesn't budget. "In nowadays world it nah work."

To try to make some savings she's planning to get a sewing machine to make her own clothes.



Day's Work - Better Earnings

Joyce Thompson does domestic work six days a week at four different places: some days as she finishes at one household, she moves on to the next.

Joyce is a single parent with sole responsibility for her seven children, all of whom live with her. Three of them (ages six, eight and 14) go to school. Before heading off to work in the morning she prepares the younger children for school, gets breakfast and then takes the little ones to the bus-stop. If she doesn't have to be at work too early, she goes with them, then comes back, tidies the place, washes the dishes and heads off to her first job.

The other four children (from 16-20) are at home. They don't have jobs. They don't do much around the home although the two older boys help her sometimes. Charmaine (19) sometimes makes a little money doing people's hair.

If she has time, Joyce mixes a little lunch before she leaves, and then she doesn't have to find so much lunch money for them (an average of \$7 each). She buys "dry things" for them to eat because they hardly cook. Joyce prefers to do day's-work because it brings in better earnings, and she can sometimes collect on a daily basis which means if she needs something urgently she can buy it that same evening.

Budgeting? Says Joyce: "It no mek no sense fi budget. You plan an you budget

\$100, then you go out and spend \$120." Savings? "Me haffi throw pardner fi survive. When me get the pardner, me buy the children uniform and res' a tings after the holidays."

To cut back on expenses, instead of cooking chicken back, or cowskin or liver on her kerosene stove, "me buy two bread, steam

some callaloo and mix 'wash' for the evening meal."

She often does her marketing on her way back from work in the evenings as she passes through town. To make savings, she buys 1½ lbs instead of 2 lbs of certain regular items, and makes things "stretch".

Recently her two small children were sick and she cared them with her own home remedy. She bought some guinea weed, boiled a bath, rubbed them down with alcohol, wrapped them up and put them to bed. According to Joyce they sweated out the fever in no time. What if the remedy fails? "Me would haffi tek a day from work and carry them a doctor or a children's hospital." We wondered what would happen if she, Joyce, got ill and faced the prospect of losing day's work? But Joyce doesn't let her mind dwell on such possibilities.

Before doing days-work, Joyce used to walk and sell "scandal-bags" and "cheese trix", and she feels a lot of mothers could try this "to help themselves instead of sitting down doing nothing and begging a two dollar. Them doan want do domestic work, but dem no have de ability fi do de work dem want."

I asked Joyce if she ever found time for herself, maybe to visit friends. "I don't visit friends - me doan have none fi go visit" Occasionally she sees her grandmother in the country, but the reality is that the burdens of surviving don't leave much time for socialising.



GONE BUT NEVER

1990 saw the passing of two great stalwarts of the Jamaican Women's Movement: the Honourable Amy Beckford Bailey, OJ and Phoebe Chang. Miss Amy, one of our earliest feminist pioneers, touched the lives of thousands and was well known nationally long before this year's final accolades; an Order of Jamaica for her sterling work on behalf of women and the black majority, and a video docu-drama about she and her lifelong friend

and sister activist, Ms Mae Farquharson, by Cynthia Wilmot for Sistren Research. Phoebe, not well-known nationally, was an inspiration to Jamaica's modern-day women activists as the supreme activist. Years of crippling arthritis, which finally left her unable to walk, never deterred Phoebe from her activism, from her desire to do all in her power to advance the cause of women. Women of Jamaica salute Miss Amy and Phoebe:

She Changed The Face of Jamaica

Tributes to The Honourable Amy Beckford Bailey, O.J.

November 28, 1896 - October 3, 1990

From the Women of Jamaica

Thank You Miss Amy

*For winning the right
for women to vote
for winning our right
to hold public office
We say thank you.*

*For leading the fight
for black women to work
in banks and stores
We say thank you.*

*For training and caring
Six thousand girls in the
art of home making
We say thank you.*

*For leading the fight
for our reproductive rights
We women, say thank you.*

*For opening the door
so children could see
For paving the way
for teachers like we
To continue the struggle
for all to see*

*Miss Amy,
Sistren say thank you!*

*"Her name will remain in the annals of Shortwood Teachers' College as a daughter who gave selflessly and unreservedly to her fellow men and women."
Shortwood Teachers' College and
Shortwood Old Students' Association*

*"... an illustrious teacher."
National Union of Democratic Teachers*

*"With the death of Miss Amy Bailey, a flag bearer and warrior of the early golden days of the Young Women's Christian Association has slipped from the scene."
Y.W.C.A. of Jamaica*

*"... a fine example of what a true Jamaica woman should be."
Lady Allan
President, Jamaica Federation of Women*

*"The Girls' Brigade of Jamaica had the honour of having the Hon. Amy Beckford Bailey, O.J. serve the organisation for three years, 1966-1968. As was her lifestyle and her flair for excellence, her performance as National President was outstanding. We have all been inspired by her life and work."
Girls' Brigade of Jamaica*

*"Miss Amy lit a fire. It's up to the rest of us to keep the flame burning."
Cynthia Wilmot
Director, "Miss Amy and Miss May"*

*"Ms. Amy was a genuine consumer advocate, who kept abreast of all that was happening in this field: she would 'phone us to point out any case that appeared to be an infringement of consumers' rights."
National Consumers League*



Miss Amy: A fine example of a true Jamaican woman.

*"She laid the basis for women to take their destiny in their own hands."
Women's Housing Group*

*"... a lasting monument to the lives of all Jamaican women."
Combined Disabilities Association Women's Group*

*"As we work for the principle of rights as well as jobs for women in the garment industry, particularly in the free zones, we are inspired by her example."
Women's Action Committee*

"... her life has been a sterling example of the liberating purpose of Christ to 'bring good news to the poor - liberty to

FORGOTTEN

the captives and to set free the oppressed."

Church Women United Jamaica

"... we pledge to continue the spirit of her work in the future."

Association of Women's Organisations in Jamaica

"She bothered to put pen to paper, to express her views and to motivate others to take action, when others were satisfied with being silent spectators."

CVSS Women's Sector

"Her dedication to the cause of women was unparalleled in her time."

Staff and Students Women's Centre Programme for Adolescent Mothers

"... she developed great consciousness about contribution of the Africans to the development of Jamaica as well as tremendous organisational skills in the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Thank God for Amy Bailey, a great 20th Century woman."

UWI Women and Development Studies Group

"She will be remembered for her outspokenness and strong leadership qualities."

Bureau of Women's Affairs

"She was a no-nonsense woman; fearless in speaking the truth even when this was considered bad manners, if not dangerous."

Organisation of Women for Progress & Women's Resource and Outreach Centre

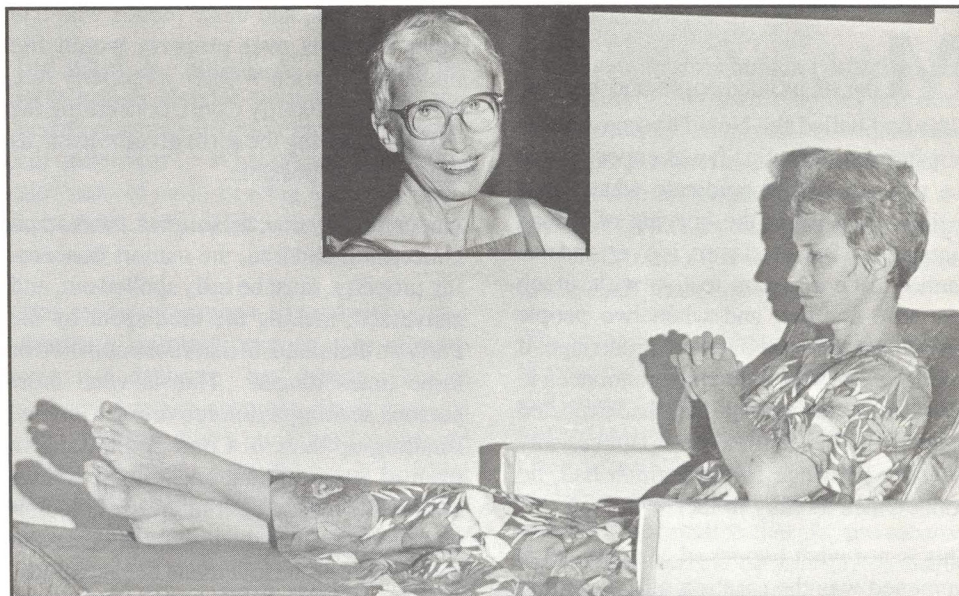
"She gave dignity to what was then known as domestic science."

People's National Party Women's Movement

"When the challenges of life shall face use,
We'll each remember as you said:
Do not be a little lime,
small and sour.

National Organisation of Women

Life Beyond Understanding



PHOEBE, THE VERY SPIRIT OF LIFE: In thoughtful mood before the onslaught of crippling arthritis and (inset) radiating the joy of life afterwards.

So many times, friends came to her with problems - personal problems perhaps or a need for clarification of ideas about policies to follow in organisational work, and Phoebe was always there, the very spirit of life, listening, sympathising, making suggestions that were both kind and shrewd, sending us on our way renewed and lighter of heart. Phoebe shared her life with us - and she had so much life to share! We remember how, as illness ravaged her body, the life force she possessed in such abundance seemed to be directed straight to her mind. As arthritis crippled her hands, the hands of a painter, she became a writer, tapping out stories and articles with tortured fingers. She was the first to volunteer to host meetings. She forced herself to walk to attend forums and art exhibitions. Was this not life beyond understanding?

So let us not mourn Phoebe. We regret that her work was not complete - but then, the tasks she set herself would never have been

completed in ten normal lifetimes. New ideas and projects came to her so rapidly that they had to fight for space in her busy imagination.

She is here with us today - who could doubt it? Whenever a frightened teenage mother seeks sympathy, Phoebe is there. When a battered woman needs a refuge - Phoebe is there. When a poor mother, desperate, jobless, homeless, looks into the face of her hungry children and then somehow, strangely, finds the will to go on - Phoebe has touched her shoulder. Whenever a woman stands up in pride and dignity fighting for her sisters - we know that Phoebe, unseen, is standing at her side. So let us have no nonsense about Phoebe being gone. She is here, in all of us, urging - demanding - that we carry on the job.

*Extracted from
Remembrance for Phoebe Chang
by Cynthia Wilmot*

Divorce More Difficult

by Suzanne Dodd

Most of us, laypeople and lawyers alike had hailed the New Divorce Act before its promulgation. It was expected that the new act would eradicate what was a tedious exercise in the burying of a dead marriage. After all, slavery is over, and one cannot force a person to live with, much less love another, and when two people decide that there is no longer a marriage; if even one party to a marriage renounces it, then there is no marriage. We had expected the New Divorce Act to be a painless way to end a marriage in law, which had, no doubt ended already in fact.

