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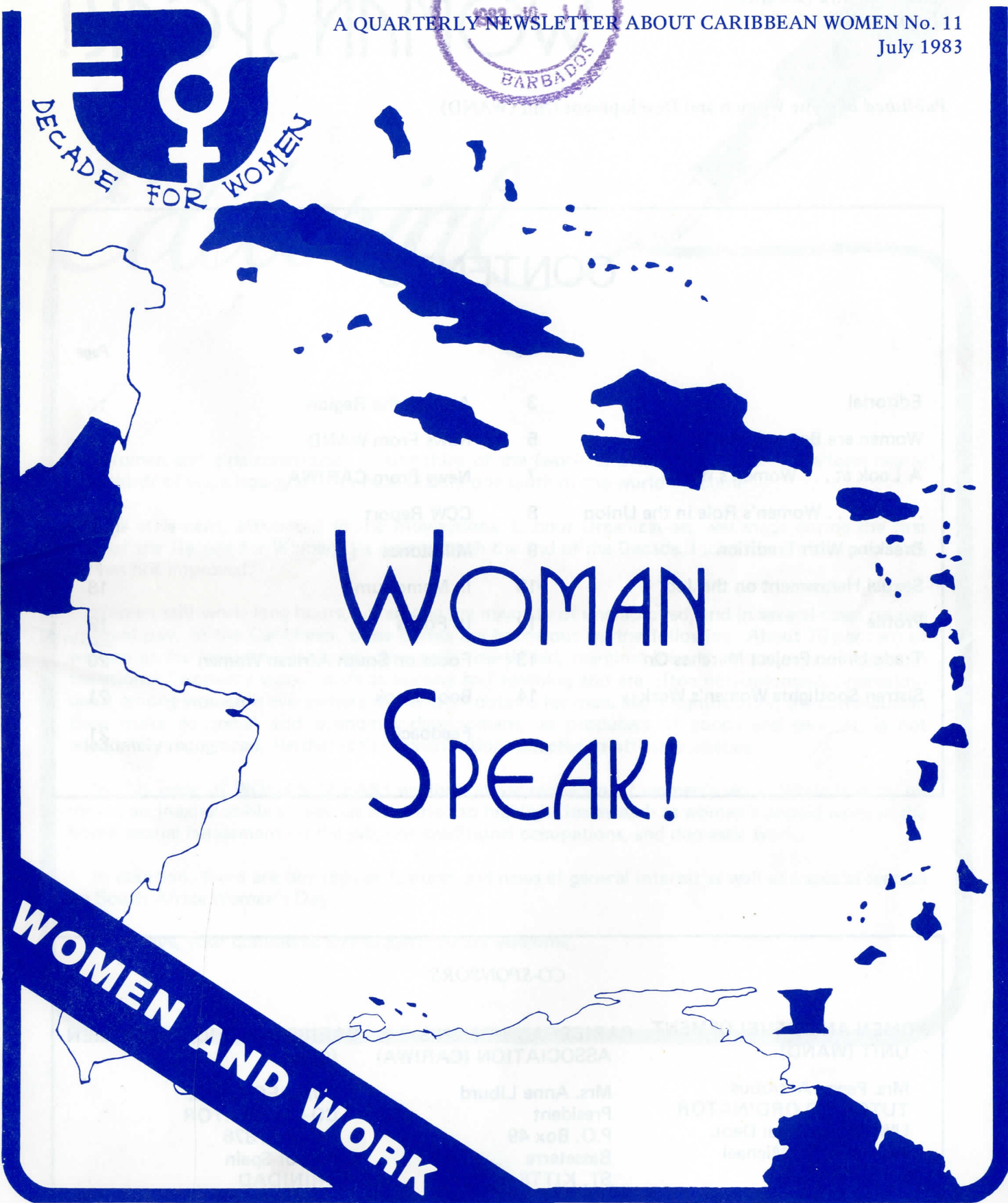
A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT CARIBBEAN WOMEN No. 11

July 1983



WOMAN SPEAK!

WOMEN AND WORK



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Graphics: Keith Gall

WOMAN SPEAK!

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Editorial



"Women and girls constitute . . . one-third of the (world's) official labour force, perform nearly two-thirds of work hours, but . . . receive only one-tenth of the world's income . . ."

This statement, attributed to the International Labour Organization, was made during the first half of the Decade for Women. As we approach the end of the Decade, indicators are that women's lot has not improved.

Women still work long hours, are among the majority of unemployed, and in several cases receive unequal pay. In the Caribbean, these points are borne out by the following: About 70 per cent of women in the labour force occupy low-paid, low-skilled, marginal jobs; they are largely engaged in traditional "woman's work" such as nursing and teaching and are often non-unionised; unemployment among women is everywhere higher than obtains for men. More significantly, the contribution they make to social and economic development, as producers of goods and services, is not adequately recognized. Neither is this contribution reflected in official statistics.

In this issue of **WOMAN SPEAK!** we look at various areas of women's work. While it is by no means an inexhaustible survey we have tried to highlight issues such as women's unpaid work in the home, sexual harassment on the job, non-traditional occupations, and domestic work.

In addition, there are our regular features and news of general interest as well as a special section on South Africa Women's Day.

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome.



'Women are better suited'

Dr. Victoria Durant-Gonzalez

Data about female factory workers in Caribbean countries included in this article is based upon research carried out in those countries in 1982. Interviews were conducted with 133 assembly line female workers, 81 in Antigua and 52 in Barbados; with managers, personnel officers, and production engineers in two companies in Antigua, 10 in Barbados, and four in St. Vincent.

