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Hurricane
Special

Women in the
Rebuilding
Process

SIREN

WOMEN AT WORK

JUGGLING THE ODDS



EQUAL WORK,
UNEQUAL PAY

DOMESTIC
LABOUR

FAMILY BUDGET

CHILD CARE

HIGH
UNEMPLOYMENT



LOW PAY

Mbala

Let's Get Acquainted



WARM THANKS

The principal of Gem Basic School on Retirement Road in Kingston, Miss E. Williams, says a warm thank-you to Joan Edwards, following Joan's presentation of a \$3,000 cheque to the school on behalf of the 1988 Sister's Celebration Organizing Committee. Looking on is the

President of the Parent-Teachers' Association, Mr. George Thompson. The theme of this year's 4th Sister's Celebration was 'Culture a rule; Culture deh a school'. The cheque, which represents part of the proceeds of the Celebration, has been used to assist in the paving of the school yard, which previously resembled a dust bowl.

SISTREN OUT DEH:

Some of the many activities undertaken by Sistren Theatre Collective in the last few months.

MAY:

Bev Hanson was a resource person at the Food Chain Project workshop in Edmonton, Canada. Her contribution included a dramatic presentation on the Jamaican Free Zone. The drama group at the Three-M Cheese Making Plant in Maidstone, formed out of a Sistren Workshop project staged its first production. The project is aimed at assisting participants with various internal problems and to improve their relations in the community. Lionheart Gal dramatisations, performed by the Sistren Theatre Team, were a high point of a conference of Caribbean writers hosted by the English Department of the University of the West Indies.

JUNE:

Sisters in Trinidad enjoyed drama-education workshops for the first time.

The workshops were facilitated by Hilary Nicholson and organised by the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA). They focused on funding sources and how to develop good relations with overseas funding agencies. Apart from the CAFRA Secretariat, Hilary worked with women of the Rape Crisis Centre, the Half Way House (a centre for battered women), the Group and Working Women, groups active around issues related to sexual violence and the Free Zone. Sistren kicked off the Commission of Enquiry into working conditions of women at the Kingston Free Zone. The Sistren case was presented by Attorney-at-Law Suzann Dodd. Sistren took part in an orientation programme for U.S. Peace Corps workers newly assigned to Jamaica. Sistren's presentation was designed to give the Peace Corp workers an insight into the day to day realities of the communities in which they'll be working.

"A wonderful experience" was how Jerline Todd described a World Council of Churches, Women in Development workshop she attended in Geneva, Switzerland. Sistren Workshop team worked with the Red Thread women's embroidery project in Guyana for six weeks, training participants in the use of popular education methodologies for organisation building. Bev Elliot represented Sistren at a Rural Development Evaluation workshop organised by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) in Trinidad.

JULY:

Sistren members held workshops with the Port Royal YWCA which aimed to motivate the women to find ways of livening up their break times. Sistren facilitated workshops at the Dialogue on Development organised by the Institute of Cultural Affairs, with sessions on overseas funding and how this affects the work of NGO's. Sistren Textiles members, Cerene Stephenson, Bess Thompson and Viris Gordon went to Nova Scotia, Canada for a Fabric Arts workshop sponsored by the Centre for International Studies. The workshop covered weaving, dying, quilt making, silkscreen printing, designing and photography.

AUGUST:

Joan Edwards and Patricia Pryce took part in the Groundwork Theatre at the Groundwork Theatre Company's second annual Community Drama and Leadership Development Workshop. Annie Blake assisted the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) in its series of workshops on Women and Health. The Creative Writing Workshop continued at Sistren Headquarters.

CORRECTIONS

Iris King was the first female Mayor of Jamaica and not Iris Collins as we stated in Facts on Women in Government, in our last issue (Vol. 10, #1, 88). We've also been advised by a reader that Madame Rose Leon was not only Jamaica's first woman Member of Parliament, but also the island's first female Minister of Government.



Bess Thompson-Rose - "Overall" Sistren talent.

SISTREN PROFILE

Myrtle Thompson-Rose, otherwise called 'May' and 'Bess', is based in Sistren Textiles but also contributes to the Theatre and Workshop teams from time to time. That's why when you ask her job title, she smiles and says, "Overall".

A founding member of Sistren, Bess is 39 years old and married with two 'big' youths, Craigie and Shuggy.

Bess' hobbies reflect her great talent as a comedienne. When she's not working, she delights in writing letters full of comical drawings and hilarious comments on developments in Jamaica's social, economic and political life. Sistren members and friends, working or studying abroad who've received one of these masterpieces admit to reading and re-reading them hungrily and with great glee when the homesick blues strike. Needless to say, Bess is also a brilliant story-teller, another hobby in which she revels.

Born in St. Mary, Bess says working with Sistren has helped her overcome chronic shyness and increased her confidence greatly.

"When I started out with Sistren, I couldn't say anything once I was in a crowd, now I even manoeuvre speeches without feeling nervous. Being with Sistren has made me feel confident as a woman. I can assess myself and run my life how I want it to run without having to depend on no man".

Personal Notes

OFF TO STUDY:

Sistren's Artistic Director **Honor Ford Smith** and **Imani Tafari Ama** of Sistren Research. **Honor** is off to the U.S. to do a Fellowship in creative writing at the Radcliffe Research and Study Centre, Harvard University. **Imani** is off to the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, Holland, to do her Masters in Women and Development. Both will end their studies next year.

RECOVERING

after surgery, our own **May Thompson-Rose** is recuperating at home, and giving visitors a bellyful of laughs. Hurry back to us **May**.

DIRECTING PANTOMINE

for the first time, **Carol Lawes** of the **Groundwork Theatre Company**. **Carol** is back on form after surgery in the summer.

IN REHEARSAL

Sistren Theatre Team under the direction of Barbadian, **Earl Warner**. The new play is based on **Sistren's** book 'Lionheart Gal' but as yet has no title.

OLYMPIC FEMALE FIRST

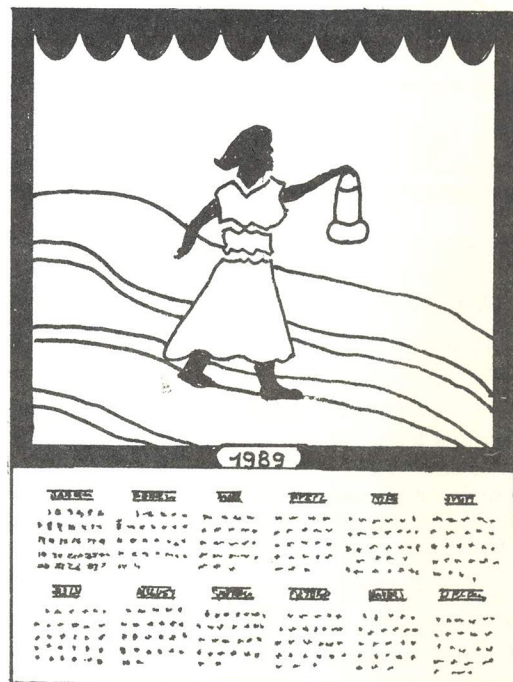
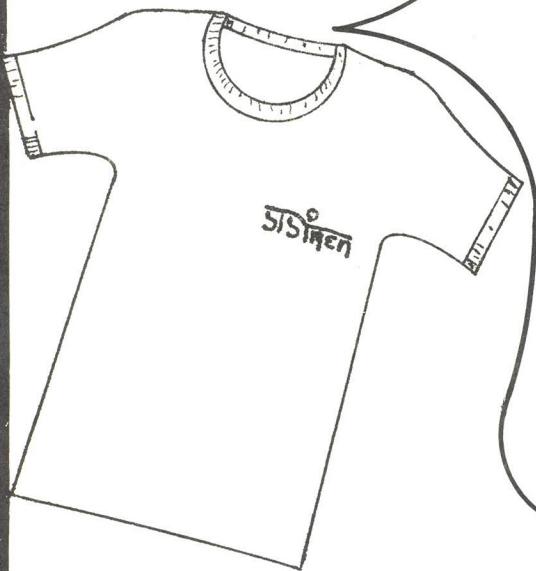
for our **Merlene Ottey** and **Jamaica**. **Merlene** became the first woman to carry her nation's flag in an Olympics Opening Ceremony. **Merlene** more than deserves the honour having served **Jamaica** so outstandingly for so long. And of course, we hail **Grace Jackson** for her magnificent Silver medal win just behind Wonder Woman, **Florence Griffiths-Joyner** ('Flo-Jo') of the **United States** in the women's 100-metre dash.

MARRIED:

Journalist and Poet, **Elean Thomas**, to British Attorney-at-Law, **Lord Anthony Gifford**. Our best wishes to them both.

Xmas Gifts from Sistren Textiles

Greetings. How yuh do? I'm your basic Sistren T-shirt. I come in all sizes (S, M, L, X-L) and a variety of nice, nice colours (soft and bright shades). My original, screen printed designs include hot, new creations from the 'Caribbean Goddesses' series and the 'Lionheart Gal' book cover, as well as your old favourites. Believe you me, I make a great Xmas gift for all ages and tastes. And when you visit me at Sistren Textiles, 20 Kensington Crèscnt, Kingston 5, check out my friends, the 1989 fabric calendar and the fabric Xmas cards. We all make Christmas that little bit extra special. Check us nuh!



TO OUR READERS

We were about to go to press with our second issue for the year when, WHAM! Hurricane Gilbert hit and changed the agenda of the entire nation and all individuals within it.

We take this opportunity to offer our heartfelt sympathy to all of you who lost loved ones or suffered damage to property during the passing of the hurricane. It will be many months before full normalcy is restored. During that time we all need to pull together at the community level, each one doing whatever is possible to go forward. And we need to put in place lasting structures that will serve our communities in the future in both good times and bad times.

We must admit though that despite Gilbert we were already pretty late with production. Moving slowly but surely to 'magazine' status is not so easy when the work is still being done through a newsletter production structure.

At this stage we thought it best if we produced issues 2 and 3 in a double edition to ensure our commitment to you, our readers, for 1988. In the meantime, we're working hard to put our house in order, and to make sure all three issues are on time in '89. And, when we say put our house in order we mean just that! Gilbert, the little devil, took part of our roof, along with thousands of others, and went off howling with glee on his path of destruction. So we're a bit cramped at the moment and on rainy days we need all the buckets we can find in the "dry weather" section. But we remain mindful of the fact that we are not the worst hit (CUSO, for example, lost its entire roof) and our hearts are still warmed from the many expressions of concern and care we've received from our friends. A big thanks to you all.

Joan Ross-Frankson

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SISTREN

Vol. 10, Nos 2 & 3

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REGULARS

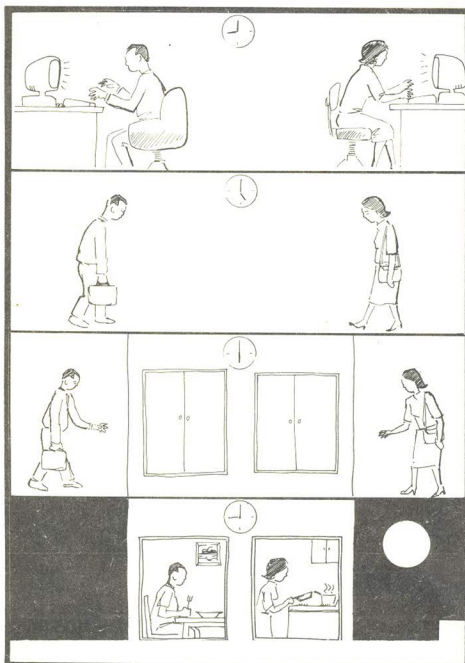
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JUGGLING THE ODDS

A woman's work is not only "never done", as the saying goes. It is also very often invisible. According to statistics, women represent only one-third of the world's labour force. But this does not include the vast army of women working in the informal sector, like domestics, higglers, market traders and small cultivators and those employed in the sex industry. In addition, most of the tremendous amount of housework and maintenance of other human beings, which continues to be, in the main, the responsibility of women, is never paid.

WOMEN WORK HARDER

Wherever women are in the world, they are working harder than men and juggling the odds to stay on top of it all. Economic necessity dictates that the vast majority of women have to earn money for their households, whether or not they have a man around. One part of the problem created is that when men leave work at the end of the day they go home to relax.



For women it's the second half of a double day's work. And as we all know, the endless cleaning, cooking, washing and nurturing and management of the family and household, is unpaid.

LITTLE PAY, LOW PRESTIGE

Even when women go out into the public world of work, they get little pay and even less prestige. If they begin to take over a "man's area", the salary and prestige falls, as has happened with the teaching profession over the years.

In general women are at the bottom of the pay scales and the power ladders in the working world. The hard facts are that women do 66% of the world's work, receive 5% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's assets.

SUPERWOMAN: A MYTH

And with all this the media makes our heads spin with non-stop images of superwoman (can she possibly exist?) She, perfect woman that she is, balances home and work, and at the end of her day even finds time to freshen up her perfect hairdo and make-up, to join her perfect husband, for a perfect evening of relaxation on the town. Her kids never get sick and are even-tempered and well-balanced at all times. (Worse still is the fact that, according to this myth all of it is the woman's responsibility alone - the baby father/husband's role is rarely questioned).

So now, what is the root cause of this situation?

The situation is in the belief, held by those in authority and drilled into women from an early age, that women are born to serve, and be dependent on, men. Men, therefore, as our bene-

factors, are the ones who must earn good money.

This idea is a mockery anywhere in the world, since economic independence is a critical aspect in bringing about the liberation of all women: but it is especially a mockery in a country like ours where two-thirds of our households are critically dependent on the economic contributions of women.

UNRECOGNISED SKILL AND HARD WORK

Society wants us to believe that the household management skills we acquired as girl children, through the unpaid tutoring of our madda's, grannies and aunties, are nature's gifts to us!

These skills are made to seem less impressive than they are when referred to as "women's work". This horrible little phrase shows clearly society's refusal to acknowledge the skill and hard work it takes to run a sewing machine in sweat shop conditions all day (or all night depending on the shift); or that washing and cooking and cleaning can be done very well, or very badly, depending on the level of skills and hard work involved. Because it is "women's work" it is not considered equal to that of a man working in a factory, or a chef (that is 'male cook') in a restaurant.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK, IRRELEVANT

It is clear, then, that our "equal pay for equal work" law is quite irrelevant to most of our women workers. We would suggest the law be renamed "equal pay for work of equal value" if the society is ever to become serious in recognising and paying fairly for all the work that maintains and develops it.

As it stands now, existing policies focus on the creation of low-paid jobs for women, then leave the women to take care of everyone, including unemployed men, on salaries that men consider beneath them.

"LOVE": "APPRECIATION" - NOT ENOUGH

We are glad to see though, that whether in the workplace or the

home, women are showing more and more by their actions that "love" and "appreciation" are not enough. Growing numbers of women are no longer satisfied with the mere "recognition" of their "tremendous sacrifice and dedication" in pretty speeches by male politicians, or in special sales for Mother's Day. Those things should be icing on the cake, but the problem is we don't have much of a cake to hold the icing.

What women want now is money that reflects the real value of the work they contribute to the society. If there is no money to pay, as is more often the case with housework, then everyone involved should be expected to do their share.

Our need for leisure, recreation and time to study and improve ourselves, is just as important as the men's.



LET'S GET ACQUAINTED *(Continued from page 3)*



Bev Hanson and Annie Blake highlight women's double-day of work in a skit they performed at the World YMCA Women's Meeting in Aruba, August 2-4. Bev and Annie were employed as resource persons for the meeting.

Sistren Research in Solidarity

Sistren Research has sent a cable of solidarity to the United Women's Organisation of Cape Town in South Africa, deploring the indefinite detention of Gertrude Fester under the racist government's notorious International Security Act. Gertrude, a former participant of the Women and Development Programme of the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, Holland, with which Sistren Research is associated, was detained in May.

At the time she was suffering from high blood pressure, severe rheumatism and a bad case of influenza. Her condition can only become worse in the dread conditions of the apartheid prison system.

As a participant in the ISS Women and Development Programme, Gertrude was part of the group which launched the INSISTERHOOD Network - an international forum for exchange and dialogue on ways of fighting the oppression of women in various parts of the world.

Up to the time of her detention, Gertrude was actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement through the United Women's Organisation, a leading force in the United Democratic Front. She is not the first member of the organisation to be arbitrarily detained and is unlikely to be the last. She is one of the many women, children and men imprisoned or executed by the racist regime because of their commitment to end apartheid and to build a democratic South Africa.

Send your message of solidarity to: UWCO, P.O. Box 120, Athlone 7760, Cape Town, South Africa.

DOMESTIC SERVICE: COMPLEX WORK RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN

One of the most revealing case-studies on domestic service was undertaken in 1985 and recently completed as part of the Population Mobility and Development Project of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of the West Indies' Mona Campus. The survey set out to get responses from both employers and employees. To facilitate this double perspective, the research group, led by sociologist Patricia Anderson, spoke with 312 female domestic workers, 71 employees and representatives of five employment agencies. The following article is based on Anderson's recently completed report of this study.