This is not what happened. In fact, what happened was the creation of a law more difficult, time consuming, and arduous than what it had replaced.

In the past, a person desirous of a divorce would often allege desertion in the other party. Under the previous law one had to find fault — adultery, cruelty, desertion, etc. or five years of living separate and apart.

Often, people had ceased living together for a period of time before they began divorce proceedings. It was not complex to find three years worth of desertion, and be able to proceed to Court on that ground. The party would inform the court that he or she had been living separate and apart from the spouse for that time period. Whether the spouse left the matrimonial home, or drove the party out, was elementary. Where there were children of the marriage, either the Family Court had been consulted previously, or the parties would come to some agreement before the divorce hearing which could be put into the petition itself.

One of the points which the court seems to miss, is that being divorced from a person one had previously loved, is traumatic enough, without having to add in arguments about property, children, and other

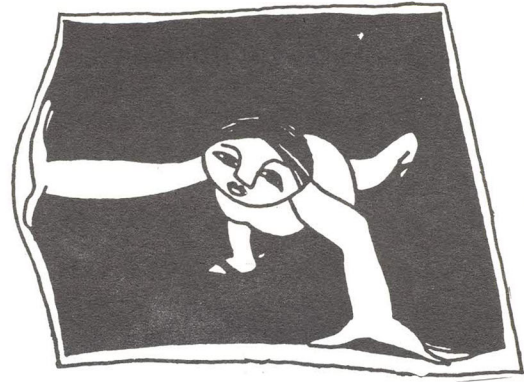
such things. The previous law seemed to recognise this, and those parties who had other conflicts over property would file under the Married Women's Property Act, or attend the Family Court, concerning the children, leaving the act of divorce itself, as unfettered as possible.

Under the new law, these items, the matters concerning children, the matters concerning property, must be fully spelled out, and canvassed, making the time spent by the Party on that stand, in that courtroom two or three times longer. This is what most persons seeking a divorce dread. That is, standing up there in Court and talking in front of people about an intimate matter such as the reason their marriage failed. It was this that made the ground of desertion so popular, because it made the actual testimony so boring that few reporters would have bothered to record it.

Saying; 'we were married in 1985 and after three months, he began to stay out late, and treat me with disrespect, and then stopped coming home in 1986, and since that time he has never lived with me again,' is not exceptionally painful. It can leave out the girlfriends, the beatings, the badwords, the acts of rape, and still allow the wife to obtain the divorce on legal grounds.

With the advent of the new act, all this is changed. First, there is the petition itself. Not only does one need to know where the Respondent is living now, but when and where he was born. Not only does one need to set out the arrangements for children, but must set them out in such detail that half of the time spent on the stand will be discussing the arrangements for the children, which are no doubt already in effect. If the judge refuses to accept those arrangements, and denies the divorce, this will lead to absurdity of a court pronouncing on the unacceptability of a fact which will not be altered by the pronouncement.

It is conceivable that the woman who wants to divorce her husband will have her peti-



tion turned down, because the Court does not think that the fact they have lived in one room with their grandmother is acceptable, although they have been living with their grandmother, and will, divorce or no divorce continue to live with their grandmother.

Added to this, is the fact that one must specifically state if there are previous proceedings concerning property between the parties, if any of the children are handicapped, etc. matters which only lengthen the hearing.

But the major problem is that one cannot merely say that the marriage has irretrievably broken down, which is the only ground of divorce, one must actually prove this to the court's satisfaction. One must go through a long, embarrassing explanation, which was never required before. You must show attempts at reconciliation, failure of the attempts, and prove that there is no likelihood of reconciliation. And if there is some belief that the marriage could be saved, then a counsellor will need to be involved, and you will not be granted your divorce. The fact that you and your husband don't live together, and live with different people, may not be sufficient to satisfy the court that the marriage cannot be saved.

But why should there be even the attempt to save something that the parties to the marriage do not wish to be saved? And that's the central point. The New Divorce Act has made divorce more difficult and painful to the parties, the fault it was enacted to prevent.

POINT OF VIEW

“Come And Get Me” Media Images

It's a new year and so a new set of glossy calendars appear in shops, offices and bars. Provocatively posed near-naked bodies shine out at the public, with a subtext of “come and get me”.

Are you now numbed by the glistening rows of g-string'd beach-bums filling the postcard racks and spilling onto magazine cover/posters/diaries/videos/tourist souvenirs, in your supermarket or pharmacy?

What are the implications of these images of women — the daily diet of STAR Caucasian bare-breasts, the cartoons which ridicule our sexuality, the ENQUIRER'S sensational reports of carnal abuse and sexual violence, all deliberately designed to titillate readers?

In a pilot survey conducted by **Women's Media Watch** in Jamaica, women overwhelmingly said they were disturbed by sexist images in the media: they felt these degraded women and promoted sexual violence. Survey respondents also said that media images were often misleading, teaching our youth false values of sexuality, sex roles and “beauty”.

Women's bodies are used, and their sex appeal manipulated, to persuade consumers to buy anything from car parts to liquor and soft drinks. And let's face facts; advertising constitutes a powerful force in society. Ads sell much more than products: they sell values and concepts of success, love and sexuality. The world of advertising creates an unreal world in which no one is ever ugly, poor, struggling, disabled or mentally unwell. Women are shown usually as housewives and, or sex objects. As housewives they are obsessed by germ-free, insect-free, super-shining homes. As sex objects they have no bulges or wrinkles, no scars or blemishes. The media tell us how to be attractive, how to be acceptable.

But **what** is “attractive?” Is it only the light-brown slender young models and beauty queens who don't bulge in French-cut underwear? What about the physical attributes of child-bearing and child-rearing which help define the lives of most women?

The media also want us to believe that women's primary purpose is to allure a man and decorate “his” home. Yet in reality a Jamaican woman plays multiple roles often heading a household as a single parent, working outside the home, hustling another job in the evening or on weekends, and playing a pivotal role in her community as well. Vast numbers of women work in agriculture (more than a 1/4 of the female labour force) many more are self-employed or work in the service sector. Of these, large numbers are domestic helpers. ‘Positive’ images of the “new superwoman” (model looks, designer clothes, never stressed out by work at home and on the job) hardly reflect reality.

How often are women featured in the nightly news? A news-monitoring project in the USA found that women were 1 in 10 of those interviewed or featured on nightly news.* In the Philippines only women who belong to the 5% cultured elite or the moneyed politician class, make it into the news. Otherwise women either have to be victims (mainly of sex crimes) or criminals to merit mention.* Here in Jamaica, getting big in the Beauty business is one way of hitting the news. But considering how few make it, thousands of teenagers are doomed to disappointment and despair when they can't match up to the “ideal”. For example Ford Models saw over 30,000 girls last year yet signed only 14 girls.

Young people learn a lot about sexual attitudes from the media and from ads in particular. “Advertising's approach to sex is pornographic: it reduces people to objects

and de-emphasises human contact and individuality.” Women's bodies are often “dismembered” so that all you see are hips, legs, lips. Fashion and cosmetic industries make millions persuading us that our sex appeal is **ONLY** as lasting as today's style — whether the style is “haute couture” or dance-hall “trash and ready”.

The teenage model has been lured early in life into the arena. “If you have it, flaunt it!” and make some quick and desperately needed money. The sexual harassment that often follows her initiation into the body business comes as a real surprise to her. She does not realize that the provocative “come and get me” poses are misinterpreted by men as “use and abuse me - your pleasure is my desire”.

The subliminal violence in many music videos targeted at teenagers, and the outright violence often combined with sex, in films, videos, cartoons, paperbacks, contribute to a society where violence is directed towards women often without an eyebrow being raised. The danger is that women internalize the media stereotypes and “learn” their “fate”, if we accept these degrading images to some extent we live them out, accepting abuse as a norm.

Fortunately as readers and viewers of the media, we have a voice which we can use to loudly challenge the media - and those who use the media - to be more responsible. We can monitor advertising campaigns, respond through public forums like radio call-in programmes, letters to editors, or initiate group discussion informally. We can call for positive and realistic images of women which reflect us as we really are - strong, confident, attractive, capable and independent. We can be critical about the content as well as the intent of the media. We can become active users, rather than passive recipients of media messages.

*Source: Media & Values No. 49.

Training For Self-Esteem

by Joan Ross-Frankson

Women's Feature Service/IPS

Take a 'helper' like Udell Lewison. She's 38, has five children and hails from rural Porus in Western Jamaica. She migrated to 'town' when she was 16. Her mother was worried about the way she was idling since leaving school at 11. She says ruefully, "Me never used to do any work an me was always giving trouble so the school suspend me, and I never bother to go back." Udell got her first job in a shoe store when she was 19 and has also been a nursemaid.

In many ways, Udell's life story is typical of the thousands of Jamaican women who earn the most minimal of Jamaica's minimum wage as domestic helpers; the migration from country to town, little opportunity for education, sole responsibility for a large number of children.

The national minimum wage for domestics is \$110 per week \$20 less than the national minimum wage for all other workers. But, Udell is lucky on that score. Her employer, herself a feminist who is well aware that Udell and her family need at least \$280 a week to barely exist, pays her more. Udell has been working with the same family for 10 years, which is not so typical of the profession. "They're nice. I don't have any problem."

WALKING TALLER

Udell is also walking taller these days, due to recent training opportunities that have been opened to her and which have given her new levels of confidence in herself. From her limited vocabulary (Udell can hardly read or write), she struggles to find words to describe how she feels. "I have a different feeling to show me how much school was important. I get ideas about a lot of things I didn't know about."

Since the start of the year, Udell has taken part in two courses. The Grace Kitchens Creative Homemakers Cooking Programme was introduced in 1986 by one of Jamaica's largest private sector firms, Grace Kennedy. While it is first and foremost promoting Grace manufactured foods, it is also free of cost and offers to household helpers a chance for formal training in nutrition, personal and kitchen hygiene, menu-planning and meal presentation in a way that encourages creativity and innovation.

At her graduation ceremony, Udell and her 35 course co-members made their feelings quite clear through their spokesperson, Nalda Green. Said Nalda, "We have found out how much education can expose us to new people and new ideas and help us to become more rounded people. We all look forward to new opportunities to learn, with eagerness."