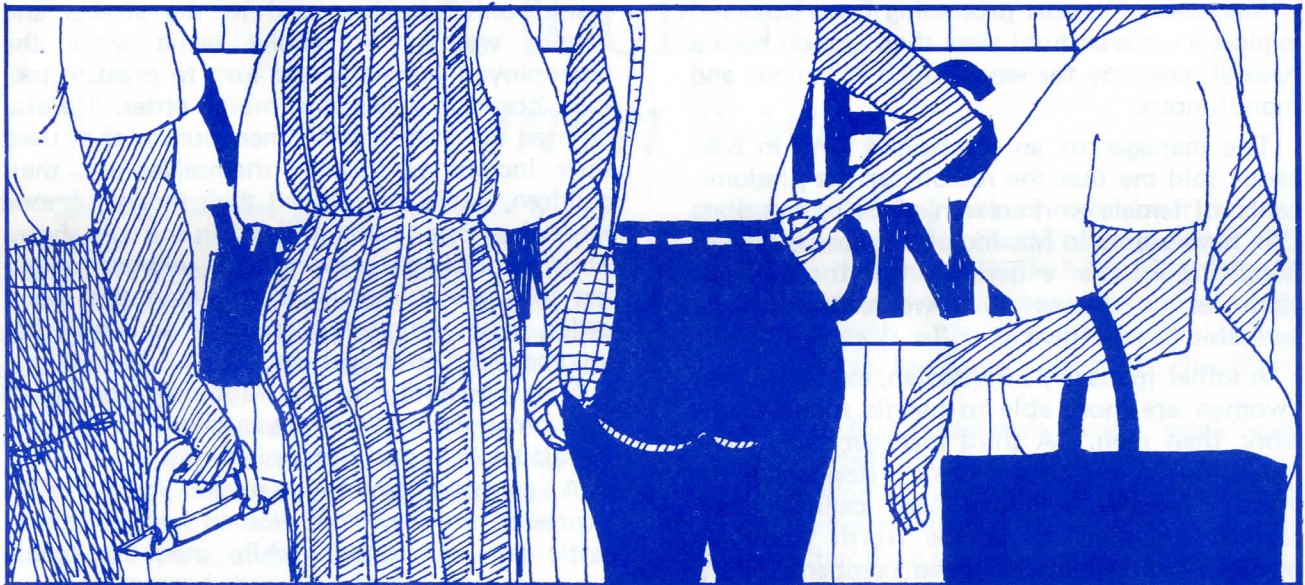
Miss Wendy is a 29-year-old worker whose factory work history began at age 16, after she completed fourth term in secondary school.

She worked on her first factory job for four

solution to their unending search for cheap and unskilled labour.

A result of this form of investment is the internationalization of labour created by the emergence of a global assembly line.

The exportation of jobs, called "off-shore sourcing" in the economic literature, links workers in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to workers in Silicon Valley in northern California. This global linking of workers is made possible by advancements in scientific management which fragment the production process into various stages, requiring fewer



years, leaving when the firm closed. From there she worked for an electronics company for one and a half years and with a second multinational firm for one year. Her employment was interrupted when the latter relocated to another production site. At the time of my research she was working for a foreign-owned company for Bds\$60.00 per week.

Miss Wendy is part of a new form of foreign investment that is pulling large numbers of Caribbean women into the industrial workforce.

The exportation of jobs by multinational corporations (MNCs) represents a new trend in foreign investment in Third World countries. This trend is viewed by some development planners as a means towards industrialization and economic growth, while the MNCs see it as a

and fewer skills on the part of workers, and then geographically separating the steps.

An interesting feature of export processing industries is the universal over-representation of female workers. Research shows that in patriarchal Malaysia and Singapore, in 1976, manufacturers of electronics employed approximately 55,000 workers of which more than 90 per cent were women.

The garment industry in the United States shows a parallel preference for employing female workers. This is exemplified in its history of first employing rural white native women during the early stages of industrialization, European immigrant women by mid-19th century and, later, non-European immigrant women from Latin America and the Caribbean, and migrants from the American South.

The preponderance of women among assemblers found in other countries is consistent with findings in the Caribbean. In Barbados it is felt that: "Women have proved their ability to work in the industrial sector in Barbados. With a number of social developments, women have fast become the bread-winners in many homes in Barbados. The majority of jobs which the Industrial Development Corporation has provided in the last six or seven years are held by females; and certainly the organization must feel proud of its remarkable achievement in assisting in the progress of women in our community." (*The Nation*, Friday, September 25, 1978).

Stereotyped perceptions of female biological and psychological traits and of their economic conditions, are among factors responsible for the preference for female workers in these industries. But the overall position of women in society is a main factor that accounts for female over-representation.

Members of export processing firms hold and exploit a cross-cultural view that women have a natural tendency for work which is tedious and monotonous.

The manager of an electronics firm in Barbados told me that the reason for the predominance of female workers in his factory was that: "We have plants in Mexico and other countries. Based upon the experience in those other countries, it seems that women are more agreeable to repetitive work."

Another manager, a Barbadian, explained that "women are more able to handle monotonous work than men." A third manager said: "The repetitious nature of the work is responsible for mostly females applying. Men cannot stand repetitious work." And the North American owner of an industrial glove company in St. Vincent observed: "Men do not adapt to sewing anywhere in the world."

These psychological explanations for the over-representation of female workers are often coupled with biological ones. For example, one manager said: "Women have more manual dexterity. This seems to come from related activities at home, like sewing."

This view is shared by the manager of an electronics company who said: "Studies done in the United States show that women are better at this type of assembly work." This finding, he explained, is from a General Electric Company study. His company produces electronic filters for cable television and employs 116 female assemblers out of a total work-force of 123.

Exploiting female traits, real or perceived, is not limited to companies, for these are also exploited by host governments. A classic

example of this exploitation appears in a promotional brochure prepared by the Malaysian government which advertises its female workers. The brochure states: "The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast and with extreme care . . . Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench assembly production line than the oriental girl? No need for a Zero Defects program here! By nature, they 'quality control' themselves." (Lim 1978:7)

A unique reason given by a government official in Trinidad for that country's promotion of foreign investments which generate jobs for women is that such investments prevent disruption in the social order.

The official explained that unemployed young women were more dangerous to a society than unemployed young men, because the latter would only stand around in the streets and admire women or smoke ganja while the unemployed female would turn to prostitution, thus breaking down the moral order. He also pointed out that when women worked they used their income to support themselves and their children, while men spread their income among more than one household and in the rum shops. Thus, according to the official, export processing jobs are a way of maintaining the moral order, and employing women ensures that income is put to proper use.

Male perception of the economic conditions of women is another reason given for the sex imbalance in export processing jobs.

A garment factory manager in Barbados expressed the view that women were willing to settle for low wages, while men are bread-winners and therefore needed more money. This myth is being spread in a country where the 1970 census shows that 42.90 per cent of the households are headed by women and that the mean size of those households is 3.7 persons.

Typically, managers of these companies have a double standard for the cost of labour. For example, I was told by a manager of a garment factory that "garment factories started off paying low wages, and low wages attract a certain kind of person." Another explained that "the price of this work is more suited to women."

These views suggest that the wage earned by women is supplemental to the wage of a male and that women work to provide the extras — the frills for their household — or to pay for personal items such as cosmetics.

My research, on the contrary, shows that the

overwhelming majority of women who engage in export processing jobs are working out of economic necessity. They work to support themselves and to support other members of their households. Among the 133 female workers in the survey sample, 78.2 per cent listed themselves as their main source of income; 97 per cent of the sample contributes to the income of the household and 94 per cent do so on a weekly basis. Data from the survey also show that their income supports an average of 3.0 persons in the household.

In other words, women's income contribution to the household does more than help the

finances of the household. In cases where employment is uncertain, it also serves to ensure that adult members will be provided for during periods of unemployment.