Domestic service is one of the major work areas for women in Jamaica, but remains a little explored corner of the labour market.

In 1984, there were 90,100 people who stated their occupation as domestic worker. Of this figure, 98.8% (89,000) were female (ISER National Mobility Survey). Despite the number of persons employed in domestic service though, it's only recently that studies have been undertaken into the job content and the complex relations that exist between domestic worker and employer. There are several reasons why this is so. Historically, domestic workers have been an isolated group. They work alone, set apart from trade union development and labour history. They have been in the main, female and poor, and past generations have left no records of their experiences for sociologists to explore.

GENDER ROLES

In the ISER study, Pat Anderson argues that despite the economic and social importance of domestic service, the relatively few studies done have failed to base themselves in the framework of an adequate gender analysis.

Domestic service is a complex relationship between women, one in which the female employer is given a sense of power, even though within the home and society she is powerless. Thus, domestic service needs to be examined not only in terms of the women workers themselves but also in terms of the sex roles which dominate Jamaican society.

Anderson notes that within the Jamaican middle-class, family power structure, an on-going struggle is waged between the man and woman. The man, on whom society has bestowed the role of economic provider, expects his physical

comforts to be given highest priority, and to be treated with the utmost respect. The woman is primary nurturer and homemaker. Her earnings, if she works outside the home are seen as secondary. For the Jamaican woman in this type of family unit, her power comes from her role as 'Mamma'. However, her work outside the home not only provides her with satisfaction, but also material rewards that can improve her power resources within the home, reducing the arbitrary use of economic power by the male and increasing the respect she gets from her children. For this woman, the domestic worker is a primary resource for ensuring competent management of the domestic affairs. Her helper is the route to increasing her power; she can be 'superwoman', efficiently balancing her work within and outside the home. The helper is not expected to build any sort of working relationship with the male 'head' of the household. After all he is not her 'real' employer.

MISTRESS TAKES CREDIT

Within this context, it is important that the helper, regardless of her competence levels, is not in competition with the mistress. The mistress transfers the labour of domestic work to the helper, but takes credit for its organisation because to do otherwise would reduce her resources in the household exchange system. So the helper becomes the subordinate, forever in need of the supervision of the mistress. In breaking-in a new helper, training rituals become highly elaborate. She is often called upon to become a 'mirror image' of the wife rather than an individual with her own creative capabilities. As one employer, a 25-year-old teacher, said, "I try to ensure that she does everything the way I do it." The mistress is excessive in her monitor-

ing of the work. 'Inefficient' helpers become the subject of morning coffee or afternoon tea verandah talk among upper St. Andrew housewives. The image of the helper as a 'girl' and the mistress as the dominant force, is maintained.

PERSONALISED RELATIONSHIP

Within this carefully maintained balance between mistress and helper, the helper is not only required to perform specific duties, but also to act out the rituals which go along with the ideological definition of housework as 'loving service'. Thus the relationship between helper and mistress becomes highly personalised. The establishment of the personal side of the relationship is critical to the housewife/mother. She needs the helper's loyalty for herself as an individual and for her family. This is because the helper is the stranger within the privacy of the family life. She is an invisible witness to the conflicts within the family. She therefore has the potential to embarrass the family, at least among the immediate neighbours. The mistress tries to minimise this risk by discouraging friendships between her helper and other helpers in neighbouring households. In addition, they try not to share the services of their helper with other families they know.

CATEGORIZATION

Basically, there are three categories of domestic worker. The first is residential 'live-in' worker which speaks for itself. Continuous employment for five or six days with the same employer is referred to as 'weekly work'. The 'day's-worker' performs more specialized jobs (mainly laundry and cleaning) on a daily basis to varied employers.

Many domestics launch out as 'live-ins'. They are from the rural areas and they are young. They go to urban areas, seeking a niche from which to explore and expand their knowledge of the new environment. Most shift from this initial arrangement to working on a non-residential basis as their confidence increases. The sample on which the ISER paper is based found roughly twice as many weekly workers as live-in and day's workers.

LOSS OF ASPIRATION

Even though domestic service is the most readily available work for women with unrecognised skills, very few of the women spoken to had seen domestic work as their future goal. Most had been interested in white collar jobs such as teaching, nursing and dress-making. They cited economic necessity and inadequate training as the reasons for their domestic in-



*Beverley Elliott, the household helper reads a letter from her daughter who has recently migrated to the United States to do domestic work, in a scene from Sistren's 1981 production, **Domestick**. The play explores the themes of domestic labour and migration.*

volvement. While as many as 49.6% of all domestic workers under 30 years have some post-primary education, only 7.2% of those 30 years and over had gone beyond the primary stage.

For many, recruitment was not a formal business. Employment agencies are used, but the majority of places found for young hopefuls are procured through word-of-mouth informality. Because of the personalized service to be rendered, it helps to be recommended by friends and family.

RESERVATIONS - NO FEMALE UNDERWEAR!

Domestic workers do have several reservations about their employment. When interviewed and asked if there was anything they would refuse to do, answers were emphatic.

One major taboo is the washing of

women's underwear, something that many saw as unclean and too personal. It is interesting that male underwear is never refused, however soiled, suggesting a traditional distaste of women's bodies and the whole reproductive menstrual cycle. Other taboos are cleaning animal refuse, preparing animal food, cleaning shoes and flushing the toilet for members of the family.

SEXUAL ABUSE

The Jamaican phrase 'two woman inna one house nuh good' carries several connotations, not least of these being a suggestion of sexual competition or temptation. A little more than a tenth of the women interviewed complained of sexual harassment. A live-in worker said that her employer would come naked into her room when she was in the shower, but "I run him". None of the sample interviewed confessed to succumbing to, or en-

couraging this behaviour, but considering the economic benefits that are often presented for their favours, it is very possible that some were just 'not talking'. It is apparently a common practice for young boys to have their first sexual encounter with a domestic worker.

Significantly, many women start out in domestic service, far less remain. Those who do stay tend to have strong identification with their social reproductive roles. They work out relations with their employers that ensure mutual respect and competent running of the household.

As one domestic observed wryly: "Woman is there to do anything". Unfortunately, domesticity in Jamaica remains the responsibility of woman whether the employer or the employed. Indeed, if "anything" is to be done, some woman, be she helper or mistress, will be expected to do it.

NOTES ON THE FREE ZONE ENQUIRY

by Jennifer Jones

BACKGROUND

Friday, March 4: Over 2,000 Free Zone workers begin protest demonstrations for 3 days.

Monday, March 7: The demonstration masses outside Prime Minister Edward Seaga's Office at Jamaica House. He meets with a delegation.

Tuesday, March 8, International Women's Day: Prime Minister Seaga announces the immediate establishment of a Joint Industrial Council to provide equal representation for unions and employers in Kingston's Free Zone garment sector.

Kingston Free Zone Operators protest. They do not want to take part in any Joint Industrial Council. Such Councils usually have mandatory powers over working conditions.

The Prime Minister changes his mind about a Joint Industrial Council. There will be a one-man Board of Inquiry instead.

April 17: The public is invited to make submissions to "A Board of Inquiry into the terms and conditions of employment, and other aspects of labour relations in the Garment Industry in Jamaica, with special reference to the Garment Industry in the Kingston Free Zone and other Free Zones".

June 20: The Board of Enquiry begins hearing. The Sole Enquirer is Attorney-at-Law, Dan Kelly. Sistren, represented by Attorney-at-Law, Suzann Dodd, makes the first presentation. The following organisations have so far made submissions:

1) On behalf of the Free Zone Workers -

Sistren, St. Peter Claver Church, the National Workers Union (NWU) and the Women's Action Committee (WAC). WAC groups the Association of Development Agencies (ADA), the Association of Women's Organizations in Jamaica (AWOJ), the Bureau of Women's Affairs, Church Women United, the Council of Voluntary Social Services (CVSS), the Joint Trade Union Research Centre (JTURDC), St. Peter Claver Women's Outreach Project, the Organization of Women for Progress (OWP), National Workers Union, Sistren, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the University and Allied Workers Union (UAWU).



A Free Zone worker (right) testifies before Sole Enquirer Kelly.

2) From The Private Sector -

The Kingston Free Zone Manufacturers Association, the Jamaica Manufacturers Association (JMA), the Jamaica Employers Federation and the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ).

3) Government Bodies -

The Kingston Free Zone Company (the government body which manages the Kingston Free Zone) and JAMPRO (the government body which co-ordinates investment and industrial development).

ENQUIRY HIGHLIGHTS

Free Zone Minimum Wage: Minister of Labour, J.A.G. Smith, referring to Sistren's recommendation to the Enquiry that a minimum wage of US\$30.0 per week (JA\$165) be set for Free Zone workers, tells the House of Representatives that the terms of reference of the Enquiry do not include wages. Attorney-at-Law, Ronnie Thwaites, in his submission on behalf of St. Peter Claver Church, challenges this statement, saying there is no way the enquiry can be conducted without looking at wages. Commissioner Kelly rules that the Enquiry will consider the issue of wages.

Wint of the Gleaner: The Gleaner's Chief News Editor and one of its columnists, Carl Wint, attacks Sistren and others making submissions on behalf of the workers as "self-righteous, bleeding heart, do-gooders" who have "bloodied up the place making all sorts of charges, dropping words like 'exploitation' and 'slavery conditions' without serious thought. They should be told to shut up". (Whatever happened to objectivity?) Continuing in this vein in another column, Wint says of the Free Zone

workers themselves, "Too many of them are incompetent, inefficient, lazy people. Too many of them are lacking in work experience and work ethic. Too many of them are plain thieves".

The workers testify: Four Free Zone Workers appear before the Enquiry as part of the submission by St. Peter Claver. Their rich testimonies identify the main issues as very low wages, poor physical working conditions and high-handed, arrogant and, in some instances, racist, management behaviour (this is what triggered the March demonstration). Their evidence also reveals significant differences between factories, with conditions in some being far worse than in others.

The Free Zone Tour that never was, July 14: Kingston Free Zone Manufacturers refuse to allow an official tour of the Free Zone factories by representatives of those who have made submissions, on the grounds that this may cause "labour disturbances". The tour was arranged by the Commissioner. Only the Commissioner and his staff are welcome. Locked out are representatives of the Jamaica Employers Federation, the Jamaica Manufacturers Association, the National Workers Union and Sistren. The Commissioner calls this a "breach of natural justice" and refuses to go on the tour alone. The Women's Action Committee sends a letter of protest to the Free Zone Manufacturers Association and circulates it to the Press. The Gleaner 'loses' the letter. Another letter is sent and checks with the security guard to confirm that the first letter was received and registered. It is 'found'. All attempts to talk with News Editor, Carl Wint, are in vain. A Gleaner representative says the

letter should have been accompanied by a news release and it is now too late. Meanwhile, no future tour has been announced. It is understood that Commissioner Dan Kelly has the legal authority to insist on a tour with representatives.

COMMENTS

The Board of Enquiry was a face-saving device. It was put into place after the Prime Minister, under pressure from the Free Zone Manufacturers, backed off from a Joint Industrial Council. When the

Enquiry opened, it was set for only two weeks of submissions. At the beginning of September, it was still hearing evidence. All the submissions on behalf of the Free Zone workers were scheduled by the Commission's Secretary at the beginning of the Enquiry.

It is clear that rather than "shooting off their mouths" (according to Carl Wint) these submissions have come up with masses of solid evidence that others are now trying to counter. In the course of all this, much important evidence from all sides has been recorded.

The Women's Action Committee is

working to publish a summary of what has emerged so far because the Press coverage has been so very inadequate. Of critical importance now is to get this evidence out to the general public who, as a recent Stone Poll revealed, feel the Free Zone workers are not getting a fair deal, but who lack full information from all sides. Meanwhile Commissioner Kelly, is certainly going to be in a position to make some solid recommendations.

Jennifer Jones is a free lance journalist, researcher and resource person working in the local development community.

A FREE ZONE WAGE: "Lawd Only Know How Mi Manage"

Debbie T is not in many ways typical of the thousands of garment workers employed at the Kingston Free Zone. For one thing, she only has one child, and for another, her baby father does give her regular assistance in the form of school fees. He will give her money as well, but she has to ask and sometimes it's more than she can stand to go to him with her hand outstretched. Debbie wants to be as independent of him as possible, but it's hard on her meagre salary. She admits, 'If mi did haffi rely pon mi salary alone, lawd only know how me'd a manage'.

This is what she earns each fortnight:

Basic pay	...	...	\$180.00
Performance Bonus (when cutbacks occur, this is not paid)	...	...	30.00
Attendance Bonus (if she works 6 days)	...	...	18.00
TOTAL	...	...	<u>\$228.00</u>

And this is her fortnightly attempt to budget:

Government taxes (N.I.S., NHT, Education)	...	...	\$5.00 (approx.)
Bus fares	...	...	36.00
Lunch	...	...	84.00
Rent	...	...	20.00
Water, Light	...	...	40.00
Food	...	...	43.00
Clothes, personal items, etc.	...	...	00.00
TOTAL	...	...	<u>\$228.00</u>

And, this is how she 'manages':

BILLS:

"Every fortnight, the first thing mi do is tek out \$80.00 and throw mi partner. When I draw down, I put it into the Credit Union. That's what I tek pay the bills most times. When bills come and I can't manage, I do without light, water, gas, till I can get it back and beg mi neighbours in the meantime ..."

INSURANCE:

"Mi nuh have none, not even health..."

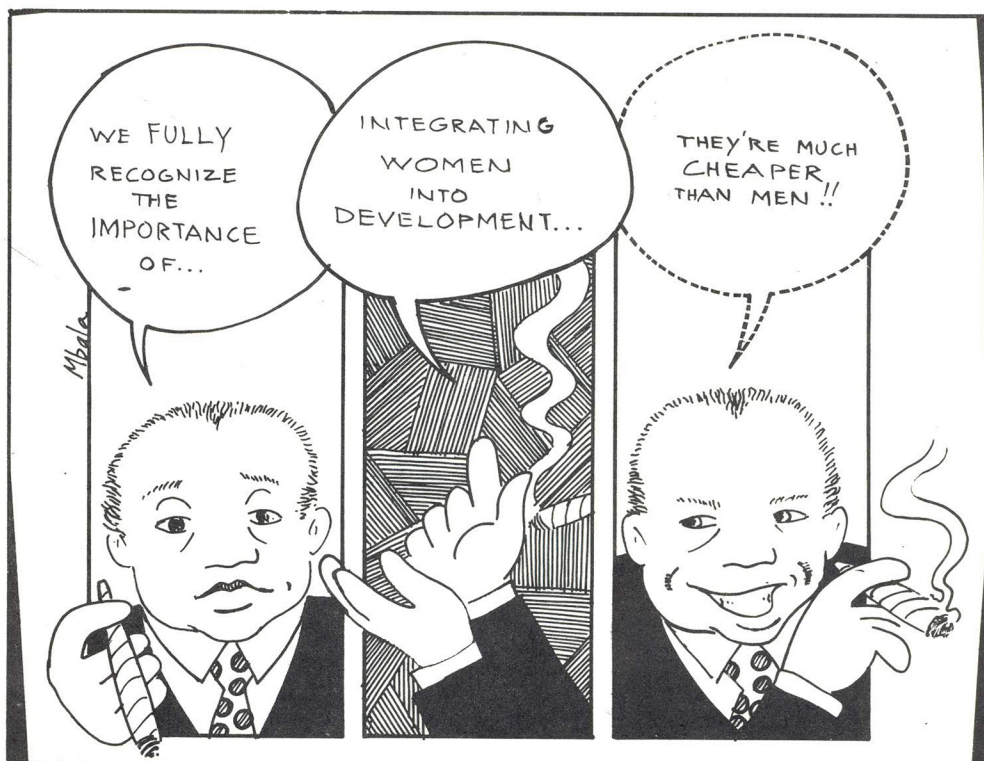
FOOD:

"I go market with \$10.00 and buy essentials like seasoning, callaloo and the cheapest fruits. Mi buy 1/4 pound and 1/2

pound of everything. Yuh haffi walk 'bout and check price and bargain. It tek nuff energy. Mi go Inna de later hours when de price low. Mi caan buy red meat, it too expensive. A 3 1/2 pound chicken can last de fortnight if mi nuh get a visitor. I buy two bread each fortnight, 1 pint of syrup, 3 pounds rice, 1 pound flour. Is not every time me go shop me can manage sugar".

MEALS:

"Breakfast is basically bread or crackers and tea. But some mornings mi can manage a piece of plantain or some callaloo. Sunday and Monday is rice 'n peas and a drink, with a little vegetable. Tuesday and Wednesday is tinned fish (mackerel or sardines) with dumpling or green banana. Thursday is porridge and by Friday, mi haffi rely pon di baby father. For Saturday I always try keep back a few dollars for soup ..."





SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE: "IT DRAW YUH DOWN TO NOTHING"

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a serious problem for women around the world. Often it comes as suggestive 'chat'. Sometimes it's a 'hands-on' experience, where a male co-worker takes it for granted that he can touch up the women's bodies how and when he pleases. Other times men use their power at the workplace to demand sex. Many women, in need of the money provided by their jobs, don't complain for fear of losing the work.

Sexual harassment is another example of how society treats women as common property.

Susan T. is a 25-year-old woman, married for four years with a two-year-old daughter. She works in a bank. This is the story of Susan's difficult, but successful struggle against sexual harassment at her workplace, told in her own words.

"The man involved was a member of top management. This is the type of person he is. He'd go around the place making smutty jokes and all of the men would laugh, through him have position. So even if them nuh really think the joke funny them would laugh. Some people might even seh him is jovial or think him disgusting.

"I remember one time I had a nice mango on my counter. One of the regular customers had brought it for me. Well this man come and see the mango and him come hold it up and come right in my face and him seh, 'Hmmm, this mango smell nice. I wish I could smell you'.

"First of all when he used to come

round and gwaan like that I used to ignore him. I thought that would be the best thing because my supervisor report directly to him and he report to the bank manager. But my ignoring it caused it to get out of hand. Him just get more determined. Every minute, him a hang round me and tell me all sort a thing. How me look nice. What him would like to do to me. How we should leave work and go hotel. And everything him tek out a context and find something dirty to say. The situation draw me down to nothing.

"After a time now me just get vex and everytime him come round me and seh anything, me just cuss him. It really get pon me nerves so till me never like go work.

"Well then I realise that the cussing not helping. It come in like it turn him on more, so me decide to go to my union delegate about it. Anyway, the people in the union, it seems them afraid fi really deal with things like that. Me tell the union delegate straight that something has to be done because I wasn't going to leave my job because him come there and see me.

"Then all I know is that he found out I'd reported him to the union and things change again. And him start. Him just watch me and if I do any little thing it come in like a big thing. If me short \$2.00 at the end of the day, the way him go on is like it short \$200.00. And, him try mek me out to be a trouble-maker. If the union seh go-slow and we go-slow, then I'm the person who said go-slow. About the same time we got a new branch manager. Well as it turns out, he

is the kind of person who like to carry news and she like to receive news. So you must know the warm time I was getting.

"It went on until they found a reason to give me a letter making charges that I was acting rowdy in front of customers. Those charges were a lie but they put the letter on my file. It was one hell of a time because I decided that letter was not going on my file.

"I called in the union. We had a meeting then a meeting with him and the branch manager, but they still refused to take the letter off my file. Then I spoke with the Assistant Personnel Manager. Well it so happens that I had already mentioned the man's behaviour to the Personnel Manager, so they knew what was going on. They decided the whole thing was foolishness and they told me they were glad I had not succumbed to his advances just so I would have a peaceful life.

"In the end the letter came off my file. After that the man was in a scandal when they found out he had been taking money out of peoples' accounts. So he was gone and the branch manager was moved to a section where she's not in charge of anybody.

"In them kind of situations, it don't make no sense for you, the woman, to run away from it. Well, for me, I have a fighting spirit. I didn't make it no secret. I didn't keep it inside of me and seh is a personal matter.

"But, it is a general thing. He is not

the only man like that in my workplace. He has other friends in top management who gwaan same way, and some of the women fall in with it. So is only a chance you take when you decide to fight.

"I was lucky because the Personnel Manager was a woman. Probably if it had been a man, he wouldn't understand, because even if they are not doing it, they don't see this thing as any big problem. And, I was lucky because I got support from other co-workers; the women mainly but some men as well.

"I think the unions have to take a stronger position. I even had a hard time getting my union to take me seriously. And we as women at the workplace should try and support each other more. But now I've been through it, I know the problem is much bigger than in one workplace. When I talked about it with friends outside of work, some of them tek it as joke."

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

The law does not recognise sexual harassment at the workplace or anywhere else unless it comes in the form of assault, indecent assault, rape or attempted rape. In other words your male co-worker would have to make such direct sexual advances towards you before he was considered a criminal under the law.

WHAT THE TRADE UNIONS SAY

Trade unions in Jamaica don't have a set policy on sexual harassment at the workplace. Here are some of the comments SISTREN got when we did a random phone check with the various unions:

"We don't come across that sort of problem ..."

"We deal with it as we would with any other grievance ..."

"We deal with it up front and encourage the workers to report such incidents ..."

"We haven't really dealt with any such case ..."

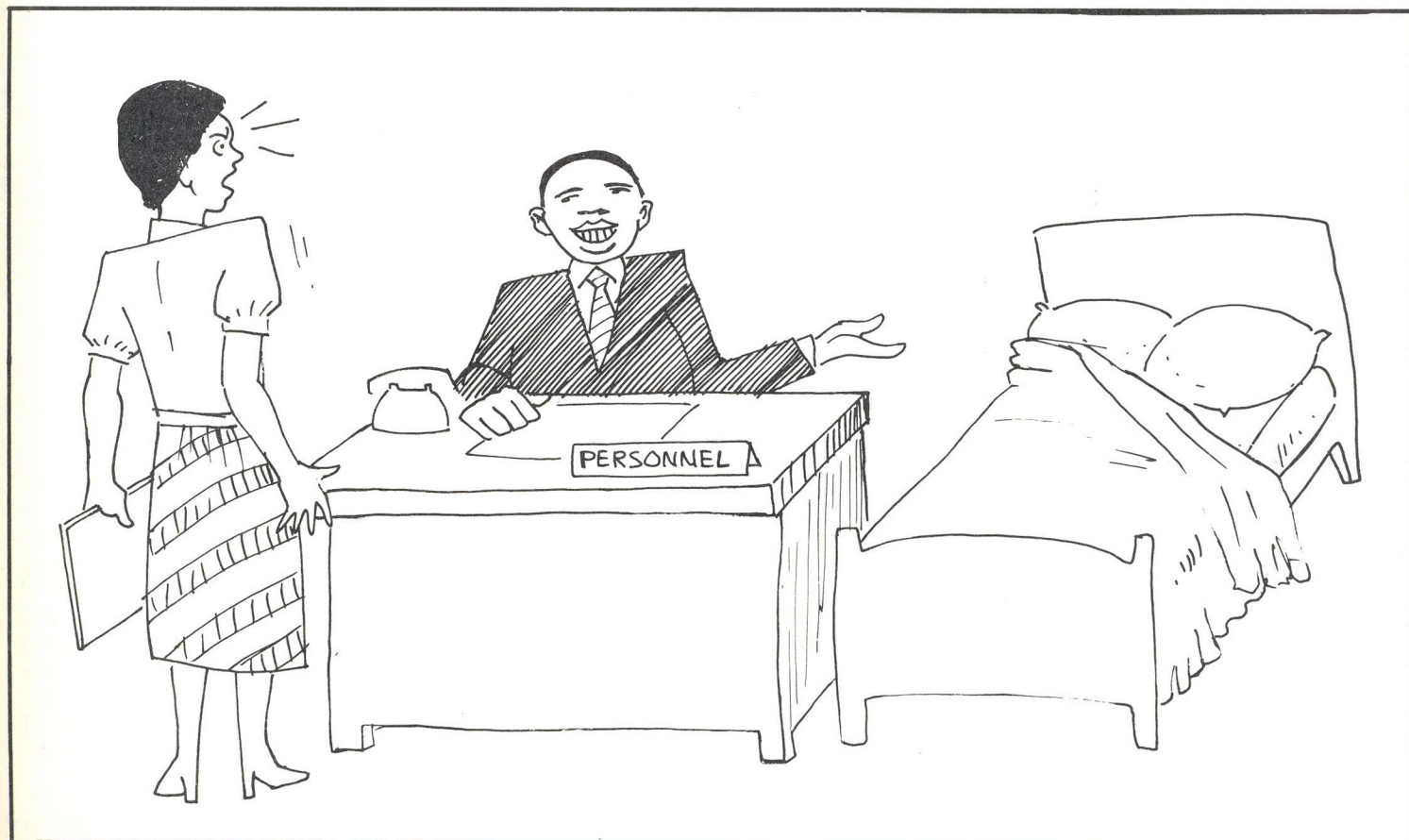
In the case of the Joint Trade Union Research and Development Centre, which groups the larger unions, we were referred to a file in the library. The file contained one newspaper clipping dated April 2, 1985. The headline read, "Unions to Fight Sexual Abuse", and the story was from a speech by Lascelles Beckford of the

Bustamante Industrial Trade Union in which he called for machinery to be put in place to end sexual harassment at the workplace.

We haven't seen any concrete follow-up on this and are forced to ask whether the problem is being taken seriously by the trade union movement.

An example they could follow is a recommendation by a government Integrity Commission in Guyana. In August, 1987, the Commission recommended that the following anti-sexual harassment clause be added to the code of conduct for public officers:

"Public Officers in the performance of their duties must not engage in behaviour which amounts to offensive sexual comments, gestures or physical contact nor exploit their position of authority for sexual gratification".



DE GREAT LOAD GOT TO MOVE

by Hilary Sherlock

Blossom and Martha both live in the Rio Grande Valley in Portland. Though from different villages, they share many of the conditions typical of rural life.

There are few opportunities for employment and both women worry about the future of their children. Although they see education as the way out, the future still seems grim. As Martha says, "Yuh haffi mek work up dis side. De pickney dem nuh really gwain get de chance fi wuk or fi get nuh good training. Dem wi haffi move out."

Basic services are restricted. Public transportation is both irregular and unreliable. Neither Blossom or Martha have running water or electricity. Neither seems to expect it even though it makes their work inside and outside the home more burdensome. They are grateful that

unlike many of their neighbours, the water source is close.

How do Blossom and Martha manage to move their 'great loads'?

Blossom has good support from her family. She buys fish in Hope Bay, takes a van to St. Margaret's Bay and then carries her load up the steep slope of Mt. Pleasant. She says, "When mi buy de fish, mi put it inna a big basin, put de basin pon mi head an' walk up de hill. Sometime mi son come wid mi. It good when him help because then mi can carry more. Mas White (her husband) help me collect de money and if mi nuh sell off everything, him wi sell de balance fi me de next day. Him always turn back de money to me, den mi tek out weh me need to buy more fish and throw me partner. De res' me use fi family

needs." Blossom also does day's work in St. Margaret's Bay.

Martha is forced to depend upon herself, in the main, to provide for her four children. Two of the children are at primary school and the other two, twins, are at basic school. Their father does not live with Martha. When he was working (planting and growing flowers for "one white fambily" that has since left the island), he provided some money each week. Now he depends on the land, and is only able to provide "yam and so".

As babies, the twins were classified in the local clinic as malnourished - malnourished not because of neglect or ignorance, but due to Martha's inability to feed them. And that's not because Martha doesn't work. Martha works morning, noon and night.

Nowadays she sells outside the local school. Every day, she walks two miles with her load, sells the stock, collects the children and walks the two miles back home again. Then she has the domestic chores - the food to prepare, the water to catch up, house to sweep, clothes to wash. Martha also has the awesome task of balancing her meagre budget between buying new stock and the daily household needs which threaten to consume everything. Many women like Martha also supplement the family's food supply by 'going to bush' (rural women who work the land still see themselves as 'going to bush' rather than as being farmers).

Both Blossom and Martha have been able to bring some relief to their situations in recent times through a participatory Community Loan Fund. The fund is operated through the Rio Grande Rural Development Project. It is funded by the Netherlands Development Co-operation through the Ministry of Youth and Community Development.

Each village is allocated a

WOMEN AND WORK: A MAN'S VIEW

"Have you many children?" the doctor asked. "God has not been good to me. Of sixteen born, only nine live", he answered.

"Does your wife work?" "No, she stays at home."

"I see. How does she spend her day?" "Well, she gets up at four in the morning, fetches water and wood, makes the fire and cooks breakfast. Then she goes to the river and washes clothes. After that she goes to town to get corn ground and buys what we need in the market. Then she cooks the midday meal."

"You come home at midday?" "No, no. She brings the meal to me in the fields- about three kilometres from home."

"And after that?" "Well, she takes care of the hens and pigs. And, of course, she looks after the children all day. Then she prepares supper so that it is ready when I come home."

"Does she go to bed after supper?" "No. I do. She has things to do around the house until nine o'clock."

"But you say your wife doesn't work?"

"No. I told you. She stays at home."

"Women and Development Resource Pack",
The Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, London.

specific amount by the Fund. Villagers then elect representatives to a management team which becomes responsible for the day-to-day administration. That team processes applications, agrees on beneficiaries, collects repayments and makes new loans. Members of the various village management teams receive on-

going training to develop their own management skills. Interest rates are minimal and a good name in the district is the only collateral needed.

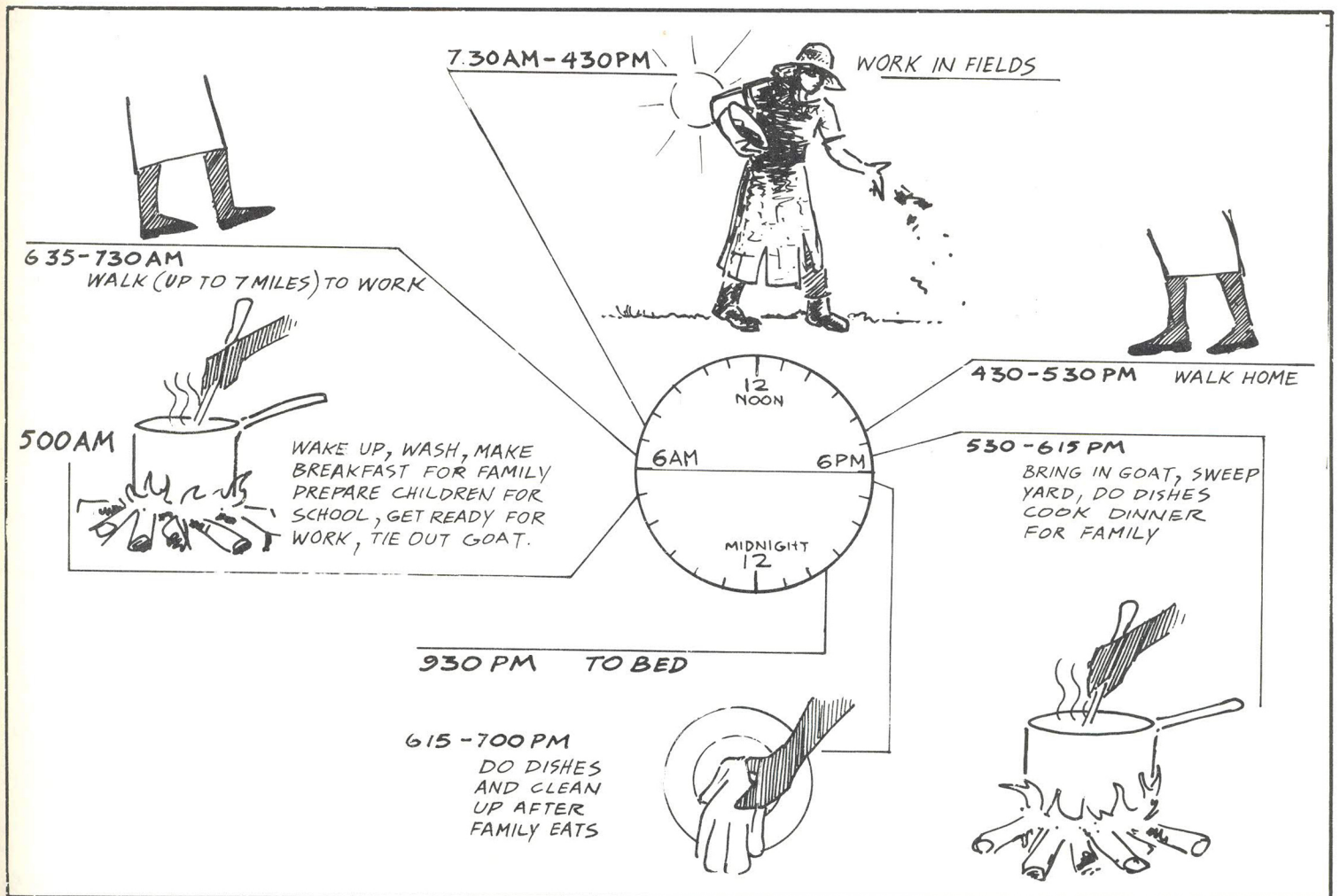
Through the Community Revolving Loan Fund, Martha has been able to expand her limited stock. For Blossom it's

meant being able to buy up to 50 lbs. of fish at one time.

Seemingly small assistance, but assistance that is helping the Blossoms and Marthas in the Rio Grande Valley to move de great load another inch.

Hilary Sherlock is Co-Project Manager of the Rural Development Project.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SUGAR WORKER



ON COMPLETING ELEVEN YEARS AS SISTREN'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: AN INTERVIEW WITH MYSELF

by Honor Ford-Smith

Was SISTREN spontaneously generated by the seventies?