SACRIFICING A DAY OFF

It's therefore not surprising that a few weeks later, when the Women's Bureau gave notice of a training course running over four Saturdays, Udell jumped at the chance to sign on. Sacrificing her Saturdays was not easy. "It was hard, because Saturday is the day when I attend to my house and children, but it was well worthwhile," she says with a broad grin. That grin bears out the fact that the Women's Bureau course "give me extra on what the Grace course give me."

The Women's Bureau course is part of the government agency's thrust to expose vulnerable groups of working women (domestic helpers, higglers and women working in the Free Trade Zone are the particular targets) to training opportunities and education about their rights. So, apart from home economics, first aid, use of household equipment and child care and development, Udell also discussed with other participants personal development (self worth, employee/employer attitudes), and basic laws

(NIS, Maternity Leave Law, vacation leave, sexual harassment).

Two drama-in-education practitioners helped design the course so it would bring out the perspectives of the helpers themselves and develop their self-esteem. Says Marva Furguson of the Women's Bureau, "We used drama as a tool for getting them talking and relating to each other. Those who started out shy and withdrawn really blossomed."

ENCOURAGING ATMOSPHERE

In such an encouraging atmosphere and amongst their peers, the day-to-day problems of the women, usually kept firmly behind closed doors, began to emerge. Employers were often not only insensitive to their helpers' problems but also took their own personal problems out on their helpers ("God help yuh if dem wake up feeling bad!"). They described the humiliation of locked food cupboards and fridges and not being trusted to use electrical appliances to ease the burden of their work; the emotional pain of having to leave their own children's needs in order to attend to the needs of other peoples' children; the physical pain of leaving home without any form of breakfast; the powerlessness when employers refuse to pay them at the end of a week of hard work.

Udell admits her eyes were opened to much from which she had been cushioned. "I often hear how bad things can be, but now I was hearing it from the mouths of the sufferers. One friend I made tell me how her employer's mother said she must never drink from her grandchildren's cups, and how them pay her below minimum wage. She is afraid to say anything through she may lose the work. I was shocked."

It was a learning experience for Furguson as well. "I am so much more aware of the plight of domestic helpers. Some were being treated less than human. It was a great



Minister of labour, Portia Simpson (centre), joins Marva Furguson of the Women's Bureau (2nd left) and participants at the opening session of the Bureau's Training Programme

awareness-building exercise for me."

JAM PACKED

These courses have been jam-packed, denoting the demand of domestic workers for training and self-expression. In the case of the Grace programme, the waiting list is almost two-years long. In the case of the Women's Bureau course an unexpected 170 women took part, including 13 employers.

Grace says when it moves to bigger premises, there may be possibilities for holding its seven-week programme more than twice a year, but the Bureau already has plans to hold a similar course in the western section of Jamaica. And, while the Grace programme limits itself to the practical, the efforts of the Women's Bureau to also build self-esteem have immediately produced an unexpected result. Participants wanted help to form a union, as well as further

hands-on training.

The Bureau is giving that help. Contact has already been made with the YWCA, and plans are being worked out to see how the Bureau can, from its limited budget, help to subsidise members of the group on established six-week courses in cooking and baking.

But even more significant in political terms, on July 7, 1990 the Bureau course participants started the process of organising themselves into an association with the assistance of the Bureau. It was an historic moment for domestic workers in Jamaica - a chance to open closed doors and make better deals for themselves.

100% SUPPORT

And, despite the fact that she personally has 'no problem' at the workplace, Udell is supporting the move one hundred per cent.

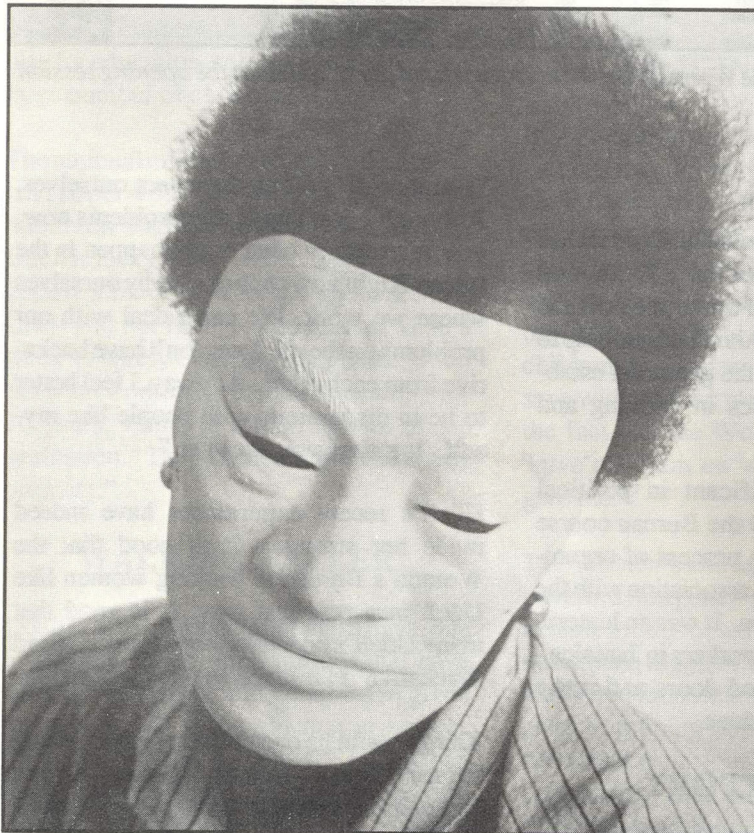
"I support this move to protect ourselves. Although I don't have any problems now, you never know what might happen in the future. Right now each of us is by ourselves where we work. We can't deal with our problems on the job if we don't have backative from each other. Anyway, I feel better to be in discussions with people like myself. It makes you stronger."

Udell's recent experiences have indeed made her stronger. It is good that the Women's Bureau is backing women like Udell in a practical way. It is good that many Udell's now have hope for organised 'backative' in relation to their profession.

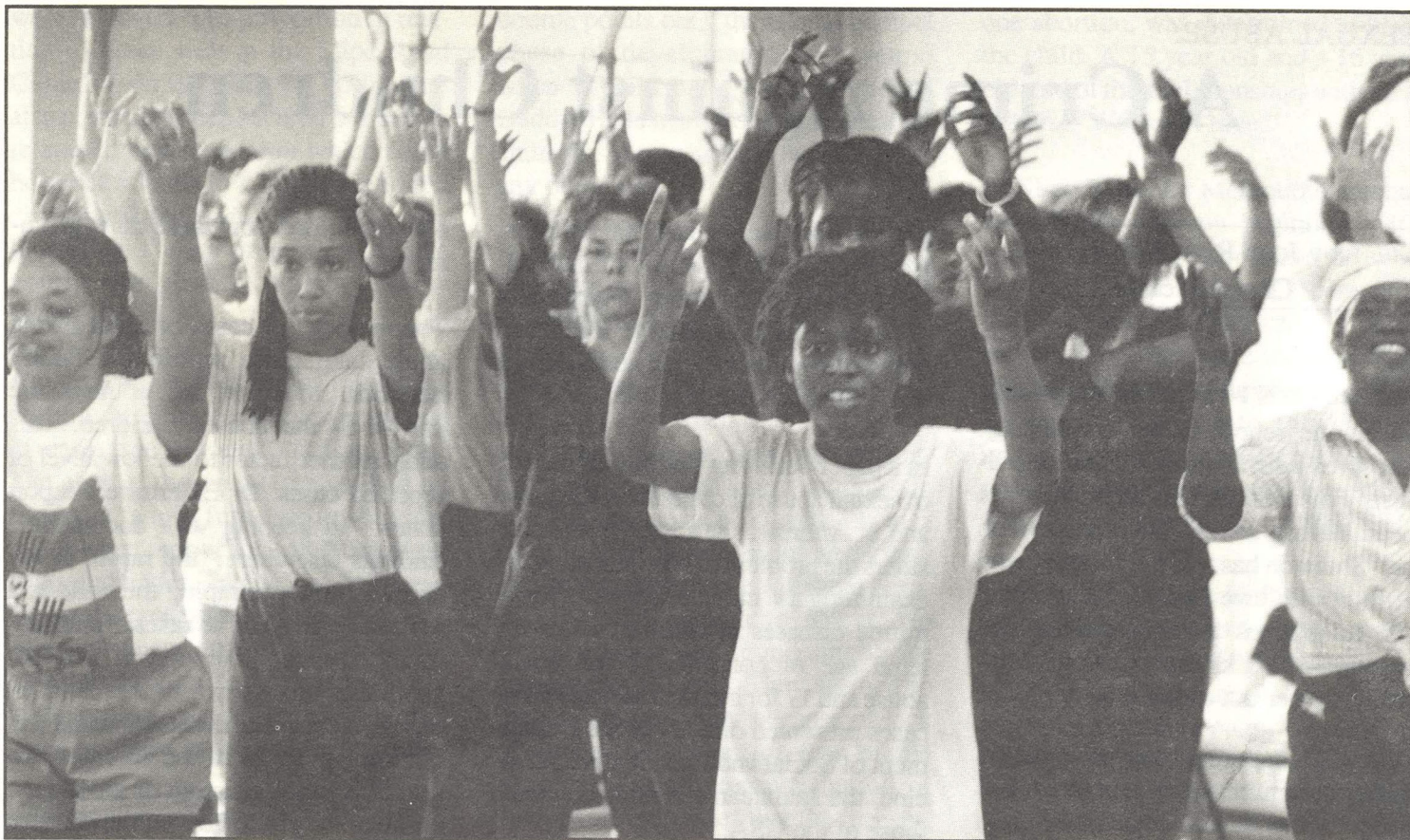
Things could be even better if more private sector firms would follow Grace Kennedy's example and promote their products through training courses that build self-esteem among vulnerable groups of working women.

A POPEFEST TO REMEMBER

HAPPY AND RELAXED: In photo at right participants at the 1990 International Workshop Festival in London pose following a *Sistren* workshop lead by Bev Hanson (3rd left lying down) and Annie Blake (3rd left, 2nd row). Participants found the session "very relaxing" and welcomed the opportunity to be taught new ways of communicating and to develop new insights on how to stimulate discussion. For Bev and Annie, the experience was a real eye-opener. As they told it the young women in the group were anxious and eager to learn more about Caribbean folklore. There are very few black theatre productions or workshops with which they can identify, so there's always an opening that Jamaican theatre practitioners can fill. "Sistren's work is also greatly appreciated by white people who identify closely with Caribbean culture. And, they yearn for more information about the smart, cunning women of Jamaica who embody the best qualities of Anancy," Said Bev.



