NEW WOMAN Struggle

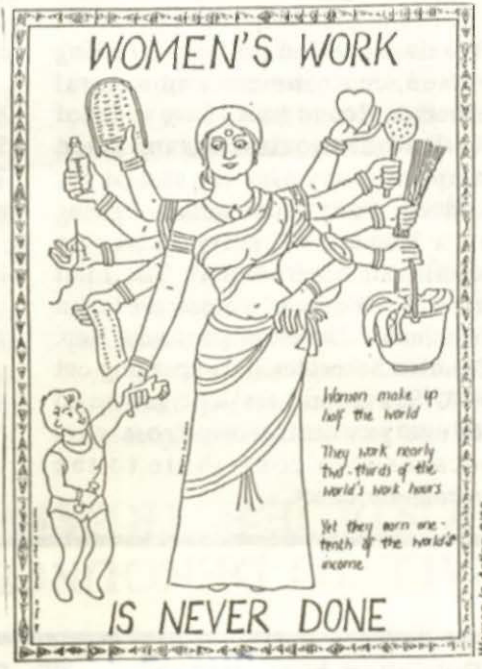
WAND'S Bi-monthly News Bulletin Volume 1: No. 2 - October 1989.

WOMEN'S WORK IS UNPAID AND UNDERPAID

The dual responsibility of women in the society does not receive adequate recognition. In fact it is blatantly belittled. What women do in the home to keep the nation's families together is grossly underated. Their programme involves the care and training of their children; and assistance to men in their attainment of domestic comfort, physical well-being and mental security. The role of a mother and housewife is easily the most financially thankless in the world.

Many of the women who shoulder the responsibility for keeping the households of a nation from social collapse, also undertake paid outside jobs to keep them from economic collapse. These jobs are frequently ones reserved for women at lower wages than would be paid to men. For their invaluable service women are respectively unpaid and underpaid.

The feature article in this issue of *STRUGGLE* points out that what women do in the home is a productive exercise, for which justice demands recognition and financial reward.



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AN OPEN LETTER TO BARBADIANS - ANOTHER OPINION

by Andaiye

In much of the Guyana government's propaganda, picked up in Barbados, the issues in Guyana have been reduced to a struggle between the People's National Congress (PNC) (the party of the late Mr. Forbes Burnham) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) (led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan); Black and Indian; *Democrat* and *Communist*.

No one knows which party or combination of parties would win a free and fair election in Guyana.

Certainly, the racial composition of the recent strikes and protests has indicated once again that the voting would not be simply racially-based, that ideology (in the narrow sense) would take a back seat, and that the question in each voter's mind would be *what party or groups of parties can help turn this country around*?

When a man or woman's daily minimum wage (or worse, old age pension), is less than the minimum wage in Haiti, and less therefore, than the cost of one pound of chicken, one pound of beef, or the oil to cook them with, party affiliation doesn't help. The issue is survival.

ABSURD LENGTHS

To back the PNC in the name of freedom is to carry anti-PPP, anti-communism to the absurd lengths of finding some value in rigged elections, once they are not *communist*.

Much of our region has never come to terms with the presence or the contribution of the Indo-Caribbean population as equal citizens of this region. So Afro-Caribbean people can believe they are being nationalist if they support a Black-led party as a means (they think) of keeping out an Indian-led party. For them (as for Kissinger re Chile), the right to vote is a fundamental right only if you like the group that wins.

But whatever the racial composition of a government that comes to power by free and fair elections in Guyana, Barbados, or in South Africa, it is the people's legitimate choice. Moreover, all major opposition parties in Guyana have pledged themselves against "winner-take-all" politics and to form a government of national unity, on the basis of the results of free and fair elections.

They have done so out of the recognition that to bring Guyana out of the mess the PNC has put it in will demand the active and collaborative participation of Guyanese.

RIGGED ELECTIONS

It is troops and condemnation for Noriega while the red carpet is cleaned and rolled out for Mr. Hoyte, the leader of a party which has presided over 21 years of rigged elections during which many have been beaten and some killed for defending their right to vote, just as in Panama.