It partly came about through the opening of the seventies, the crash programme and so on. But another big part of it was a vision of women's popular theatre, which came out of feminism, socialism, experimental and political theatre and education. Without this thinking the organization would not have been unique. This is often overlooked. The theory behind the work.

What has been SISTREN's biggest achievement?

The creation and development of a working class popular theatre and an autonomous women's organization over the last eleven years which has had national impact on working class women in terms of helping to show an alternative to oppression.

What has been its biggest failure?

Members often fail to see the connection between the existence of the organization and the women's movement (by that I mean the needs of grassroots women). As a result our consequent responsibility to the women of Jamaica is often overlooked. In the organization there have been two different and sometimes conflicting visions of the work. One that it existed to serve the welfare of its founding members, and the other that it is to facilitate women's struggles and women's equality. Our biggest failure has been our inability to resolve these two visions.

Why weren't you able to resolve it?

Class problems, race problems, leadership problems - problems to do with the history of the organization, and even something to do with us growing out of theatre.

Also the fact that our society seems to be happy to create a context of woman-hating within itself. Slack songs, the pressures and poverty facing single mothers. The greater privileges of men as workers, in terms of their freedom of movement, leisure time and so are cultural currents which suggest it is un-



natural for women to work together for their own advancement.

Any other mistakes?

The move away from using personal testimony as the basis of the work. Instead we got bogged down in old fashioned processes of administration. We spent so much time in meetings we hardly had enough time to get any work done. The meetings themselves depended on abstract reasoning, debate and argument skills. Since not all of us were able to do that, people became suspicious and bored and agreed to things they didn't always understand. Then when they found out what it really meant, they'd "unwork".

Why would personal testimony have helped?

It would have helped us to deal with our own creativity; given us a place to express interpersonal problems non-verbally. And because we are women and most women experience political problems in the so-called private area of life it would have made that link between our social structures and our work.

How can these mistakes now be resolved?

One aspect of the way forward now is in personal renewal. Founders need a chance to take structured study leave and

grow through exposure to other women's groups, organisations, theatre and general education.

In addition, the organization needs to be able to attract the skills of people who can help us to develop better management of our resources. We've had a very idealistic attitude. Everybody can do everything - everybody should have a chance to try everything. But, unfortunately, if we fail at certain things the whole caboodle will go BANG and leave us with nothing. We need to attract people who can help us to run things well, and accept that they have something to teach, or else we'll stagnate and become a boring, useless organization.

What did you fail at personally?

I didn't know how to make my innovative and creative ideas into systems and processes which reproduce themselves. I didn't set up a proper creative system. I didn't know how to do it. I still don't, so a lot of the time I couldn't explain properly what I was trying to do beyond stamping my foot.

I also failed with building internal discipline. If you don't do it, bad behaviour will destroy your organization.

You seem to feel there have been more negatives than positives?

No. I don't. We've achieved a lot. But it's always under threat. My biggest fear is that Sistren (the organization) will become an innocuous social welfare institution. I prefer the danger, the confrontation with the consumer values, and the prejudice of the society. If we lose that in a search for middle class respectability we've lost everything. It's the rebel vibes that count.

What are you doing to do?

Think about these problems and write. Renew, grow and develop my own energies personally, I hope.

Is Sistren dependent on you?

Are you kidding?! It's dependent on two things - its fundraiser and the ability to understand and be faithful to the needs and potential of Jamaican women. That's all.

(Honor is now on one year's study leave in the U.S.A.)

REBUILDING WITH DIGNITY

There's no dignity in dependency, whether you be woman, man or pickney. For a nation, the encouragement of dependency 'pork-barrel' style, in a time of national disaster, must surely lead to greater disaster in the growth of (can you stand it) the hustling mentality, the tribalism and warring. We need to reject this approach as a people and opt for one that encourages self-help and community interdependency.

Unfortunately, it's not an easy path for us at this time, when the most gross survival instincts are to the fore.

At the same time there is more than a gleam of hope that we can rebuild with dignity by strengthening our natural tradition of sharing. The examples of self-help and community sharing during and since the storm give us hope. A community in Westmoreland which has launched a campaign to obtain a wheelchair for one of its senior citizens despite the problems of Gilbert; the 'rankings' in a Kingston tenement yard who tacked back zinc on the board houses of the women living by themselves, during the eye of the storm; those development workers who put behind them their roofless and flooded homes in order to assess community projects in which they are involved; the families that opened their homes to those in need around them, are all such examples of which we can be justly proud. Let's look at some ways we can advance the process of rehabilitation, by developing these positive aspects of ourselves.

ORGANISATION IS KEY:

If your community is well organised and pulling together, the recovery process will be far less painful and take less time. If no community organisation exists, which has the credibility to function, start with what you have. Gather two or three people from every section of the community each covering about 25 households. The representatives should know all persons in their section. Let this

group serve as the basic point of information for rebuilding - to carry out needs assessment, apply for overall relief and plan for community reconstruction. Choose a meeting place that is non-partisan such as a church hall or community centre. Remember, it takes a while and a lot of energy to set your organisational machinery in place.

REALISM A NECESSITY:

Don't take anything for granted. In times of dislocation such as that caused by Gilbert - everybody is looking something. Those most in need can easily be overlooked. They may be elderly or very young, disabled or simply too traumatised to come out. Your organisers will have to seek them out, hence the necessity to choose persons with a good knowledge of who is who in their section of the community. They will also be able to identify the 'ginnals' and 'anancys' within the community - the ones who will take what they don't need (whether for hoarding or profit) at the cost of those who are in more dire situations. The community lead-

HURRICANE SPECIAL: WOMEN IN THE REBUILDING PROCESS

ers should, for example, be able to verify that, yes, this person used to sell icy-mints and cigarettes and she lost her entire stock for the week.

The community leaders must also be prepared to be strong and firm. Distribution of relief in equal proportions is not realistic, because everyone has not suffered to the same degree. Part of being realistic is to do with security - the need to put in place a policing system and to ensure that your stockpile of relief goods and rebuilding materials is housed under

(Continued on page 22)



ORGANISE TO REBUILD: is the message Sister Shirley of the Roman Catholic Church (seated at centre) has been taking to fishermen and small farmers in St. Mary, Portland and St. Thomas, as part of the ADA Outreach Team.

GEARING OPERATIONS TO MEET THE GILBERT CHALLENGE

WROC REACHES OUT

The Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) and the Organisation of Women for Progress (OWP) have been responding to the particular needs of women with a programme comprising initial relief, education and medium and long-term rehabilitation.

Within days after Gilbert struck, over 120 women from urban communities and as far as August Town were at the WROC offices on Beechwood Avenue in Kingston, seeking assistance.

One woman was concerned that her daughter was soon to have a baby, but where the baby would sleep she did not know, as all her mattresses were soaking wet. Another told how she had scooped up her baby as the storm raged and ran to a neighbouring yard, just minutes before a mango tree fell on her board room, flattening it. It was a particularly traumatising experience coming just two months after a difficult pregnancy, and in a situation where her baby is still in poor

physical health. Yet another woman was partially handicapped and elderly, but had managed to save her own life by propping up a part of the roof in her small, board house, when a section collapsed, smashing her few possessions.

The WROC staff and OWP volunteers responded immediately with sympathy and comfort as well as food packages obtained from various agencies and groups - and they began to organise. First step was meetings with the women to do a needs assessment and determine immediate priorities. The main areas of lasting damage were identified to be roofing and bedding. The WROC doctor who services the Centre's clinic was also on spot to give advice about water purification and

other health tips relevant to the post-Gilbert situation.

WROC also attempted to broaden its relief and rehabilitation work beyond the Corporate Area, to the rural communities with which it has links. Rural outreach trips were undertaken, relief supplies distributed, and health information imparted. In Salt Spring, Hanover, in particular, WROC volunteers reported that women were in the forefront of efforts to form a broadbased committee to organise distribution of food and other items, and take the community into the rebuilding process.

However, WROC is mindful of the fact that it is not a relief agency and that relief efforts can only last for a short period. As Coordinator, Janice Rose said, 'The real work begins with rehabilitation and development to help the women we have registered to once again stand on their own feet. We'll be maintaining our normal services, and trying to expand our women's clinic. That's all we can manage at this time.'

To help in this medium and long-term part of the rehabilitation programme, WROC has received a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The money will be spent mainly on creating income generat-

RELIEF FROM WROC:

Below left, women who turned out for assistance from WROC are registered and, at right, they receive packages of supplies obtained by WROC personnel.





LOOKING RELIEF SUPPLIES:

The vast majority of the hundreds of people who lined up at the Kingston offices of the Red Cross in the days following Gilbert were women - out there working for the survival of themselves and their children.

ing projects, house repairs, bedding and organisational work among the women.

WROC's relief and rehabilitation efforts have also been assisted by agencies and groupings with which it has been connected over the years. These include the Association of Development Agencies' Special Fund, Project Accord, the Salvation Army and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA).

WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTION COLLECTIVE (WCC)

Eight days after the passing of Hurricane Gilbert, the women of the Women's Construction Collective (WCC) met at their Lincoln Road workshop/offices. Many had lost their roofs or suffered damage to their homes. Others had lost livestock and crops, which would mean a significant loss in their earnings for some time to come.

There was no power at the office and the group had been in the midst of auditing when Gilbert struck. In addition, many of the workers were already involved in construction jobs, which would have to be assessed for damage before work re-started. Obviously the Collective could take very little extra strain. However, individual members who were being under-utilised have formed construction gangs which are beginning to respond to requests for jobs created by the storm.

Contact them at 91/2 Lincoln Road, Kingston 5. Tel: 929-8565.

CONSTRUCTION RESOURCE AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (CRDC)

The Construction Resource and Development Centre has been in the forefront in disseminating information about the need for good building practices in countries affected by hurricanes. Its lively booklet, **HURRICANES AND HOUSES**, published within days of Gilbert, will help any lay person to ensure that the repairs to their house will stand up to another storm. It has already been serialised in sections of the press, but it's well worth obtaining a copy.

Contact: CRDC, 1661/2 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6. Tel: 927-3678.

BUREAU OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

The Bureau of Women's Affairs has been in the process of mobilising the Parish Advisory Committees, which form the National Advisory Council as well as former trainees, to assist in relief and rehabilitation efforts. The Parish Advisory Committees and the trainees act as liaison between rural communities and the Council to ensure that those persons most in need of immediate relief get it, and to encourage self-help in the process of rehabilitation. In this way, the Bureau has been able to assist with food and

clothing to various communities in the first instance. Presently, seedlings are being distributed so that replanting of the land can begin. The Bureau is also setting up a revolving loan fund to assist those of its former trainees who have gone into bee-keeping and for micro entrepreneurs linked into the Parish Advisory Committees.

For further information contact the Bureau by telephoning 929-7233.

CRISIS CENTRE FOR WOMEN & WOMEN INC.

The Crisis Centre for Women is not at all geared to assist with the flood of requests it has received from women for shelter, clothing and food, having no facilities to join the relief effort. However, it has been able to house a very few women in need and act as a very competent referral point by ensuring that the women who make contact with its office are put in touch with those agencies which can help them.

The councillor can be contacted at the Centre, 18 Ripon Road, Kingston 5. Tel: 929-2997. In the meantime, Woman Inc. which set up the Centre, is going ahead with its annual women's Trade Fair at the Pegasus Hotel, October 29 and 30. Part of the proceeds will be used to repair the roof of the St. Andrew Hostel for Girls which suffered severe damage during the hurricane.

How GILBERT Changed My Life

PAT MORRISON, 30
Office Supervisor

"Before Gilbert, I'd been looking to rent somewhere for me and my two children. The problem was unavailability and high rental. Now rented property is worse unavailable and the rental is higher still. I've been living with my mother. Her house stood up well. Just a little leaking. But we still don't have light, which means we have to shop every day and that takes more money to live than when you shop weekly. Basic food items are short and when they are available, it is very expensive. Gilbert has put my life on hold. There is not an earthly thing I can do to help myself at this stage. I'm just going from day to day ..."



GILLIAN SMITH, 34
Housewife*

"More of my time is given over to domestic life than before, when I did alot of voluntary work. We lost the roof of our house so I'm organizing the insurance, getting materials and hiring labour. Presently, the family (husband and two children) is staying with my mother, whose house held up. It's not too bad for us. I can't complain because I know it's just a matter of time before we get back to normal. But I'm resolved that I'll never get caught again. I'll be supervising the re-roofing because I never want to go through the horror of watching it lift off like paper again!"

(* name changed)

MILLICENT BRIGGS, 50
Higgler/Seamstress

"I am still in shock. I lost a three apartment (board) house plus clothing, furniture and my goods. I have five children. I make the pillows and they sell them on the street. All of us pooling to get things straighten out. So far, one of the rooms fix back up, so me trying to fix up the machine which got wet. I didn't have any insurance and I was forced to spend out the little savings I had, just to survive. Things hard and we don't get no assistance to date, but I still give thanks to God. Some people lost their lives, but I am still here and I am willing to start again ..."

JOYCE BAKER, 62

"I'm still sleeping on a friend's floor. My house mash up. Before Gilbert, I used to hustle odd jobs, but people who used to give me a little work caan manage it again. Dem not working so dem caan help. Mi son try help, but him is a teacher and dem nuh earn much."



PATRICIA PRYCE, 24
Animator

"I was a very independent person living on my own, now Gilbert put me right back under my mother's roof. Is ten a wi in the house - mi madda, seven of us, and one a mi sister baby father and her baby. I used to send one of my sisters to school, but since Gilbert, my mother

can't work, so all my money is going into the household. We get outa bed early every morning to go shop to get the scarce basic items - the chicken and rice and flour, and that is another pressure. But I at least have somewhere to live. I know women whose house mash down and dem nuh have nuttin. Them is the people who need the help .."



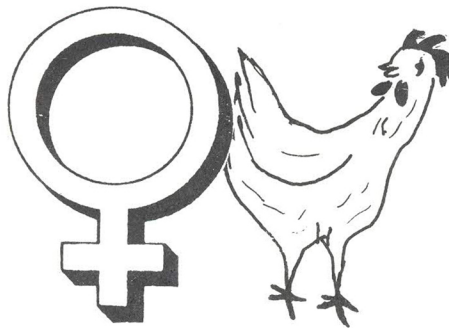
PROJECT ACCORD VOLUNTEERS who turned out to assist in unloading and repackaging goods at the Arena (above), numbered many women. *Sistren* volunteers included Hilary Nicholson (below right).



OVERCOMING GILBERT'S WRATH

The 15 women and two men who make up the Islington Self-Help Group in the parish of St. Mary, aren't sitting "wid dem han' pon dem jaw" in the wake of Hurricane Gilbert. Not at all. The circumstances created by Gilbert have forced them to begin a process of overcoming one of their major weaknesses - dependency on representatives of St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church in Annotto Bay who helped them start their chicken project in October 1987.

With the passing of Gilbert, there was nobody on hand from the Church to spoon feed them. They couldn't wait for advice on the next move to take, so they simply got on with the job. They quickly assessed damage done to their chicken coops and crops and carried out repairs collectively. For the first time, they organised their own cheques so that



members could quickly replace the chickens that had been lost in the storm. (Each member operates individual loans from the Catholic Church through the St. Mary Credit Union, thus ensuring individual accountability). They also began doing a collective needs assessment to obtain tools, seeds and seedlings from the Jamaica Agricultural Society, swiftly putting into action a plan to expand their farming capacity.

Says 48-year-old Sheila Everett, a

founding member of the group, "We're finding out how to manage intelligently by ourselves and overcoming obstacles. We are not at all discouraged by Gilbert. We are proud of the project and fighting for it to become a beacon in the community." No doubt there will be many more obstacles in the future, for the Islington Self-Help Group to overcome. But the fact that the members have built up a cohesive collective base over the last year, and have a deep commitment to community development will stand them in good stead. The collectivity has been present from the start with individual members owning and operating their own coops, but acting as a group to obtain funding and to carry out marketing. Their commitment to community development is summed up like this by Miss Sheila, "Our expectation is that this group should prolong and get bigger financially and in numbers. In that way we can better serve the community when it comes to improving roads, the school, creating jobs for the youths and organising to withstand any crisis, Gilbert-style or otherwise that comes along."

Rebuilding With Dignity

(Continued from page 17)

lock and key or secured in some other way. For example, one community stored zinc sheeting in the hardware store of the nearest town where the proprietor was well-known and trusted by all. Those allocated the zinc were given signed and numbered tickets to take to the store in exchange for the zinc (use ticketing systems wherever possible).

Central distribution can often lead to corruption. For example, at the arena youths who tried to obtain goods from the Project Accord central stockpile told organisers they were from Tawes Pen in Westmoreland, a place which does not exist. In another instance, relief goods being distributed from a community centre without security were hijacked by the community "rankings". Note, however, that those "rankings" with a community conscience should always be included in your efforts. Central distribution often leads to disturbances as crowds get out of hand. You can avoid this situation by distributing door-to-door.