Unmasking Realities: Participants explored the use of masks in popular theatre.



STRETCH OUT THE 'NIGERITIS'! Bev (far left) leads an after-lunch warm-up session.



***SINGING AND DANCING TO
THE BEAT OF POPULAR
EDUCATION TECHNIQUES:***

Participants were given the opportunity by Bev and Annie to learn how much fun can be had while communicating ideas and stimulating discussion.

A Crime Against Children

by Joan Ross-Frankson &
Cheryl Fletcher

Shannon is 14 years old and attends an all-age school in her community. She lives with her mother and stepfather. For months her stepfather has been having sexual intercourse with her. Shannon has told her mother, who does not believe her. In desperation, she telephones a radio call-in programme and asks that someone, anyone, help her out of her misery.

Dulcie, 16, reports to the police station in her community that her father has been having sexual intercourse with her. No action is taken. She gets pregnant, and seeks help from the Family Court.

For sometime now the lid has been off child sexual abuse in Jamaica. There have been numerous articles written about the growing numbers of our very young children who have contracted sexually transmitted diseases and efforts are being made by the various agencies concerned, including the Family Court, various clinics and the police, to form a central registry so that realistic statistics can be determined.

Child sexual abuse is a global issue. It happens everywhere but statistics vary according to the place of study. Britain for example, does not have compulsory reporting of cases of child sexual abuse. The suggested level of incidence there is 1 in 6,000 children per year. But in America where the law in many states requires official reporting, the incidence is reported as 1.3 per 1,000 - or nearly eight times that in Britain. Jamaica is similar to Britain. Our studies show a reported incidence

of approximately 1 in 8,000 children. However, Dr D Eldemire of the University of the West Indies' Department of Social and Preventative Medicine, does not see this as being necessarily a true reading of the situation.

In a paper outlining findings of a study of sexual abuse of children in Kingston and St Andrew, she says, "If one considers the problem of non-reporting, by examining the cases of sexually transmitted diseases in children under the legal age of consent (14 for sexual abuse and 17 for incest cases) and those cases presented directly to the Department of Social and Preventative Medicine, the Jamaican statistics approach those of the USA."

abused children, but these cases go unreported.

The majority of cases of child sexual abuse take place within the family network. Most of the abusers are known to the abused children. This adds another factor to the low level of reported cases. Dr Eldemire's report states: "In keeping with documented findings elsewhere, 'the rapist' is not an older stranger raping the child in a dark alley. In 12 of 16 cases of substantiated rape, the man alleged to be responsible was known to the child although sometimes the actual name was not known. In 14 of the 16 cases, the sexual act took place in or around the home of the child. Four of the children

"Deep social prejudices against homosexuality make it likely that a larger proportion of young boys are abused than we know about . . ."

In Eldemire's study 36% per cent of the children attended the clinic because of medical problems related to STDs. One can assume that if a medical problem had not occurred, it is unlikely the children would have been taken to the clinic. In addition, the Department only reported these cases of sexual abuse to the Family Court because it was involved in the study of sexually abused children. Presumably, therefore, other clinics and private practices are also seeing and treating sexually

were given money."

At the Slipe Road Comprehensive Clinic, paradoxically, Child Psychologist, Dr Pauline Milbourne sees more children who have been abused by strangers. She says, "There's more willingness to focus on cases where the abuser is outside of the family."

Undoubtedly the majority of abused children are girls. Of the 33 incidents studied by Eldemire, 3 male children

were involved. The proportion in relation to cases seen at the Slipe Road Clinic is similar. But Dr Milbourne also pointed to deep societal prejudices related to homosexuality which could be a factor in the low level of reported cases involving young boys. "It's very likely that a larger proportion of male youths are abused than we know about."

Age can be another factor in non-reporting. At Slipe Road, the average age of cases seen is eight-to-nine years. The ages of those children studied by Eldemire ranged from two to 16 years. The biggest proportion (48%) were six years and under. Twelve per cent were between seven and 10 years and 39% were 11 years and over. Reported cases of rape occurred more frequently in the younger age group than reported cases of incest in an older age group.

Often younger children cannot distin-

bourne points out, "there is an oedipal phase of development (4-5 years) when a child may want to 'marry' Daddy. He is her hero. But no healthy child sets out to seduce her father, or any other man."

In the majority of incest cases studied by Eldemire (9 out of 17), the male was the only parent and source of affection, as well as of food, shelter and clothing. Four of the 17 also complained of physical abuse when they rejected the sexual advances of their fathers. Significantly, the four were among six cases aged between 11 and 13; at a stage in their development when they are not yet comfortable with their sexuality but old enough to object. No physical abuse was found among the girls under 11 years. They seemed to "accept" incest either because of lack of understanding or for fear of the consequences of exposure, but all of them expressed relief that the incestu-

one abortion, was determined to have the child. A 15 year old and a 16 year old said of their relationships with their fathers, "We are in love."

At Slipe Road, Dr Melbourne emphasises family therapy beginning with individual therapy for the child who has been sexually abused. These children are often withdrawn, depressed and tearful. They stare into space for long moments when the horrors of their experiences flash into their young minds. They may wet their beds, suffer disturbed sleep, or become aggressive. They believe somehow it is their fault.

The disturbed child is encouraged to talk about what she wants to talk about. If it is a problem for the child to talk, materials and toys are on hand so she can write, or draw a picture, or demonstrate the experience using a doll. "We deal with them at their own level," says Milbourne.

"The overwhelming majority of offenders are normal men and most of the incidents take place within normal families, a point too many of us are unwilling to see..."

guish between the affectionate physical contact that is a normal part of family life, and the touching that amounts to sexual abuse. A small child may feel discomfort at the 'affectionate touching' of a respected family member or friend, but cannot express this to make herself understood. Often when she expresses it, she is blamed, boxed or beaten. But sexual abuse cannot be seen as the fault of the child. They are not by nature prone to seductive, manipulative behaviour. As Mil-

ous relationship had been broken.

In the case of older children, Eldemire's findings suggest that "if the incestuous relationship is not broken in early adolescence, there is danger of the girls adjusting to and enjoying the relationship". She highlights the cases of four females involved in incest who were outraged by the "interference" in their sexual relationships with their fathers. One girl who was pregnant for her father, and who had already had

The main aim of the therapy is to remove the burden of guilt from the child. The family is focussed to recognise that the incident is not the fault of the child. Family members are encouraged to say, "Congratulations. Thank God you told someone." The mother in particular is encouraged to get the family to talk about the child's experiences openly while at the same time expressing love, confidence and the assurance that there will be no lasting scars. The child's broader community is also targeted: how are the neighbours handling the situation? Is the child feeling acute embarrassment and/or shame by being in the community? Does she need to be moved out for a while?

Without a doubt, child sexual abuse warps the minds of the children involved, and to one degree or another, the result is likely to be an adult with a warped sense of his/her own sexuality. Like rape, it is women worldwide who have brought the child sexual abuse

skeleton out of the cupboard. In many countries, women have spoken publicly of the horrors inflicted on them as children. There are Incest Survivors groups in parts of Europe and the USA. There are books and pamphlets for anxious parents to teach their children how to say no.

Here in Jamaica, work is now being done to develop credible statistics and to document and determine the long-term effects of child sexual abuse in our

context. The subject has become an issue for the police, health and welfare services and the media. Even though non-reporting remains a major problem, more reports are made than previously. Yes, child sexual abuse is no longer completely trapped within Jamaica's cupboard of skeletons to which we relegate so many of society's ills.

All of us are 'appalled' at this crime against our children. But unfortunately

too many of us are not seeing, or are unwilling to see, the root cause of the problem. To do so would in fact be tantamount to challenging the notion of the family as a haven. Why? Because the overwhelming majority of offenders are normal men and the incidents in the main, take place within normal families.

As is the case of sexual and physical abuse of women, we are witnessing an issue of male power and male control.

PROTECTING CHILDREN . . . THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ADULTS

The protection of children should be the responsibility of all adults, whether or not the adult is the actual parent of the child in need of protection, whether or not the adult is a parent at all. We should find the courage to act, not just talk, whenever and wherever we see children being abused, regardless of who the abuser is and what is the abuser's status in the community.

This was the message brought to the 10th Congress of the Caribbean Association on Mental Retardation and other Developmental Disabilities (CAMRODD) by Jackie Moriah, a Ministry of Education Officer who works with guidance counsellors.

Ms. Moriah was addressing the subject "Protecting Disabled Children from Exploitation." She however stated her objection to the separation of disabled and non-disabled children, an objection that was reflected in many of the presentations at the five-day Congress.

She said that in her experience adults brought to the question of child care, several harmful perceptions. Among

the most harmful was the perception that "children are basically incompetent until they arrive at this magical age of 'grownup-hood' which legally is now the age of 18. This led to children being denied rights to which they were entitled by the mere fact of their existence. For example, we will not accept, not even ask their opinions on matters critical to the community, the family or even their own well being. At the same time however, we give these children responsibilities for which not even adults are prepared, much less children.

To support this point she noted that there were children who were breadwinners. There were children who were parenting younger brothers and sisters, parenting their own children and in some cases parenting their own parents. This amounted to abuse, Ms. Moriah said.

She said children deserved and were entitled to their childhood. . . . and it need not be a childhood filled with things. Most critical was a mother and father who cared, caring parents who both worked and thus helped set the example of responsible adult behavior,

and caring parents who found time for children."

If adults could accept these principles she said, then certain positive actions would follow. We would not permit certain things to happen to children. We would not permit bus drivers and conductors to abuse them and we ourselves would not thrust children aside to get on a public passenger vehicle. We would not permit other adults to abuse children and would find the courage to confront the abusers. We would not give children responsibilities for which they have not been prepared.

Emphasising that her message was to all adults about all children, Ms. Moriah said, "I've never given birth to an infant, but I do not see that excludes me, or permits me to exclude myself, from the role of parent of children."

The 10th Congress (and 20th anniversary celebration) of CAMRODD was hosted by the Jamaica Association for Mentally Handicapped Children and the 3D Projects (for the disabled) Ltd of Spanish Town. **P.U.S.**

Sex Education and the Mentally Disabled Child

Sex education, like health education, should be an important component in the curriculum of any child, but especially so in the case of those who are mentally disabled. Sometimes ignorance and prejudice prevent parents from acknowledging that mentally disabled children are exposed to the same sexual pressures and stimuli as their "normal" siblings, and peers; pressures from other children, from parents and relatives (incest), from strangers (rape, sexual perversion and pornographic practices). In fact their parents have to be much more careful and vigilant since mentally disabled children:

- frequently over-respond to attention and give affection indiscriminately in return;
- may have poor judgement and limited reasoning ability;
- often do what is asked of them without question and therefore stand in extreme danger of being used, abused and exploited sexually;
- may not be in a position to acquire information on their own; their peers are usually equally ignorant;
- run the risk of being confused and frightened by myths and half-myths because they may have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy.