The exploitation of women's labour in export processing industries is based on myths which do not recognise the real economic responsibilities women have for their families. It is convenient to promote the idea that "women are better suited" to certain jobs. It is therefore now more crucial than ever that persons concerned about women's labour in the Caribbean should challenge these myths and the industrialization policies on which they are based.

Dr. Durant-Gonzalez is a Research Fellow in the School of Social Science, Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S.A.



A look at... *Woman's work*

Numerous women, who do not work outside the house, when asked "what do you do?" will reply "I'm a housewife, I don't work."

But how do we define work, and who decides what is work? "All too often, the woman who has chosen to be a housewife and stays home with her children is looked upon as lazy, untalented, or someone who 'doesn't really work,'" says Ann Crittenden Scott in her article "The Value of Housework" (*Ms. Magazine*, July 1972).

Certainly, a country's Gross National Product does not reflect the work women do in the household. In this context work is defined as an activity which a person does for monetary reward.

Thus, a chef preparing a meal in a hotel is regarded as being economically active; a woman cooking two or three hours a day for her family is merely doing another household chore.

Rarely in our society do we attach importance to a person's labour unless it has economic value. We are socialised to believe that unless a woman has a job outside the home she is not working. Yet, in 1972, economists at the U.S. based Chase Manhattan Bank calculated that housewives were doing work in the home worth

at least US\$257 a week on the labour market. And, doing them for free! The economists also concluded that many of the household tasks, if done outside the home, would be independent professions each with its own salary — such as practical nurse, laundress, seamstress, chauffeur, cook, etc.

The idea that housework is not "work" can seriously affect the personality or self-concept of those women who choose not to, or are unable to, work outside the home. Such women may feel that their energies are drained in useless toil as their families often take their "work" for granted.

It is said that people gain a sense of self-worth through an appreciation of what they do. Maybe if more men and women would understand and value housework the women who do it would take more pride in themselves as workers.

"A regular personal income might help alleviate that sense of inferiority by reminding both parties that the wife has made a measurable contribution to the family's fortunes," suggests Ann Crittenden Scott, "and that she, like her husband, has earned a salary that is hers and hers alone, not to be asked for or accounted for, but payment for a vitally important job."



...and...

Women's Role in the Union

With Norma Shorey-Bryan

One cannot talk seriously about issues concerning work, workers and the workplace without considering the role of the trade unions.

Caribbean history attests to the tremendous role played by these unions in bettering conditions of workers during the past half century. The early struggles culminating in the riots of the 1930s, and the pattern of present negotiating tactics throughout the region, demonstrate the power of the union in upholding workers' rights.

However, the role of women in the union in the early days and today has seldom been recognized.

In the past, names like Jane Phillips-Gay, General Secretary of the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (in then British Guiana), were testimony to the courageous spirit, drive and commitment of these female labour organizers.

Today, in many Caribbean territories, women form 50 per cent or more of union membership and are the backbone of union activities ranging from fundraising to organizing. They work daily alongside men in struggling and negotiating for better working conditions, fair play and the rights of workers.

Yet, in spite of their work commitment and dedication, rarely have women attained senior leadership positions in the union.

The reasons for this are complex, and include the traditional male structure of the unions as well as the attitudes of male and female members. Since women are not in leadership positions, their influence on union policy and negotiation demands is diminished. As a result, many of the issues which primarily concern women are often relegated to the end of the negotiating agenda, or not included at all.

One of these issues is the question of adequate maternity leave. This is an important concern of working women, yet in many Caribbean countries maternity leave laws were only passed in the mid 1970s.

Generally, the agreed period for maternity leave is six weeks before childbirth and six weeks after, but conditions vary from job to job. In some jobs a woman receives paid mater-

nity leave for the entire period. In others, if a woman gets pregnant on the job she may be fired as soon as her employer discovers this and she will not be reinstated after the baby's birth.

The issue of equal pay for equal work is also of primary concern to women workers.

In the 1960s most Caribbean countries ratified and accepted in principle the Equal Rights Agreement of the International Labour Organization which "embraces the principle of equal pay for work of equal value." Yet, employers are still able to sidestep this by classifying jobs of similar value differently for men and women, and using this classification as the basis for continuing discrimination against women workers.

If the union is going to seriously address some of the special concerns and needs of female workers, its male leadership will have to be sensitized to these needs.

Women themselves will have to play a more active leadership role in their unions. They will have to examine the forces that hold them back; to learn to appreciate themselves as individuals and as women; to develop leadership and negotiation skills and, more importantly, be willing to articulate their particular needs and concerns as women workers. Finally, they will need to learn how to harness the power that comes from solidarity with each other and use it to build their unions and their communities.

Strategies for building women's strength and enhancing their contribution to the trade union movement must also include men, for men need to understand and accept, without feeling threatened, that the growing confidence among women will strengthen and not destroy the union.

The Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions (see p. 13) coordinated by the Trade Union Education Institute of the U.W.I., aims to help women in the trade union movement develop these personal and organizational skills. But it is up to the women in each union to find ways of working more effectively, along with men, toward improving the lot of all workers.

Norma Shorey-Bryan is a programme officer with the Women and Development Unit of the Extra-Mural Dept., UWI.

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

by Martina Mathurin

When I first spoke to Mrs. M. three years ago, she was cooking rice in a shed on a housing construction site. I told her I hoped she did more on the site than just cook rice. She smiled but did not reply. I thought she was cooking for the men working on the site, little did I know she was cooking for her husband who was the contractor.

I do not know what prompted me that day to comment on the task Mrs. M. was doing. Perhaps she appeared to be full of stamina and capable of doing more on the construction site than just cooking. Maybe my own life came into play here too. Being a professional woman myself, I had always thought women could assume non-traditional roles if given the opportunity.

The next time I saw Mrs. M. on the site, she was assisting her husband in preparing the pay sheets for the workers — which I thought a big improvement over cooking rice.

On another occasion I went to the site to speak with Mr. M. about the house I had bought, but he was not there. A worker directed me instead to a newly built home down the road where I found Mrs. M. painting the walls. In my excitement at seeing this I exclaimed, "So this is what you really do!" Laughing, she corrected me. "No, this is not all I really do," she said, "I assist my husband with the electrical work too."

Through the years, as I came to know Mr. and Mrs. M. much better I was impressed by this young couple — she is 25, he is 33 — because he was willing to give women the opportunity to enter a non-traditional field and she was willing to take advantage of it.

I also discovered how Mrs. M. became involved in construction work.

"When we were married my husband was involved in contracting. At that time he paid someone to help him do the electrical wiring. I offered to help him, with the idea that I would have the opportunity to learn something new and it would mean added income for our home," explained Mrs. M.

