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C A F R A NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION.



CAFRA NEWS.

CAFRA News is the quarterly newsletter and primary networking tool of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA).

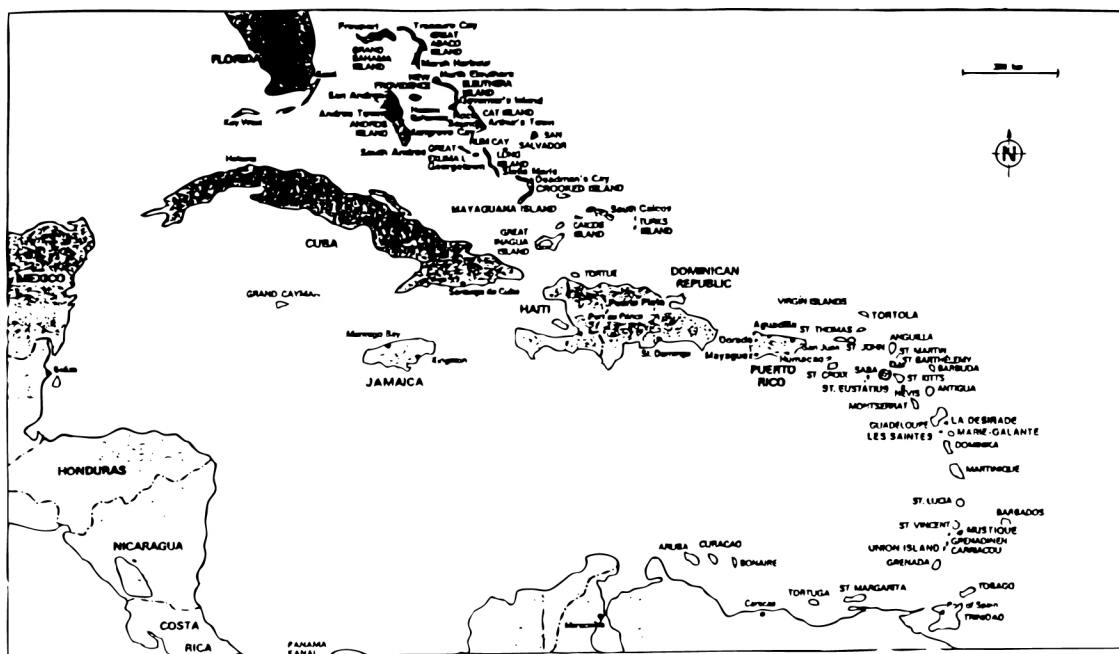
Its main purposes are to:

- Inform members and other interested persons about the activities and programmes of the association;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate on key issues of concern to women in the region;
- Promote the sharing of experiences and foster links among individual feminists, activists and women's organisations;

- Assist in breaking down language barriers in the region
- Stimulate women's creative expression; and
- Contribute to the development of the women's movement regionally and internationally.

We welcome letters, articles, poems, reviews, opinions and artwork for editorial evaluation and selection. The newsletter committee has a final right to edit content and to reject material not appropriate for publication, e.g. that does not further the aims and objectives of CAFRA and promote a spirit of sisterhood; or that is racist, sexist or "maternalist". Individual authors and reviewers are solely responsible for views and opinions expressed in published articles.

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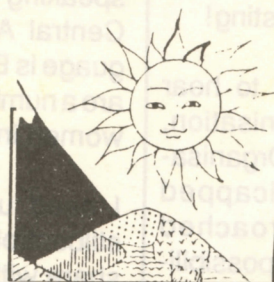
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Editor's Note

F eedback

letters

This double issue of *CAFRA News* brings a variety of conference reports and viewpoints on the environment, health, women's rights, women's groups, and the activities of CAFRA members.

Our feature article is an interview with Olga Renoire of **Haiti (p.3)**, giving us a women's perspective, of the politics and survival strategies of Haitian people.

We were intrigued by the **opposing viewpoints** of two Third World feminists on the relevance of feminism (**p.10 & 12**), which we are reprinting from *Panoscope*. We would love to hear readers' opinions on this.

Two **conferences** of historic significance took place this year, the highly successful **Third All-Island Conference of Jamaican Women (p.23)**, which attracted over 700 women from all walks of life on any one day, and the **First Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference (p. 21)** in the Dominican Republic, July, 1992; more news of this conference in our next issue.

In this issue I say good-bye as editor of *CAFRA News*. I leave to take up a new job in the field of education, leaving the newsletter in the capable hands of the editorial team.

A special thank you for all the support I received in this challenging stint as Editor.

In sisterhood, Rowena.

Publishing Handbook

Match International Centre,
Ontario,
Canada.

Many thanks for the enclosed copies of the "Publishing Handbook for Caribbean Women Writers". The section on "Making Time to Write" is especially important as it addresses the constant tension peculiar to women between the demands of reproductive and productive work. I read recently that illness is no less frequent in homes that are kept spotlessly clean than in those that get "a lick and a promise" except for allergy attacks in women brought on by too frequent bouts of dusting!

You may be interested to hear that a Canadian organisation, Coalition of Provincial Organisations of the Handicapped (COPHO), has approached MATCH to investigate possibilities of collaboration on an anthology of poetry written by disabled women from the South. Just what form this collaboration will take has not yet been defined but it was interesting to see that another group was identifying poetry as a means of validating women's experience. I have sent a copy of

the handbook to the COPOH.

*In sisterhood,
Cynthia King,
Programme Officer*

Breast is best league

Dear Friends,

I am Eva Middleton, executive director of Breast is Best League. I am a founder of a women's organization called Breast is Best League. Our objective is to improve maternal and infant nutrition in Belize.

I would like to get in touch with women promoting infant and maternal nutrition in the English-speaking Caribbean and also in Central America. Our first language is English. However, there are a number of Spanish-speaking women in our organization.

I need updated information on stilbestrol and Depo-provera, to share with our 350 volunteers.

*Eva Middleton
Breast is Best League
P.O. Box 1203
Belize City, Belize*

(reprinted from Women's Health Journal, 1/92)



Haiti: a woman's view

Olga Renoire speaks to Joan French

At the recent AWOJA, Third All Island Women's Conference, Jamaica, April 1992, Joan French of the CPDC (Caribbean Policy Development Centre), interviewed Olga Renoire of CRAD, (Centre for Development Research and Action), about Haiti's political situation generally and about Haitian women in particular. CRAD works with women in rural and suburban areas, as well as with mixed organisations. They work in areas of training, education and the economy.

Joan French: Is the work of CRAD particularly from a gender perspective?

Olga Renoire: No, it's more general, but I work particularly with women's issues. I am also a member of a women's organisation called SOFA, Haitian women

in Solidarity. We have branches for rural, urban, and professional women. It is important not to put all women in the same group because the reality of the class structure in Haiti is that while women have many similar problems, they differ according to class, and how women survive economically differs.

SOFA works to raise women's consciousness, and we have worked in many ways against violence of which women are victims, violence at all levels, political, social and domestic. On 7th February, 1991, the day that Aristide took power everybody took to the streets, but as women we used this opportunity to make ourselves known, to speak out against rape, and the fact that the laws punishing rape are not implemented.

Coup, counter coup

J.F. Tell me briefly, what has happened to Haiti since the overthrow of the Duvalier regime?

O.R. The overthrow occurred in February 1986. Many organisations were formed, youth, peasants, women, and other professional organisations, which were not allowed to organise under Duvalier. Naturally a lot of them no longer exist, because of the political instability that presently exists, but some have survived.

Since Duvalier's overthrow a series of coups took place within months of each other, and a number of military junta have ruled. People feared the junta governments because they were known as repressive persons, mercenaries of Duvalier. The last coup before the elections was called the 'small soldiers' coup and it placed a woman, Pascal Truillot in power. After that, the 1990 election which brought Aristide to power was organised.

A people's coup

Aristide's victory was a surprise for the ruling class in Haiti and for the American government, who had a lot to do with organising elections in Haiti. They were expecting that a pro-American candidate, like Bazin, would win, so



R. Templeton



R. Templeton

Aristide's victory was a people's coup. The American government has always been there making decisions for Haiti since the time of the Duvaliers who they dealt with, and people say that the Americans were involved in the massacre of the Haitian people in 1987.

Though many people were involved in organising this election, and campaigning, there was a lot of repression of people. One incident which highlighted this, was the December siege, when a bomb exploded in the suburbs injuring many people. Especially heart-rending was the incident where a 13 year-old girl lost both legs and one arm. I felt they deliberately attacked children, because Aristide works with street children, whom he calls his own. Despite

this, Aristide still pursued the campaign. I have it from a good source that the American Ambassador even asked Aristide on the election day to resign; he told him "don't you see you are losing the election, why don't you resign?"

Meanwhile everybody was on the street voting for Aristide. In one poor suburb in the north of the capital, people waited till midnight for their card to vote.

Our analysis of the election campaign made us believe that the Aristide government would be fragile. Even though Aristide had a popular base, it did not really prepare him to take power, and keep it. Everyone felt he would be eventually overthrown but we didn't expect it to happen so early, seven months after he was voted in.

On January 6th right after Aristide won the election, there was an attempted coup, but people were on the streets and the coup failed. But the second time, on September 13th, the military got on the streets first, and they killed a lot of people. They killed more than 2000 people. This prevented people from going out onto the

streets in their masses, as people came out they were shooting at them.

It was terrible. They were actually hunting out people and killing them, they were searching houses for people who they felt collaborated with Aristide, not letting people enter hospitals, to help the victims.

Clean up campaigns

J.F. Presently the American government is giving the impression that it is very pro Aristide and that it would like Aristide to return. How do you see that?

O.R. Now, it seems that the Americans are for the return of Aristide, but they can't have any other position, since they claim that elections are the symbol of democracy, and this election was democratically carried out, in the way that they define democracy. Their observers, including the OAS were there, and they witnessed the voting. The Haitian coup after a democratic election is a bad example for encouraging democracy in Latin America which has a history of military coups. Bush has personally said that he would support the return of Aristide, but while the negotiations for the return of Aristide were taking place, they showed conflicting dispositions. They were lobbying actively for a 'clean up' before a possible return of Aristide.

the country. They don't pay any taxes, they export goods without paying duties and tariffs, so of course they would never want reform. I think that is why there is protest about cutting the civil service. The way Haiti is now, satisfies all their needs and allows them to gain profits from it.

Surely the Aristide government made mistakes, but clearly a lot of people voted for change. The election was like a social liberation but people had not gone further and analysed if they just wanted reform or fundamental change.

Quite a number of people wanted to contribute to this government, but the first step needed was change for *country* first, change which was structured. The country no longer operates as if in the interest of *one people*. The capital has only one state hospital which has nothing; a patient has to buy his own alcohol and his needles. There are no universities, as we know universities in

other countries, no educational materials to work with, teachers have no books, no chalk and the economical situation is getting worse every day.

J.F. You are saying that because of the sudden way in which democracy came, people were not yet prepared, in terms of their structures, for participation, but what about the structures for government that already existed? Isn't there an Assembly and a judiciary? How did Aristide find it possible to work with the existing state structures? Who were those controlled by?

O.R. That's the problem. There was no Assembly because Duvalier shut up everything a long time ago. There was a state judiciary, but the people in them were Duvalierists and corrupted, which is why as I said before, they had to clean up public administration. When Aristide was voted in, the assembly had many opportunists and no spaces were created for trusted people in the Assembly.