Noriega had foreign observers at his rigged elections. Mr. Hoyte calls Caribbean observers (though not their money) *foreign intervention*.

But as Mr. Hoyte stops to talk to children on the airport tarmac, a commentator in Barbados is moved by his *common touch*.

And a Barbados dance company dances for him as though to celebrate the value-free nature of dance.

And members of the Bussa Committee go as part of the entourage at the laying of a wreath at the feet of a rebel slave -all we black people together, the democratic Barbadian Government, the anti-democratic Guyana government, the progressive nationalist Bussa Committee - to do what?

Celebrate what you all have in common with Bussa's vision of and struggle for freedom?

Something tainted is at work in all this, different for different groups, perhaps.

NARROW-MINDEDNESS

The racism, perhaps; the anti-communism perhaps; the love of being important with the important, perhaps; the cynical business-as-usual, perhaps.

And for the Bussa Committee, **perhaps**, a narrow-mindedness that can make it seem more important to have the Bussa statue recognised by the Barbadian authorities than to have it suitably recognised.

Nothing you can say or do after the event can reduce the mockery, or the hurt. (And it is perhaps because so many Afro-Guyanese, including myself, are of Barbadian descent that the hurt is always a little sharper).

As one Guyanese, I would like to thank the *ordinary* Barbadian men and women overheard on the radio, in taxis and buses, and on the street, who are ordinary enough to care what is happening to *ordinary* Guyanese.

For the rest, you cannot know how we receive the contempt for Guyanese that is demonstrated by the manner of receiving Mr. Hoyte, as it is mirrored every day in the newspaper headlines about "Guyanese jailed" "Guyanese deported" - these Guyanese who have been driven out of their particular piece of the Caribbean soil to be insulted through the length and breadth of the rest of the Caribbean.

But mark well. We will continue to be a nation of migrants -some migrating back to the Barbados from which their grandparents came to Guyana.

And we will continue to be unable to pay back our debts to your treasury until the political crisis in Guyana is solved, paving the way to a solution to Guyana's economic, social, cultural and spiritual crisis.

And for that solution to come without too much more suffering in Guyana, will demand principled behaviour on the question of Guyana from the region's governments, institutions and people.

·Info from: *Sunday Sun*, May 1989

Caribbean Feature

HOUSEWIVES WANT SELF-EMPLOYED STATUS

by Joy Springer

Housewives are working women too!

And a recommendation is currently before Labour Minister Mr Keith Simmons to have them recognised as self-employed persons so that they can contribute to and benefit from the National Insurance Scheme.

This recommendation was one of several which came out of a recent workshop sponsored by the Bureau of Women's Affairs and the CARICOM Secretariat with the theme "Management for Development - effecting change."

It captures the attention because few people see housewives as working women. In fact if you asked the average person for their definition of a housewife, the answer will most likely be *A woman who does not work.*"

But any serious examination of the role of a housewife will show that not only does she work but her unpaid labour involves longer hours, fewer vacations and less recognition than in any other field.

For instance, according to the latest edition of Development and Co-operation magazine, a woman in a Pakistani village spends around 63 hours a week on domestic work alone. An in an industrialised country where water comes from taps and cookers light with the flick of a switch, a housewife works an average 56 hours a week.

The housewives in the United States have worked out that if their services had to be purchased with wages at today's market rate, these services would cost about $20,000 a year. It is further estimated that unpaid housework done by women in industrialised countries contributes between 25 to 40 percent of gross national product.

On the local scene, I talked to a woman who has been a housewife for eight years.

She gave up her job as a secretary at a private firm when she was expecting her second child. She is not prepared to put a dollar value on the work she does now, but she says that if housewives were to be paid a salary it would have to be "a good one."

The mother of three, says: "People believe that when you're a housewife you just breeze through the day, getting out of bed whenever you like and working at your own speed. But if I wan to have a smooth day, I must be out of bed before my two-year-old and that means I'm up by 5.30 a.m."