"I am now able to lay the electrical conduit and install boxes, switches, outlets and lamp holders. Along the way I acquired other skills. I am able to do some plumbing, I can mix mortar and concrete, and I have plastered the walls in our new home."

Mrs. M. says her male co-workers do not harass her, nevertheless problems do exist for her.

"The real problem comes from the women, young women in particular. They explained that they would not degrade themselves by painting or digging, doing the work on a construction site. They think of it as menial and as being man's work. On the other hand, two old women have offered words of encouragement saying 'Show them, show the men it can be done, that women can do that



type of work.

Mr. M., who has employed as many as five women on the construction site has no qualms about women working in his field!

"Most women shy away from construction type of work because they think it is difficult," he observes. "I would encourage women to try it, to see how it is; there are already women who have entered the field. I have seen women in

agriculture carrying three bunches of bananas; construction work is lighter than this.

"I have been accused of hiring women because their labour is cheaper than men's labour. Wages should depend on production and not on sex. A young woman who works with me and pulls her own weight, sometimes earns more than her male co-workers. I find women more cooperative to work with than men.

"Some women like construction work because they are able to help themselves later. For example, building their own home."

In fact, it was the sight of a woman building her own home that inspired him to hire women.

Mr. M. is of the opinion that before women become fully accepted in the construction and other non-traditional fields, there will have to be a change in attitude — of the society, women themselves and male employers.

"It is ironical that the majority of men who are in a position to hire female labour and enjoy seeing women labour and doing non-traditional work, are the same ones who would hesitate to give a woman a job in the field. Male workers, on the other hand, need to look at the female workers as a counterpart and not just as a sex object."

Martina Mathurin is senior community development officer, Ministry of Community Development, St. Lucia.

Sexual Harassment on the job

TRADE-UNIONIST, SHANNON HALL, SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON THIS CONTROVERSY.

Having been a flight attendant for the last 10 years, I find sexual harassment in the workplace a very important issue. The image of the sexy, young flight attendant who is willing to do anything to keep her passengers happy is one which has been carefully nurtured by airline management in an effort to increase business.

In Canada, our union has been successful in negotiating sexual discrimination out of our agreement; female flight attendants no longer have to retire upon marriage, or on reaching age 31; we can operate as pursers and we can fly while pregnant. However, the union has had little success in changing our public image and the incidence of sexual harassment aboard aircraft has increased dramatically in the past few years.

Since coming to the Caribbean several months ago as a project planner on secondment to the Caribbean Congress of Labour, I have heard enough about cases to convince me that sexual harassment in the workplace is as much a problem here as it is in Canada.



The right to work in a healthy, safe environment, free from discrimination, is a basic right trade unions attempt to achieve everywhere.

With more women participating in the labour force new emphasis is being placed on the rights of working women. We are demanding, and in some cases receiving, equal pay for work of equal value; equal access to education, training, and employment opportunities; and, increased social infrastructures to meet the needs of working mothers.

Sexual harassment is another area which demands immediate attention.

Sexual harassment is humiliating and degrading. It may take the form of suggestive remarks, inappropriate or unwanted touching, leering, demands for sexual favours, and sexual assault. It may come from supervisors, co-workers, or even fellow union members. The frustration it produces can result in stress, anxiety, decreased productivity, and absenteeism.

There are few statistics available on the

incidence of sexual harassment, because most victims do not come forward with the facts either because they fear reprisals from their employers or they are ashamed and embarrassed by its occurrence.

Thus, the first step we must take to protect ourselves from sexual harassment is to admit it exists and determine to what extent by encouraging each other to talk about our experiences. Promoting discussion on the issue must sooner or later lead to action.

The ideal solution to the problem is labour legislation which protects all workers, organized and unorganized, from sexual harassment. This will require collective action on the part of women, and our unions will be instrumental in forcing our governments to react.

Our next task, then, is to convince our unions and employers to negotiate separate clauses on sexual harassment into collective agreements. In response to the members' concern many unions, particularly those with a high percentage of female members, are negotiating clauses such as:

- The union and the employer recognise the right of employees to work in an environment free from sexual harassment, and the employer undertakes to discipline any person employed by the employer and engaged in the sexual harassment of another employee;
- Sexual harassment shall be defined as: inappropriate touching, including touching which is expressed to be unwanted; suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse with a sexual connotation; compromising invitations; repeated or persistent leering at a person's body; demands for sexual favours; sexual assault.
- In cases of sexual harassment, the employee being harassed has the right to

discontinue contact with the alleged harasser without incurring any penalty, pending determination of the grievance. In cases where sexual harassment may result in the transfer of an employee, where possible it shall be the harasser who is transferred. The employee who is harassed will not be transferred against her will.

- An employee may initiate a grievance under this clause at any step of the grievance procedure. Grievances under this clause will be handled with all possible confidentiality and dispatch.
- An alleged offender under this clause shall be entitled: to be given notice of the substance of a grievance under this clause; and, to be given notice of and to attend, participate in, and be represented at any arbitration hearing which is held as a grievance under this clause.
- An arbitrator, hearing a grievance under this clause, shall have authority to: dismiss the grievance; determine the appropriate level of discipline; and, make such further order as may be necessary to provide a final and conclusive settlement of the grievance.
- An alleged offender under this clause shall not be entitled to contest disciplinary action taken by the employer which is consistent with the award of the arbitrator.

As more unions take on the problem of sexual harassment as a bargaining issue, the need for legislation will become increasingly evident. It is a problem we should not hide any longer. We must "fight that our pride, our self-respect, our dignity may not be sacrificed in the future as they have been in the past." (Christabel Pankhurst: 1911)

Shannon Hall is on the staff of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Myths and Facts about ... **WOMEN AND WORK**

MYTH: Women are not primary wage earners.

FACT: Women's earnings are usually considered as a mere supplement of family income. The extent to which women are family bread-winners is rarely appreciated in both developed and developing countries. In 1972,

264,000 families in Egypt depended upon women's earnings. The 1960 Kenyan census showed 525,000 rural households headed by women; 400,000 of them had male heads of household living in towns. In the United States, 13 per cent of all families are headed by women.

PROFILE

Clotil Walcott

Agitator for Working Women's Rights

Clotil Walcott spends her day divided between doing her job and vigilantly protecting the rights of her sister co-workers at the poultry processing plant where they work.

At the Canning's Poultry Processing Plant in Arima, Trinidad, Clotil's job involves clipping chicken claws or doing any of the other tasks that may be considered "woman's" work.

"We must get job classification for women working in food processing plants in this country," she argues. "Because the jobs of the women working in the plant are not classified, they can be shunted from section to section to do whatever is assigned to them for the day. It's not so with the men."

The men's jobs are classified and they are not expected to do anything other than what is in their job description.

Clotil has been fighting this type of discrimination since 1965 — a fight which led to the formation of the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of which she is president general.