The then president of the Chamber of the Assembly formed an alliance for the election with the pro-American candidate Bazin, and these people formed the majority of the Assembly. The military's power comes through arms, and they are supported by the ruling class. A lot of people put a lot of money into the coup last September, because they were against Aristide's return. Under Aristide these people would now have to pay taxes. The American plan for Latin America and the Caribbean is to make these countries more dependant, through the application of Neo-Duvalerism in the form of structural adjustment policies. They know with this type of government it would have been easy to reach their goal, so that's why I think they were supporting the coup, and the Macoutes: they did nothing to stop them.

J.F. So Aristide would have found it difficult to work with those existing structures. He needed to change existing structures, by defining other ways for popular participation that would allow

Haiti's ragtag poor stand by their man as embargo bites

by Hugh O'Shaughnessy,

MIRAGOANE: TRADE is at an extreme low level this week.

and greatly disappointed president whom they overthrew on September 30. Trade is drying up. Instead of 15, only four rusty coasters arrived last week. Haitians have no

choice. He pauses lest I have not registered. "He is a cretin... and I have no objection to being

Trade embargo

only relief for the ragtag city is that large numbers of Haitians have fled to the hills where food is easier to find and where it is easier, to escape the guns of

Haitian Army

At the petrol pumps where people have been queuing for four or five hours a day, tempers have

OAS man hits media's treatment of Haiti boat people

ROSEAU, Cap-Haitien — Negative portrayals of the Haitian people in the media are hampering international efforts to help them, says a senior OAS official.

and there is a great deal of misunderstanding. Christopher Thomas, OAS assistant secretary for Caribbean affairs, said media claims that 70 percent of the boat people are criminals.

AIDS virus and that some practised violence were forcing them to flee. He said that he had seen and read of these reports.

to the terms and conditions under which it receives refugees. An international media portrayal of that kind is not likely to help in the

Haitians have been fleeing their country in hundreds following the September 30 coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the

Thomas, accompanied OAS adviser Dr. Michael Alevy, in visiting a number of Caribbean states bringing regional governments on the OAS policy,

the response of some Caribbean governments to the United States request to accept Haitian refugees has been discouraging. Dominica recently

Thomas said that the OAS role in the crisis was to ensure that the situation was not

file of the Haitian people as a result of the embargo. But there is a continuing disturbance or intervention by the army is related to the present

U.N. agency, Cuba sign accord on Haitian refugees

HAVANA, (Reuters) — A memorandum of cooperation to aid Haitian refugees has been signed by officials of



democratic change. What is the response of people at the popular level? Why has there been no rebellion since the coup?

People's response

O.R. There was no rebellion because people were afraid, and for good reason. The military are highly armed, and they use their arms against the people. If the military has killed more than a thousand people, most have been killed on the streets. We don't know how many people were killed, because people are afraid to talk, to go searching for missing people. People who have been killed have not been put in the hospital morgue. They have been buried away from the city.

I think however that people have put a lot of effort into establishing communication channels. There are small "tracts" circulating which inform people of what is going on, and allows people to express what they feel. The government has had problems with popular movements and doesn't want them. Despite this we recently had Radio Antilles, a Dominican Republic station in operation. It was the only radio station from which we could hear news, and the Dominican government have closed that station down. The fact that alternative communication structures existed is also why they were searching for people. A lot of people had to hide themselves. In

spite of this one morning we woke up and saw posters of Aristide on almost all streets, even where there were police headquarters. A lot of money was distributed to soldiers for them to kill people. I think the money is running out now, so there is less reason to continue the reckless killing.

J.F. I gathered from another Haitian that the overt repression, the killing of people, was beginning to calm down. Only now is the calming of the repression making sense to me, when you speak of it in terms of a clean up campaign, which is supposed to make the military look more acceptable.

O.R. Yes. We also have four radio stations that are working. They are Radio Metropolis, which is the voice of the ruling class; the Catholic radio station which doesn't have a clear position; Radio National, the government's propaganda machinery; and Radio Tropic which gives the news takes chances and lets people from grass-roots organisations speak, or give all the news they can receive. That helps a lot. My centre for instance has pre-recorded programmes which they used, and this contributes to spreading information. Any radio station can use them

J.F. And do they?



Cayenne 1986

O.R. They do sometimes. We have a lot of illegal information sources. There are 3 radio programmes but each of these only covers part of the capital. We have a lot of illegal magazines and small papers, flyers. One magazine has a distribution of over 50,000 now; it started at 20,000. We have regional news flyers as well, e.g. Zebe, (Zebe is a kind of herb that never dies). Just last Tuesday, students had a controlled protest, something like a picket line. I heard there were a lot of people on the streets. Now there are a lot of things going on, that could not be done because of the repression.

J.F. So maybe now that they are trying to make the army's image more respectable there is a little space being provided.

O.R. Yes and people are trying to make the best use of it.

Impact on women

J.F. Tell me briefly about your own experience as a woman and of other women in this situation.

O.R. This situation affects women more. A lot of women who were organised in rural areas were persecuted, they had to flee their houses, leaving their children behind. A lot of women got sick, with illnesses like vaginal infections and things like that. A lot of them died giving birth out in the open, many are malnourished. One of the most cruel things is that we have had a lot of rape all over the country, both in the capital and rural areas. The military has systematically raped women. They are afraid of us. They point us out, especially organised women, because we are accused of being part of everything which is happening, and we were involved in protesting the economic crisis. A lot of people in Haiti are unemployed, women head families, and now they could not continue their economic activities. A lot of husbands do not work and it was the women who had to take charge of families, they couldn't do that with prices getting higher and higher. I think people expected the embargo, because they knew it was a way to bring Aristide back, but the ruling classes and business organised to gain profit off the embargo, by selling stock they had bought before the

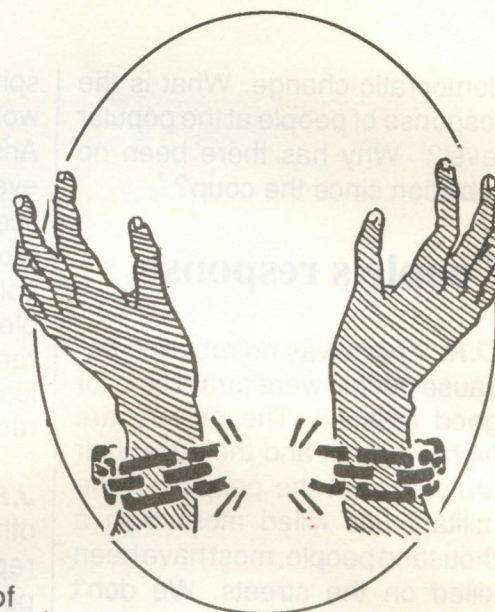
embargo at very high prices. Women are really suffering through that. For myself as an organisational woman I keep on participating in which ever way I can.

J.F. Are there any examples of how women who have a lot of children are meeting their needs for food and money in this situation?

O.R. They are surviving by operating small businesses. A woman may have a pack of chewing gum, and all her family food will be based on selling this pack of chewing gum, or a few loaves of bread, or other small items like that. A few women survive by working on small projects, but most by selling for a small profit. The problem is that it is impossible to do organisational work. Anytime more than six people get together, they become a target for the military. The situation is really bad socially and economically. The good thing is that the people understand that while the embargo makes them suffer, it could bring Aristide back, so they support it

Aristide's return

J.F. There are some people who have asked is it worth Aristide's return? How long will he survive if he returns to Haiti?



Cayenne, June/July 1986

O.R. A lot of people think that way, but people still believe that if he returns quickly enough there might be hope. They are allowing the negotiations to be drawn out so they can put a Prime Minister in power who would have to arrange and clean up everything before, instead of when Aristide returns.

J.F. So Aristide would be forced to operate within these confines?

O.R. Yes the same people in the Assembly, who are against Aristide, who set up the coup, are the same persons who have to prepare for Aristide's return. There is something fishy in that. Some people don't believe Aristide's return would help, but to the masses of people it would be like victory, because they chose him, even in the face of the ruling class and the Americans not wanting him. The

population keeps on mobilising, calling for solidarity everywhere, to allow Aristide's return. The main thing is that people must keep organising themselves, and organisations need to be more structured, and keep supporting the people's fight, because it is in the struggle for Aristide's return that we will come up with answers, in vindication of people's demands.

Real justice

J.F. Aristide has been charged with encouraging violence, how do you view that charge?

O.R. Aristide always had a position that he cannot give justice to the people.

J.F. So the people had to take it into their own hands?

O.R. The people had to organise themselves in order to have justice. He said that if there was justice there would be no people's violence. People's violence is a response to the violence that they have suffered. Aristide never said to the people you are being bad because you are violent, instead he encouraged them to continue organising in their search for justice, because no justice could occur with the present corrupt judicial system.

Justice is the main demand of people. Justice has not been car-

ried out against the Duvaliers who killed so many people, who destroyed so many lives. No one wants to touch this topic, because it implicates so many people. It is easy to say Aristide is encouraging violence, but I don't think that is the way it is. They want Aristide to condemn things like tyre-burning, but he never condemned it, because in order to eliminate this, real justice is the solution.

J.F. What could Caribbean governments, people, non-governmental or popular organisations do to support the Haitian people at this time?

O.R. We are seeking all types of solidarity. I think if we didn't have any solidarity things could have been worse, and we still need it. A lot of effort has already taken place, but we need to keep lobbying for our demands.

J.F. Who do you think they should lobby? The U.S. government or who?

O.R. Yes. You could lobby the U.S. government. Before, the U.S. didn't have any interest in us, but now they support Aristide's return, because it is in their interest, and the way the army is now, is not in their interest.

J.F. The army's repression is too obvious?

O.R. Yes. The American government doesn't have total control of

either the Macoutes or the military, but it would like to. The Macoutes continue to refuse Aristide's return, and it is not in U.S. interest to let this happen so obviously.

In the first few months after the coup the Americans were trying to civilise the image of the General who took over from Aristide, as that of a moderate. But he is not a moderate, he is a criminal. They want to give the army an image of neutrality. They come on T.V. and say that the army only does what it has to do.

Lessons from the coup

The coup has allowed us to know a lot of people better. A lot of people try to pass themselves off as democrats, as if they are with the people, but they are against the people, and I think this is one of the good things that has come out of the coup.

J.F. The other is in identifying the weakness of structure in the government.

O.R. Yes. Also, in Haiti, people had taken a position against elections. They knew already that there were limits to the power of an election to bring about real change, but now that they have experienced it, it confirms that their position was right. ¶



Westernisation of the Women's Movement

by Hira Jhamtani
Reprinted from *Panoscope*,
No. 29 (March 1992).

The feminist movement is essentially a movement by women fighting exclusively for women's rights, using analysis derived from Western capitalist societies. It often loses its relevance in developing countries - unlike the women's movement, which has broader aims. There are women defending natural resources, taking part in liberation movements and defending the livelihood of their families. The most relevant women's movement in the Third World is women against "maldevelopment."