BE SENSITIVE:

Remember many people are extremely proud. Whatever their condition, they will never stretch a hand to "beg". Door-to-door distribution will be far more acceptable to them and better still if it can be done by someone who they know; someone from whom they may be more willing to accept assistance. When the rebuilding starts, organise "food for work" days. Everybody should make a contribution, however small. This stems the tide of the "hand out, beggy, beggy" syndrome, a trap so easy to fall into.

COLLECTIVE ACTIVITY:

Organise collectively as many necessary activities as possible. for example:-

- 1) Water purification done collectively, will help protect against diseases by ensuring **everybody** has clean water. Draw up a roster. If it's your turn this week, you will be responsible for collecting firewood (there's plenty about so why waste gas and electricity), building the fire, boiling the water and bottling it when it cools. If there is a district nurse or other community-

health person, work with them to do chlorine purifying.

- 2) Organise "work-gangs" of men and women to assist in housing re-construction, clearing of trees, putting fields to rights, etc., or youths to assist with child-care, for those persons who need it - the elderly, the disabled, the sick, women alone with children and so on.
- 3) Declare a truce on all 'cass-cass', whether personal, political, or social. Sign peace document if necessary, and deal with the business at hand.
- 4) Select representatives to seek assistance on behalf of all persons in the community.

And, when the rebuilding is complete, you will have a firm community foundation on which to develop further activities of benefit to all. Let's make the Gilbert-disaster an event on which we move forward, and not one that halts our progress and nurtures the worst aspects of our society.

Compiled by Joan Ross-Frankson with Peta-Ann Baker of ADA

A STRESSFUL EVENT

by Joan Ross-Frankson

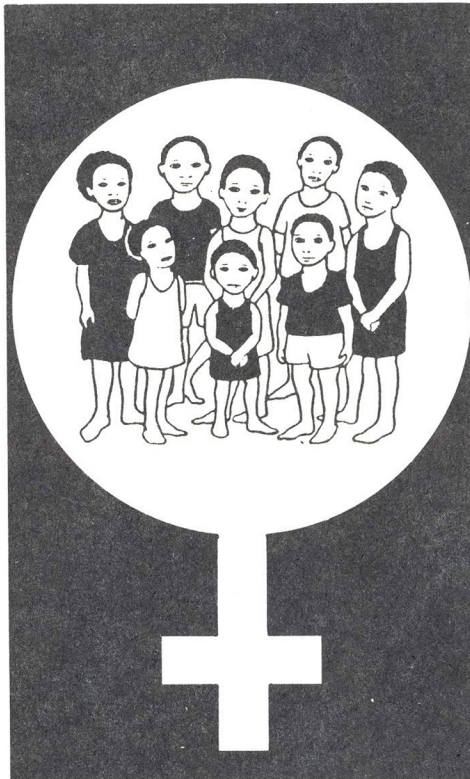
Gilbert gave one of my friends a headache which lasted for one and a half weeks. A Secretary at another friend's office went back to dating all correspondence with the month of August. She simply blocked out the month of September. Several other people I know escaped the trauma into deep sleep. One said she never made it through the second hit from Gilbert. She was too tired from the strain of watching the winds bow the massive mango tree over her house. Would it fall or not? After the calm, when Gilbert's tail began lashing from the opposite direction and she figured the house had escaped the worst, she retreated to her bed and knew nothing until the following day. Then there's the lady who is guilt-tripping because her house was left untouched, the telephone never went and water and electricity returned within 48 hours.

Most people responded to the coming of Gilbert by trying to take protective measures to whatever degree they were able. We taped up windows, packed away equipment, filled vessels with water, chopped limbs from trees near to our homes, lowered never-before-used storm shutters (I didn't even realise my awnings WERE storm shutters), bought what tinned food we could afford, and cleaned out the stores of candles, batteries and kerosene. We watched in horror as our roofs lifted off, as trees swayed over our houses, as the rains washed away our crops and livestock.

Since Gilbert, many of us have had worse to bear in the changes to our lives. Many still have no light or water. Many who had jobs, could not go to work in the first instance because our workplaces remained closed. Others have lost their livelihood because Gilbert wiped out their workplaces, ruined their stock and left their fields under water. Small business people and those who are self-employed have been particularly hard hit. Many who lost roofs could not leave their homes for fear of looting.

Yes, for all of us, lulled by 37 years in which nature smiled on us, Gilbert has been, and continues to be, a most stressful event.

How do people handle national disasters of this magnitude? Psychiatrist, Frederick Hickling says that most of us are able to cope because of an inbuilt safety valve known as "bereavement



reaction".

'Bereavement reaction results from a deep sense of loss - the death of a loved one, loss of material things, the end of a loving relationship. It doesn't have to be treated; it ends itself through a process.'

This process, he said, has three stages. The first stage is one of disbelief and numbness. The second produces lethargy, where one is unable to do anything, or in some cases, the opposite extreme of hyperactivity. In the third stage we are pushed to recognise our situation, for example by talking it through with others. In this regard, Dr. Hickling emphasised the value of finding ways to release tensions.

'For the majority, the bereavement process is a natural coping mechanism. Focussing on the problems, looking at ways of working through each problem, goal directing all helps to resolve the bereavement. And, people should not forget entertainment and leisure. This is a very important aspect of getting back to normalcy.'

The most disadvantaged people in society often cope better than others more well off, while there are those who cannot cope at all, regardless of their socio-economic conditions. Says Dr. Hickling, 'People who are more used to stress often cope better. For example, the street

people weren't affected too much. They are already living at the lowest level, with nothing, so they lost nothing. They are in the same position so they would cope better than someone in the upper class who lost their roof and are not used to that sort of physical and emotional stress. A small majority will not cope at all because of their own psychological makeup. There is fairly extensive reporting on the psychological effects of various kinds of national disaster around the world. It has been found that whether man-made or natural, such disasters bring an increased incidence of certain types of psychological illness, namely anxiety states and depressive and sometimes psychotic illnesses'.

It would appear also from what Dr. Hickling says, that men and women respond very much in keeping with the roles society has designated for them, in the forms they use to release their tensions. 'In our society women are responsible for food, so the majority of those lining up for scarce items are women and children. Men will find release in chopping and clearing trees, fixing back roofs and so on.'

Dr. Hickling also pointed to another type of reaction to Gilbert - that of widespread looting across class lines, of homes, stores and warehouses. 'Looting is an expression of the level of tensions and stress prior to the disaster - the social and economic pressures, the class hostility, under which people were living in the best of times. Gilbert opened a release valve which resulted in this abnormal reaction. And, it is not only poor people who loot. Trying to get votes from the devastation is another form. Both responses are understandable but equally wrong.'

Dr. Hickling also referred to a 'primitive, psychological response' to the disaster within the society - that of increased dependency. 'Aid, in terms of relief supplies, feeds the dependency response. It is a regressive response to stress, one that can be politically exploited because people are looking for a political solution to feed the dependency. But it is short-lived and will shift again when people become more independent and interdependent. Part of the acceptance of aid should be that one is helping oneself in conjunction with neighbours. The way forward is to reduce the dependency and opt for a more self-reliant form.

Reconstructing for Development, The ADA Way



STRATEGY MEETING:

ADA members meet to plan action around short term relief and medium and long-term re-building.

The following article by Peta-Anne Baker, Coordinator of the Association of Development Agencies, of which *Sistren* is a member, was extracted from the group's networking newsletter, *For Your Information* (Vol. 2, No. 10, October 1988). *Sistren* is a founding member of the Association and is linked into its relief and rehabilitation efforts specifically in the areas of education, mobilisation, morale building and publicity.

It is a real challenge to be responsive and yet remain faithful to developmental goals and processes when hit by a disaster of the scale of that created by Hurricane Gilbert. Like so many others in Jamaica, we had become complacent. We were not like our "cousins" in a number of Caribbean territories accustomed to dealing with hurricanes, although we have had some close shaves.

Perhaps because we had risen so well to meet the challenge of those previous events, or perhaps because some of us believed that Jamaica was such a "God bless" country that nothing worse could happen, we failed to implement directives we had set ourselves after the June 1986 floods.

So the first of four twice weekly extraordinary General Meetings held the Monday following Gilbert, began with an element of self-criticism. We had not done what we said we should do and as a consequence, we were slow in getting going. But the self-criticism was not an occasion for scapegoating or squabbling. Rather it was to ensure effective action. Individual initiatives by member agencies - particularly Social Action

Centre and Projects For People, helped to get us moving. After taking a check of who was "wet", i.e. had no roof, and who was "dry" (a few were damp or numb), we set to work. Four areas were identified:

- a) Stockpile: to create a pool of our own resources;
- b) Fund Raising: to set up a Special Fund to meet requests for assistance, particularly from the smaller agencies and community groups;
- c) Education/Mobilization/Morale Building and Publicity: to transmit important messages to and ensure feedback from the communities;
- d) Coordination: to ensure that we knew what we each were doing, to support each other, and to work with other agencies in the relief and reconstruction effort.

Special committees were set up for each area of work. We identified time frames and defined our work like this:

- i) Short Term (ending September 30) when

our emphasis would be on immediate relief work;

- ii) Medium Term (October 1 to December 31, 1988) when our focus would begin to shift to rehabilitation and reconstruction but would maintain an element of relief.
- iii) Long Term (beginning January 1, 1988) focussed on reconstruction and development.

We knew that even as we dealt with the delivery of immediate relief assistance, we had to try to keep the faith with our original goals. As far as possible, we worked with and through community-based organizations, we struggled against the temptation to spread ourselves too thinly, to raise unrealistic expectations and to reinforce dependent relationships. It isn't easy, especially since the national climate currently encourages rather than discourages all three of the above.

On Friday, September 30, the end of the first phase, we paused to assess where we were. In the area of the stockpile we had moved from simply creating one, to facilitating access to existing resources, e.g. providing money to purchase, assistance with transportation, or simply information on where things were. We also supported the bringing into operation of Project ACCORD. The indications are that this "supplies information service" is more valuable and within our capacity than creating a separate stockpile. The issue of the availability of building materials (almost non-existent) now looms large on the resource agenda.

A special fund was established with contributions and commitments from Oxfam (UK), Christian Aid, War on Want, CUSO, the Caribbean Conference of Churches, the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) and the Mennonite Central Committee. A fund-raising telethon was conducted in Canada as part of the fund-raising efforts of an expanded Canadian inter-agency group, and another on Channel 4 and ITV in England. Other offers of assist-

ance continue to come in.

The fund currently stands at a little more than half a million Jamaican dollars. In its first week of operation, six requests for assistance were processed, totalling a little over \$60,000. The requests ranged from providing temporary housing, bedding and fuel, to paying land preparation costs and purchasing day-old chicks to re-start economic activity. Groups in seven parishes were assisted in this way.

In the area of education, mobilization, morale building and publicity, a pamphlet with public health information was circulated to DJ's, radio commentators and the print media. A series of visits to communities have started mobilising for reconstruction. A pilot housing clinic was held in Westmoreland to test responses to providing professional guidance to builders and householders on constructing hurricane (and earthquake) proof houses.

In the area of coordination, the extraordinary General Meeting became an important forum for sharing reports from the field and for planning. It gave new friends an opportunity to understand and participate in the ADA process. In addition, special efforts were made to relate to the relief agencies, Project ACCORD, the Council of Voluntary Social Services, and official agencies like the Office of Disaster Preparedness.

It has been a strenuous and stressful period. For those of us who have been tied down in the urban setting (which has quickly regained a veneer of normalcy), travelling out to the rural parts can be shocking and depressing. But it can also be uplifting. On Saturday, October 1, in Petersfield in Westmoreland, members of the Youth Club were speedily restoring the roof of the community centre. The young people at Roaring River just up the road were planning their workday for the following Sunday to clean up the area around a small tourist attraction which provided many of them with a source of income. We also knew about the farmers in the hills of St. Elizabeth who were setting up a "Tool Pool" to make agricultural implements available.

The reconstruction phase has already begun. We in ADA have barely paused to commend ourselves for what has already been accomplished. In the back of our heads we realise that our accomplishments, small but effective, were made possible because

we had already evolved a style of work at agency and community level which could carry the load. We're now moving to complete and systematize our information gathering to guide our planning and action in the coming months.

Heavy Losses in the ADA Farming Community:

Projects for People staff have embarked on fundraising efforts to assist its projects. Two such - the Hillside Farmers Association in Southern Clarendon and the Salisbury Plain Young Farmers Association in West Rural St. Andrew - lost a

combined quarter million dollars in livestock, orchards, cashcrops and coffee. Pictures show the extensive damage done by Gilbert to the pig pens and hen houses at Salisbury Plain.



PREVENT DIARRHOEA

With the passing of Hurricane Gilbert, it is possible that our water supplies have been contaminated. Contaminated water can lead to diarrhoea. Diarrhoea, with or without vomiting, is very dangerous, especially for young children. It causes the body to lose water. This loss of water is called DEHYDRATION and it can kill.

- * Help prevent diarrhoea by boiling all water used for drinking, mixing drinks or washing food. Boil the water for at least five minutes.
- * Where it is not possible to boil water, use special water purification tablets which are available from the Parish Health Departments.
- * Wash hands before handling food and after using the toilet.
- * Keep all drinking water and food covered from flies, rats and other germ-carrying pests.
- * Breast feed rather than bottle-feed.
- * Avoid unripe fruit and unfit ground provisions.

**DIARRHOEA
CAUSES
DEHYDRATION
DEHYDRATION
KILLS!**

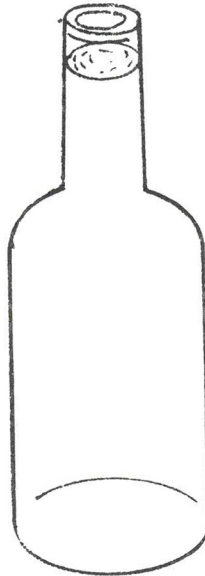
WHAT TO DO IF IT OCCURS

If diarrhoea does occur, prevent dehydration by giving affected persons plenty of liquids or this special drink:

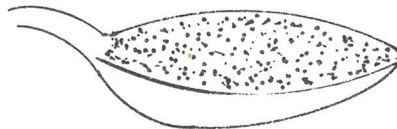
A child needs at least one (1) quart per day; an adult, at least three (3) quarts per day.

Sources:

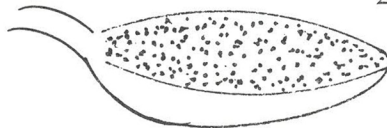
- Carib. Food & Nutrition Institute (CFNI) U.W.I., Mona Kingston 7.
- Ministry of Health, Kingston, Jamaica.
- 'Where There Is No Doctor'. David Werner: Hesperian Foundation, 1985



1 quart. boiled water
(a large rum bottle filled to the top)



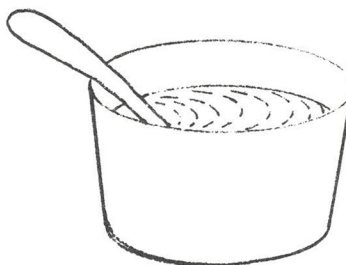
2 level teaspoons sugar or honey



1/4 teaspoon salt



1/4 teaspoon baking soda



(add 1/4 cup orange juice or coconut water, or a little mashed ripe banana if available)
Mix thoroughly.