Once up, she says, her activities are centred around home and family and can become so hectic that she does not know what she would do without the help of her husband and her parents.

On an average day, this is how she spends her time: "I make breakfast and make sure the children are bathed and dressed for school. I then drive them there and come back here to start preparing lunch. At lunchtime I pick them up and bring them home to eat. I then take them back and during the afternoon after cleaning up the lunch dishes, I usually find an hour or two to rest but some days there is the washing and pressing to do and so resting is out. Then 3 p.m. comes around and I'm back to the school to pick them up."

Her youngest son is not yet at school so he spends the days at home with his mother and she says: "He is a handful." Her quiet time comes after the children are in bed and it is then she really tries to relax by reading or just going to bed early.

She is also an active PTA member and she is regularly roped in as a member of the adult contingent to accompany the children on school tours.

This housewife understands why some people might think that housewives contribute nothing because she herself has sometimes wondered if she was really contributing enough. "But then something happens which lets you know you're doing a good job and its is being recognised. For instance, I once received a phone call from my daughter's teacher out of the blue to let me know that she was the most stable child in her class and the teacher felt it was because I was at home to give her the help she needs."

She says that seeing her children do well is the major advantage of being at home. "Because I'm here. I know what's going on with them and I can help them. I know that has made a difference."

But the major disadvantage is the lack of adult company. "I miss being with other adults and the stimulation that you get in the office environment."

In fact, she admits that she is ready to make the career switch again from housewife to secretary. "Eight years ago I made the switch from secretary to housewife but the children are older now and I think I'm ready to make the switch back."

In preparation, when she is not looking after her children, this housewife is busy practising her shorthand and perfecting her typing speed.

From: *Barbados Advocate* May 24, 1989

WE CAN MAKE IT WORK - Marriage and Blindness

By Nathalie Giraudel

All women, regardless of colour, creed or class,look forward at some time to their wedding day, and of course, blind women are no exception. Unfortunately, though, this desire is not always supported by their families and it is seldom encouraged.

Some families tend to believe that it is beyond the ability of a blind woman to be a capable wife and mother, especially if such individuals are not allowed to function *normally* in the home. This situation can be frustrating to a blind woman.

Many families would rather have their adult blind daughter remain at home under their care and protection, than have her be self-sufficient and independent. This is because they believe that she would be taken advantage of by *men*. The following is an account of my personal experience on the issue, which I am sure a lot of blind women will agree, has also been theirs. In my case my relationship is with someone with a physical disability.

I have been blind for the past 14 years and according to my family, I am always to be served and assisted by someone. I have never, during the time since I became blind, been allowed to assist in or prepare a meal. To use the words of my mother: "Natalie cannot see to help herself, so we must do for her." Truthfully speaking, these comments annoy me, for I know within myself I can manage fairly well on my own, a view which is not shared by them.

Our relationship has never been supported by my family. Recently, on learning of our upcoming marriage, they indicated in no uncertain terms their disapproval and objections. It is even impossible to engage in any constructive discussion on the matter, because it always develops upon the rest of the family.

I have already turned down an offer from one of my sisters who lives in the United States, to join her there and this has also contributed to their disgust and opposition to my decision. She wrote in a letter to me, "The day you go ahead and marry that guy, you can just forget that you have a sister named Gloria." Although she has never met my intended husband, her words in a letter to him were most humiliating. Among other things, she said, "You will dream of a wedding, but there won't be one." In the meantime, I can only hope that given time, they will come to respect my decision and understand the whole situation.

I believe in the proverb which says, *Seeing is believing*, and I firmly believe that my family's negative attitude towards our relationship can only be reversed by proving to them that we can make it work.

·Info from: *Conquest* Vol. No:1 January, 1989.

Nathalie Giraudel, at WAND Consultation/Symposium in November, 1988.

Lamps

A lamp means light
For my personal darkness
Which is not at all
physical
And when
I am the proud possessor
of five
How great is my light
For I have not Five senses
Now figuratively lit up ?