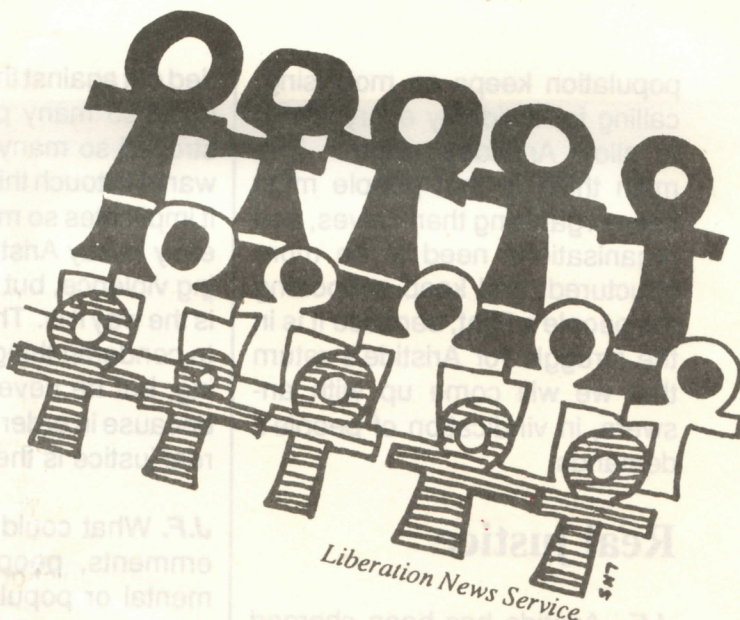
The most prominent myth in Western-rooted feminism is that men are responsible for women's oppression. It is a myth because development and the growth of ideology in Third World countries oppress both men and women. Women and children are oppressed more and are the most vulnerable victims of capitalism and mal-development, but women's issues cannot be separated from the broader context of oppression and exploitation.

Indeed the women's movement in the Third World is a struggle for survival. At the end of the UN Decade for Women, it was established that development itself is a problem for women. It displaces them - and the entire community

for that matter - from productive activity because it destroys the natural resource base.

Yet there is a tendency among middle-class women's groups to ape the Western movement (especially those sections of it which have not adopted a holistic approach to society), and a tendency among Western feminists, especially those involved with non-government organisations (NGOs) to Westernise the Third World women's movement. Western feminists see Third World women as oppressed by men, ignorant of the fact and therefore in need of help. Based on this concept and influenced by the feminist lobby, many development agencies put up programmes such as women in development and gender analysis in development projects.

The programmes are translated into projects of doubtful benefit to poor women. In Indonesia, the availability of funds helped create NGOs that deal with women's issues in cities and enabled the government to draw up projects all over the country which benefit middle-class and upper-class



women rather than the poor women at whom they are aimed. Neither NGOs nor government has addressed the real issue of women's oppression.

Many feminist groups aping Western feminism fail to educate society about the impact of development on women. Such organizations tend to be elitist, separatist and exclusive. But they give legitimacy to funding agencies as being "sensitive to women's problems."

The process makes women into a commodity, as has happened with the environment. I know many people invited to international workshops because they are women. I myself have been offered scholarships abroad because I represent "a vocal young woman involved with the environmental movement in a Third World country". Every programme, every

seminar, every activity has to involve women. But has the situation helped improve women's conditions and rights? More importantly, is it targeted at the improvement of the whole community? The feminist movement needs to think about this seriously, especially in terms of its extension to the Third World.

While the feminist movement considers patriarchy to be the cause of women's oppression, some Third World women's movements see capitalist-based development, or colonialism and imperialism, as the prime cause. Indian eco-feminist Vandana Shiva encompasses both, concluding that it is Western male-dominated science that causes marginalisation of women and non-Western communities, and destruction of nature.

Many traditional Third World societies do not know the term women's oppression. Among the Dayaks of Kalimantan, both men and women worked in the fields, and children and the home were taken care of by elders. With government sponsored resettlement programmes, clans and families were split up and separated into nuclear families. Women found themselves having to take care of the home and the children as well as working in the fields. That was when the problems started.

Many Western-oriented feminist movements are gender-ideology based, which is inappropriate in the Third World.

Asking women to leave the domain of their home and children to become "liberated" has made a mockery of the feminist movement at the grassroots level, where women's struggle for clean water, against land appropriation and against tree-felling and other forms of maldevelopment are prominent. While feminist groups in Jakarta and other cities discuss the unequal treatment of women, old women in Sugapa and Sianipar villages in North Sumatra stage a sit-in at the office of the Home Affairs Minister to demand the return of lands appropriated by a pulp company. While NGOs design "women and environment" programmes in Jakarta, the women of Sleman village in Central Jawa struggle to prevent their water sources from being destroyed for development.

There need not be such a gap between urban-based, middle-class feminists and women's struggle for survival at the grassroots. The feminist movement should

gear itself to the local context and redefine its goal as people liberation. Disconnecting women's problems from their social, economic, and political context only alienates women.

The women's movement will be a leading social movement, because women activists are more effective in creating change. Integration of feminist and women's movements will create an even stronger movement for a better, more just society.

Hira Jhantani is the Executive secretary of Konphalindo, the National Consortium for Forest and Nature Conservation in Indonesia.



Poster of the Movement for the Liberation of Women.

Connexions, #28, 1988-89



place for feminism in the Third World

by Joan French,
Co-ordinator, CPDC
From: **Panoscope**, No. 31 (July
1992).

Feminism, some say, is not relevant to the struggle for justice and development and, in particular, to the Third World. According to this view, feminism is an invention of Western or westernised women; blames men instead of the capitalist "growth model" of development; fails to recognise that women and men are equally oppressed under this model; and has nothing to do with the struggles of women for basic needs such as clean water.

Interestingly, the most radical analysis of the growth model (which is responsible for most of the world's environmental destruction) is being done these days by Third World feminists. Indian eco-feminist Vandana Shiva is one of a growing number who conclude that Western, male-dominated science is responsible for the oppression of women, and for the anti-human ideology which destroys nature and people's livelihoods.

Development Alternatives for Women of a New Era (DAWN) is a Third World women's network which has evolved a Third World feminist analysis of the growth model. DAWN's analysis shows the links between patriarchy, the growth model, the destruction of

the environment and of livelihoods, and the undermining of people's ability to determine their own development paths. The DAWN analysis is relevant not just to women, but to men, children, the old, the sick, the disabled - to everyone.

Feminism is not by definition Western. This myth has been debunked in studies by Third World feminists over the past 10 years. In *Third World Feminism*, Kumari Jayawardena traces the dynamic interplay between feminism and other ideologies at different stages of struggles in the Third World.

Women wage daily battles against patriarchy, sometimes dying in their homes because of it. Wherever there is oppression and exploitation, there is a struggle for freedom - and that includes the home. In the Caribbean, women slaves went on "birth strikes" against slavemasters who wanted them to breed new slaves. They also resisted the attempts of their own men to imprison them in marriages modelled on European elitist and repressive patterns. Many Caribbean women refuse to



Cayenne, 1988

marry to this day; marriage rates range from a low of 20% in Jamaica to a high of approximately 50% in parts of the Eastern Caribbean. Slave women saw no contradiction between struggling against slavery and against male domination. Both were necessary for the liberation.

In the pre- and post-independence eras, women have had to battle the marginalisation of gender-specific issues in socialist, Black Power, anti-apartheid and national liberation movements; in unions, political parties, churches, the education system. In all those arenas, some have argued that feminism is irrelevant to the struggle, in order to keep women from contesting their control.

Some people approach the "growth model" without a gender analysis, while others see that the model is male-defined and dominated: violent, exploitative, destructive and anti-human, because that is the nature of mainstream male culture. Many of us believe that only a model centred on the female principles of care and preservation for future generations can maintain and enhance life on our planet. It is because of these principles that women are playing such a fundamental role in the environmental movement.

Once again, however, they are being challenged by those who do not see that women have any concerns beyond the "general" struggle, they should not act around their own gender-specific issues. A couple of practical examples should help to illustrate the relevance of gender to grass-

roots issues.

When a community water pump in the Jamaican sugar belt was broken, the people most affected—women—were afraid to go to the local authorities because of the violence of male political thugs in the area. The Sistren Theatre Collective, which uses drama to promote action around women's concerns, helped take their case to the local councillor. She herself, it emerged, had been fighting to get the pump fixed, but the council would not give funds for a "technical" project to a female councillor. They got money for 'female things', such as community social activities.

Despite class divisions, the councillor and the local women were able to work together to confront male authority and get the pump fixed. Part of the common ground they found was rooted in gender-specific realities.

Another example involves control of land. The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), conducted a survey of the land-tenure system on two Caribbean islands. The study revealed that the people who had access to the smallest, least fertile plots were mainly women, and that they gained this access mainly through their links to male relatives.

Many women were being exploited and abused by men because of this dependency. The study showed the need for women to gain access to land in their own right.

Capitalist-style development embodies a particular—and now almost hegemonic—form of women's oppression which is by nature patriarchal. But patriarchy pre-dates capitalist-style development and is also present in other economic and social systems that claim to be non-capitalist.¶



Building trust exercise at a WAND (Women and National Development) Feminist workshop in Barbados, 1989.

Youth '92: perspectives for UNCED

*Youth '92: World Youth Preparatory Forum for UNCED
Costa Rica, 21-29 March 1992*

Youth from Barbados, Belize, Grenada, and Jamaica represented the Caribbean at Youth '92, a preparatory meeting for young people participating in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

In their workshop report, Raye Goddard, Pamela Redwood, Paulette Bynoe, David Denny, Dale Young, and Pio asserted their common heritage. "By meeting together, those of us from the Caribbean have realized that we have a lot in common.... Those things that make us similar are far more important than those that separate us, or those which make us different. We become powerful by working together and co-operating, as we are attempting, instead of working apart or against each other."

The four page document addressed, inter-alia, Foreign Debt and Poverty; Democracy, Participation and Peace in the World; and Exploitation of Natural Resources, and began by affirming that the biggest contributors to environmental degradation were the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank

In their statement, the youths rejected: 1) the idea of **debt swaps**

"which lead to a loss of sovereignty since decision-making is effectively transferred from one's own country to the IMF and the capitals of the developed world"; 2) the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** as it relates to farmers as it "will affect their livelihood and further reduce the ability of many developing countries to feed themselves"; 3) the **Population Control Policy** which wrongly places large populations as the source of poverty, and the implementation of which, violates women's power over their fertility.

Democracy

Desperately needed is "greater **participation of the marginalized** in the decision-making process [and] in the implementation of government policies." Crucial to the involvement of Youth and Women is access to economic and political power. Youth involvement is particularly important since today's youth will ultimately inherit responsibility for the environment and become its future managers, leaders, planners and rulers.

Militarisation

In addition to recommending a regional and international '**code of ethics**' which would demand an adequate wage, safe working conditions, health care,



UNCED Logo

education, and housing, the youths demanded that 50% of **military expenditures** be channelled to eliminating the 40,000 child deaths due to starvation and diseases that occur each day.

They viewed the so-called "Trade Winds" war games scheduled for Barbados in June, as a direct threat to **Cuba** and called for an end to the economic embargo on Cuba.

The report questioned the validity of the so-called **new world order** and called on people in the countries of the North to "realize that they must be prepared to pay the South a fair price for goods and raw materials," one that will not result in the exploitation of people or the natural environment. ¶



Women declare on Debt at UNCED

The Women's Tent, which grouped women's organizations from all over the world at the 92' Global Forum issued on June 10, 1992 the "Declaration by Women at the Global Forum." In it they expressed their "outrage" that the "UNCED agenda has ignored the fact that some of the most critical factors contributing" to the degradation of people and the environment are "economic and military systems." They blame these systems for using "mechanisms such as debt, trade and aid, and military excesses, including nuclear testing, to exploit and misuse nature and people."

The four page long declaration is a "call to action" whose philosophy was developed in part from the views expressed at a conference on Debt and Trade organized by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

According to the document, "it especially draws its inspiration from the Women's Action Agenda '21, DAWN's analysis, and also other women's views at the Global Forum."