"These men have to listen to us," she says. "You know what will happen to this country if we withdraw our labour? The whole country come to a standstill; so they must listen to us."

Her experiences as a shop steward in a male-dominated union are the key to her keen insight into the specific problems of inequality between the sexes on the job. These same experiences convinced her to exclude male participation from NUDE.

"We cannot allow the men to decide for us any longer," she says. "We have to decide what we want and where we are going, then sit down and decide what society we want. They must have respect for the work we do."

Clotil is a busy woman whose day generally starts around 4 a.m. when she is awakened by one of her daughters.

Her manner softens when she talks about her two daughters and the tremendous help they are to her. Between the three of them breakfast

and lunch materialize, and everyone — including Clotil's grandchildren — leaves home by 6 a.m.

Home is Arima, where Clotil is well-known and appreciated particularly by the women of her neighbourhood. It as if they sense that she is a different woman — one who has a deep insight into their problems and their struggles, who is on their side and is, perhaps, the only one capable of articulating their problems and finding solutions.

A strong, capable woman of 54, Clotil is never too busy to see any of the many women who constantly knock at her door to ask her assistance in solving their problems. She devotes almost all of her time to helping them, armed with the knowledge she has acquired through hard work and dedication, and her interest in the plight of working-class women in the society.

Clotil is home most days by 6 p.m. when, after supper, the women begin to arrive. Then, she forgets her hard and busy day, forgets that she has hardly finished her supper and has not yet been able to put her feet up, as she talks, helps and advises.

After she has seen the last of the women Clotil leaves home again, maybe to attend a meeting at which her inexhaustible services are required for she is in the process of mobilising women and educating them about their rights as workers.

She returns home around midnight where her bed is waiting and another busy day comes to an end.

Clotil Walcott is convinced that the work she has done and is still doing — "The struggle has only just begun," she says — is exclusively a result of her mother's struggles to keep body, soul and children together after the death of Clotil's father.

Clotil struggles and fights for recognition of the rights of working-class women because, says she, "I cannot allow my mother's struggle to go down the drain."

This article has been edited from "A Day in the Life of Clotil Walcott" which appeared in the Trinidad Express.

Regional Trade Union Project Marches On

The Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions, sponsored by the Inter-American Foundation and the University of the West Indies, is now in its second year.

Emphasis in this phase will be on widening the Project's scope of influence by reaching out to the wider community, moving towards the target of making contact with some 2,000 women in the regional trade union movement.

This target is set to be reached by the time the Project ends in 1984 and is one of the objectives laid down when the Project was formulated, following a 1979 seminar for women in the Caribbean trade union movement.

That seminar, which was sponsored by the International Labour Organisation, the Danish International Development Agency and the Caribbean Congress of Labour, identified the need for leadership training among women in the movement and mandated a move to find the process for such training.

Establishment of the Project resulted from that decision.

Since its launching early in 1982, the Project has brought together some 30 women from 14 territories in regional seminars in Jamaica, the Bahamas, St. Kitts and Trinidad.

The seminars focussed on the upgrading of skills in areas such as trade union knowledge, personal development, organization and planning methods, and the understanding of women in development issues, particularly as they relate to the Caribbean.

The programme was carried out through lectures and workshops conducted by specialist lecturers and consultants, by group discussion and project work, and by the exchange of ideas with community leaders in the various locations.

Two newsletters were produced and circulated to build up links within the group and affiliated organizations, and work was begun on

a series of resource handbooks to assist in the ongoing training process.

The schedule for this year calls for two regional seminars, one of which has already taken place in Trinidad. The other is to be held in Jamaica in October.

Phasing in of national seminars has also begun and will continue, moving into a programme of local seminars, to extend the scope of influence.

National seminars are organized by the persons trained in the regional seminars, working with other trade union women in their countries. Local seminars will involve the women trained at the national seminars, reaching out to a wider group.

In her assessment of the first year, Dr. Phyllis MacPherson-Russell of the Human Resources Development Unit of the UWI Extra-Mural Department, said:

"The first year of the Project was a process of preparing for outreach by confidence-building and by refining the organizational techniques and skills. We have learnt by doing, because experience gives a better base."

Chief consultant to the Project, Dr. MacPherson-Russell has been responsible for organization and planning.

Miss Marva Phillips, Project co-ordinator, commented:

"We have achieved far more than I expected. When we started we recognised that a big task was ahead and we expected to work hard. We have done so and I can see where we are well on our way to meeting our objectives.

"Solid relationships have been built among the women in the Project and we have all witnessed great personal growth. We have established some strong links and all of us have a greater awareness of what is happening not only in the trade union movement, but within the region as a whole."

Extracted from the Newsletter of the Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions, Vol. 2 No. 1, April 1983.

Jamaica: Sistren SPOTLIGHTS

Women's Work



Everyday we wake up
It's the same condition
Long time we've been working
Frustration remaining
This could never be our destiny
Life must have something else in it
For ALL OF WE!

The dust will remain in the corner
Till the broom sweeps it away
So we gonna
Sweep on
Sweep on
Sweep out poverty!
Sweep out slavery!

These words introduce the play **Domestick**, a production of the SISTREN Theatre Collective of Jamaica — the only working-class women's theatre group in the Caribbean.

"**Domestick** is a tribute to women's work," SISTREN says of the play. "It began with attempts to answer questions like: Why is domestic work so undervalued? Who benefits most from child care and housekeeping? How does women's position in the house affect other problems of women?"

"In Jamaica, 40 per cent of women are unemployed. That is, they don't work outside the home. To these women, as well as to their sisters who work out, fall the tasks of preparing food, cooking it; looking after children, the old, the ill; mopping, tidying, sweeping, catching up fires, carrying water, washing, ironing, sweeping, mending, washing up.

"This women's work, when it is done outside the home, is universally badly paid, low status work. Most Jamaican women earn less than U.S.\$15 per week."

Since its formation in 1977, SISTREN has consistently dramatized the issues around women's work.

At the annual Workers' Week celebrations in Jamaica, in 1977, they performed **Downpression Get a Blow** dealing with women in a garment factory forming a union and achieving their demands. This was also their first work.

QPH, performed in 1981, also focuses on domestic workers. It is about three women who

spent some of their strongest years in domestic labour and, by chance, meet during their last years in an almshouse.

"This production is dedicated to all the women who have struggled and are still struggling for survival against all odds. It's for those women who struggle for independence in spite of being oppressed. This play attempts to make their names 'live for evermore.'"

In **The Story of Iris Armstrong and the Sugar Estate** SISTREN illustrates how one woman fought for a decent life as a sugar worker.