Never assume that children (non-disabled or disabled) know about sexual behaviour and sexual responsibility. Such knowledge, if it is there, is often full of wrong information, myths and misconceptions. It is wrong to assume that because the child is mentally disabled he/she can be left in ignorance. They experience many of the same sexual feelings and urges as the rest of us; they are human. The physical and

"Sometimes ignorance and prejudice prevent parents from acknowledging that mentally disabled children are exposed to the same sexual pressures and stimuli..."

emotional changes which they undergo (puberty for example) must be extremely bewildering and confusing, maybe even traumatic. To leave them in ignorance can certainly prove to be more dangerous than blissful.

The basic thinking behind sex education, and indeed all education, should be that the person who is taught learns, and in learning, understands and remembers what is taught so that his/her behaviour in future is socially acceptable. Chil-

dren should be taught:

- both the physical and biological facts; the physical aspects of their bodies and their functions, as well as the results of sexual behaviour;
- to develop moral values and to be able to distinguish between what is acceptable behaviour and what is not;
- to both make judgements in any sex-related situations in which they may find themselves, and to have confidence in their judgements - to say "no" if they do not want something to happen;
- to understand their bodies and their feelings so that intelligent and practical decisions can be made.

Parents, whether we like it or not, whether we feel capable or not, are responsible for our children's training and education; all round education which must include the sex component. Look for help if necessary. Start by contacting the combined Disabilities Association (CDA), 11B Carlton Crescent, Kingston 10 (929-1176). Form a group with other parents in similar circumstances to exchange experiences and give each other strength. Let us not take things for granted; let us not use ignorance or embarrassment as an excuse. Let us make a genuine effort to help our children.

(Source: Conquest, DPI Quarterly Magazine)

CONTINUING EDUCATION THE KEY

Continuing education is the main factor preventing teenage girls who've dropped out of school to have babies, from having subsequent pregnancies before they can handle them. The latest evaluation of the Women's Centre Programme by the Population Council of New York both confirms that education is key to the development of the young woman and that the programme itself is a success in this regard.

SHORT TERM IMPACT

The evaluation focused on the short term impact of the programme, comparing a group of those who had graduated since 1985 with a matched sample of teenage mothers who had not been exposed to that or any other similar programme. Only 15% of those who had not been exposed to the programme returned to school following their pregnancies, compared with 55% among graduates in Kingston and 73% among graduates in the Mandeville branch of the programme. Where employment was concerned, programme graduates were earning higher salaries.

CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

The evaluation also confirmed that counselling sessions provided by the Centre have had a positive effect in relation to knowledge about contraceptive methods. Contraceptive

use was high among both groups: up to 89% among the programme's graduates and 81% among non-participants in the Programme. The difference lay in the mix of methods. Centre graduates favoured the IUD and pills, while non-graduates favoured pills and injections.

Subsequent pregnancies pose a serious problem for the teenage mother and again the effectiveness of the

"Only 15% of those teenage mothers not exposed to the Women's Centre programme returned to school, compared with 55% of programme graduates in Kingston and 73% in Mandeville."

Centre was highlighted by the evaluation. At the Kingston Centre, some 15% of graduates had become pregnant within three years, while in the Mandeville Centre the figure was only 8%. For non-graduates the figure was significantly higher at 39%.

The many physical and psychosocial consequences of early childbearing among teenage girls prompted the creation of the Jamaica Women's Centre in 1978. Central to the objectives of the programme were continuing education for the girls during their pregnancies and assistance to re-enter the school system after the birth of their

children.

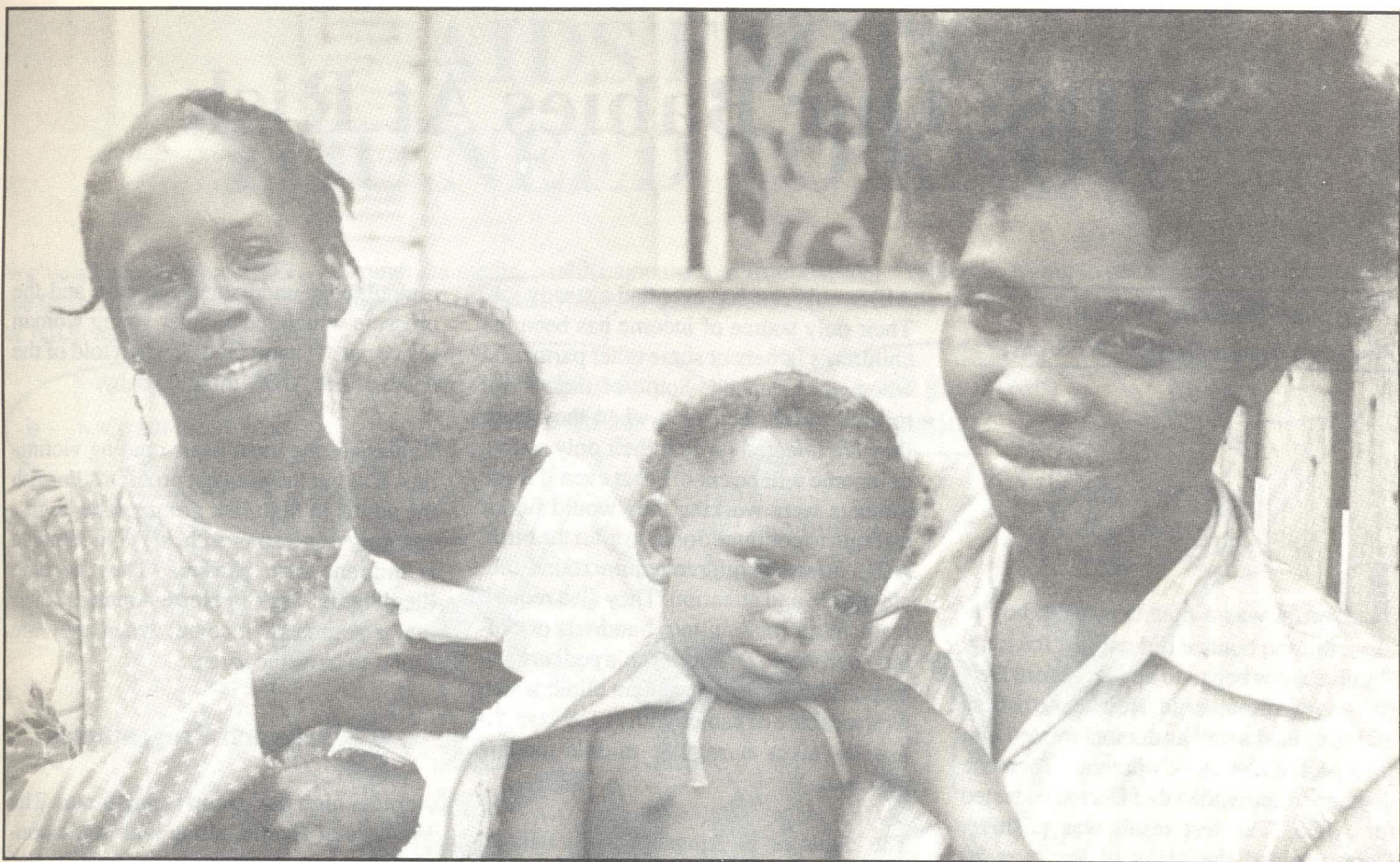
LOW COST

The services provided are not only effective, as shown by the latest evaluation, but financing them is very reasonable. The cost of keeping a young woman in the programme for one academic year is approximately J\$3,500, while providing nursery facilities costs J\$664 per child annually. Services to former students, which include counselling, school visits and sometimes financial assistance, run to about J\$176; and the rural outreach aspect of the programme averages about J\$336 per girl.

MARKETABLE SKILLS

If there was a weakness identified by the evaluation, it was in relation to the Centre's preparation of graduates for the labour market. In this respect, it was recommended that the Centre make additional efforts to provide mothers with a wider and more marketable range of skills, that as far as possible, meet local needs. The evaluation also recommended that the Centre continue to strengthen its links with other national skills training programmes and with small business groupings, in order to stimulate the creation of work opportunities for Centre graduates.

Contact the Women's Centre Programme at 42 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 5



Where Ignorance is Not Bliss! Too many of us in Jamaica — mothers, fathers, teachers, pastors — still refuse to acknowledge the need for sex education for boys and girls from the earliest stages of life. Yet armed with knowledge instead of myth and fantasy, young people would be able to exercise responsibility and respect towards each other. The following views, expressed by students taking part in the Sistren School Workshop Programme on Teenage Pregnancy, underline the crying need for our children to receive appropriate education about their developing sexuality, and, for adults themselves to be more responsible.

"I know one girl drink Pepsi and aspirin to get rid of her pregnancy . . ."

"Me will carry out chimmy fi meself and me bredda dem or me fahda, but if is me sista or me madda, me nah touch it . . ."

"Some mothers don't know anything about sex and some of them are shy so they don't know what to tell their daughters . . ."

"Abortion is a sin. It is murder . . ."

"Is de big man dem pregnant de girl dem . . ."

"If a girl get pregnant, some people seh she dun wid . . ."

"If a girl's mother don't tell her the facts of life, she shouldn't get blame if she get pregnant . . ."

Without continuing education and with low esteem, it is easy for teen mothers to fall into the cycle of subsequent pregnancies for which they are still unprepared. Some views from the mothers:

"I didn't know about protection. When I had my baby in hospital . . . the doctor told me (about it) and I said I would go for it. I used to hear about family planning but I didn't know it was protection" Age 17, one baby

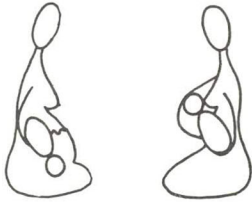
"I wanted to become a teacher or doctor, but I can't do it now because I have the baby. I am not going to school and not working" Age 16, one baby

(Photo: International Planned Parenthood Federation)

AIDS: Our Babies At Risk

by Paulette Williams

Women's Feature Service (WFS/IPS)



Derron was a bouncing baby boy at birth, but the bounce did not last for long. Trouble signs began to appear before Derron was two months old. He became listless and remained small as doctors treated him for a host of childhood ailments. Then one doctor recommended that Derron be tested for AIDS. The test result was positive. Derron joined the ranks of the over 20 children in Jamaica born with Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome.