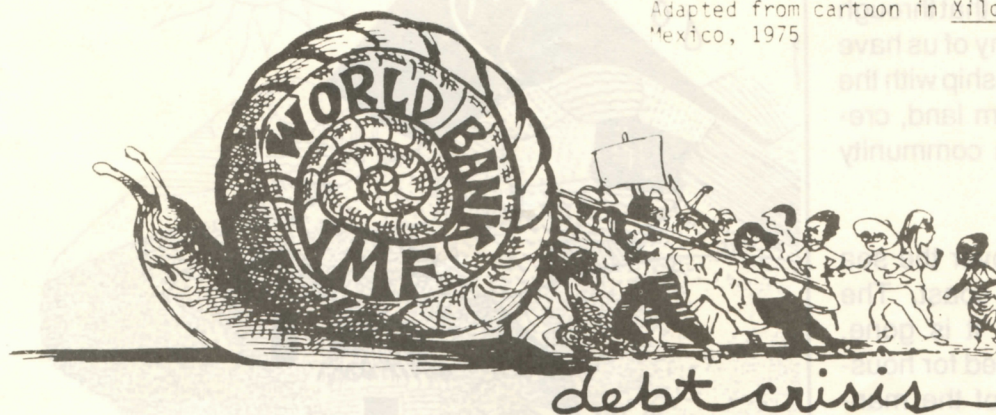
The document urges world leaders gathered in Rio to "commit themselves and their governments to a true implementation of the Women's Action Agenda 21 which was adopted by their officials without amendment," including:

- recognition of the centrality of women's roles, need, values and wisdom to decision-making on the fate of the Earth;
- the adoption of a model of "sustainable development" based on sustainable livelihoods for all peoples with full human rights including access to clean air and

water, food, shelter, health, education, information, the enjoyment of civil liberties, and spiritual and cultural integrity;

- establishment of an alternative more just and equitable economic, social, cultural and political order;
- cancellation of the debt owed by countries of the South;
- the provision of comprehensive reproductive health care and family planning, including the right to pre- and post-natal care, safe and legal contraceptives and abortion, sex education and information;

It also called for action on the empowerment of women, the rights of indigenous people, biotechnology and genetic engineering, dumping of toxic wastes and incineration among other key issues. ¶



Adapted from cartoon in Xilonen, IWY Tribune, Mexico, 1975

F light over Belize

by **Lucía Ellis**

*Address by Lucía Ellis at **The Environment and Development NGO Consultation**, which was held in Belmopan, Belize, December 1991.*

In preparing for this consultation, I took a trip down memory lane. My reminiscing took me back almost thirty years. It was my 7th birthday and my present from my father was a flight from Belize City to Big Creek, Stann Creek District and back. I recall being awed at the beauty of Belize, my country. Many years and flights later, I would like to invite you to take that journey with me again. Climb into our imaginary aircraft. The name of the tour is "Back to the Future". Binoculars are available if needed.

As we ascend, we get a view of Belize City. How it has expanded. Can you see the housing? Why is it that people have chosen to live there? Why don't they occupy rural land or apply for a lot elsewhere? It seems that through our colonization many of us have not built up a relationship with the land. Alienation from land, creates alienation from community and nature.

As we head south over the sea we look to our west coast. The mangrove swamp - it is gone. More land was needed for housing, so destruction of the mangrove was the solution. Whose

decision was that? The ecological balance will be affected. Who cares? Who is telling the people of this? Why should they be told?

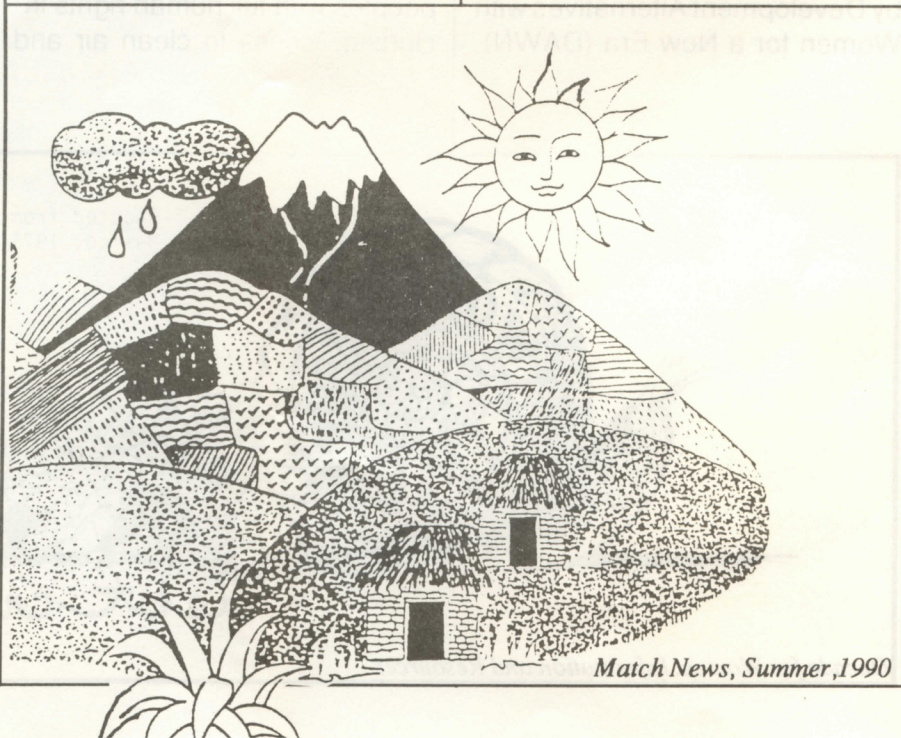
Look a little further in, you can see the Novelo's Buses on the Western Highway. Many people are travelling to Belize City these days for jobs. The rural-urban drift, a result of values that are measured in terms of money, over the beauty and health of nature, over human dignity and reverence for all forms of life. Who will mobilize people to reverse this trend?

Look, what is that brown thing? That is the Belize River, flooded. But we only experience floods like this during a hurricane. What is happening? Heavy rains in the

mountains, heavy land clearing.

Will we fly over the Mountain Pine Ridge Area? No, that is a part of another tour package. Why? Well, I would really love to see the virgin forests and pine trees of Belize. You know we are blessed to have ... Not any more, I respond sadly. Large acres are being cleared in Mountain Pine Ridge and nationwide on a dangerous scale. Many pharmaceuticals and products are lost in ventures like this. Did you know, there are plans to construct a hydroelectric plant in the Mountain Pine Ridge? How will this affect the people who live alongside the river and/or depend on it for their livelihood? Do they know of the implications?

We are now flying over the Stann Creek Valley. To your right is the



Citrus Company of Belize and Belize Foods Ltd. Not only have large areas of land have been cleared to produce these export commodities but the run-off of fertilizers and pesticides into water supplies and the waste produced from the factories pose a threat to the health of the people. Poverty. Yes, poverty is the ultimate form of pollution of a world out of touch/balance with its people's needs and its own future.

Leaving the valley, we will head back to Belize City but we will hover a little over Dangriga, as low as possible. If you wish, you can direct your binoculars to the beach. Not the cleanest is it? The people of this community once relied heavily on fishing and farming for their livelihood. However, value systems based on beauty and health of nature have changed and have been replaced by monetary values. Many heads of families have migrated to the U.S. to achieve these monetary values. How contradictory. At this very moment people in the U.S. are desperately trying to come here and occupy these abandoned lands. Refugees from neighbouring Salvador, Guatemala and other Central American countries are seeking out this peaceful haven.

We are now heading back to Belize City. Let us spend the remainder of the flight considering the following principles, developed

by the Commonwealth NGO Forum in Harare, Zimbabwe in August, 1991. They read:

1. Seek to establish and maintain a harmony between resources and human needs;
2. Seek to inform and to change at national, local and individual levels, patterns of consumption;
3. Seek solutions to the impact of poverty without the further degradation of the environment;
4. Support and adhere to the concept of intergenerational equity;
5. Build into its processes the mechanisms both for the education and participation of the public and for the evaluation of environmentally sustainable development initiatives.

We cannot give our seven year olds the same view that I had thirty years ago. However, we are accountable to them to apply the above principles so as to give them some hope.

We are now going to land. Happy landing. I hope you enjoyed your flight.



Kvinner, Norway

Rallies for Peace and Friendship with Cuba

Over 5000 people expressed enthusiastic solidarity with Cuba at New York City's Javits Convention Center on Jan. 25, 1992, at a rally sponsored by the International Peace for Cuba Appeal (IPCA). IPCA began a process to publicly stand up for Cuba and petition the U.S. government for a change in policy toward Cuba. The appeal has been adopted by thousands around the world from all walks of life who are supporting its goals and circulating and publicizing it everywhere. Despite an attempt to ban the rally and a campaign of harassment, the people's message to the U.S. government was clear.

**End the blockade!
Lift the Travel Ban!
No U.S. intervention!**

Showing the depth of support for Cuba, representatives from more than 50 U.S. cities attended; a dozen cities in four continents held simultaneous events, including: Sao Paulo, Brazil - Buenos Aires Argentina - Rome, Italy - Puebla, Mexico - Kingston, Jamaica - Paris, France - Manila, Philippines - Istanbul, Turkey.

cont'd p. 18

Teachers' maternity leave rights

Cuba

cont'd from p.17

Messages of solidarity were sent from occupied Palestine, Sweden, Nicaragua, England, Australia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cyprus and Portugal.

Although the U.S. government denied visas to the Cuban delegation, messages from Cuba were delivered nonetheless. Teófilo Stevenson, Olympic boxing champion, and Rev. Raul Suarez, director of the Martin Luther King Center, sent greetings from Havana via video.

In a special message read by PCA organizer Monica Moorehead, Cuban president, Fidel Castro stated:

"What is at stake is not only the future of our country, but also to a great extent the future of justice, of socialism and of the poor peoples of the world."

To join the international Peace for Cuba appeal, write to:

"International Peace for Cuba Appeal, 36 E. 12th St., 6th Floor, New York, NY 10003.



Women for Peace, Denmark

In CAFRA News Vol. 5, No.4, Ingrid Skerret of the Women's Action Council in St. Lucia, commented on the debate to repeal the Suspension of Unmarried Teachers Act, in that country. When asked for an update on the issue, Ingrid had the following to say:

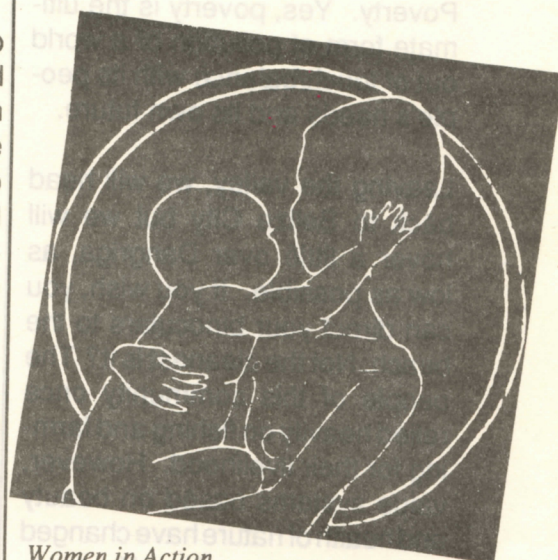
The Committee set up to look into the issue has up to now reneged on its agreement to have an Open Day to get the public's view. The investigation having dragged to now, almost 18 months of several cancelled meetings, has been bypassed by Government for the time being.