Nelcia Robinson
from: *Poetry is feeling*

Women Priests Tense Issue: Bishop

Anglican Bishop of Barbados, Drexel Gomez tendered an extensive report on the Anglican Church as the diocese held its annual general meeting yesterday.

In his 26-page summary, the bishop called attention to the struggle of women for the priesthood in the church; the lack of funds forthcoming for the Codrington Appeal and the establishment of several parish outreach centres to help families suffering substance abuse.

The bishop said in Barbados there would be no provision for women in the priesthood until two-thirds of the diocese agree.

Adding that the issue would remain for some time and that he was disappointed with the decision not to directly address the issue of women in the episcopate, Gomez said: "The latest count disclosed that five dioceses agreed and three disagreed."

"The matter became the most widely discussed issue within the certain sections of the Worldwide Anglican Communion, and the 1978 Lambeth (conference) decision on Ordination of Women to the priesthood left the matter entirely in the hands of the individual provinces."

·Info from: Daily Nation, May 22, 1989

CALL TO DENOUNCE 'HOSTAGE'S' TREATMENT

Caribbean women's organisations and female personalities are being urged to voice concern over the treatment of a woman who was held "hostage" by local policemen who claimed they are looking for her husband.

The appeal was made by the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) which related the ordeal of Ms. Leila Ramsammy, a mother of five, who was allegedly detained recently by police and held in the same room with about ten men, all hand-cuffed and foot-chained.

The Mahaicony housewife, who claimed that she belongs to no political party, stated that she was arrested on May 5 and held for one day and two nights at CID headquarters in Georgetown.

Ms Ramsammy said she was placed at night in a room with about ten men and was escorted at all times by policemen, even to the toilet. She stated that she was not given anything to eat or drink, except a serving of rich soup, which she refused. In addition, she was not allowed access to her lawyer.

The woman believed she was held as a hostage by the police who threatened to keep her in jail until her husband "give himself up".

The WPO charged that the arrest, detention and escort of the woman by policemen were improper and demoralising, and constitute "gross violations of her constitutional and human rights".

by Moses Nagamootoo

·Info from *EC News* May 19-20, 1989

5 WEST INDIAN STATES STILL SPURN SEX EQUALITY ACCORD

Almost a decade after the United Nations General Assembly adopted a convention to spur equality between the sexes, five Caribbean Community (CARICOM) nations have still not agreed to be bound by the provisions of the accord.

According to a UN report, Antigua-Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago were not on the list of UN members which were *state parties* to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

States parties are countries which have ratified an international convention and have agreed to be bound by the accord's provisions.

Guyana became the first CARICOM country to approve the convention when it handed the UN the *instruments of ratification* in July, 1980.

In all, 96 countries including Jamaica, St Kitts-Nevis, Barbados, St Lucia, Dominica, St Vincent, Venezuela, Haiti, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, Zambia, Ethiopia, Peru, Panama and Hungary have ratified the convention.

On the other hand, the United States, Chile, Tanzania and Saudi Arabia are among those which have not approved it.

The convention was approved by the General Assembly towards the end of 1979 and it came into force on September 3, 1981.

Under its provisions, countries which have ratified it agree to take steps to improve the status of women and to encourage their full integration into every aspect of life.

They must also submit periodic reports on the steps they have taken to remove barriers of sex discrimination and to improve the quality of life of women.

The committee, on which Guyana is represented by Desiree Bernard, wants UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the convention by the General Assembly.

·Info from: *EC News* May 19-20, 1989

WOMEN TOLD TO PULL THEIR WEIGHT

Antigua and Barbuda's Deputy Prime Minister Lester Bird has given the region's female politicians a catalogue of *musts* to attain full and equal participation not only at *operational* decision-making, but at the highest policy and strategic levels of their political parties.