The play is based on the true story of a woman who lived and worked in Jamaica's sugar belt for years as a "common" labourer. She was appointed the only female supervisor on one estate, but soon discovered that she was being paid less than the men in spite of the equal pay law. She took up her case with the union, only to experience other problems.

"In Clarendon where we did our research (for the play) we found virtually no female supervisors, and no women workers involved in the mechanized process of production. The best organized labourers, the cutters, are all men.

"Women's work on the sugar belt involves planting cane, weeding and fertilizing (all manual work). Women field workers earn the lowest wages on the estate. Predictably, over the years, fewer and fewer women are being employed in sugar, one of the major industries of the island. Many of the women who do work on the estate are contract workers, that is, they are temporary workers employed for the crop without the right to join the union or the right to benefits."

All of SISTREN's work is based on their experience and the collective experiences of women.

"SISTREN is made up of women whose experience is a living testimony to the meaning of oppression. This experience has taught us the need to struggle not only at the individual level, but to promote the collective resistance of all women to the reality of oppression.

"Through our work we try to raise the consciousness of women and society."

JAMAICA:

SEMINAR ON WOMAN AND WORK

"Training and Employment of Women" was the theme of a four-day seminar which took place in Jamaica, in May.

It was sponsored jointly by the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Jamaica Women's Bureau and the Joint Trade Unions Research Development Centre.

The seminar sought to examine current projects and programmes for the training and employment of women; critical points of the under- and unemployment situation in the participating countries; and, training strategies in these same countries designed for creating employment opportunities for women.

Topics dealt with included: Country statements on training programmes for women; services and resources within the community; use of indigenous material and waste for generating non-traditional means of employment; the family as an economic unit; and, introduction to project design.

Trainers and trainees from seven Caribbean countries participated in the seminar, with observers from the CARICOM Secretariat and WAND, and resource persons from the Jamaica Women's Bureau, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture and the Organisation of American States.

Participants developed project proposals to address the training and employment needs of women and, on return to their respective agencies, were expected to finalize these proposals for submission to the OAS.

The seminar, which was held at the Social Welfare Training Centre of the UWI, Mona, was opened by Princess Lawes, Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Affairs.

TRINIDAD:

DOMESTIC WORKERS' UNION

The National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) in Trinidad is run solely by women.

Headed by president general, Clotil Walcott, NUDE seeks to organize domestic workers and to improve the terms and conditions of their employment.

Formerly a branch of the Union of Ship Builders, Ship Repairers and Allied Workers, NUDE was officially registered as a trade union last December.

Other members of its executive are: Catherine Le Blanc, internal auditor; Marlene Orr, secretary; Salisha Hosein, treasurer; Michele McQueen, director industrial relations; and, Pearl Walcott, trustee.

GUYANA:

LABOUR LAWS UNDER SCRUTINY

The Conference on the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana (CASWIG) is examining that country's labour laws as they relate to domestic workers and hotel and restaurant employees.

CASWIG's affiliates are expected to study the laws and put forward proposals to the umbrella organization.

Meanwhile, CASWIG is continuing its training programmes for women. The organization claims that, over the past two years, it has trained more than 800 women in areas such as upholstery and book-binding, and for employment in the security services. It has also set up a project where 10 women are employed to make household linen.

The organization has also been holding seminars in project planning and preparation to provide women with the basic skills needed for self-employment.

TRINIDAD:

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE WORK HARD, EARN LITTLE

A survey of rural women in agriculture in Trinidad has demonstrated the need to introduce these women to other income-generating activities.

The survey revealed that women involved in laborious agricultural tasks were still heavily dependent on members of their household to supplement their incomes.

The survey was carried out in 1982 by the Research and Planning Division of the Ministry of Labour, at the request of the National Commission on the Status of Women. It is still being assessed.

As a result of the survey's initial findings, the Commission is planning to hire an agency to conduct workshops on vegetable and fruit preservation, with due regard being paid to nutrition, quality control, packaging, marketing of products and the use of solar dryers.

The Commission's Rural Women Committee has also been making recommendations for rendering women's lot less burdensome.

In one area the need for taxpayer assistance for both the women workers and their union

representatives was identified, and the Commission's intervention led to the implementation of a taxpayer assistance training programme.

In the area of handicrafts, the Commission is requesting that research be carried out into the processing of the raw material with the emphasis on quality control and pliability.

It is expected that such research could result in tasks being made less tedious, and in end products which are not only satisfying and beautiful, but a reliable source of income.

Myths and Facts about ...

WOMEN AND WORK

MYTH: Women are unreliable employees.

FACT: Women are often accused of excessive absenteeism and a high degree of turnover. But a number of countries have found that there is very little difference between men and women in this respect. For example, Canada in 1972, the figures show that absenteeism due to illness was not significantly different between the sexes. It was found that, for the same week, 1.72 per cent men and 1.92 per cent women, both full-time workers, were absent due to illness.

MYTH: Women are less capable than men in scientific or technical work.

FACT: More and more women are taking up work in scientific or technical fields. For example, in the USSR in 1977, among specialists with higher qualifications, 59 per cent were women; 60 per cent of economists and also half of all engineers in industry were women.

MYTH: Women take away jobs from men.

FACT: Women and men are usually employed in different jobs. For example, in

1974 in Canada, there was an average of 400,000 unemployed men, the vast majority of them not in the overwhelming female-dominated professions such as nursing and teaching. If women had stayed at home, it was estimated that there would still be 300,000 unfilled vacancies since qualified men in these jobs would not be available.

MYTH: Women are not qualified for many jobs.

FACT: There is no occupation listed in the census of many countries which does not employ some women. While the majority of the professional occupants are regarded as a special preserve of one sex or another, the division is traditional rather than functional. The hardest struggle in the long drawn-out campaign for genuine equality at work between the sexes is yet to be won on the job segregation front . . . As an ILO study puts it, the root cause of wage inequalities today lies "above all in the existence of a dual labour market which employs men and women in different non-interchangeable jobs."

Taken from the Newsletter of the Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions, Volume 2, No. 2.

...NEWS FROM WAND...

WAND involved in search for women's history

WAND is administering the Caribbean end of a research project which aims to identify, examine and document women's socio-economic contribution to their societies from a historical perspective.

It is part of a larger project being co-ordinated by the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) which is based at the Hague, Netherlands.

Entitled "Women's Movements, Organizations and Strategies in a Historical Perspective, with Special Reference to Colonial and Contemporary Societies", the ISS project involves women's institutions in Mexico, Peru, India, Indonesia, Somalia and Sudan.

The Caribbean sub-project covers three countries — Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago — each one concentrating on a particular aspect of the problem and using a particular method of research and action.

In St. Vincent, the women involved in the Integrated Rural Development Project at Rose Hall will study and write their own social history. The SISTREN Theatre Collective in Jamaica will feed back their research into their productions and published docu-dramas. And, work is being carried out in Trinidad and Tobago through oral history interviews and the use of archival and library material.