A cabinet memorandum dated October 3, 1991 submitted by the Minister of Education and Culture decreed that pending a response from the 'Louis Committee' (as it is called) qualified teachers now on, or dismissed for their second illegitimate pregnancy will be eligible for reappointment on a month-to-month basis.

In the meantime, inside information has it that the "Louis Committee" is nearing a decision which is as follows:

- That the word 'female' in section 42 of the Teachers Ordinance be replaced instead with 'Teacher';
- That the Law should be amended to allow for disciplinary action against all teachers not just female ones;

- That all prospective teachers be made acquainted with the Laws pertaining to their profession; and
- That where they are in violation of Section 23 Sub Section 42 that they be transferred to another district where their life style is not well known.



Women in Action

No further comments on this matter are needed from me. I rest my case, and to the teacher I say "over to you".

When the release was made to the Press, the Teachers Union President remarked simply, that the decision was unacceptable. We all await the passing of the coming general elections so that we may all return to rationality or are you hearing me saying "we are just who we are"?

Editor's Note: General elections were held on April 27, 1992.

National Policy on Women in St. Vincent

by Theresa Daniel

A proposed National policy on Women- the draft document of which will be put to local groups in the coming months - will give Vincentian women the mandate to ensure that the government executes women's programmes. "The government has actually agreed to certain provisions for men and women to have all forms of discrimination removed" says Ms Nelcia Robinson, co-ordinator of the umbrella organisation, Committee for the Development of Women (CDW). "The government has accepted the need to address gender issues and put mechanisms in place to improve the lives of women."

Women make up a little over half the population of 110,000 persons of this multi-island state which includes the Grenadine islands, Mustique, Bequia, and Cancun strung out south of the main island St. Vincent. Over and above this, more than half the Vincentian households are headed by women. And in many others, women shoulder the main socio-economic burden of their families.

Yet a recent survey on the role of women in organisations in St. Vincent, published under the title **Unmasking the barriers** reveals that women hold only lower level positions while male dominance continues to be the norm. The survey, which included a broad

sample of community, government, political and other organisations, found few women in leadership positions. Former newspaper editor Nora Peacocke notes that while women are making great strides in business, tourism, cash crop farming and professions, they are conspicuously absent in technical fields and in policy-making. "A lot is very wrong with the way many Vincentian women think about gender," says Mrs Peacocke. "Centuries of brainwashing still have a disastrous effect. Not only the majority of men, but a large proportion of women believe that national decision-making, kingpinship in the home and clearly defined 'men's work and 'women's work' are dictates from a deity."

Gender-based division of labour, is in fact one of the issues of specific concern to be addressed in the draft policy document. Other issues include violence against women, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, incest and sexual abuse of children,

The policy document also urges more laws to ensure constitutional protection for women. Currently, St. Vincent's constitutional laws - adopted in 1979 following independence from Britain - do not specifically consider its women as nationals. The exception is the issue of citizenship where a recent amendment puts men and women on equal footing. Another recent legislation also removed the gender component from the minimum wage which now stands at EC \$20 (Approximately US\$8).



IWD March 1988, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

But few Vincentians doubt that a lot more needs to be done for women. Both men and women at a recent workshop on gender planning which focuses on the content of the proposed National Policy on Women, identified certain areas - like education, health, unemployment, childcare facilities, access to credit - as crucial issues where the government needs to be more involved.

It is the government's Women's Affairs Department, responsible for fine tuning the National Policy, which will also provide the basic infrastructural support at the time of implementation.

Progressive men also agree on the need for a national policy in order to empower women. But some of them are skeptical about its practical application. "The question is not just whether or not women are ready (for a National Policy), and whether or not the country is ready. But most importantly, whether men who play a dominant role in terms of decision-making are ready to give up that power bloc," says Mr Elson Crick, news director of the island's lone television station. "I don't think men in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are willing to do that. I think it's mere lip service," he adds.

But Rev. Anne Daniel, a vocal Methodist minister, feels that women and the Church are also to be blamed for the current status

of Vincentian women. Most women 'may not themselves, want a man who cooks or washes. Women need to do some re-thinking to change the situation," she says. According to her the Church fosters stereotyping by playing up incidents in the Bible regarding women's roles. "In fact, the Church often misleads people to satisfy denominational beliefs, and does not promote standards from the point of view of Christianity," Ms Daniel says.

The concerted efforts to improve women's status in St. Vincent is in keeping with a wider international

movement, centered in the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development. Drawn up in two parts, the first is a blueprint for Commonwealth Secretariat action to integrate women's concerns into all its activities and programmes. The second is a set of measures which national governments must take in key areas, to further incorporate women and development issues into national policy planning, and thus increase their participation in the development process.

Reprinted from Caribbean Contact (Mar/April 1992).

Young leaders conference

1st International Conference for Young Leaders, Montreal, 23-30 May, 1992.

by Martha Joseph

Among the 270 participants at the Conference, were two CAFRA members, Pamela Redwood (Jamaica) and Martha Joseph (Dominica).

The conference was organised by the Jeanne Suavé Youth Foundation whose main objective is to set up a permanent international forum for young leaders.

Thirty-three workshops were or-

ganized under the broad headings of Liberalism and Protectionism; Media; and Human Rights. Some of the more popular workshops, which were based on sub themes of these areas were, The International Trading System, Globalization and the World Bank, Economic Sovereignty: is it possible?; Women and Media; Mass Media, Culture and Education; Women, Human Rights and International Poverty; The Economics of Human Rights.

.For me the most interesting aspect of the conference was interacting with participants, sharing

insights about countries, culture and work. This was facilitated through the Gala of Nations. Delegates were given the opportunity to lead workshops where they examined issues which were most crucial to them. Included was an information Fair with a colourful display of craft, literature, eats, music and dance. Many person to person exchanges, learning about countries or situations one never knew existed, and getting accustomed to saying your name, country and organization almost every time you held a microphone were all part of this enriching experience.

An important event for the seven Caribbean delegates present at the conference was their success in lobbying for the recognition of the Caribbean region as separate from Latin America. At the end of the workshop we no longer heard Latin America (which was meant to include the Caribbean), but Latin America and the Caribbean.

Throughout the discussion one underlying fact was eminent,

"Women and children are the World's poorest, and the most common victim of Human Rights Violations, no matter where, in the rich North, or the South.

This experience for me, is captured in the words from the Word Game Institute Catalog;

Imagine the World has been shrunk to the size of a gymnasium, its 5 billion people condensed to a room full of players.... Many are crowded and poor.... Few are rich and powerful All of them are trying to solve their problems.

Many contacts were established and I sincerely hope that at the next conference in 1994, there will be more Caribbean delegates taking advantage of the rich experience and opportunity this conference affords young women.

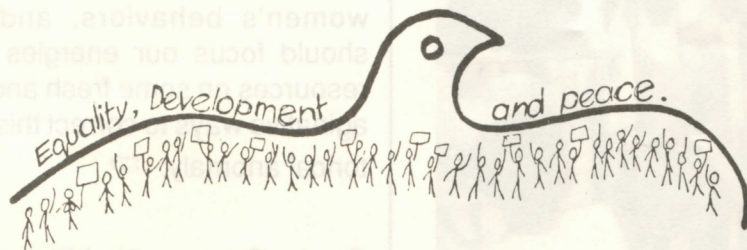
Martha Joseph is an Acting CAFRA National Representative for Dominica. ¶

Why a Black Women's Conference?

by Julieta Alfonso

The first Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference will be held in the Dominican Republic, July 19-25, 1992. It is anticipated that women participating in the conference will form a Network to further discussions and analyses on issues affecting Black women from race, class and gender perspectives, as well as on strategies for action to end discrimination experienced in the region along these lines.

The idea for this conference germinated during the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Conference which took place in Argentina, November 16-24, 1990. Thirty-two Black women from twelve countries got together to reflect on and discuss ethnic and race issues and their experiences and concerns about these areas of distress. For four days they discussed the political, cultural and ideological dimensions underlying the Quincentennial celebration with its racial and ethnic repercussions. The conference is seen as action commemorating 500 years of re-



Mallika Badrinath, *Stree*, Mar-Apr. 1985, India

sistance to colonial, imperial and neo-colonial intervention in the region. The multi-lingual, multi-media conference is targeted at women who have demonstrated an understanding of the issues of race, class and gender.

The following is an article by Julieta Alfonso, on the significance of the conference.

The gender based oppression of women is seriously exacerbated by the prevalence of other types of oppression, which are just as important. This situation is reflected in the ever broadening agendas of the many groups of women and Women's organizations which combine gender issues with one or more of the other problems.

In the Dominican Republic as in

the rest of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin America (with the exception of socialist Cuba), the problem of racial discrimination, alienation and marginalization is based on a lack of recognition and appreciation of the African elements in the national culture of these countries. The predominance of an ideology of white superiority, a pervasive relic of the Spanish colonial heritage has allowed the black and mixed population - especially women - very little possibilities to contribute to their societies.

Proceeding from this understanding, the Movement for Black Women's Identity (Identidad), a group of feminist educators and anthropologists in the Dominican Republic has identified the links and relationship between gender discrimination and racial discrimi-

nation in their country. Accordingly, they have emphasized the need for a fresh concept of gender and cultural identity free of the patriarchal and colonial assumptions of the past.

This situation has also motivated Identidad to form the Network and to celebrate the first Encounter of Black women of Latin America and the Caribbean in the frame of the Quincentennial of Resistance and Colonization.

Women are unfortunately, the ones who are assumed to be principally responsible for the process of socialization, they are the main transmitters of society's values and behavior. It is in these social values and behaviors that is contained the poison, which contaminates and distorts the individuals perception of gender relations, cultural and social identity.

To my mind the planned women's encounter should be inspired by the urgent need to address this critical situation. We must take a hard, critical look at the white-biased, androcentric perception of the world which adversely affects women's behaviors, and we should focus our energies and resources on some fresh and imaginative ways to correct this historical anomaly. ➡

Opening Ceremony, Black Women's Conference, D. Republic, 1992.



A All-Island Conference of Jamaican Women

In terms of regional cooperation and integration, it is important to define and assume an identity based on a real vision of historical and cultural realities and so to identify and work with the common elements which define the Caribbean identity.

There is a political, economic and strategic need for the region to develop a plan of joint-action in order to challenge and influence government as well as the wider population. ¶

Third All-Island Conference of Jamaican Women, 10 -12 April, 1992, Kingston, Jamaica.

by Joan French

The Third All-Island Conference of Jamaican Women, was organised by the Association of Women's Organisations of Jamaica (AWOJA) in collaboration with the Women's Bureau. Coming out of this conference were a number of recommendations and resolutions for an action plan, in all areas of national development. These were divided into four broad areas, 1. The Economy and Cost of Living, Employment and Agriculture; 2. Women and Community, Political Empowerment and Legal Reform; 3. Education and Culture, Housing and

Health and Environment; 4. Most Vulnerable Women, children and Family Life.

Recommendations are to be implemented by AWOJA, the Bureau of Women's Affairs and other NGO's and which will form the basis for lobbying Government. On any day before the final count, at the Third All Island Conference of Jamaican Women, there were easily 700 urban and 400 rural delegates registered despite a registration fee of \$25.00 per day.

The conference was opened by the Hon. Portia Simpson, Minister with responsibilities for Women's Affairs and the first Jamaican woman to contest the post of Prime Minister.

