

WOMAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Struggle

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MATERNITY LEAVE ROW

Caribbean representative for the International Labour Organisation (ILO), George Depeana, says he finds it "rather Unusual" that in St. Lucia unmarried pregnant teachers are not given maternity leave with pay.

The right of the unmarried teachers to bear children without losing their jobs is at the centre of a controversy between government and the St. Lucia Teachers Union.

Clause 23 of the statutory rules and orders governing the conduct of the island's teachers sanctions dismissal of female teachers who bear illegitimate children twice, unionists complain.

The teachers union which has labelled the clause unconstitutional and discriminatory has taken government to court on the matter, but lost an appeal. However, the union continues to campaign for a change in the legislation.

Depeana said that maternity leave for teachers was one of the first issues settled when the ILO was formed 70 years ago.

THE NATION (Barbados)

January 26, 1989.

CBC TEAM PROTESTS OVER DONNA, DARNLEY

The normal cricket commentary team at CBC-TV and radio refused to man their posts recently in protest of a management decision not to use local commentators Donna Symmonds and Darnley Boxill for the match.

But a few hours later, CBC's Sylvester Forde came to the station's team, saying he was sure something could be worked out. All but one returned to their microphones.

That one was Symmonds, who said she was told the Indian audiences would not be comfortable with a female voice talking cricket.

So she refused to return to the job.

"I was unhappy about the way it was handled, so I stayed out", Symmonds said.

The commentary team negotiated as a team, so when other members learned about Symmonds and Boxill's dismissal from the local matches, they said they wouldn't work either.

THE NATION (Barbados)

March 3, 1989.

CALIFORNIA BIRTH CONTROL CUT

California Governor George Deukmejian (R) has proposed a budget for next year that eliminates the state's aid to family planning, which has been about \$36.2 million a year. Planned Parenthood Executive Director, Norma Clevenger sharply criticized the governor's decision.

Deukmejian complains that this and many other cuts in social programs are necessary because Californians in November approved an initiative that requires the state to spend 40 percent of its budget on schools. He has been talking about trying to get Californians to repeal the initiative, and may be using social program cuts as a weapon.

The Democrats who control the legislature are not likely to go along with the governor's attempt to axe the birth control program.

Info from Los Angeles Times

January 11, 1989.

BID TO PUT WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recently, Caribbean women holding senior government positions assembled in Barbados to devise a scheme that would throw more women into the mainstream of regional development programmes.

The two-day workshop on Women, Gender and Development, was convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for aid donors and policy makers on women's issues.

It was designed to train officials and get project planners to incorporate in future development projects, assessments of how such projects would affect women.

"Too few development projects promote women directly", said UNDP Resident Representative Rolf Stefanson when he addressed the assembly of women on Monday. "By the end of this workshop", he added, "we should be in a position to know how to analyse projects so as to ensure that gender-related issues receive the attention they deserve".

Delegates to the workshop were selected from senior government and Civil Service positions in Barbados and Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Donor agencies were also represented at the two-day meeting.

The UNDP also brought in two senior specialists from the Women's Division in New York to head the briefing session, along with Pegzy Antrobus, a consultant on Women's Affairs in Barbados.

The focus of UNDP's Women in Development policy is to assist governments, in line with national development priorities, to integrate women to the largest extent in their development activities.

E.C. News

February 3, 1989.

FEMINIST MAGAZINE ACCUSED OF LIBEL

That well known newspaper tycoon and Kinnockite, Robert Maxwell, forced the feminist magazine *Everywoman*, to withdraw its September issue from the newsagents. The reason? *Everywoman* was accused of libelling his prodigious tabloid, *The Daily Mirror*, by suggesting that 'the world's most famous agony aunt', Marje Proops, no longer writes its problem page.

The *Everywoman* article was written in response to the outrageous advice given to a woman who had been sexually abused as a child by her step father. The woman

should, according to 'Aunty Marje', simply forget about it. What would be the point of upsetting her mother, who obviously loves the man, now that she herself has grown up and left home.

The article also referred to previous advice given to a woman who came across a pile of pornographic magazines stashed away by her husband. This time the advice was that the woman should read the pornography herself since she was probably the root of the problem. She should learn a few exciting new techniques which would keep her husband happy so he wouldn't have to resort to pornography.

Maxwell took out a high court injunction against Everywoman when he was alerted to the article by the UK Press Gazette asking for a comment. Everywoman's distributors were also served with an injunction, but the printers, one of the many companies owned by Maxwell, were - not surprisingly - let off the hook.

Although Maxwell told the high court that he was taking out the injunction to stop publication of the magazine, subscription copies had in fact already been sent out and the issue was already on the newsstands, involving Everywoman in the costly exercise of withdrawing them, in addition to the loss of sales.

Maxwell agreed to settle out of court, with Everywoman paying costs, but this would have forced the magazine into liquidation.

Everywoman is still waiting to hear the terms on which Maxwell will agree to settle but say that if his terms are unreasonable they will fight the case. They have opened a legal fund which, should they not need it, will go to other magazines faced with a similar situation of what they see as blatant censorship.

Meanwhile, we hope the offices of both Everywoman and The Mirror will be flooded with letters showing Maxwell that Everywoman might be small enough to bully, but that women united are not.

Fran

Outwrite (England)

Issue 69 October 1988.