In July, researchers from these countries attended a conference at the ISS where they examined methodologies which could be employed in the project.

The material gained from the project will be disseminated in pamphlets, tapes, slide-shows and other popular education media. It will be used to strengthen the building up of an institutional network, to further existing women's organizations, and to support grass roots movements concerned with women and development.

The project is expected to end in 1985.

Workshop links practitioners with the community

Twenty participants from throughout the Caribbean, and representatives of St. Lucia community groups, recently ended a process of learning and sharing creative new methods of popular education.

The group, comprising Caribbean people skilled in theatre, radio, drama, publications, puppet shows and other cultural and non-formal education techniques, came together in St. Lucia at a 10-day workshop sponsored by WAND.

During the workshop, participants demonstrated skills used for non-formal education in their home communities, and shared these skills with other members of the workshop. After an initial three-day learning exercise, the participants were divided into three groups which then resided in local communities and put into practise the techniques of popular education experienced in the workshop.

Residents in Babbonneau, La Resource and Mon Repos, which hosted the participants, learned techniques for raising and exploring issues crucial to the development and welfare of their communities. A presentation of the methods was given by community groups in all three areas, and audience participation and discussion centred on solving problems which had previously disturbed or divided the communities.

The workshop is the second half of WAND's "Through Culture to Consciousness" project which started with a CARIFESTA symposium on Women and Culture in Barbados, in 1981.

It is planned that the audio-visual and published documentation of the St. Lucia workshop will be made available to all persons interested in non-formal education in the Caribbean.

The workshop, organized by a local committee, was officially opened by Ruth Lawrence, Permanent Secretary in St. Lucia's Ministry of Community Development, who deputized for the Minister.

NEWS FROM CARIWA

CARIWA's membership may soon be extended to include Anguilla, Curacao, Saba and St. Maarten. This proposal is among a number of plans to be considered by the organization at its executive meeting in October.

The meeting will hear progress reports on the Shirley Field-Ridley Scholarship and the CARIWA Secretariat which is to be sited in Antigua.

Other plans include the election of a deputy president and the standardisation of agricultural projects for all territories. The structure of the seventh biennial conference, to be held in St. Maarten, will also be decided on.

In other news of the organization . . . two former presidents were recently honoured by their respective countries. Vesta Patrick of Trinidad was recognised for her outstanding activity in social and women's organizations, while Guyana's Olga Byrne was honoured for her contribution to community work.



Dame Dr. Doris Johnson died June 21, 1983, in her native Bahamas.

An educator who became president of the Bahamas Senate, Dr. Johnson was dedicated to promoting the greater involvement of women in Caribbean affairs.

She was president of the National Women's Organization of the Bahamas and a member of the executive committee of the Caribbean Women's Association (CARIWA). Up to the time of her death she was vice-president of CARIWA for the Bahamas.

WAND joins with the women of the Caribbean community in mourning her death and extending sympathy to her family.

CCW REPORT

The **Antigua Sub-Region** of the CCW is continuing its "Women in Industry" programme in St. Vincent with seminars on women in agriculture.

Two seminars have already been held. A final seminar later this year is expected to bring together representatives from among participants at the previous seminars and follow-up exercises.

The objective of the seminars is to make women workers understand the importance of their labour to society and to facilitate worker unity among women.

In the **Jamaica Sub-Region** the CCW has been holding workshops on peace, in rural areas.

The subjects discussed at the workshops were "Peace and the struggle for survival," and "Apartheid — an understanding of the South African situation, and a response."

Participants were drawn from various religious denominations. Their selection was based on: the need for offering education to church women; the need to expose women to other methods of education; and the need to offer an opportunity to discuss topical issues.

In co-operation with the Home and Family Life Commission of the Jamaica Council of Churches, the CCW also organized a one-day seminar for fifth formers from high, secondary and technical schools in Kingston. The theme was "Deviant behaviour problems."

MILESTONES

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

Dr. Sheila Dorothy King has been appointed Professor of Microbiology at the U.W.I., thus becoming the first woman to hold this post and the second woman in the history of the U.W.I. to achieve the title of "professor."

Dr. King is Head of the Department of Microbiology at the Mona Campus in Jamaica, a position she has held since 1973.

INFOCUS

ANGUILLA: New Executive

The Anguilla National Council of Women has a new executive.

The newly elected members are: Miriam Gumbs, president; Gloria Kelsick, vice-president; Rose Connor, treasurer; Margaret Mitchell, secretary; Bernadine Huliger, assistant secretary; and, Viola Connor, Bernice Fahie, Hildred Richardson and Rowena Carty — members.

Lana Connor remains as government liaison officer.

The Council, the newest women's umbrella organization in the English-speaking Caribbean, consists of 15 member groups.

BELIZE: Peace Conference in the offing

The Belize Organization for Women and Development is planning a conference on women and peace, to be held in November. The conference will be part of a general convention on peace, being organized by the Belize Christian Council.

In the meantime, the organization continues its work throughout the country. A group of its members in the Southern District have started a farming project to grow cash crops, while others are involved in Popular Theatre.

GUYANA: WPO is 30 years old

The Women's Progressive Organization (WPO) in Guyana celebrated its 30th anniversary in May.

The WPO was founded on May 27, 1953 to fill the need for an organization of workers at the economic and political levels.

In 1982 at the World Congress of Women the organization was elected to the Bureau of the Women's International Democratic Federation which is based in East Germany.

In further news of the WPO, founding member and current president, Janet Jagan, was recently paid tribute by the Association of Concerned Guyanese of Canada. The occasion was the launching of the Association's women's section in Toronto.

The Association complimented Mrs. Jagan on the part she had played in the history of Guyana's politics, and acknowledged her role as chief pioneer of the WPO.

Meanwhile, the WPO will hold its 9th Congress from November 5-6 this year.

GUYANA: Plans for new women's organization

In Guyana also, . . . the Working Peoples' Alliance (WPA) has said it is moving to form a multi-racial mass organization of women.

In a CANA report from Georgetown, WPA member, Bonita Harris, said formation of the organization was in keeping with a resolution unanimously passed at a recent multi-racial conference of 102 women from throughout Guyana.

Theme of the conference was "Women in struggle for bread and justice."