From the poster of the First Latin American and Caribbean Black Women's Conference



Voting by referendum at the closing session of the AWOJA conference, Jamaica 1992.

The conference was of historical significance, as Ms Lynnette Vassell's address at the opening ceremony, outlined. It was the 3rd conference of its kind in Jamaica's history. (The first two were held in 1939 and 1941, and like this conference were initiatives of the Jamaican feminist movement). The main address was given by Mrs Selena Tapper of CUSO Caribbean (see this page), who addressed the importance of lending energies to the follow-up programme after the euphoria of the event, and of avoiding ridiculous, artificial and unnecessary distractions we sometimes create in the process of working around a collective programme, and of avoiding speaking on behalf of others when the others can speak for themselves, and when in fact, we are only speaking for ourselves.

What aspects of the conference impressed me most? First the diversity - the fact that women from every walk of life and every religious and political persuasion and diverse ethnic groups and different classes, able and disabled, young and old, social-work feminists and modern-day feminists, rural and urban, all came together out of a long process of careful consultation, to participate in democratic discussions around issues which had been defined in the consultation process before the conference.

What in my view, were the weaknesses? Mainly that the deliberations while properly rooted in the concrete experiences and needs of women at the micro-level, might have benefitted from some analysis of the regional and global context. Secondly that while a small Caribbean contingent was privileged to witness the conference, better use could have been made of their input in the interest of the goals of the Jamaican conference.

"Women United for Development" was the theme of the conference. However given the global forces at work in 1992, strategies to achieve the development of women at the local and national levels ignore the global realities to their peril.

While the conference was a refreshing change from the pontification about the 'global' which is often the exclusive focus of similar events, awareness and understanding of the global realities can strengthen strategies for one's achievement of local and national goals. ¶



Women's World.

The We and the They

*Excerpts from an address by Selena Tapper at the **Third All Island Conference of Jamaican Women**, 10-12 April, 1992, Jamaica.*

In this conference we need to take all the large issues, decide on the ones we can agree on, usually few, and then get on with the decidedly unglamorous task of implementation, far from the glare of cameras and the media hype.

But who is the "We" who must do all this vs the "They" we so often use in our speeches. If we are honest with ourselves, and we need to be, we need to discover and face our own motivation for involvement, if our contribution is to be conscious, if not always guileless.

When last have we asked ourselves why we are involved in all of the work. Why did you come this evening, why will you participate tomorrow and Sunday? What do I/We personally hope to get, to achieve by participating? I think that we so easily and quickly rush to the more politically correct collective "we", that we spend little time in the area of personal self-examination. And because of this we sometimes genuinely

confuse our own private ambitions with those of the many, the collective. We genuinely think we speak for others, when in fact we only speak for ourselves.

We are so busy caring and planning for the welfare of others, that we overlook our own. We lose that source of inner inspiration and strength which enables women's lives; and in our resulting tiredness and frustration are unwittingly trampling on other's ideas and contributions, on their feelings. We begin to claw and clamor in our desperation to get our good deeds done before our time runs out.

Which brings me to my third point. The concept of the "We" and the "They". "They" in fact speaks to the divisions we impose on ourselves, never mind the divisions others impose on us. "They" are usually those who disagree with us, or those who are brave enough to venture forth while we sit back and take the easier road as critics. We see ourselves as "rural vs urban", politically correct vs politically backward"; religious, "saved" vs irreligious, "unsaved"; educated vs uneducated; some are even "nice", others not nice. But the best one I have heard was from a North American who was in Belize last week. He was making reference to drawing a distinction between the "real people" in Belize and the others. For him, the "real" people were the poor people

living in remote rural areas. This comment prompted me to ask him whether middle class Belizeans, by his definition were "unreal" and somehow undesirable. What does this kind of artificial division in fact say about the objectives of our well-intentioned development efforts. Do you see how ridiculous our distinctions become when held up to the light of logic and reason?

The point that I am making is that everyone of "us" has to be a part of the development effort. How do we ensure this?

Which leads to my fourth point. The issue of representation of women at all levels in all areas of community and national life. I acknowledge and fully support the need for more women to be involved in the political process at national level. The time for that is way overdue. I take note of, and commend the current efforts to organize women for public office. But I think we also need to remind ourselves of the inevitable emptiness of a few - be they women or men - making policies in a system that is corrupt, unjust; making policies that the majority do not own. If policies are to work then they have to emerge from work that is grounded at the community level; the natural outcome of the work.

To this end, I think after this conference and for the near future,



Selena Tapper addresses the audience at the Third All island Conference of Jamaica Women, Jamaica, 1992

we have to devise ways, mechanisms to encourage, commend, expose and train women to become involved; to feel the confidence that comes not only from bravado but that is based on consistent preparatory and prudent support.

We need to fight to resist the temptation to speak for women, and allow women to find their own voice. We need to fight to resist the temptation, over the next two days, to hurriedly fill the gap while another woman searches for her own words to express herself. -

Selena Tapper is Regional Field Officer of CUSO-Caribbean, in Jamaica. ¶



Tackling RTI's - A Call to Action

*The following cominiqué was issued at the recent **Reproductive Tract Infection Meeting** in Barbados, co-organized by the international Women's Health Coalition, and the Women and Development Unit (WAND).*

Reproductive tract infections (RTIs) pose grave threats to women's lives throughout the world. They are as common as the common cold, and frequently as deadly as cancer. They include three types of infection: sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), infections related to procedures, such as unsafe deliveries and abortions, or IUD insertion, and infections due to overgrowth of organisms normally found in the genital tract. Men also experience RTIs, particular STDs, but the prevalence and the consequences for women are much more severe.

Worldwide there are well over 250 million new cases of RTIs every year which have devastating health and social consequences. RTIs increase HIV transmission, and the HIV epidemic cannot be controlled without controlling RTIs. They are the most common preventable cause of involuntary infertility, potentially fatal tubal pregnancy; they also cause foetal loss and infections of newborns. Each year RTIs kill tens of thousands of women through cervical cancer, the most common cancer among women in Southern coun-

tries; while an additional 200,000 women die annually due to septic abortion.

Women and men generally are not aware that they are vulnerable to RTIs. Policy makers do not understand the substantial cost of failing to prevent RTIs. Hospitals and other health resources are often overwhelmed by the demands of caring for septic abortions, infertility, cervical cancer and AIDS.

Severe imbalances in the relationships between women and men, in all spheres of public and private life, established early in life, make it impossible for most women to protect themselves against RTIs in sexual relations and in health services. For example, men determine when and under what conditions sex takes place, and they frequently do not take responsibility to protect their partners. The only protective technology currently widely available is the male condom, and many women are unable to persuade men to use it. The culture of silence surrounding sexuality prohibits women from seeking health care, emotional support and information for their sexual health.

Today, addressing RTIs is more urgent than ever because the present global political and economic context fosters their spread. Northern institutions, along with collaborating Southern govern-

ments, are moving away from a holistic and humane model of development. Privatization and severe budget cuts in the social sector are eroding or making basic health services and other essential resources, such as water, inaccessible. The same institutions suggest compensatory programs which in no way compensate for this destruction of basic services. Often national governments institute harmful policies for example, restrictions on contraception or safe abortion - for political or ideological reasons, but are nonetheless supported by international agencies.

Such international and national contradictions undermine a comprehensive approach to women's health that is responsive to the needs of women as they perceive them, and that enables women to take control of their sexual health and reproductive rights.

To break the culture of silence surrounding RTIs and to remove the burdens they place on women, health systems and national budgets, eight immediate actions are called for:

- ◆ Re-establish basic human needs as the objective of development policies.
- ◆ Integrate services for the prevention and control of RTIs into ongoing health programs, including family planning, MCM and

HIV prevention, to reach both symptomatic and asymptomatic women, and to optimise cost effectiveness of programme.

- ◆ Provide safe abortion services for women.

- ◆ Invest in improving the quality of all aspects of reproductive health services and education, and in training all health providers about RTIs.

- ◆ Develop and make universally available simple, inexpensive, rapid diagnostic tests for STDs, particularly for women who do not have symptoms.

- ◆ Develop safe and effective vaginal microbicides that protect women against STDs, including HIV, and that women can use without the co-operation of their partners.

- ◆ Mobilize all public education channels so that all women and men have access to information on the causes, dangers, prevention and cure of RTIs.

- ◆ Substantially increase support for women's organisations to enable them to inform and support other women, to demonstrate effective approaches to prevention and control of RTIs among women and to participate in policy making.

The struggle to prevent and control RTIs must be inclusive. We must pay special attention to the

needs of young people. We call on men to collaborate with us to develop more caring, responsible sexual relationships to redress the imbalances in gender power relations in all aspects of public life.

Glossary of Reproductive Tract Infections

• AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an infectious disease produced by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and characterized by deterioration of the body's immune system. The onset of AIDS brings a number of "opportunistic" diseases that take advantage of the body's lowered defense system. HIV infection is transmitted by blood, semen and vaginal fluids and can be spread by contaminated needles and blood; unprotected sexual relations with an infected person; from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding. There is no cure for AIDS.

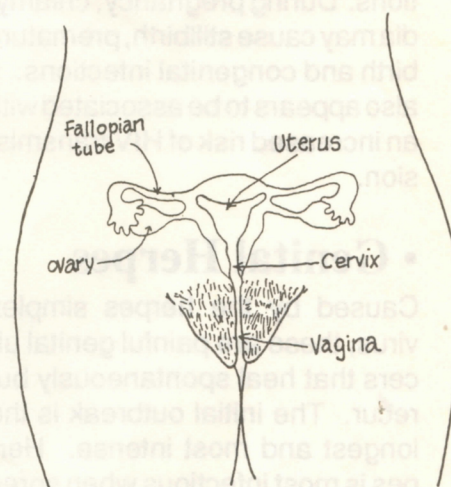
• Cervical Cancer

Although not an infection, this appears to be causally related to lower tract infections from some subtypes of the human papilloma

virus (HPV) that also causes genital warts. About half a million new cases are diagnosed each year worldwide. In a number of developing countries, cervical cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer.

• Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)

This is probably the most common of all vaginal infections. It can occur without symptoms, or be accompanied by excessive malodorous vaginal discharge. The organisms causing BV are normally found in low numbers in the vagina. BV results from their rapid multiplication due to factors that upset the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina. BV may cause upper tract infection. ☞



Guilla Bastías
Women's Health Journal 2/92

In pregnant women, this may lead to the birth of a premature infant; in non-pregnant women, infertility or tubal pregnancy. BV is treatable.

• Chancroid

This disease occurs frequently in developing countries, particularly Africa. While it usually causes a painful ulcer in men, it may occur without symptoms in women. Chancroid appears to increase the risk of HIV transmission.

• Chlamydia

This is the most common bacterial STD in some industrialized countries, and it is particularly difficult to control. Most women with chlamydial cervicitis have no symptoms. Chlamydia can lead to extremely serious complications. During pregnancy, chlamydia may cause stillbirth, premature birth and congenital infections. It also appears to be associated with an increased risk of HIV transmission.

• Genital Herpes

Caused by the herpes simplex virus, these are painful genital ulcers that heal spontaneously but recur. The initial outbreak is the longest and most intense. Herpes is most infectious when sores are open, but the disease can also spread to sexual partners by individuals who are not aware of any symptoms.

• Genital Warts

These are small painless growths caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). The precise prevalence of HPV infections are asymptomatic. These infections are difficult to treat and recurrent infections are common. Preliminary data have established a link between genital warts and HIV infection.