Bird said such a move can be achieved if women are prepared to formulate an intensive programme *to publicise roles promoting your equality.*

"You as a group must be aware of the need to increase your political participation. You must work for educational reforms to change cultural concepts about the perceived inequality of women," the No. 2 man in the Antiguan government hierarchy told the regional Women in Democracy seminar under the theme, ***The Role of Young Female Politicians in the Caribbean***, being held here at the Beachcomber Hotel.

The two-day seminar attracted regional delegates from the Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St Kitts, St Lucia, St.Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and host country Antigua and Barbuda.

He added: "You must continually be pro-active not reactive in your determination to participate in politics while being fully aware of the sacrifices, rewards and consequences that are involved."

"You must promote solidarity among women within and outside political parties as well as in women's groups and publicly denounce any abuse or violation of law that affects the equality of women."

"You must become involved in the eradication programme of drugs and substance abuse. You must become involved in a programme of education to rehabilitate those who have become involved in these scourges to mankind. Such is your mission, such is your role, such should be your vision."

Local interest groups represented were the United National Democratic Party (UNDP), the Antigua-Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM), the government's Women's Desk.

·Info from: EC News June 2, 1989

Human Rights Abuses in Guatemala

Early in the morning of 9 Feburary 1988 Ana Elizabeth Paniagua Morales was queuing for bread at her neighbourhood bakery in Guatemala City. She was seized by a group of heavily armed men in plain clothes, beaten and forced into a white van with darkened windows.

Ana Paniagua's body was found two days later. She had been stabbed and her throat slashed almost to the point of decapitation. At her wake the white van reappeared and shortly afterwards men whom her family believed to be members of the security forces visited her family home. They threatened that her brothers and sisters "would be next".

Ana Paniagua was a former student at the autonomous University of San Carlos (USAC) and an activist in the Association of University Students (AEU). For several years she had received anonymous death threats and four months before her murder she had been warned by a police lieutenant that, "We know all about you."

Ana Paniagua's case was the first of a series of murders in February and March 1988 which Guatemalans dubbed the panel blanca ("white van") murders. Victims included student activists, teachers and business people. In the following months the National Police reportedly collected 300 pages of documentation on the cases - this implicated the Treasury Police in at least eight murderers, including that of Ana Paniagua...

·Info from: *Focus* - Amnesty International Newsletter, April 1989

WORLDWIDE LINKS ACTIVISTS

The bimonthly WorldWIDE News highlights individuals, events, projects, studies, reports, organizations and policies affecting women, environment and natural resources. Recent issues have included stories on: dioxin-contaminated tampons, baby diapers and paper products; Costa Rican women fighting for a Women's Equity Act and a sustainable environment; The First African Women's Assembly on Sustainable Development; and Rep. Claudine Schneider (RI) speaking out on U.S. automakers' obligation to reduce gas emissions from cars because they contribute to the greenhouse effect.

The WorldWIDE Directory lists women working on environmental projects around the world, along with their specific interests and expertise.

Membership costs $15 for students, $35 for others. The directories cost $17.50 for members and $20.50 for non-members.

Make checks or international money orders payable to **WorldWIDE, P O Box 40885, Washington, D.C. 20016.**

·Info from: *New Directions For Women* May/June, 1989

WOMEN LEAD IN OWNING HOMES

Women own 80 per cent of the houses being sold or built in Barbados.

This was revealed yesterday by Minister of Education Cyril Walker, who said the pattern of female home ownership suggested men were failing in a vital area of responsibility, namely the provision of shelter for their women and children.

Speaking at a Family Life seminar for male teenagers at the Division of Health Sciences, Walker said these women occupied the houses with their children, while their male partners were content with visits.

He also expressed concern that mothers were the only parents in far too many homes in Barbados. He said mothers were often saddled with the responsibility of raising children while the fathers failed to make a contribution.

"Too many young men fail to realise that privileges have attendant responsilities. Consequently, they father children and leave the rearing of their offspring in the hands of the mothers without offering adequate, and in some cases, any financial, emotional or psychological support."

·Info from: *Daily Nation*, July 11, 1989

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