It was only now that Florris, Derron's mother found out she was carrying the virus known as HIV, which she had passed on to her only child as AIDS. "I was so angry, I wanted to kill the baby's father."

The man, her only partner at the time, refuses to believe he gave Florris the virus and has continued his pattern of sexual behaviour in business-as-usual style. "There should be a law to force AIDS-infected people to behave in a more responsible way," says Florris with feeling.

Latest figures (October 1990) indicate that 185 Jamaicans, 57 of them female, have so far developed AIDS. Twenty-one of them (12 male, 7 females) are children under five. Fourteen of them have so far died representing a child AIDS mortality rate of 67%. There has since been an updated figure.

● The Impact of Economic Dependency

Of the 23 women whose children have

AIDS, only one has ever had a steady job. Their only source of income has been the children's fathers or some other partner on whom they depend. Some of them have refused to tell their men when they learn they are infected for fear their only source of income will be cut off. But even if these mothers were working they would find it difficult to continue doing so after the birth. AIDS infected children require round-the-clock care and attention. They also require medication running into hundreds of dollars each week. Dr Pat Burke, a pediatrician responsible for a government clinic which oversees care of babies with AIDS says, "It usually takes a regular middle-income paycheck."

The clinic is in Kingston and caters to children too ill to be cared for at home as well as out-patients. Dr Burke sees her little patients as "family", and her work with them and their mothers (most of whom can barely afford the bus fare to the clinic for medication) goes way beyond normal working hours.

● Stress

The babies rarely live for more than a few years and their retarded development puts additional strain on their mothers. Constantly having to carry three year olds that cannot yet walk causes back ache; the emotional strain is on-going. Florris lost several jobs due to irritation and quarrelsomeness resulting from high stress levels.

The initial reaction of her family added to her problems. "No one wanted to touch him or get close. Nobody showed him any love. They just saw him as 'the thing'. Happily that situation has changed. "Gradually, they have come around. They now realise they can touch him and not get AIDS."

Florris now has an understanding boyfriend who supports Derron and herself, emotionally and financially. But she would

undoubtedly understand the pain and the pressure which led another young woman to cry out, "Thank God!", when told of the death of her AIDS-infected baby.

Babies are the most heart-rending victims of AIDS but the greatest problems lie with the adults in high risk groups. The largest category of persons with AIDS in Jamaica is migrant farm workers. They become illegible for work in North America (their major source of income) when they are found to have the virus.

● Outreach Programmes

Another high risk group is prostitutes. The Ministry of Health, along with some non-government organisations, has implemented an outreach programme among them, including alternative employment, but woefully some who are infected continue to ply their trade. Peer counselling has been emphasised with the Epidemiology Unit recruiting and training prostitutes for this very purpose. Once trained, they act independently of the unit but can rely on its support.

Other programmes include counselling for relatives who will care for those who become infected, an AIDS/STD (sexually transmitted diseases) helpline and training of health workers. An islandwide training programme in the management and care of AIDS infected persons is also planned. At another level, efforts will be made to integrate AIDS education in the school curriculum in a project funded by UNESCO and the World Health Organisation.

However, it is hard to measure the degree to which programmes succeed when there is already a pool of HIV infected people who have not yet developed AIDS. These alone will ensure that the numbers of persons with AIDS will continue to escalate for at least the next ten years.

AIDS FACTS

YOU NEED TO KNOW

We've all heard about AIDS — through the media, health campaigns or from friends. Problem is trying to get a clear understanding of the facts through the maze of information. Let's face it, many of us are confused or scared by it all. Some of us even think the whole issue of AIDS has been exaggerated.



● **WHAT IS AIDS?** AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is an infectious disease caused by a virus called HIV. AIDS damages your immune system and leaves you unprotected so even a simple head cold can kill you. There is, as yet no cure. You can have the virus (HIV) without actually getting the disease (AIDS).

● **HOW DO I GET AIDS?** The virus is passed on when infected sperm enters your body through your vagina, bottom or mouth. Women with the virus may pass it on to their babies during pregnancy at birth or through breast milk. It can also be passed to you if infected blood mixes with your blood (transfusions, torn skin, dirty syringes).

● **HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE AIDS?** Any one or combination of the following could mean you have AIDS:

- Sudden unexplained loss of weight
- Fever for several days
- Loss of Appetite
- Swollen glands in the neck and armpits
- Tiredness lasting for weeks
- Shortness of breath
- Persistent cough
- Creamy whit patches inside the mouth

● **HOW CAN I AVOID AIDS?** Stick to regular sexual partners who you know well. If you are unsure, use a condom or ask your partner about his/her health and what he/she knows about Aids. Consider celibacy, sexual toys or other forms of masturbation (no you won't "draw-down" and God won't sin you!) rather than having casual sex.

(Source: From Woman To Woman by Project Empowerment, 1988).

Neglecting The Fountain of Youth

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of youth."

Gabriela Mistral, Nobel Prize-winning poet from Chile.

In Jamaica, thousands of our children live on the fringes - in institutions and on the streets. These children are the subject of a recent research project conducted by *Melrose Rattray* and *Sonia Ebanks* for *UNESCO*. The following is extracted from the project's summary report, which is titled *Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances in Jamaica*.

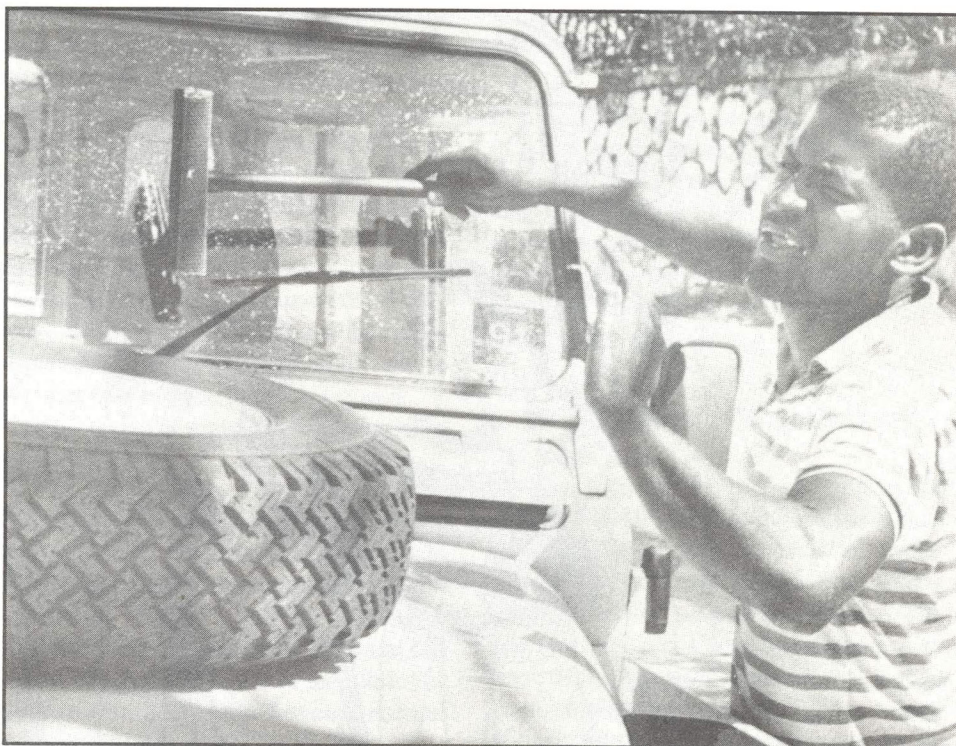
CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS

At the end of 1989, those under 18 years of age amounted to 43% of the population, or just over one million. Nearly 3,000 of them are living in institutions. These include four correctional institutions which cater to juveniles between the ages of 12 and 18 who have been before the courts for a variety of reasons, the main one being their need for care and protection. The other main factors are wounding, larceny and 'minor offences' but a significant minority have been charged with such serious crimes as murder and manslaughter, robbery, rape and arson.

Of the four centres, two cater to boys only, one of them being classified as maximum security for "hardened" juveniles. The other two are for girls. There are also 14 Places of Safety (nine run by government and five privately-owned) and 36 Children's Homes (nine run by government and 27 privately-owned).

Conditions

Conditions vary widely. Many of the



Children on the streets can earn as much as \$100 a day or as little as 20 cents.

facilities are in poor physical condition; some are still being repaired following additional devastation by Hurricane Gilbert in 1988. Others, mainly private, are in excellent condition. The maintenance system in government institutions is not automatic and when requests are made, the process is a long one due to scarce funds allocated for the purpose.

Funding

Up to March this year, private institutions were being given J\$55 per week per child by government, which has since increased to \$105. Government institutions receive an average of \$4,800 per week for food, household

articles, stationery and office supplies, medical care, school, transportation and incidentals. The cost of feeding one child per week is about \$38.50.

Failure to properly maintain existing institutions, especially those run by government, is very often blamed on insufficient funds. But the report concludes that while there is some need for additional funds, the amount being sought for the provision of basic care is not significantly high.

CHILDREN ON THE STREETS

There are over 1,000 youths under the age of 18 living on the streets of Jamaica's main urban centres: King-

ston and St Andrew, Spanish Town, May Pen, Ocho Rios, Mandeville and Montego Bay. For them, the street is their home, substituting for the family in the process of their growth and development. The vast majority of them are boys, and they are also at considerable risk from the negative influences of adults who seek to exploit them.

Of the 150 children interviewed by Rattray and Ebanks, 112 had started living on the streets over the past six years. Eight had been on the street for ten years, and three had lost track of how long they'd been on the street. Half those interviewed were between 14 and 17 years of age while a significant 29% were between 11 and 13 indicating the tendency for "dropping out" to take place following "failure" at the common Entrance Examinations.

Behaviour Patterns

They have their own laws, like the non-refundable security 'tax' charged to new-comers. They see the police as being hostile towards them. They are described as "more than aggressive" and generally exhibit low tolerance levels and very poor social judgement. They are often extremely impulsive and fight over the smallest thing. Much of their aggressiveness is felt to be the result of the often violent triple bill movies they watch at the various cinemas.

Accommodation

Street children are nomadic, sleeping in old garages, derelict buildings and old cars depending on whether conditions or levels of police "harassment". Some indicated they often get wet or have their belongings stolen.

Sexuality

Some are "proud" to report that they "beat" men who have approached them for sexual favours. But not all of them

resist, which means that a number of them are open to sexually transmitted diseases. Many of the boys said they were sexually active, in some cases paying for sex from prostitutes older than themselves.