FOODS FOR A PERSON WITH DIARRHOEA

When the person is vomiting or feels too sick to eat, give these drinks:

- teas
- rice water
- chicken, meat, egg or bean broth

Kool-Aid or similar sweetened drinks

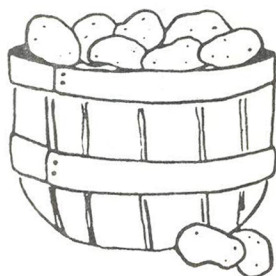
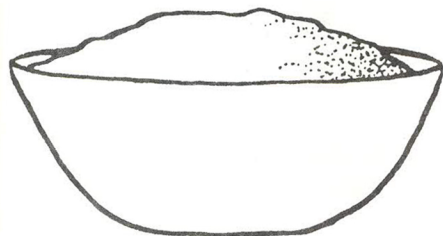
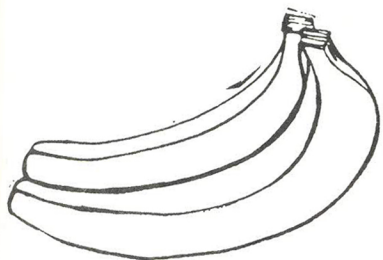
REHYDRATION DRINK

Breast milk

As soon as the patient is able to eat, in addition to giving the drinks listed above, give a balanced selection of the following foods or similar ones:

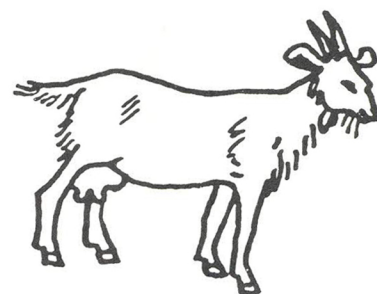
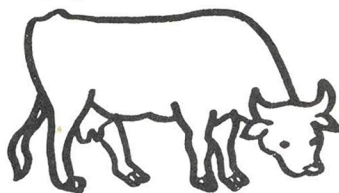
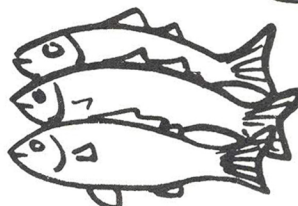
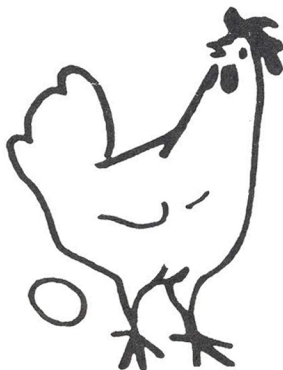
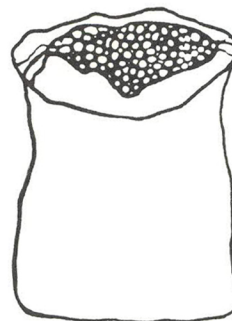
Energy Foods

ripe or cooked green bananas, crackers, rice, oatmeal or other well-cooked grain, fresh maize (well cooked and mashed), potatoes, apple sauce (cooked), pawpaw.



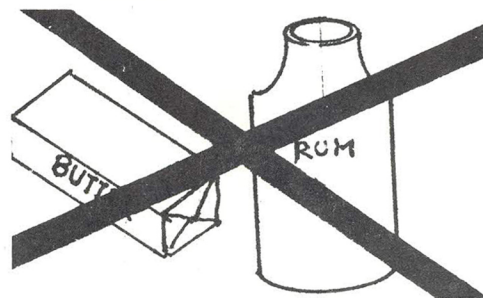
Body-building Foods

milk (sometimes this causes problems), chicken (boiled or roasted), eggs (boiled), meat (well cooked, without fat or grease), beans, lentils, or peas (well cooked and mashed), fish (well cooked).



Persons with Diarrhoea must avoid

fatty or greasy foods, most raw fruits, beans cooked in fat, highly seasoned food, alcoholic drinks, any kind of laxative or purge.



PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN

Hurricane Gilbert has created additional hazards for children. Bear these tips in mind as you seek to protect your children in the coming weeks and months. Talk to your children about these dangers and help them to protect themselves.

- * DON'T allow children to play or bathe in stagnant water. It is very dangerous to their health.
- * DON'T allow children to drink water that has not been boiled for at least five minutes.
- * DON'T allow children to eat spoilt, young or dirty food.
- * DON'T allow children to play near electrical wires, lighted candles, lamps, broken-down buildings and garbage.

Our children's lives are precious. Protect them and help them to protect themselves.

HEALTH AS A DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Unfortunately, the western health model is undoubtedly the dominating one, and this has grave implications for women in both industrialized and developing countries.

Until the early 1970's the World Health Organization was uncritically promoting the system of western medicine: the massive introduction of medical technology, drugs, hospitals, surgical intervention and all the attendant expertise and equipment. But, this did little to reach most of the world's populations - the rural

poor. Indeed, even today, three-quarters of Third World doctors work in cities where three quarters of the health budget is spent. But three-quarters of the people and three-quarters of the ill-health are in the rural areas.

In the 1970's a radical rethinking took place. WHO and Unicef in 1978 launched the concept of "Primary Health Care". Primary Health Care (PHC) is defined as "essential health care that is accessible, affordable and acceptable to everyone in the

country." It implies a variety of approaches including promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative action. It should cover: nutrition, adequate safe water, sanitation, maternal and child health including family planning, treatment of common diseases and injuries, immunization, prevention and control of locally endemic diseases, and health education. In other words, PHC is about ditches, water, pipes, nutrition, latrines and contraceptives. The approach is revolutionary in that it officially regards health as being related to many things, and not just lack of disease or availability of medicines ...

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE!

We need mass Primary Health Care because most cases could be prevented by relatively cheap methods.



- adequate water supply



- adequate nutrition



- safe sanitation



- immunization



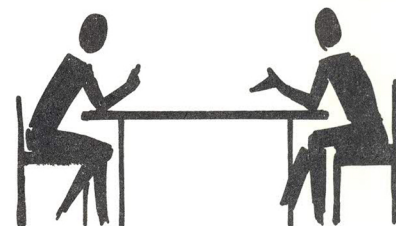
- community participation in deciding on and supporting preventive health plans



- training of primary health care workers



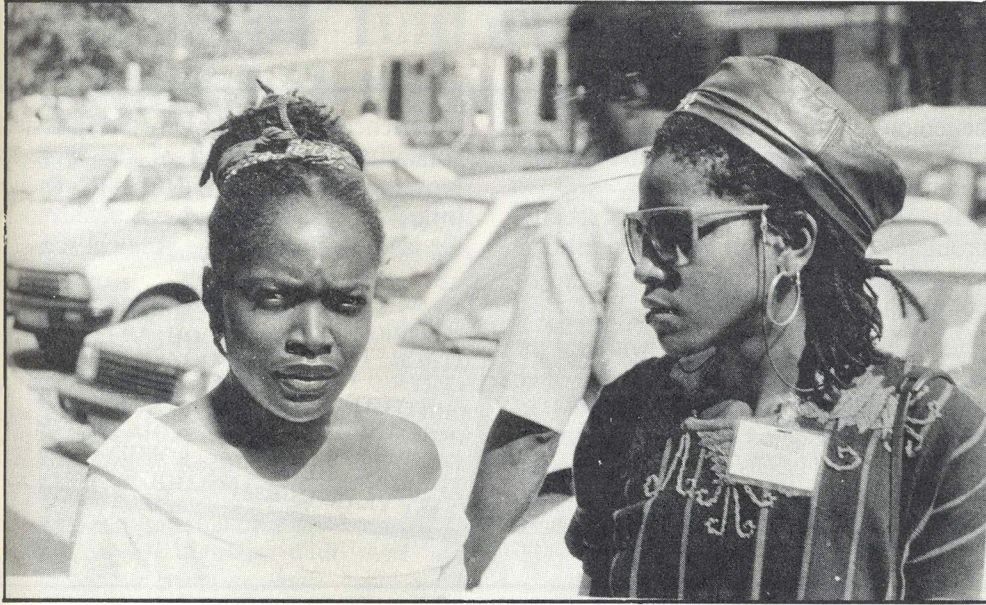
- treatment for cuts and common ailments



- parental education

CASSIE McFARLANE: Rocking The Boat In Britain's Film Industry

by Imani Tafari Ama



Cassie (left) and Imani.

Between June 17-24, this year, *Le Premier Festival Images Caraibes* (the first Caribbean Film Festival) was held in Martinique. Organised by the Association for the Promotion of Caribbean Cinema headed by Suzy Landau this event brought together scores of persons concerned with portraying the multi-faceted Caribbean identity on screen. *Sistren's "Sweet Sugar Rage"* was one of 46 films from 17 countries shown. Hilary Nicholson and Imani Tafari Ama represented *Sistren* at the Festival. That's where they met Jamaican born, British actress, Cassie McFarlane and took time out to get her views about black women in Britain's film industry.

It was indeed a blessing, after hours of film watching, debates, meetings, and general exploring, to retreat to the home of Yolene de Vassoigne in the mountains of Tivoli. Non, pas comme Tivoli a la Jamaïque (not at all like Jamaica's Tivoli). Hilary is a close friend of this cultural, dread-locks sister, and so we were able to escape the hotels in Martinique's capital, Fort de France, where other participants in the Festival were being housed. Cassie McFarlane, also visited Yolene's mountain retreat to escape the sterility of town life for a while.

We had applauded her brilliant performance in the British low-budget film "Burning an Illusion", a memorable exploration of man/woman relationships. It was first screened in Britain in 1982, and won for Cassie the film industry's national award for Most Promising Actress.

But since then she has not been approached to do another film. That disappointment has made Cassie recognise more fully the problems for black actresses in the British film industry. "Basically, you can't show too much political consciousness. Most of the roles for black actresses are stereotyped and if you don't accept them, half of the time, you don't work. It's a difficult situation in which to maintain your integrity and sense of being. That is why I don't act very much now because as a black person and as a woman, I would like to address myself to issues concerning black people in general and women in particular. The stock characters don't allow for that enough."

Cassie has now decided to concentrate on script writing and independent film production. Her latest TV script "Footprints in the Sand" is scheduled to be produced for Channel 4 next year. "Footprints" is about black history in Britain shown through the conflicts between a mother and daughter. Cassie realizes that launching out into the male dominated field of playwriting and film making is indeed a bold step for any woman in Britain but even more so for a black woman.

"People have low expectations of women film makers. They feel women are not capable of dealing with the "complexities" of film technology and that's not true. It's all tied to the question of "expertise" in areas not traditionally occupied by women. Traditionally, women have been portrayed as intuitive, instinctive and not in control of the tech-

nical aspect of things. I hope to overcome all these misconceptions."

But the problems women encounter in the film industry, Cassie noted, go beyond the day-to-day activities, to include areas like funding. Because women in general are not perceived as demanding, or worthy of, the attention of powerful people, she said, it is harder to convince funding agencies to support the dramatic work of an independent black woman. And because the film making field is relatively small, males tend to collude against women sharing power. She is optimistic, however, that by collaborating, women can inspire a more equal state of affairs.

"As a woman, when you reach certain positions of power, it is important to open up the doors for other women. There seems to be an unstated policy among the powers-that-be, of letting in one woman, who is supposed to feel grateful as a result. However, if instead, you use the opportunity to make demands for other women, you are regarded as a threat because you are rocking the boat. But that is exactly what women have to do. Getting what you want as an individual, is not enough."

Imani Tafari Ama is a freelance journalist specialising in culture and gender issues, and a researcher with *Sistren Research*.

FILM FOCUS ON WOMEN FOR '89



Suzy Landau (above), the moving force behind the Caribbean's first own film festival, is already planning the next one. The 2nd Caribbean Film Festival will seek to feature female directors and focus on how our women are portrayed in local Caribbean productions.

Suzy is now in the process of getting in touch with regional women's groups involved in video and film production, as well as those concerned with media images of women. For full details check her at The Association of Black Cinema, 77 Route de la Folie, Fort-de-France, Martinique.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

PERU

After the wars of independence in 1821, Peruvian women participated in the different social movements, but only as a secondary force. During the second part of the 19th century some autonomous groups of women appeared. Most of them were writers and journalists coming together to organise literary activities. Within that environment they started to approach issues from a female perspective.

During the early years of the 20th century, women workers were very active around demands for better conditions of work and higher wages. In the same period, two feminist organizations were founded by middle-class women. These women had close links despite the class differences. However, in the late 1920's when the modern political parties began developing, these women activists were co-opted but were not allowed to raise their special demands as women. They played only a supportive role.

Towards the end of the 1970's, women again started to put forward their own specific demands. Some of them created small collectives in which they had space to discuss issues which affected their lives. These groups were formed primarily by educated women from the middle classes. A considerable number of them were disaffected former members of leftist parties which had not been inclined to raise problems related to gender. While these groups have maintained informal links with leftist parties, they consider themselves feminist and have become more autonomous.

Poor and working class women also began to organize themselves but in different ways more in keeping with their immediate economic problems related to food, sewerage, health, education, etc. These organizations have achieved important political power because of their capacity to mobilize large numbers of women from the popular sector to raise their demands and push them into the forefront of national life.

There are also those women who are still members of leftist parties. One of their main struggles is against male

hegemony within these parties. One form they've used in the creation of women's committees. In this way, they seek to make the parties recognise the specific problems of women in the party political struggle and to link these with the wider political issues.

These three streams within the women's movement in Peru have their own strategies and different styles of organization. But on some occasions or around specific issues, these women have come together, overcoming their differences for the common good. These

experiences have shown the potential solidarity and strength of the women's movement, which is evident in the greater influence that women have achieved in the last few years on the political scene.

CORRECTION: THE MEETING FROM WHICH THIS SERIES OF ARTICLES IS TAKEN WAS ORGANIZED BY THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN HOLLAND AND NOT ISIS AS STATED IN OUR LAST ISSUE (VOL. 10, NO. 1). IT WAS HELD IN BOMBAY, INDIA, LAST YEAR. OUR APOLOGIES.

WOMEN'S WORLD BRIEFS

Media Watching in Japan

The Japanese Women's Action Group has made some progress in a campaign to 'clean up' the negative images of women in that Western nation's newspapers. In its year-long campaign, the Action Group has managed to persuade three major tabloids to transfer the pin-ups of naked women from their highly visible back pages, to the inside covers. Only two of the seven major tabloids don't use these pornographic pin-ups.

Sympathetic sub-editors have told the Action Group that some advertisers specifically request the use of pornographic articles, while others are carried as a policy of media bosses wishing to boost circulation.

US Fathers Stay in Marriages Because of their Sons

What holds US marriages together? Sons. A survey of US Census Data

between 1960 and 1980 has found that the presence of children reduces divorce rates by 30%, but that where there are sons, the divorce rate is reduced by 40%. According to the researchers, from the University of Pennsylvania, the survey "shows how sexist our society is".
OFF OUR BACKS, Vol. xviii, no. 3)

Israeli Women Picket

Israeli women are taking effective action on behalf of the anti-occupation movement in Israel. Each Friday afternoon, scores of women dressed in black join pickets in the major cities of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa holding placards with the slogan DOWN WITH THE OCCUPATION! 'The women in black', as they have become known, choose major intersections where they are visible to thousands of motorists stuck in weekend traffic jams. (OUTWRITE, Issue 65).

WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH: BROADENING THE MEMBERSHIP

The Women's Media Watch group has taken steps to broaden its active membership and develop a long-term plan of action. At its first public meeting in June, an expanded group formed sub-

committees to deal with the areas of media monitoring, lobbying and education. A year-long action plan was formulated. Interested in taking action to improve the media images of Jamaican womankind? Join the work by contacting Sonia Scott or Judith Wedderburn at P.O. Box 344, Kingston 9. Tel: 929-2457.

WOMEN TRADERS OF THE CARIBBEAN:

Making an Important Contribution to National Economies

Women have been the backbone of the trade which has existed between the Caribbean islands for centuries. Various called Hucksters, Traffickers, Higglers, Speculators, 'Suitcase Traders' and Informal Commercial Importers (ICI's), they've travelled far and wide in the region, buying and selling mainly fresh fruits, vegetables and ground provisions, since slavery days. In the 1970's, responding to changing economic realities, there emerged the so-called 'Suitcase Traders' or ICI's, trading in manufactured goods. The street corner higglers with their little trays selling anything from matches and cigarettes to mosquito destroyer and seasoning increased in number in the 1980's.