• Gonorrhea

This is the most common preventable cause of PID and tubal infertility worldwide. In women, symptoms of cervical infection can include abnormal vaginal discharge and burning during urination. Upper tract infection may be associated with lower abdominal pain and abnormal menstruation. Gonorrhea can produce spontaneous abortion, prematurity and potentially blinding eye infections in newborns.

• Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

This disease consists of infections of the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Symptoms usually include abdominal pain and abnormal vaginal discharge. The spread to the upper reproductive tract of gonococcal and chlamydial infections, and of bacterial vaginosis organisms, is often facilitated by IUD insertion, unsafe

abortion or childbirth. PID can cause severe inflammation and scarring of the fallopian tubes and ovaries, and damage increases with the severity of inflammation and with each recurrent episode. Long-term consequences of PID include infertility, potentially fatal tubal pregnancy and chronic pelvic pain.

• Syphilis

The primary and most infectious stage consists of painless ulcers that are often unnoticed by women. If untreated, the disease proceeds to a secondary stage of systemic infection, followed by an extended latent phase, and a potentially lethal tertiary stage. In pregnant women, early stages of syphilis can result in premature birth, stillbirth and congenital infection of the infant. Genital lesions caused by syphilis increase the risk of HIV transmission.

• Trichomoniasis

This is a very common and treatable STD. It may be associated with profuse discharge, burning during urination, bad odour or, occasionally lower abdominal pain. Preliminary studies show an association with increased risk of HIV transmission.

From: *Women's Health Journal* 2 (April-June, 1992): 50 ¶

C Caribbean Conference on Nutrition

Caribbean Preparatory Meeting on the International Conference on Nutrition, Jamaica Conference Centre, Kingston, 24-27 March, 1992.

by Erica Morgan

Eighty participants along with various observers and invited personnel representing 12 Caribbean countries from Government departments and over 25 Non-Governmental Organisations, with a special interest in health, food and nutrition were present at this Preparatory meeting for the International Conference on Nutrition, which will be held in Rome, Dec. 1992.

There were four working groups whose discussions were based on the Nutrition themes of the Rome Conference, as well as those of the Caribbean Food and Nutrition targets to 1985.

As a result of the discussion a consensus paper is to be produced for presentation at the Rome conference in December. In Rome the consensus paper will be further discussed, taking into consideration the global situation based on the experiences of other countries, after which a final paper will be adopted.

Specific attention was paid to the general health of children age group 0-5 years, and of pregnant and lactating women. Of concern

was the fact that the health of pregnant, unemployed mothers, particularly poorer women, suffered due to the cost of prescribed drugs. Purchase of these drugs, mainly iron and vitamins are way above the financial means of these women, and as a result they suffer severe iron-deficiencies which lead to other health problems.



Mothers and Children

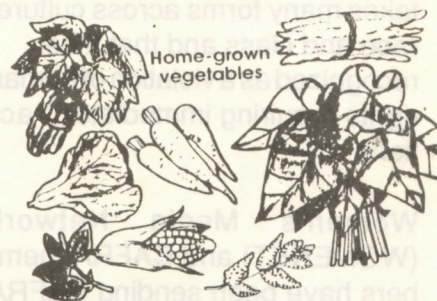
Locally-grown foods and dishes, such as green bananas, callalou, cabbage and spinach represent a more nutritious and far less costly source of iron than iron-tablets and other drugs. Education was therefore noted as the key factor in raising the consciousness of pregnant and nursing mothers, and working women as well, towards purchasing these less costly yet more nutritious alter-

natives for themselves and their children.

The conference recommended that Caribbean governments, Departments of Health and Agriculture, and non-governmental organisations with specific interest in health and nutrition become more involved in ensuring the safety of food supplies and sanitation in their respective countries. Methods suggested were the organisation of educational seminars on food and nutrition, with emphasis on street food vendors, sanitation and public health Workers, health risks/cholera, Imported food - expiry date, farmers, and related legislation.

Members of each work group pledged to establish committess in their countries, or become involved in existing ones there, as a means of educating and giving support towards the development of a more healthy hemisphere.

Erica Morgan is a CAFRA member from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.





Women's Rights as Human Rights

Seventy-five thousand (75,000) people from over 78 countries have so far signed a petition, requesting that the 1993 United Nations World Conference on Human Rights "comprehensively address women's human rights at every level of its proceedings", specifically calling upon it to recognize that "violence against women violates human rights."

In a letter accompanying the boxes of petitions, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, stated: "We believe that the massive violence in women's daily lives constitutes one of the most pervasive and insidious, yet least recognized, violations of human rights in the world today."

He urged the World Conference on Human Rights to:

- comprehensively address women's human rights at every level of its proceedings;
- emphasize that women's equality is a significant human rights issue;
- consider gender violence, a universal phenomenon which takes many forms across culture, race and class and that it be recognized as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action;

Women's Media Network (WOMENET) and CAFRA members have been sending CAFRA many reports of human rights abuses in the region and through-

out the world carried out against women and their families by the State. These women have called for solidarity, and support to stop such abuses.

Barbados: CAFRA member body- searched

Antiguan-based Imani Tafari-Ama, was taken into custody by Barbadian police and searched for narcotics, on arriving at Grantley Adams International Airport on June 13. Imani was in Barbados to promote the First Black Women's Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in the Dominican Republic in July.

According to Imani, who is a Rastafarian, the Special Branch of the local police told her that they had received information suggesting that she was carrying narcotics. They even denied her access to a telephone to seek legal advice. "I was subjected to extensive body and luggage searches which revealed no evidence of narcotics" she added. "Their response to my question about their source of information about the narcotics was that the source could not be revealed and I should understand that all they were doing was carrying out their duties." Finding nothing, the police eventually allowed her to leave the airport.

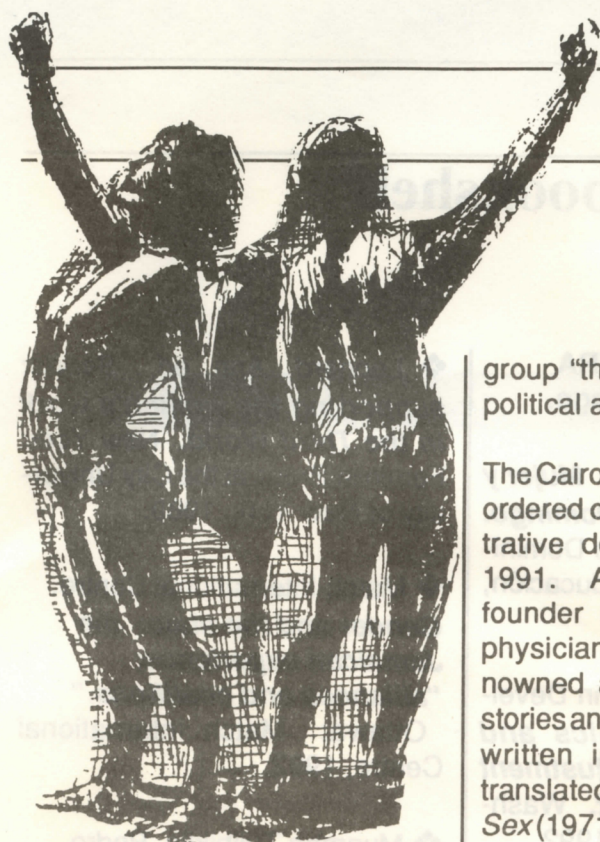
In an interview with journalist Jewel Brathwaite, reported in the *Weekend Investigator*, Imani said that she felt it very contradictory that in spite of various attempts being made in the region, to unite women of all races, the system serves to maintain racial barriers.

Imani has been involved in the women's movement for a number of years, first in her native Jamaica and now in Antigua, where she has been administering CAFRA's Women and the Law Project.

Pakistan: Trafficking of Women

Poor young Bangladeshi women and children lured by the prospects of a better life in Pakistan are finding instead that they are being sold to pimps for prostitution. Currently three young women two of whom are 15 and 16 years of age are charged with prostitution and face death by stoning (under the Islamic law called the Haddood Ordinance this is the punishment for prostitution). Traffickers are not held responsible for their exploitation of women.

According to Saqi Selima, President of the Bangladesh Students Association at the New School for Social Research, human rights activists or simply concerned people need to organize to expose the atrocity committed



Women's rights —

against women. The issue of trafficking [in] women is not solely a women's issue but an issue that all people and friends of Third World countries must be concerned with. Groups and concerned individuals concerned about this issue, should contact: *Committee for Democracy, c/o Saqui Selima Huq, 1700 Metropolitan Avenue #6E, Bronx, New York 10462. Fax: (212) 828-1377*

Egypt:

Arab feminism banned

An administrative court in May upheld the government's dissolution of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (ASWA). The State Council Court rejected the association's request for an injunction that would have allowed the group to continue working while it appeals the government's action. The Court denied the injunction on the grounds that the

group "threatens the peace and political and social order."

The Cairo-based organization was ordered dissolved by an administrative decree dated June 15, 1991. AWSA's president and founder is Nawal El Saadawi, physician, psychiatrist and renowned author of novels, short stories and non-fiction. Her works, written in Arabic, and widely translated, include *Women and Sex* (1971), and *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1977).

ASWA, which was established in 1982, has been in the forefront of the controversial and difficult battle to promote equality between the sexes in the Arab world.

The memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Court, accuses ASWA of "perpetual violation of the law, making that perpetual violation one of its foremost ends." Among violations cited were: convening a conference which took a stand against the government's position on the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq; and distributing a magazine as an internal publication, after the Higher Press Council refused to grant ASWA permission to publish it as quarterly.

The appeal process could take years.

Sources: *Ms* (July-August 1992); *Association for Women in Development Newsletter* (April 1992).

Attacks against Environmental leaders:

India

In October 1991, paramilitary forces arrested 40 members of India's **Chipko Movement**, including Chipko leader, Sunderlal Bahguna and his wife. Those arrested were at the time camping on the slopes of Tehri Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh. For years, the movement has non-violently protested the construction of the Tehri Dam, which is being built without environmental clearance, in an earthquake prone area.

The Chipko Movement emerged during the 1970s when Indian villagers - mainly women - sought to protect their livelihood through non-violent resistance. The women joined hands and encircled trees, preventing them from being felled. The movement spread and in 1980, the government issued a 15-year ban on green felling in the Uttar Pradesh forests. The movement acts as a pressure group for a natural resource policy that is more sensitive to people's needs and ecological requirements.

Kenya

Professor **Wangari Maathai**, leader of the Kenya's Green Belt Movement, was among four

O n the bookshelf

women clubbed unconscious by riot police in March, as they dispersed a group of 50 women hunger strikers and their supporters. The women were on hunger strike in Nairobi's Uhuru Park, in an appeal for the release of 52 political detainees. Most of the women were mothers of the prisoners.

It was the second time in one year that Prof. Maathai, a member of the International Policy Action Committee which organized the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, was hospitalized after officially sanctioned police brutality. She has since been released from hospital and was scheduled to speak in May at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York and at the parliamentary Earth Summit and Women's Tent in Brazil.

Malaysia

The indigenous people from Sarawak, Malaysia, have been subject to a wave of violence and arrests because of their non-violent protest against logging operations in Sarawak. Among those arrested was Anderson Mutang Urue, a Kelabit (one of Sarawak's ethnic groups), who was detained in police custody. He is now released on bail, but the violence and arrests of Sarawak's people continues. ¶

New books in the CAFRA office, Trinidad & Tobago.