The girls are usually involved in prostitution. In the Half-Way-Tree area, three 13-14 years old are known to "service" the older men in the area. A nine-year old, known as "Night Nurse", is used by the street boys. Questioned one night, she said she needed to carry home at least \$15.00 but had so far only made \$10.00.

Education

Not all street children attend school, even though many expressed a desire to do so. Of 150 interviewed, 135 said they liked school but only 15 said they were still attending school. Of those interviewed, 88 said they could read and 31 said they could not read, while 31 said they could read "a little".

Earning Power

Children on the streets can earn as little as 20 cents to as much as \$100 per day. Their economic activities include wiping windscreens, washing cars, gambling, selling newspapers, stealing, begging, running errands, loading trucks and doing odd jobs in stores and other business places.

Discipline

The children have developed their own code of discipline and exercise discipline over each other. They have a hierarchy and in some instances this authority is used to train younger children for illegal activity such as picking pockets. It is also reported that they are sometimes used as "fronts" for drug pushers particularly in the Western section of the island. Stealing is a serious problem. They steal from each other as well as from other people. As

part of their survival strategy, the boys have made the selling of clothes among themselves a growing enterprise.

Health

The health of these children is an area of great concern. Some do go to the hospital when they become ill, but as a general rule they help themselves and each other when necessary.



The boys were found to be aggressive with low tolerance levels and very poor social judgement.

COMMON ENTRANCE: CHOICES?

by Nancy L. Anderson

"The children got their results after assembly. All the class passed except for four real dummies..."

Poor Donny must have been one of those "dummies" because he didn't pass. Certainly Donny never thought of himself as a "dummy" before this fateful day in his young life. Neither did his mother, nor his sisters nor his teachers. He had searched the list with growing fear and when he was sure his name wasn't on it, he wept. His little heart was broken.

Poor Donny is now convinced that he is a "dummy". Poor Donny cannot be consoled by the fact that he is in the majority of the 40-odd thousand little people who took the Common Entrance Examination. Only 25% of them "passed". Seventy-five per cent were "dummies". They and Donny feel themselves on the scrapheap of life at the tender age of 11.

"He had searched the list with growing fear and when he was sure his name wasn't on it, he wept. His little heart was broken. ."

They have not been selected for the best High Schools. Places are very limited so only the highest achievers are allowed to pass. Average achievers like Donny are not allowed to make it.

Donny's mother now has three options; get him enrolled in the Secondary School nearest to her home, leave him at the All-Age school where he is now for seventh grade, or take him out of school altogether. The



All-Age School extends the Primary School Programme in very poor conditions. In the Secondary School Donny's education will comprise vocational studies in the main. His opportunity for broader study will be severely limited. Some choice.

The practice of selecting children at the tender age of 10 or 11 within the limited options offered by our system of secondary education is discussed every year as results become known. Many parents feel the Common Entrance Examination is good for children. Exams will make them study harder and teach them the realities of life; if children 'fail' it's because they're lazy or slow. But a growing number of us feel this examination is a bad thing.

There's no question that the examination causes trauma, stress and anxiety; pressure which has already led to several cases of suicides. The competitiveness generated is furthermore socially unhealthy.

A central question which is not often enough discussed is the fact that the Common Entrance Exam detracts from real education. By this I mean that the enrichment areas are deliberately excluded from the curriculum after the age of nine because

teachers are forced to grill the children in Common Entrance questions for most of the school day. The enrichment areas include art, craft, literature, creative writing, drama, social studies and music, and are key to each child's all round personal and social development.

Primary education is all about English and Maths, the basic areas which the examination tests. Some of the better preparatory schools still try to include a little enrichment in the curriculum, such as art, but the emphasis remains on the 3-Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). Children in today's schools are given little information about the world around them (the biological, social, economic and political environment); they have few opportunities for

"... they have few opportunities for exploration and discovery of their bodies and themselves."

exploration and discovery of their bodies and themselves.

Education should be a humanising process - a process which is not helped much by doing English and Maths all day long.

In this context we also have to look at certain class factors which further hinder little Donny's chances. Generally middle and upper class children have more opportunities outside of school to make up for the shortfall of the enrichment areas in the school system.

It is sometimes said that if you educate a man, you educate one individual but if you educate a woman, you educate the family. Most middle and upper class families have educated mothers who understand (consciously or otherwise) the need for the enrichment areas and can find the funds to provide that enrichment. Yes, there are

"Children in today's schools are given little information about the world around them . . ."

those middle-class parents who substitute high-tech toys (satellite dish, Nintendo etc.) for quality enrichment, but in the main, the children of the middle-classes are in a better position.

Middle-class children are more likely to be taken on trips and visits around Jamaica (Port Royal or Nature's Habitat or the Zoo) or overseas, and to hear and use more advanced language. They often have more toys (home-made or bought), books and games than the working-class child. Toys and books are important from a very early age to assist in language development and the development of an enquiring mind, but we can only buy them if we can afford them. Money enables middle-class parents to send their children to a fee-paying school. For upwards of a thousand dollars, your child will get a school that is far less overcrowded and far better equipped than a free primary school. The middle-class

family is also in a position to provide basic support such as nourishing food, a quiet place to sleep and study, which are key factors in the learning process.

Despite their circumstances, however, many children of the working class do very well in Primary school and in the selection examination, but it is a fact that prep school children have a much higher pass rate.

The alarming number of non-readers who are leaving the primary school every year (54%) should cause us great concern. Recently a number of Secondary School principals announced they would refuse admission to non-readers (the choices are dwindling even further). This is rather unfair because in most cases, it is the school system with its examination that detracts from real learning, which has failed the children.

But let's not kid ourselves into thinking that it is only the children that are traumatised by the examination. Parents and teachers also suffer the pangs.

Anxious parents have helped to create a growing 'industry' in the area of extra lessons. They pay out for extra tuition in the basic examination areas once their children are at the age of nine. They know little Johnny or Susan is "weak" in this or that area and what will become of them if they fail? They are anxious because a High School education is the path to success and upward mobility; a way out of poverty. But again, the middle-class parent has the edge when it comes to extra lessons since the fees charged by woefully underpaid teachers exclude most children from lower income families.

For teachers, it is a matter of personal responsibility for the success or failure of their students. Teachers feel they will be blamed if students don't get through.

So is there a solution? How Can we abolish the Common Entrance and still have a more equitable education system? So far the emphasis tends towards creating more High School Places so that more children can be allowed to pass the exam. But that "solution" will still leave a whole lot of kids on the "junkheap" and it certainly will not

"The aim has to be to upgrade all Secondary Schools to the level of High Schools so that all our nation's children have the opportunity to attend and study broadly."

require the school curriculum to provide the enrichment required by growing minds.

The aim has to be to upgrade all Secondary Schools to the level of High Schools so that ***all*** our nation's children have the opportunity to attend and study broadly. In addition, of course, teachers will have to be paid decent salaries to ensure quality. That's when we can scrap the Common Entrance Examination and the torture that goes with it.

Taken out of the shackling system of the 3-Rs, and given room for healthy growth in both academic and vocational studies, a young person at age 14 will indeed have choices. It is then that they can be streamed fairly according to their interest and potential. It is then, also, that the society can begin to come out of those other shackles - the ones that confine our minds to the view that somehow a carpenter or secretary or chef is at a lower level than a lawyer, doctor or University lecturer.

I'm quite aware of the IMF and its structural adjustment policies over our heads and running the nation's business. The path I suggest will take money and with the national debt as it is, there's not much money left for nation-building. But despite the difficulties, we need to aim for a system which spurs our children to their greatest potential. Why bother to patch up the same old one that is working for a minority only? We should ensure that Donny and the majority he represents are always given the greatest possible choices.

WOMEN CREATING HEAT

Creation Fire, an Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry, burst into the Region's heritage of fine literature late last year. CAFRA (Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action) launched this formidable new work at the CAFRA AGM when many women from the Caribbean (and diaspora) were gathered, including many of the poet-contributors. **Creation Fire**, published by Sister Vision Press (Toronto) and edited by Ramabai Espinet, brings together over 100 women poets between its 350 pages of celebratory fervour - at times "prophetic, revolutionary, tender, tight-lipped or pagan".

The Anthology crosses boundaries of race, class and language: poems are written in several of our creole languages, as well as in English, French and Spanish (with English translations). You can dive into the book at any point and be richly rewarded, or you can follow your mood and select works from specific sections dedicated to the **Seer**, the **Artist**, the **Mother**, the **Lover**, the **Exile**, the **Mourner**, the **Land**, the **Region**, the **Worker**, the **Guerilla**, the **Survivor**, and finally, the **Praise Singer**. Readers will be intrigued to meet the many poetesses - yes, respect has been paid to the writers by including 20 pages of short biographies, including photos.

The torch for **Creation Fire** was lit many years ago: since the early 1980s, visionary women of the region toiled to bring the work to fruition. The team from Sister Vision and CAFRA had to jump through many a flaming hoop to realise the dream (later, we hope to tell you more about how the book came to light). But the anthology does much more than reflect the artistic creativity of Caribbean women because: "Poems are always rebelling against Now. That's what they do. They raise hell...Poems love causing disturbances. They are poor. They steal the gold cape of the king and run around in it like it was everybody's. They are considered inconsequential, but they have brought down governments (starting with the ones in our heads)..." from Nan Peacocke's **About Poems**.

CONDITIONS CRITICAL

by Lillian Allen

*Dem a mash it up down inna Jamaica
Dem a add it up down inna Jamaica
Gas prices bounce in hoops for the sky
a little spark and the embers of oppression rise
People tek to the streets. It's no negotiating stance
When do you want Freedom. Yesterday
And how do you propose you'll get it? By the people's way
So, that's why, dem a mash it up down inna Jamaica
Dem a add it up inna Jamaica*

*Dem say dem tired of trying to buy the country back
from the Americans and the IMF pack
A little friendly debt with an open end and it feels like the ball
and chain game again
Conditions critical
Freedom has been mythical
Every few years a new deliver come
Say: Better must come, let me lead the way my people
Seems better get delayed and somewhere hiding
It's quarter to twelve and it's getting late
Better change to waiting and we waiting here a while
and the weight is piling on our backs
And we sweating and dying under disparity's
attacks...attacks
And our children still bawling. And our ancestors
still calling And we right ya so demanding.*



Miss Amy And Miss May: Applause From Abroad

The Sistren Research video docu-drama, **Miss Amy and Miss May**, has travelled far since being released in early 1990. From Jamaica to Barbados and Brazil, Cuba and Martinique, the U.S., UK and Canada, the video has been promoted on television and among mixed audiences at seminars and workshops. And **Miss Amy and Miss May** has also been winning awards and critical acclaim. It was the only documentary from the English-speaking Caribbean which made it to competition level at the prestigious **12th Latin American and Caribbean Film Festival** held in Havana, Cuba in December. Director Cynthia Wilmot reported great interest among the participants in **Miss Amy and Miss May** as people, during interviews with the media and in meetings to which she was invited to speak.