INDEPENDENT

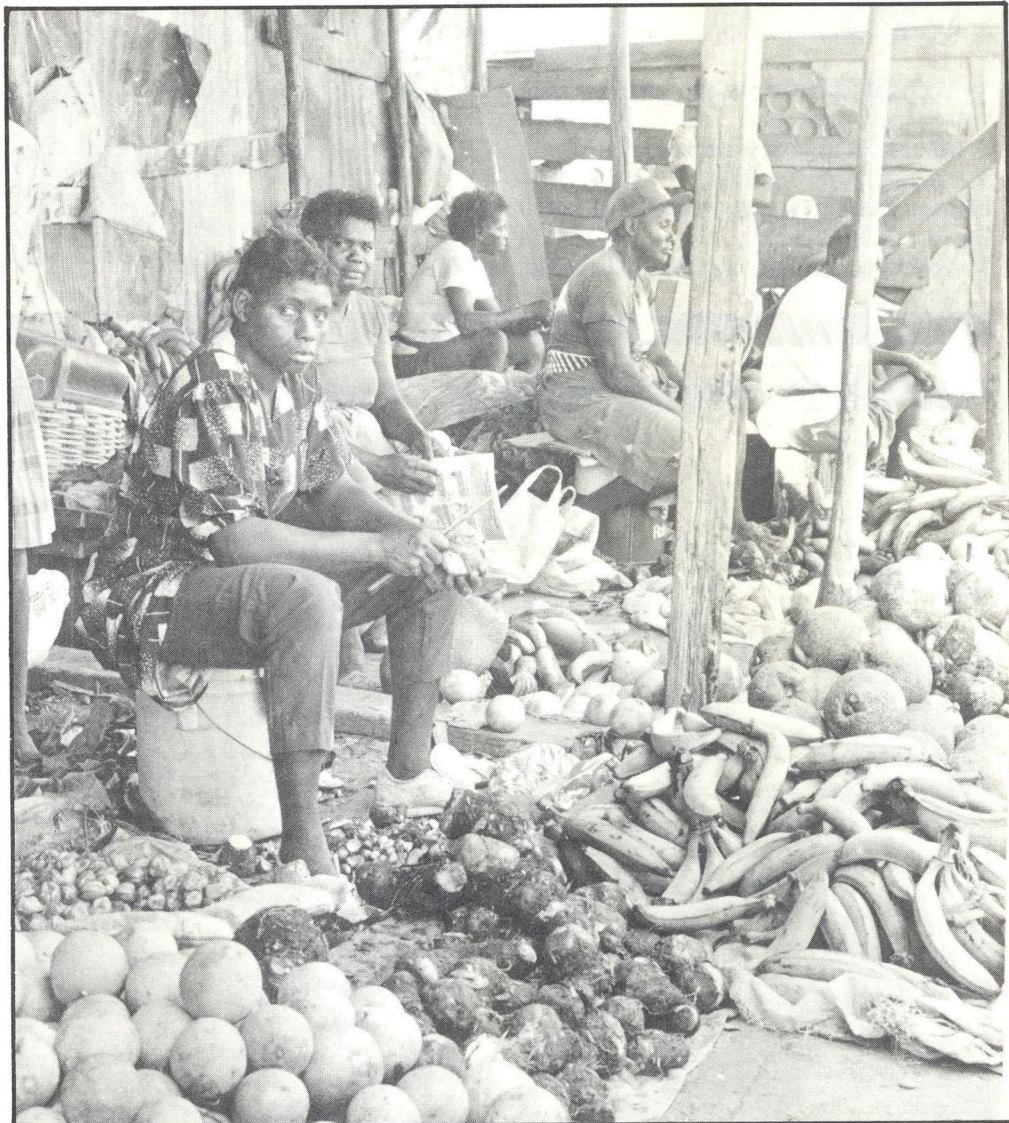
But, it is the traders in small farm commodities who remain in the majority regionwide. They labour long and hard, like their counterparts elsewhere, purchasing, exporting, importing and marketing the produce themselves. Most of them work by themselves independent of other traders. They purchase directly from small farmers and organise transportation for the goods to the port to be loaded onto small vessels bound for the neighbouring islands. After selling their goods, they return to their own islands carrying mainly manufactured goods for personal consumption or to sell.

EFFORTS TO ORGANISE

Although there have been attempts by traders to organise themselves, only the Dominicans, and to a lesser extent the Vincentians and Grenadians, have succeeded. The Dominican Huckster Association (DHA) is a private organisation which was founded in 1981 and presently has 385 members. The Traffickers Small Business Association of St. Vincent was founded in 1983 but although it has 275 members, its organisational structure remains weak. The Grenadian traders decided to form an association at a meeting in January 1987.

CONTRIBUTION TO CARICOM

There are several reasons why the



Higglers with their produce in Coronation Market in Kingston.

informal inter-island trade in agricultural commodities is of significant importance to the Caribbean Economy as a whole. For a start, exports of small farmer commodities from the small island states amounts to as much as 35% of all CARICOM exports and it is estimated that the traders market about 90% of these commodities. The traders have the ability to respond quickly to market demands which means they provide a significant contribution to food supplies in the receiving countries. Many small farmers are dependent on these traders to market their produce and trading itself provides self-employment to women who would otherwise have few options on the job

market. Of significance also is the opportunity provided these women in the trade sector to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Despite all of this however, as in other areas of work where women dominate, the economic contribution made by the traders has been seriously taken for granted. In fact most of them are classified as self-employed and are not included in labour statistics. While such statistics specify the volume of trade, the products traded and the destination, they do not say who is actually doing the trading - the marketing boards, producers associations or individual traders.

TEST YOURSELF:

Fact and Fantasy about Women's Work

(Answers P. 36)

(Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

- * Men produce the world's food; women prepare it for the table.
- * Women work to supplement the family's income.
- * Women who receive the same education and training as men, receive equal pay.
- * Men are the heavy workers and where food is short they should have first priority.
- * In modern societies, women have moved into all fields of work.
- * Women contribute a minor share of the world's economic product.

True False

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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MUSICAL PRODUCTION FROM GROUNDWORK THEATRE COMPANY

Yuh Safe is the latest production from Groundwork Theatre Company (formally Graduate Theatre Company). Using strong and original reggae sounds along with an often hilarious script, Yuh Safe tells the story of two youths from different sections of the society who get caught up in drugs and violence. GTC friends got a sneak preview of the play at the Creative Arts Centre, UWI, prior to the group's tour of Germany in July. Yuh Safe was enthusiastically received by audiences in Munich and Göttingen. Picture shows 'JJ' (Patrick Prendergast) caught on the Big Move by the security (Jean Breeze). Yuh Safe is expected to open for an extended local run soon.



REVIEWS

Because The Dawn Breaks!

Poems Dedicated to the Grenadian People.

by Merle Collins



Introduction by
Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o Karia Press

Merle Collins is a Grenadian woman who has experienced Grenada before, during and after the 1979 Revolution that disposed of then Prime Minister Eric Gary and brought to power the Marxist New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop.

Her anthology of poetry **Because the Dawn Breaks**, is a tribute to, and chronological account of, the struggles, hopes and dreams of Grenada and her people as they fought for, found, then lost their true independence as a nation.

Collins, through the use of the vivid rhythms of Grenadian French creole and English, as well as the use of essentially Caribbean imagery, creates a picture in her audience's minds of the experiences of her people.

She documents the brutal repression of Gairy's era in such poems as 'Nabel-String': "when you cousin/de secret police/beat you up/an' search you/an' treaten/to report you/you feel/like you dyin'/inside . . ." She also speaks of the remnants of colonial teachings still rife in the society, noting her grandmother's limited view of her own Caribbean heroes such as Fedon, Che, and Toussaint. Through Collins' verse, we begin to understand the slow but precious growth of the revolution and its rewards "mix up/like callaloo/not no watery callaloo, but/a thick hot, sweet/callaloo/ ... dat is

what it feel like/to be part o' dis/revolution reality." We see a new consciousness rising in the mass of people, and understand that the revolution has now made them part of that international struggle for freedom and fulfillment—Collins likens her country to South Africa and Mozambique.

Then there is the pain and fear born of the United States' invasion of her land, her frustration as many begin again to swallow the conqueror's propaganda, as expressed in 'A Song of Pain': "so you welcome their invasions/echoing their words/you call their rape/deliverance".

But Collins' book is not one that ends in despair. Rather, throughout the text

there is a strong note of defiance, of the supreme knowledge of the inevitability of freedom for the Grenadian people; "we speak/because/your plan/is not our plan/..." She likens this inevitability to nature, to the flow of water - events that must take place for the balance of life to be maintained.

Collin's pieces are works of faith, of hope, of a militant yet patient consciousness of tomorrow. Read it to get angry, to cry, to feel a little of Grenada's pride and inherent strength. Read it to understand the joy, the lament of a people conquered, a people that must rise again.

Leone Ross

DECISIONS: For All The Youth

Decisions is the brainchild of the Adolescence Fertility Resource Centre, a project of the Jamaica National Family Planning Board. It is the third such publication, and one which addresses issues related to teenage sexuality.

Decisions encourages the young to stand up and take responsibility for themselves, set progressive goals, and work towards those goals in a deliberate manner. While emphasizing sexuality as an important and pleasurable part of life, **Decisions** encourages teens to postpone sexual involvement until truly ready for the experience.

In simple terms, writers Angela Gray, (also Managing Editor), Fr. Anthony Aarons, and other contributors address topics including self-confidence; double standards in parental-child relations; love and relationships; "The Art of Saying No"; the reasons for and consequences of promiscuity; sexually transmitted diseases and the role of teens in minimizing this transferal; as well as clear explanations of different methods of contraception. These themes are presented in lively ways with cartoons, a quiz, and the views of the teens themselves, as revealed in rap sessions. There is also a glossary of terms to familiarize readers with sexual terminology.

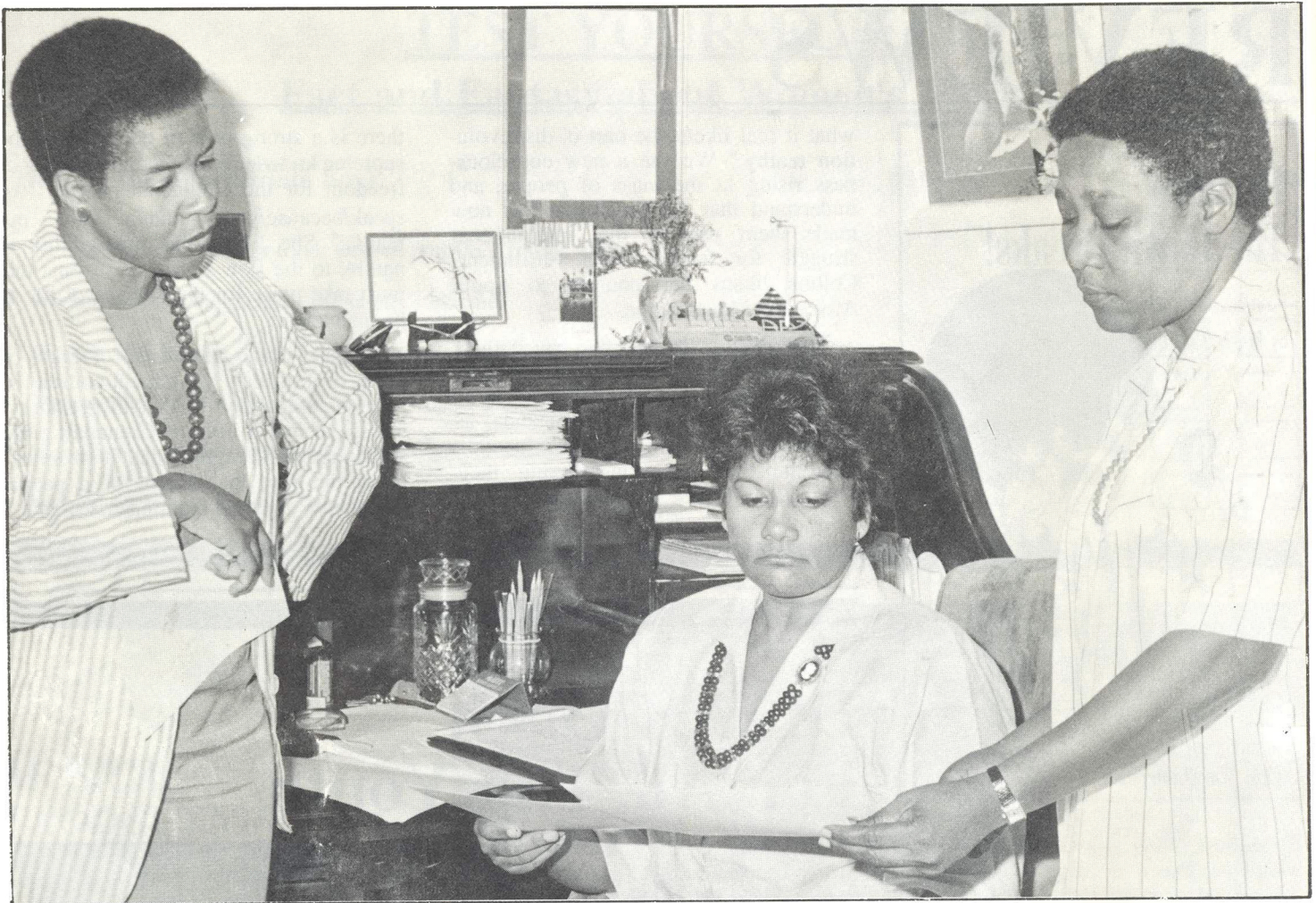
The target audience is not confined to young females. **Decisions** makes it



very clear that responsibility for one's life and sexuality is not merely a female issue.

With so much information coming to the youth by way of the United States and Europe, it is good to see a publication with an essentially Jamaican touch. **Decisions** is an excellent effort from 'wi own back-yard'.

Leone Ross



Berl, Eunice and Carmen working things out together - an approach that's extended to all staff at CCL.

TEAMWORK AND NO INDIVIDUAL PRIMA DONAS:

One morning in late 1981, Carmen Tipling came down the stairs from her bedroom to her living-room, and announced, "My horoscope says I shouldn't bring my work home."

Enough was enough. Earlier in the year Carmen, Eunice Bent and Berl Francis, the team behind the dynamic company, Communications Consultants Ltd., had started working out of Carmen's living room. Operations rapidly spread to the dining room and then the entire ground floor.

Carmen's announcement precipitated the search for rented offices and the start of the company's real growth. Two years later, the company was able to purchase its own offices at number 2 Balmoral Avenue, Kingston. And five years on, Carmen, Berl and Eunice are employing a staff of fifteen full-timers, a large squad of freelance writers and specialists and a bank of computers to help keep the company from becoming totally snowed under with the rush for its services.

A large part of the company's success is based on the trio's own long experience in the field of communications (over sixty years between them) and the respect they've built up for themselves. Another part is the fact that they've attracted on staff, from the start, some of the best of the younger practitioners in the field - all of them women ...

But it's not just having the professional skills that counts. As Berl Francis points out, combining the professional skills with the businesslike and collective approach the trio has insisted on, is the key to the CCL success story. "Our philosophy is based on team work. We consult with each other within the consultancy ... and learn from each other. Recognizing that each person in the team has different strengths, we break down each job and ensure that the best of our collective skills are brought to bear on each aspect. This approach gets the job done faster and ensures the highest quality". As part of the team approach the entire CCL staff

meets twice a month. "It's an opportunity to talk about the things that are happening and to restate goals; a looking at ourselves, and not a grouse session. If there's a rush on and we can't have a meeting you can feel the tensions".

CCL also believes in on-going training. Says Berl, "You can never learn too much in the field of communications. Training also keeps the brain fresh and receptive to new approaches and ideas."

Public Relations in Jamaica is no longer dominated by men. Indeed the reverse is true. Women are now topping the field. Berl says, "Women make good communicators. We're inclined to do the housekeeping, the little things, that make for better quality output."

Now going into its 8th year, CCL is planning to expand into the Caribbean, particularly Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, and based on its development so far, it's a sure bet that the CCL team will meet the challenge with its trademark - energy, creativity and teamwork.

SISTREN IN GUYANA

A *Sistren Workshop Team* comprising *Audeline Crawford, Rebecca Knowles, Joan Edwards and Joan French* recently spent 8 weeks in Guyana working with the *Women's Development Committee (Red Thread)* of Guyana. This was the first phase of a long-term project to assist the WDC in utilising popular methodologies for consciousness-raising and organisation building. *Patsy Pryce, also of Sistren Workshop, put some questions to the members of the team on their return to Jamaica.*

What kind of work was the Sistren Team doing in Guyana?

J.E. We were training and learning. We were training community women in some of the Sistren methodology and we were learning about some of their culture and how we could work with that in some of our consciousness raising.

P.C. We worked with 4 groups, 2 Indo-Guyanese and 2 Afro-Guyanese. We did workshops with each group once per week which we evaluated between sessions. We also conducted a weekend training seminar and gave a small public performance.

From the experience, what stands out most in your mind about the situation of Guyanese women?

J.E. I was struck by the level to which women were abused, and how confined they were. It seems that women are beaten a lot, and there were several cases of police brutality involving sexual abuse which came to our attention through the workshops. One of these was taken up by Red Thread while we were there. Most women can't afford to get their own lawyers. Red Thread helped this particular

young woman to get a lawyer. Her husband had raped a 9-year-old girl left in her care, and when he ran away and the police couldn't find him, they arrested her instead and brutalised her in the most awful way. The Red Thread sisters really helped her face the whole thing and gave her all kinds of support, like going to court with her and so on. Until then, she had seen no hope, and she was thinking of killing herself.

J.F. There is quite a lot of suicide in the Indo-Guyanese community, especially among young women. Parents still force girls to marry at a very early age, sometimes to get rid of the burden of an extra mouth to feed, sometimes in the belief that the prospective son-in-law will bring income or other material resources into the family. Sometimes the girls don't like the men, or the men treat them



Guyanese sisters enjoy the 'members' warm-up game with Sistren team members Rebecca Knowles (centre, right) and Joan Edwards (far left, partly hidden).

bad. Yet they can't leave, because there is so little alternative. They are dependent on the men. It causes a great deal of suffering, and some end up drinking poison or using some other method to kill themselves.

J.E. There is a Women's Ministry in Guyana, but I am not sure what it is doing for women. There is no coming together of women's groups against this kind of thing.

P.C. Take even the wife-beating. Women just accept it. Women in Guyana have strength, but it is all bottled up. They are not willing enough to fight. There is no kind of rebellion, just acceptance.

J.E. I don't think Jamaican women would take that kind of thing. No Jamaican woman is just going to sit down and let a man beat her every Friday night.