❖ Albert Batista, Celsa. ***Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo***. Santo Domingo: Centro Dominicano de Estudios de la Educación, 1990.

❖ Alternative Women in Development. ***Reaganomics and women: structural adjustment U.S. style: 1980-1992***. Washington, D.C.: Alt-WID, 1992.

❖ Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development. ***Trinidad profiles: a survey of 39 agencies/groups engaged in rural & community development in Trinidad***. St. Augustine: CNIRD, 1991.

❖ Henry, Dawn, comp. and Susan A. Hallgarth, ed. ***Directory of women's media***. New York: National Council for Research on Women, 1992.

❖ Jamaica Bureau of Women's Affairs. ***National Policy statement on women***. Kingston: Jamaica Information Service, 1990.

❖ Jansen, Senaida and Cecilia Millan. ***Genero, trabajo y etnia en los bateyes dominicanos***. Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, Programa de estudios de la Mujer, 1991. (Serie investigaciones, 9).

❖ Leonard Ann, ed. ***Seeds: supporting the women's work in the Third World***. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989.

❖ Match International Centre. ***Gender and the state: the Jamaican experience: "alliances and coalitions."*** Ottawa: Match International Centre, 1992.

❖ Muamba Tujibikile, Pedro. ***500 años: hacia un autodesencubrimiento de la Identidad Caribeña***. Santo Domingo: Centro Dominicano de Estudios de la Educación, 1991.

❖ Sisters in Islam. ***Are Muslim men allowed to beat their wives?*** Selangor, Malaysia: Sisters in Islam, 1991.

❖ World Bank. ***How the World Bank works with nongovernmental organizations***. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1990.

❖ UN. ***Women: challenges to the year 2000***. New York: UN, 1991.

❖ UN. ***The world's women 1970-1990: trends and statistics***. New York: UN, 1991.

STAFF CHANGES

Gemma Tang Nain assumed the position of Acting Coordinator of CAFRA with effect from 1 September, 1992. A member of the CAFRA executive since 1986 and a past National Representative for Trinidad & Tobago, Gemma has worked with the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and more recently with the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD), before joining the CAFRA Secretariat. Gemma is a graduate of the Women and Development Studies Programme of the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague.

Savitri Ramsaran has been appointed Project Co-ordinator, of the Women in Caribbean Agriculture (WICA) Project. Savitri brings to the position from training in agriculture and experience in setting up youth programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. She is currently undergoing an internal orientation programme, including training in feminist and development theory.

CAFRA News lost its second Editor at the end of August. **Rowena Kalloo**, who had taken leave from the Trinidad and Tobago Teaching Service to tackle the newsletters and the Women's History component of the Women's History and Creative Expression Project, has accepted a challenging job with the National Institute

of Higher Education (Research, Science and Technology) (NIHERST). Rowena will freelance for the newsletter while the Secretariat re-assesses the need for a full-time replacement.

STUDYING ABROAD

CAFRA Coordinator on leave, **Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen**, is now in Holland, no doubt shaking up the M.A. Programme in Women and Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies, in The Hague. She is the lone Caribbean student enrolled in the 1992-93 programme. She recently submitted a Ph.D. thesis on "A Historical Perspective on the Lexicon of Trinidadian English," to the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus).

As reported in the last issue of CAFRA News (p.30), **Rhoda Reddock** is now at the Women's Studies Programme at Hunter College in New York, pursuing a ten-month fellowship.

NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Rebeca Cutié Cancino replaces Cathy Ribas as the National Representative for Cuba. Rebeca works with the Federation of Cuban Women as a Translator. She is currently doing research on

Women in the Informal Sector in Cuba and on the Black Woman in Cuba: Past and Present

Janice Jackson is back home in Guyana after completing studies in Canada. Thanks to Danuta Radzik of Red Thread Women's Development Project for holding the fort during Janice's absence.

Gladys Do Rego-Kuster resigned as National Representative for Curaçao after many years' service to CAFRA.

MEETINGS

Workshops/Courses

"Participatory Methodologies for Legal Education" was the name of a workshop held as part of CAFRA's Women and the Law Project, from March 16-21, 1992 at the Hotel Normandie in Trinidad and Tobago. Participants from 10 Caribbean countries attended. The workshop was facilitated by Elizabeth Dasso, a sociologist and Executive Director of the Peruvian women's organization, Peru Mujer.

The objectives of the workshop were to analyse the different educational approaches in teaching women's legal rights concepts, to organize legal education plans of action for Caribbean countries and to develop printed educational materials adequate to the social realities of the

Caribbean. Participants discussed strategies in organizing women's rights campaigns and produced pamphlets on a number of topics, including domestic violence, child maintenance and constitutional rights. The workshop included a field trip to St. Mary's Village, Moruga in south Trinidad, to test the educational materials developed during the workshop.

CAFRA's third **Regional Committee Meeting** was held on July 18, 1992 in Trinidad and Tobago. Among other things, the meeting discussed CAFRA's 1991 Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements, new and existing programmes and staffing. The meeting was preceeded by a three-day **Strategic Planning Workshop** which was facilitated by Audrey Ingram-Roberts and Alicia Mondesire. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a strategic planning framework for CAFRA for the period 1993-1995. Look out for a more detailed report of this meeting in the next issue of the CAFRA News.

Pax Guest House, Mt. St. Benedict was the venue for the first **CAFRA/WAND Summer University in Feminist Theory** which was held from August 30 - September 11. The course was attended by twenty-eight women activists from the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Curaçao, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Croix,



Sigrid Blohm: Voices Rising

St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The curriculum included modules on the historical and theoretical context of feminism; the family; sexuality; spirituality and religion; work and the economy; organizations and communication styles; and building a Caribbean community. From all reports received, the course was a resounding success, thanks to the enthusiastic participants; the astute Course Coordinators, Hilary Nicholson and Marion Bernard of Jamaica; and the fantastic resource team comprising Hilary, Marion, Nan Peacocke and Kurlyne Alleyne of WAND, Pat Donald, Gemma Tang Nain, Roberta Clarke, Gaiety Pargass, Dr. Monica Davis and Clotil Walcott. The next issue of CAFRA News will feature a more

detailed report of the Summer University experience.

GLOBAL FUND 5th Anniversary Celebration

In June 1992, the Global Fund for Women marked its fifth year of international grant-making. To celebrate, it provided US\$5,500 to ten grantees around the world - \$5,000 to be given away in the form of five \$1,000 grants to women's groups that might not otherwise have access to funding, and \$500 toward costs to administer the five grants.

CAFRA was one of the ten grantees chosen, out of a possible 200 grantee groups. In consultation with National Representatives, the following groups were chosen to receive \$1,000 grants: **Westbury Cultural Group** (Barbados), **BOWAND Housing Cooperative** (Belize), **Byera Women and Development Organization** (St. Vincent and the Grenadines), **Equipo de Mujeres de la Asociación por los Derechos Barriales** (Dominican Republic), and the **Democratic Women's Association** (Trinidad and Tobago). ¶

The Jamaica Political Women's Caucus

The scarcity of women in the prominent areas of Jamaican Political life, and consequently their non-involvement in the decision making processes at national and international levels, have long been major concerns of the St. Andrew Business and Professional Women's Club. Accepting that the concerted efforts of women themselves are necessary to empower women in national life, the Club decided to take action. Members were inspired by the influence and activities of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

The St. Andrews Business and Professional Women's Club, con-

cerned that so few women were candidates in the Jamaican General Elections in 1989 and the Local Government Elections in 1990, recognized the urgent need to begin the process of actively and deliberately encouraging, promoting and supporting women to take part in the political life of the country as principal players.

At a panel discussion held on the 11th February, 1989, on the topic "Women in Politics" the Club was challenged to assist women in politics by establishing a Political Women's Caucus for Jamaica.

It accepted the challenge to establish this political avenue by piloting a non-partisan Women's Caucus.

After two years of study, a Steering Committee, comprising members of the Club and other

organizations, has prepared a Provisional Constitution for the establishment and operation of the Caucus.

The main aims of the Caucus are:-

- ① to empower women to participate equally in responsibilities of front-line politics in Jamaica;
- ② to ensure that gender issues are given high priority at the policy-making level;
- ③ to strive for a climate in which national issues can be discussed on a non-partisan basis;
- ④ to strive for a climate in which national issues can be discussed on a non-partisan basis;

To achieve these aims the Caucus will, among other things, provide training for women in politics; lobby for the selection of women to contest elections; take steps to change the perceptions and attitudes about the role of women in political machinery; promote and encourage equal rights and respect for women in politics and sensitize the wider society (particularly women) to the capabilities of women as political representatives at the highest level and as agents of change. ¶

FRAN ON SUNDAY

From the Sunday Nation, Nairobi, Kenya. Adapted by IWTC



"If we ignore them, do you think they'll go away?"

Woman A-Fire Creative Writers Group

(formerly Sistren Creative Writing Group)

by Carmen Hanson

The Woman A-Fire Creative Writers Group formed in May 1987, grew out of a participatory research project on Women and Culture, which was funded by UNESCO and conducted by Honor Ford Smith of Sistren Research.

In this project 'Creative Expression' was used as a vehicle for consciousness-raising. At the end of the project, women who had participated and who had been

writing for some time but whose work had little or no exposure decided to stay together as a group. Presently the group has an average of 7 members at meetings, held on the first Tuesday of each month. At these meetings the work of group members is critically evaluated and group members participate in exercises for building their writing skills.

Consciousness-raising takes place through analysis of the content of the material all of which has so far been based on personal experience or first hand observation.

The group aims to:

- raise women's consciousness through Creative Writing
- help women writers to recognize and develop their potential

- build a united bond among women creative writers
- use the medium of Creative Writing to become economically viable.

The group links with other groups working on themes dealt with in their writing, eg. the group performed at the launching of the booklet **No to Sexual Violence**.

The group is facilitated by Sistren Theatre Collective, where meetings are held. At present, we would like to attract professional writers to help to develop the skills of members as well as new members who are interested in creative writing. *Interested persons can contact the group at Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, or call 929-2457 or 929-6171.*

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

RETURN THIS FORM TO US TODAY TO BE SURE OF YOUR COPY OF CAFRA NEWS

Caribbean: Individual: 30 units of local currency

Organisation: 35 units of local currency

Elsewhere: Individual: US\$15.00

Organisation: US\$20.00

(payable in U.S. currency or local equivalent)

NAME

ADDRESS

Return to CAFRA, P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

We are a network of individual researchers and activists and women's organisations who define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of oppression in the society, and are working actively for change.

Membership spans the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking countries of the region as well as the diaspora. It is open to women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives.

A brochure outlining the aims and objectives of the association is available on request.

Structure of the Association

The decision-making bodies of CAFRA are: (i) The biennial **General Meeting** of the membership of the association; (ii) The annual meeting of National Representatives, a representative of the diaspora, Project Co-ordinators and the Secretariat (also called the **Regional Committee**); (iii) Bi-annual meetings of a **Consultative Committee**, made up of one representative from each of the four major language groups in the region, the Project Co-ordinators and the Secretariat; and (iv) **The Secretariat**, made up of the Co-ordinator, the Financial Officer, the Administrative Assistant and a few members of the feminist movement in Trinidad and Tobago.

Annual Membership Fee

Individuals: 25 units in currency of residence

Organisations: 35 units in currency of residence

(Payable by cheque, money order or cash in currency of residence or US\$)

Founding members

Peggy Antrobus
Sonia Cuales
Joan French

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen
Honor Ford-Smith
Rhoda Reddock