The Festival brought together regional film-makers who were treated to a feast of screen efforts from 20 different countries. Participants not only screened their offerings, but also took part in various roundtable discussions which sought solutions to the various problems associated with distribution and production. Meanwhile, "the Sistren entry was the high point of entries from the English-speaking Caribbean: a much overdue work which hopefully will influence the making of constructive films within the region, rather than ethnocentric chauvinistic works..." Well that's how **Caribbean Week** put it in a review of the **2nd Caribbean Film and Video Festival, Images**



The Jamaica delegation to Images Caraibes poses with Chief Organiser, Suzy Landau, (second left): Others (l-r) Don Green (Synergy), Dermot Hussey (Jury member), Winsome Van Horne (Senior Editor, JIS in TV), Alwyn Bully (UNESCO Jamaica Office), Hilary Nicholson (Sistren), and Harclayde Walcott (Coordinator, Creative Arts Centre).

Caraibes, held in Martinique last June.

Miss Amy and Miss May was awarded a Certificate of Distinction in the video docu-drama class. And phase 3, the Jamaican film company which worked on **Miss Amy and Miss May**, was awarded a trophy for best music video.

Images Caraibes is the brainchild of Suzy Landau. She's assisted in its organisation by a team of women in Martinique, who work very hard to put together a film festival that is conducted in the three languages of the region (English, Spanish and French)

and which seeks to encourage regional integration.

Not surprisingly, the Images Caraibes Organising Team has encountered many of the difficulties experienced by all-women groups vis-a-vis the establishment (and very macho) world of cinema. Sistren's experiences, particularly in relation to collective management and international funding, have been useful in helping the Images Caraibes group to develop. In addition, Sistren has acted as liaison between Jamaica and Martinique, encouraging a much wider participation by Jamaicans in the field, at last year's Festival.

FROM OUR MAILBAG

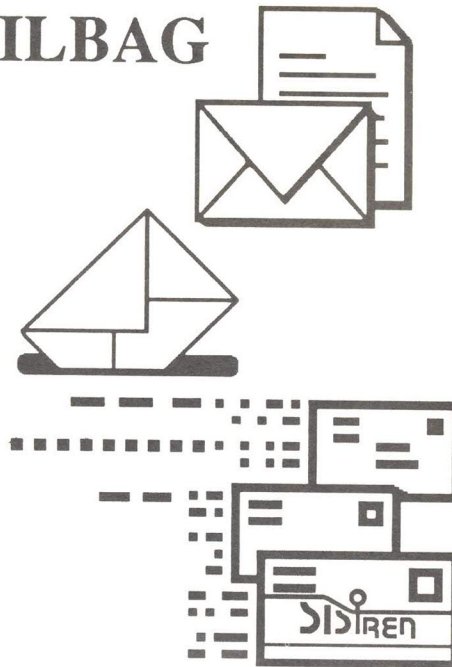
CONCERN ABOUT SISTREN

Dear Sistren,

Sistren magazine continues to be very informative medium through which one is able to keep in touch with life and its conditions for women in Jamaica. For this your efforts must be commended.

However, the magazine seems to have been sliding into a sort of ideological/political propaganda campaign where some stories about women and the women's movement are somewhat exaggerated. For example, in one recent issue the caption "Women's Movement Bigger and Broader . . ." implied a movement spreading among all classes of Jamaican women, which we know is hardly the case. This gives the impression that Sistren newsletter is an activist organ, an implication which indeed, would be seriously problematic for many of us Caribbean women, who are in support of Sistren and the women's movement in the entire Caribbean.

Another point of concern is the notion of men writing on women's issues for a women's magazine. We know that in Jamaica and the Caribbean, men are merely spectators to women's lives and/or perpetrators of our subordination and oppression. I'm referring specifically to the issue in which one Patrick



Smikle wrote an article on women higglers in Kingston. The issue here is not that Mr. Smikle cannot write about women, but that he ought to write such a story for another newspaper or newsletter but not for Sistren.

Finally, and in the same vein, I wish to express dismay at Sistren's promotion of men who support their children and assist with domestic labour as if this is a favour being done for women. What is novel or commendable about men looking after their children? This is their responsibility and duty. It is their attitude taken by Sistren which continues to perpetuate the idea in the Caribbean male (and unfortunately, too many women) that women's work and men's work are separate, the latter having value and the former lacking value.

Again, I wish to commend you on the good work you are doing, specifically with the regularity with

which the paper is published considering all the constraints under which you work.

Thank you.

Sisterhood in struggle,
Linda Carty
Toronto

MEN & WOMEN ARE NOT OPPOSITES

Dear Sistren,

I wish to extend my appreciation to you for your copy of Vol. 12 No.1. It has opened my eyes to something I never paid much attention to in Jamaica; a women's movement with deep historical roots.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am aware, to some degree through actual knowledge and inference, of the contributions to Jamaican history and society by women. Women are half the society and nothing could be accomplished without either their input or acquiescence. From slavery through the Maroon Wars to Morant Bay to the Labour Movement and finally Independence, women have been there making their invaluable, indelible, and undeniable contribution.

That contribution is great and important, but it is not a women's movement.

A Women's movement is one where the primary goal is the ending of the oppression of women. It is where the interests of women are paramount and their self realisation of the unique beings that they are, are recognised both by themselves and by men. It is where women and men are made to understand that although 'male' and 'female' are in grammatical terms opposites, men and women aren't. It is where we all learn and internalise to the benefit of men, women, and society, that men and women are compliments of each other.

The quest continues. Please continue to inform and educate me. Continued success.

Sincerely,
Habte Selassie
Radio Pacifica, New York

HEALTH DISTRESS

Dear Sistren,

I have been working in the health sector for over 13 years and I have never seen it in such a deplorable condition. The particular hospital where I have been working (said to be the best hospital in the country) now appears to be heading for the worst. This is unacceptable for a teaching institution.

The first thing to note is the deterioration in the number of nursing staff. There are health workers (those who work along with fully-trained nurses) who have not had proper training but who are often times left on their own to carry out the work.

Secondly many of the wards have been closed so patients have to put up with many inconveniences, such as not being able to stay for the time they should and receiving less attention than they need.

Sometimes out-patients cannot get their drugs because of staff and drug shortages in the pharmaceutical department. Too often, very sick people are brought to the hospital only to hear from the doctor, "No beds. I am sending you home on medication." Sometimes they die before they leave the hospital, much less reach home!

The Maternity section comprises one antenatal ward and two post-natal wards. Only one is presently open (one has been closed for a number of years). Despite less facilities, which means mothers are spending less time in the hospital, they are required to pay a higher admission fee.

I am not saying that nurses, doctors and other health workers are not doing what they can in the circumstances. I am saying that it is high time something is done to improve the system. It is going down far too rapidly; at such a rate that it seems to me everybody will soon die out, cause who is not suffering from stress is suffering from disease.

I am moved by this situation and I know that many others are crying out too. The health system just cannot be allowed to continue like this. It is DISTRESSING!

Lana McFarlane
Kingston

23 JUL 1991 1661 707 20
**GUYANA NURSES SAY
THANKS**

Dear Sistren,

Thanks for your issue on Sistren Theatre Collective's Caribbean Tour (Vol.11, No.2, 1989). I read it from cover to cover and I just wish to inform you how much I enjoyed it. Your articles made me feel so good about the many things women can do and say for themselves.

The editorial, Our Bodies, Our Rights, is one article my many friends and colleagues enjoyed and debated. I hope it was so for others. Thank you on behalf of the Guyana Nurses Association. We will be glad to read your many other magazines.

Yours cooperatively,
Linda Dawson
Guyana

INDIAN EXCHANGE

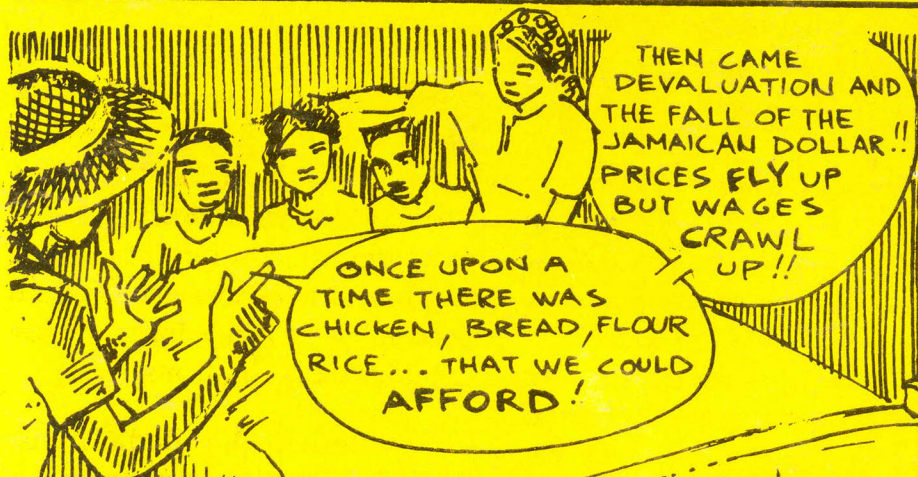
Dear Sistren,

Your organisation is well known in India and I have had the pleasure of reading some issues of your magazine. I am sending you issues of Human Rights Worldwide, a new publication. I shall be happy to put you on the mailing list on a reciprocal basis. In any event, I would like to receive material from you as I am sure it would be of interest to our readers.

Wishing you every success in your endeavours.

Yours faithfully,
Ajit S. Gopal
New Delhi, India

SISTA ANSA an GRANNY A CHAT ABOUT LIFE AND DEBT



YEAR	COST OF FEEDING FAMILY OF FIVE FOR ONE WEEK	MINIMUM WAGE
JUNE 1975	\$ 24.27	\$ 26.00
DEC 1983	77.00	30.00
AUG 1984	110.46	40.00
JULY 1985	128.43	52.00
SEPT 1986	148.72	52.00
DEC 1987	165.60	52.00
DEC 1988	160.03	72.00
DEC 1989	207.04	84.00

SOURCE: NUTRITION DEPT. MIN. OF HEALTH