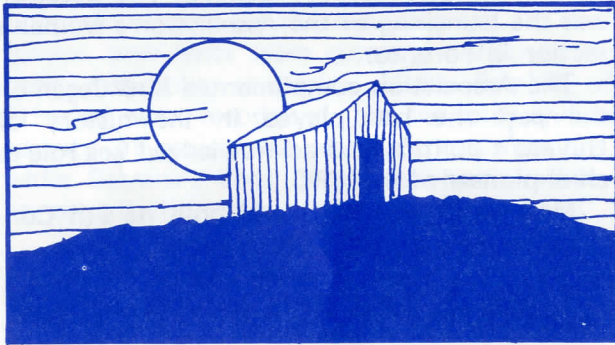
The conference, identifying hunger as the most critical problem facing the workers and the one which was making the lives of working women unbearably oppressive, also resolved to form working groups of women throughout the country to join in the fight for the lifting of the ban on essential foods.

SOUTH AFRICA Women's Day

South Africa Women's Day is celebrated on August 9 to mark the anniversary of the day in 1956 when 20,000 Black women demonstrated against the pass laws of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

These laws are aimed at directing and controlling Black migrant workers. Without a job the workers cannot get a pass, and without a pass they are likely to be jailed. Hundreds of women and men have been jailed throughout the years for passively resisting these laws.

It was the pass law system which initiated the Sharpeville demonstration and massacre in March 1960.



Sisters in the struggle

Winnie Mandela — Black Nationalist and founder of the (now banned) Black Parents Association. Banned six years ago by the South African authorities to a small town, 200 miles outside of Johannesburg and restricted to her house at nights and on weekends. Also prohibited from meeting more than one person at a time, and from being quoted in South Africa.

Dorothy Nyembe — a member of the African National Congress. The longest serving woman political prisoner in South Africa. Sentenced under the Terrorism Act in 1969 to 15 years in prison. She led the Natal contingent of women in the mass demonstration against the pass laws. Organized and led women in protesting against major oppressive laws in South Africa.

*The above information is extracted from Outwrite
No. 1 March 1982*

POEM

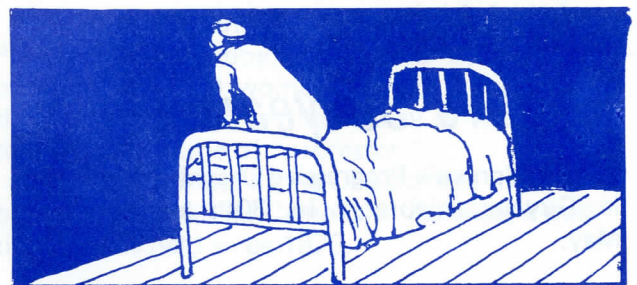
Black South African poet and playwright, Gladys Thomas, describes the difference in experiences for wife and mother, between a black woman and a white woman living under apartheid.

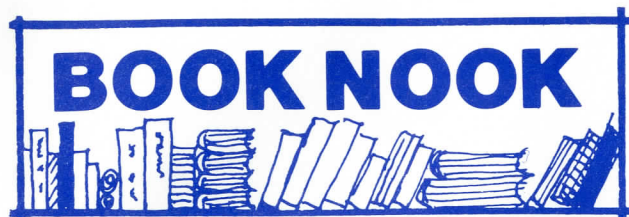
"Leave Me Alone"

by

Gladys Thomas

I tear my hungry babe from my breast
To come and care for yours
Yours grow up fine
But oh God, not mine.
From Schools and beach yours I fetch
And wonder if school mine did reach
Your man comes home at night
A welcome and delight
Wine glass in hand
Red chair in front of fire bright
To bed you go and make love
My bed is empty and cold
For all my energy is drained away
My man and I too soon feel old.
My man comes home body all pain
From working all day in sun and rain
No woman or son in sight
So out again into the night
On corners he will stand
Wine bottle in hand.
Your son tucked up in bed
Your man in front of fire red
You lay in wait for him in bed
My man still not at home
My son in streets still roam.
Can you still look me in the eye
And ask me what is wrong
After you've stripped me to the bone
You win and take everything I own
And still you want my home
And what have I done that you won't leave me
alone?





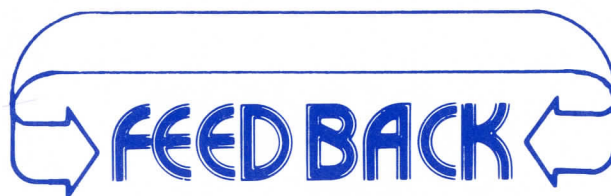
Women and Work by Sheila Lewenhak, aims to set the record straight on women's economic contribution to human development, by showing that women throughout history have always worked. She emphasizes the value of women's work within their families and the fact that, until recent historical times, their family's livelihood has depended on women rather than on men. She stresses the need to establish an economic value for women's work for their families. The book does not limit itself to the experience of women in Europe and high technology countries, but takes examples from different economies in all five continents. It illustrates the links between the developing women's rights movements in different parts of the world. Published by Fontana, September 1980.

Women, Work and Development is a forthcoming publication in the **Women in the Caribbean** series of discussion papers published by the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the U.W.I. The work features two papers, "Women, Work and Development" by Margaret Gill and, "Indicators of Women and Development" by Dr. Joycelin Massiah with an introduction by Pat Anderson.

Unpaid work in the household: A review of economic evaluation methods.

Luisella Goldschmidt-Clermont. Examines the various economic approaches used to evaluate unpaid work in the household. Analyses the strengths and weaknesses of each method, particularly in relation to social values and labour market conditions, and suggests further lines of research in this area. This monograph is part of the **Women, Work and Development** series published by the International Labour Organization and may be obtained from the ILO Office, P.O. Box 1201, Port of Spain, Trinidad or ILO Publications, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.

Women at Work is the newsbulletin of the ILO Office for Women Workers' Questions. It shares information on trends and developments concerning women workers as well as ILO activities, ideas, news, events and programmes concerning women all over the world. Available from the ILO Office, P.O. Box 1201, Port of Spain, Trinidad or ILO Publications, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.



The Newsletter for March is most refreshing. I intend to share some of these articles with our preschool parents as part of our Parent Education Programme.

Winifred Peters
Co-ordinator UNICEF and
Ministry of Education, Preschool and
Day Care Project, Antigua.

I have received the back issues of **WOMAN SPEAK!** which we have found very interesting and wish to inform you that we are interested in subscribing to the Newsletter.

Joann Taylor
for Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health, Guyana

We would be happy to receive **WOMAN SPEAK!**. We find it not only very interesting and informative, but brimful of ideas through the experience of other organisations. We also like the new format.

Mrs. Ursula McKay
for Executive Committee
National Y.W.C.A. of Trinidad and
Tobago

WOMAN SPEAK! is very interesting and informative.

Rose Marie McDonald
Information Officer
National Research and Development
Foundation, St. Lucia

NEXT ISSUE ...

The next issue of **WOMAN SPEAK!** will be out in September/October.

Under the theme, **Women and Media**, this issue will look at how women are presented in the media, and the status of women actually working in the media. It will also discuss the question of alternative media systems for women.

Our regular features and columns will also be included.