R.K. I wouldn't say that. It happens right here - Friday night fights over how much money the man brings home and how much he spent at the bar are very common: if it don't happen Friday night, it happen Sunday morning. A lot of women get blows because they complain that the money can't go to market. So I don't think we are that different at all. Our women often stay and take it because they have no jobs or couldn't manage with the children on their own.



*A MOMENT OF CONCENTRATION:
Pauline Crawford (left) and Joan French of Sistren observe a presentation from one of the Red Thread groups.*

P.C. I still think it is worse there. Women seem to work outside the home less than here. The economic situation is bad. There are few jobs especially for women. If they don't get the little barrel there is nothing.

Did you notice any positive things about women's situation in Guyana?

P.C. Yes, we noticed that the women spoke freely about having abortions whenever they needed it. Abortion is legal in Guyana. You can go into hospital and have it properly done, and it is fairly cheap. There is no stigma attached to it. Here in Jamaica they would call you "cemetery" or "dash-weh belly". You feel ashamed to have an abortion. In Guyana it is not so. Guyanese women have that right. The other thing I noticed is that there is less sexual harassment on the streets. Nobody makes you feel like a "beef" or calls out "Hi Fatty" or makes obscene remarks, even in places where you would expect it. That whole pressure is not there. As a woman it gives you a spirit to jive them. For once in my life I had the courage to "Psst" them, to see how they would react: and they were embarrassed!

J.F. For me, one of the positive aspects was that Guyana has made good strides in the direction of equal education for boys and girls. It is compulsory for boys as well as girls to do home economics, and for girls to do technical subjects, as part of their basic education. This showed up in the workshops, where the younger women had very different ideas about their potential than the older women. They saw themselves becoming carpenters, builders, welders, mechanics, and they felt men had a duty to do their share of housework. The older women saw themselves mainly as housewives. One interesting side of this, though, was that the boys were still reluctant to do housework at home, despite the equal training in school. Tackling the problem

TEST YOURSELF - ANSWERS

- * FALSE:
In the Third World, where three-quarters of the world's people live, rural women produce more than half the food.
- * FALSE:
Women are the sole breadwinners in one-quarter to one-third of the families in the world. The number of families headed by women is rapidly increasing.
- * FALSE:
So far, earning differentials persist even at equivalent levels of training. In professional fields, for example, comparisons of women's salaries show a large gap between them even when samples are matched for training and experience.
- * FALSE:
As a rule, women work longer hours than men. Many carry triple work loads - in their household, labour force, and reproductive roles. Rural women often average an 18-hour day. Nutritional anemia is a serious health problem for women in the Third World.
- * FALSE:
Relatively few women have entered occupations traditionally dominated by men. Most women remain highly segregated in low-paid jobs.
- * FALSE:
Women are a minority in the conventional measures of economic activity because these measures undervalue women's paid labour and do not cover their unpaid labour. The value of women's work in the household alone, if given economic value would add an estimated one-third to the world's Gross National Product (GNP).

at the school level helped, but social attitudes outside of school remained largely the same, so the women still had to be doing battle at the home base.

Guyana is a country with roughly 55% Indo-Guyanese and 36% Afro-Guyanese. What were your observations about the racial situation?

P.C. The races don't seem to mix much.

There is a strong clear cut Negro-Indian division. When you drive along the highway into the country you can see clearly that this is an Afro-Guyanese village and that is an Indo-Guyanese village. Indians are condemned by their own race for marrying blacks. Blacks are not condemned for marrying Indians, but there is not much mixture. There are no whole heap of red-skins (mullattoes) either: it is as if the Europeans moved out long ago or didn't mix much. The Indo-Guyanese have kept Indian culture to a large extent. There are special cinemas that show nothing but Indian movies. All over the place there are Hindu temples and Moslem morgues as well as churches, and they still observe the Indian religions, festivals and rituals. The Afro-Guyanese, on the other hand, seem to have lost their links with Africa to a large extent under the influence of slavery and colonisation.

J.E. Red Thread is trying to address the racial division in their work, to get Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese to meet and get to know each other across cultures, and to build understanding between the two groups. That was a conscious aim of our work with the groups.

P.C. What I learnt about race in Guyana is that it is not only people of African descent who suffer race-wise, Indians do too. Wherever in the world you go negroes and Indians are at the bottom.

Still, negroes are always at the very bottom. This is so in Guyana too. The Afro-Guyanese villages look more depressed than the Indo-Guyanese ones, at least outwardly. Indians also move ahead in Guyana, into business and so on, be-

cause there is no competition with whites. There are hardly any Afro-Guyanese in business. They have a different attitude to money. Take the pork-knockers (men who go into the interior to search for gold): they mostly spend their money on short-term things: clothes, gold watch, and so on. The Indians build by going into business.

J.F. Of course, there are areas where Afro-Guyanese predominate, like in the police force. Interestingly, most of the women subjected to sexual abuse by police were Indo-Guyanese. I think that has something to do with the underlying racial tensions, which Guyanese politics has tended to exploit rather than overcome. I think people are getting tired of it now, just as we're getting tired of political tribalism. New forces are at work trying to overcome these racial divisions.

What about the economic situation in Guyana?

J.E. It is very bad. The minimum wage is \$23 per day and that is what the bulk of ordinary people earn. Yet chicken is \$20 per lb., a box lunch is \$20, and a bath soap is \$8. It makes you wonder how people survive.

P.C. For once in my life I know that when you have money, you have power. Although our little per diem would be nothing to a lot of people, when I changed it out and saw how many Guyanese dollars I could get and what it could buy, I felt powerful. Now we know what devaluation means to those tourist and businessmen with their US dollars. When you give someone US\$10 or US\$20 you should see how they looked at you, as if you are rich: they would do anything for you.

This is the first time the Sistren team has worked in any one place in the Caribbean for such a long time. Usually you tour in the U.S., the U.K. or Canada. Was there anything special for you about this ex-

perience?

R.K. Well, it was our own Caribbean people. We felt good about that, we felt at home. The people we worked with at all levels were really loving and nice, and they give you encouragement to come and work again. There was real openness and ease in the relationships. They treated us as friends and socialised with us. They didn't just treat it as business.

J.E. We learnt about a part of the Caribbean we didn't really know before, though we have so much in common.

P.C. One thing this tour showed me is that when you are doing this type of high-concentration work, if a person does not have enough time for socialising, the work will get cramped. The whole vibes, the whole spirit when a person has the time to socialize gives the work a plus. In this respect, the programme was well designed. We had time to learn about the everyday life of Guyanese people, share in their festivals, hear their concerns. At the same time it was no rigid programme with people breathing down your neck to go here and go there. You were able to flow with the tide, to mix freely, to choose what you wanted to explore. Guyana left time for this: most Sistren tours do not.

The other thing I liked was we were not staying in any posh place, we were living in an ordinary house experiencing the place as ordinary Guyanese do with the blackouts and the cooking gas shortage and the brown water coming out of the pipes, everything. Not that we want tour organisers to put us up in some awful hole, but I think it is good when things are arranged to incorporate reality so you can see life in the country as it really is for the ordinary people.

Did you achieve the objective of leaving people behind who could carry forward the work with the groups?

J.E. We have developed in each group a core of people who understand the process and have begun to implement it. The aim is to build on that. Who knows, they may even invent new things for themselves which can be of use to all of us. Already there is a body of Guyanese games and songs which they are using as departure points for consciousness-raising about gender issues. Remember too, that we are not only training, we are also learning. It's more like an exchange. Much remains to be done: this is only the first part of the programme. The enthusiasm, commitment and hard work that have been shown so far will, I think, ensure that what comes out of the programme will be very positive for all of us.



Andaiye of the Red Thread Committee adding her chair to the symbolic structure which is one of the methods used by the Sistren Workshop Team to analyse group relations.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proud So 'Till!

Dear Sistren,

On Friday, the 24th of June, it was a gorgeous day outside - a relief from the New York heat that is the closest thing to the hell I used to have nightmares about after the tent-meetings the 'foreign Evangelists' used to have in Half-Way-Tree park when I was a child. (They would scream and holler just like Jimmy Swaggart, calling everybody else's sin but dem own).

Anyway, as I was saying, over night it had just cooled down - sunny but with a mild, cooling breeze. And where was I on such a rare balmy summer's day? Bent over my little desk, frantically typing a paper; hoping to catch the professor before him tek off to him summer retreat. Meantime Summer Session B was fast approaching.

I stretched trying to work out the knots in my back when it dawned on me that I hadn't picked up the day's mail. I jumped at the thought, glad to have an excuse to take a break. You would not understand what it meant to get your first **MAGAZINE** in the mail that day! Suppose you saw my face, and the tears in my eyes, and the swelling of my heart? Mi seh - mi proud so till!

I eagerly turned the pages, saving the reading for a time when it would have my undivided attention. Well, if ever the saying, "You've come a long way baby", is apt, it is now. Look how far into hills and valleys and plains you have gone in search of voiceless women: what a magnet you have been. But also Sistren, you are like a mirror shined with newspaper (and you know how that can shine!)

You reflect in sometimes startling detail, the truth of the lives, fine lines, wrinkles and the breadfruit-tree sturdiness of women and you are raising our con-

cerns in ways no one else has (with all due respect to everybody else). When I looked at the pictures of the last Sisters Celebration and remembered the banana bread sale that financed the very first effort ... lawd ...

Later in the day Lucy (Hutton) came over to my house not wanting to go home where not a friendly face is in sight ... And ah pop de magazine pon har (much squeals and de taking of de lawd name in vain). After she looked and looked (funny, she didn't read it either, till later when she was reclining with her feet up) she paid the ultimate tribute, "Lawd ... Sistren motivate me, motivate me fi come back come work".

On behalf of all of us in temporary exile who intend "fi come back come work", nuff respect and love!

Carol Narcisse
New York

GUIDANCE and INSPIRATION

Dear Sistren,

Your latest Newsletter on "Women & Politics" arrived as if someone had heard my wish for guidance and inspiration! I had been struggling to write a paper on "Empowerment" for the Closing Ceremony of a Summer Course at a University in Canada and having great difficulty in finding words to describe the difference between "our kind of politics" and the party politics that is so meaningless to most people.

Your Newsletter is great: interesting, informative, exciting, powerful - and inspiring. It's like SISTREN!! It's arrival was like the arrival of the theatre group

here in Amherst in March - a touch of hope, of the possibilities for change.

Continue the struggle.

Walk good.

Peggy Antrobus
Massachusetts, U.S.A.

SUPERFICIAL

Dear Sistren,

It was lovely to see the magazine (Vol. 10, No. 1). I liked the subject area it covers and felt very excited by the expansion.

However, the theme of women and politics was from my point of view, treated a bit superficially, particularly the interviews with the party women. Two fundamental questions needed to be raised and neither was.

The first is, "What is the election platform of your party and what are you offering women?" Portia Simpson in particular was not questioned closely enough. She appears to have a rather opportunistic position on gender issues, yet she is the convenor of the PNP women's movement and in a powerful position to advance the position of women in our society. We need her to act on our behalf, but, she seems not to understand the issues involved. In fact she seems to regard her responsibility to women, as a secondary issue and one which might cost her certain privileges if she dealt with it up front. It is not good enough to say that you don't only want to narrow yourself to women's issues. There is no such thing as a women's issue. What is at stake are the relations between men and women.

There is irrefutable evidence now that the power relations between men and women are quite skewed. Some women of the upper classes collude with and benefit from the same privileges. Others don't. Which side are you on? What do we see as a priority issue that we need women leaders to use their power to deal with? Free Zones, prostitution, domestic work, sexual violence, women in agriculture ... what are your positions on these issues? Sure it's hard to gain power in party ranks. I sympathize. But once you have some power what are you going to do with it and what can help your sisters?

The second question is to do with the PNP parties fight election politics. To put it bluntly, what the article did by failing to raise any questions about machismism and terror tactics in electoral politics was to condone their tactics. I am not suggesting that the interviewer should have risked her life by accusing the politicians in question of condoning tactics which require their supporters to shoot first and peacefully persuade after. I am hoping that there are ways in which the issue could have been raised and needs gently to be raised. The fact that it was not is a missed opportunity of some significance.

Love,
Honor Ford-Smith
London, U.K.

Women's Bureau Appreciates

Dear Sistren,

Hearty congratulations on a very impressive new version of the Sistren newsletter. I want to commend all those who no doubt laboured long and hard to

produce it. You have succeeded in publishing a very informative, appealing and inspiring magazine.

The Bureau of Women's Affairs particularly appreciated your coverage of the National Policy Statement on Women and the implementation process we are now promoting.

Women as individuals and as part of groups must actively monitor the progress being made toward the Policy commitments contained in the Statement. Now that it is a formal policy, let us not lose our original momentum or our drive to make it a reality for Jamaican women.

Thank you, Sistren, for your support in this process. Best wishes for your continued success.

Yours sincerely,
Pat Sinclair (Miss)
Director
Bureau of Women's Affairs

CONSCIOUS INMATES

Dear Sistren,

I hope that good health will assist you to continue the good work you have been undertaking in providing good readership and assistance to all of the Jamaican public, male and female.

I am a death row inmate in Spanish Town and I came across your tabloid since of recent. After reading through the pages and analysing its contents, I came to the conclusion that it is intellectually put together within its principles and objectives. It is well presented and does observe merit in that respective category.

Looking at the issue of sexual

violence from the angle where I am now, I see where it has got out of control at an alarming rate. To a fact, I don't know if your association holds seminars within penal institutions to focus inmates' attention on the importance of women in our society and their contribution to humanity throughout generations. I think strongly that coming to these penal institutions and having lectures and issuing pamphlets containing your principles and objectives, will help to reconstruct that pride which males there have lost for the women of this country.

If you take a deep look inside some of our penal institutions, you will find inmates who are conscious they have made a fundamental error in life. We also know we can't run away from ourself. We will try our best with the assistance of the women's organizations to correct ourself in respect to crime and violence against our women.

Yours etc.
Errol Smith
Spanish Town
Adult Correctional Centre

Dear Sistren,

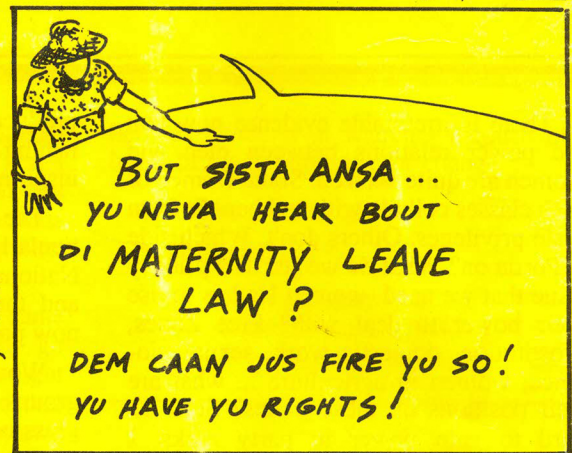
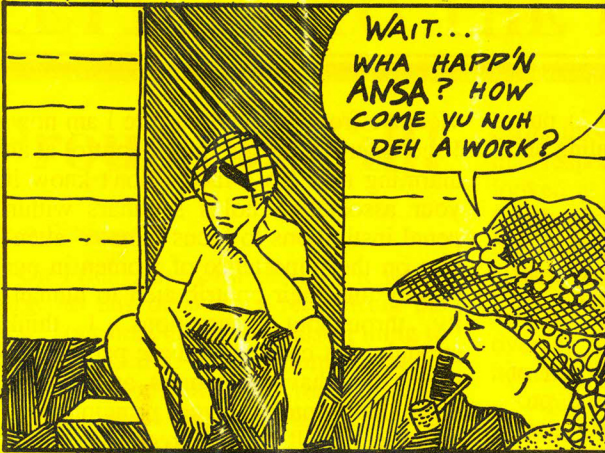
We have read every copy of your magazine with interest. It's information packed and focuses on issues we are interested in! Keep up the good work and always remember we support you.

Please inform us when Sistren plans to be in Belize. We would like you to do a special presentation focusing on family violence or sexual assault for our members, supporters and friends.

Sincerely,
Dorla Bowman
President
Belize Women Against
Violence Movement



SISTA ANSA AND GRANNY A CHAT BOUT MATERNITY LEAVE



WEN IT COME TO DOMESTIC HELPERS, DEM HAFI REGISTA DUNG A NIS FRAM BEFORE, 'CAUSE FI GET DI PAY LEAVE, DI HELPER MUS HAFI MEK AT LEAST 26 CONTRIBUTIONS DURING DI YEAR. DI PAY FI DI DOMESTIC HELPER COME OUTTA DI NIS YUH SI, NOT FROM DI EMPLOYER.
 ANYWAY, ANSA, YU FI GO DUNG A MINISTRY A LABOUR AN LODGE YU COMPLAINT.
 DI ADDRESS IS
 THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
 MINISTRY OF LABOUR
 1F NORTH ST., KINGSTON
 OR
 THE PAY & CONDITONS DEPARTMENT
 MINISTRY OF LABOUR
 1F NORTH STREET
 KINGSTON TELEPHONE: 92-29501