SPEECH THERAPIST FIGHTS EQUAL VALUE CASE

Because of the way equal value legislation works in Britain, bringing an equal value claim is not only a long and expensive process but also a politically lonely one. Claims must be brought by individual women; 'class actions' of the kind taken by women workers in the USA are not possible here. The law forces women to act

individually, yet no individual woman could afford to take advantage of the law. The legal costs are such that, without the financial support of a union and/or the EOC, she would have little chance of success. She can prove her value but only at a price!

In some cases, there might be strings attached to the union purse. After all, unions are not immune to the same sexism that women have to challenge in the courts to achieve equal pay. What do women do if keeping their funding means keeping quiet about the sexist attitudes of those providing the funds? This was the dilemma faced by Liz Clark, a speech therapist involved in one of the most important equal value cases in the public sector. The union that was funding the speech therapists' claim took a crucial decision affecting the future of the case without bothering to consult the women involved: even in fighting their own equal value case women don't count! Liz Clark not only disagreed with the decision but also felt that the manner in which it was taken and the union's subsequent behaviour were incompatible with the objectives of the case. Since the union would not change its position, or even acknowledge that there was a problem with it, she had no choice but to proceed without financial backing. Abandoning the case at this point would have been a waste of the successes won after three years' work.

The speech therapists' claim is based on a comparison with clinical psychologists and NHS pharmacists. Speech therapy has always been 'a women's profession', and this is reflected in the pay discrepancies between them and other comparable professions in the NHS; an increase in the order of 5% at the bottom of the grades and 33% at the top would be required to achieve equality. Speech therapists are arguing that their training, skills and responsibilities have been undervalued precisely because they are women. Many people think speech therapy is something to do with elocution and all you need is a middle-class accent, and 'the caring attitude' that come 'naturally' to women. In fact, speech therapists undergo a long and intensive training, and they are responsible for assessing and treating a wide-range of language and communication disabilities. Their job has nothing to do with changing people's accents, but getting their job recognised has everything to do with changing people's attitudes.

Changing people's attitudes to speech therapy, and more generally to the skills involved in 'women's work', cannot be done just through the courts. Although the legal process is important, a wider campaign is needed. Equal value cases have often been fought in relative isolation: women might have received support from their fellow workers and their union, but there has been no campaign bringing together women from related areas of work and taking the cases beyond their narrow legal context. The special circumstances of Liz Clark's case have made such a campaign indispensable. The Liz Clark Support Campaign has distributed information to Speech Therapists, academics in allied disciplines, doctors, health workers, and

women's groups. We have been working in close co-operation with Liz Clark's union branch, and have received wide-spread support from individual speech therapists and other union members.

OUTWRITE (England)

Issue 69 October 1988.

CENTERPIECES

An English feminist magazine which campaigns against women's oppression, racism and imperialism as well as women's struggles and achievements, reports:

Women in leisure is a women only group for women with learning difficulties, which aims to increase people's awareness of their own self worth and strengths. The group has regular sessions on different leisure activities, as well as time spent in discussing and working through the issues of oppression which face many of these women.

The Youthreach Greenwich Young Mothers' Group was set up in 1986, primarily to encourage self-confidence, self-assertion and self-sufficiency among the young women participating.

Women Axe Section 28 are a new group created from the previous women's section of the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, the new group was set up in order to organise as women and to expand their aims beyond fighting the Section.

Young Women's Helpline is a new help line set up in the Birmingham and West Midlands area to provide help to young women who have been subjected to sexual harassment. The helpline has been set up in response to a report 'young women and the Youth Training Scheme' which highlights the level of harassment young women face, and the lack of response from the Training Commission. The helpline also provides advice of other employment rights.

OUTWRITE (England)

Issue 69 October 1988.

GENDER IN ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Sherry Ahrentzen, Department of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, P. O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201, U.S.A. is putting together a booklet with syllabi and descriptions of methods instructors have used to integrate gender-related issues and perspectives in design studios, special courses, special curricular events, and in courses of design theory, research methodology and environment-behaviour studies.

She has requested persons who have a relevant syllabus or studio design program, or would like to write a description of the methods she/he has used in teaching gender-related issues to send it to her. She hopes to make copies of the completed booklet available to contributors at reduced duplication cost.

Info from Women & Environments,
Winter 1988.

SELF DEFENCE

In Lima, Peru, some women have organized themselves into Women's Mutual Self-Defence Groups. Each member has a whistle to summon the rest in case of emergency - particularly to defend against violence in their homes. The number of violent incidents in their neighbourhoods is reported to have decreased, according to a June 1987 story in OUTWRITE, a U.K publication.

Women & Environments
Winter 1988.

RETURNING AFTER TIME OUT

One U.K. organisation has a useful service that might be adapted by other professions to help women returning to work after a career break (children, sickness, etc.). HERA (Housing Employment Register and Advice) supported by the independent Women in Housing Group, and the Over Forty Association for Women Workers in London, operates a register of part-time and job-sharing vacancies in housing work, gives advice on training and re-training for housing workers, and promotes flexible work arrangements. It assigns people to temporary positions from its pool of experienced workers, frequently a valuable foot-in-the-door for women returning to work.

More information from HERA, Basement Office, 120/122 Cromwell Road, London SW7 4ET, U.K.

Women & Environments
Winter 1988