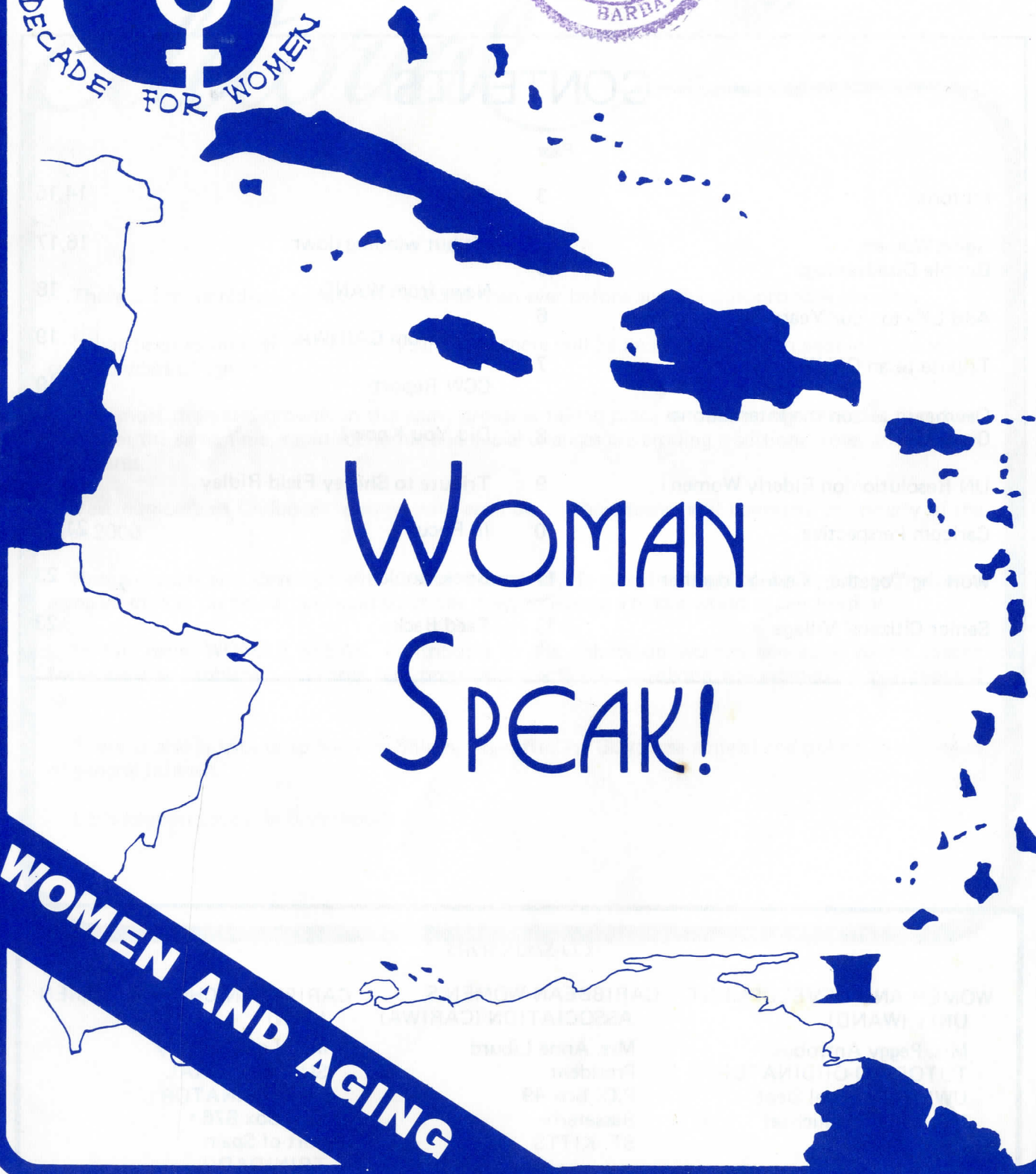


WEST INDIES COLLECTION



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT CARIBBEAN WOMEN No. 8

September 1982



WOMAN SPEAK!

WOMEN AND AGING

Editor: Sandra Edwards
 Co-ordinator: Lorna Gordon
 Graphics for this issue by: Lesley Whatley

WOMAN SPEAK!

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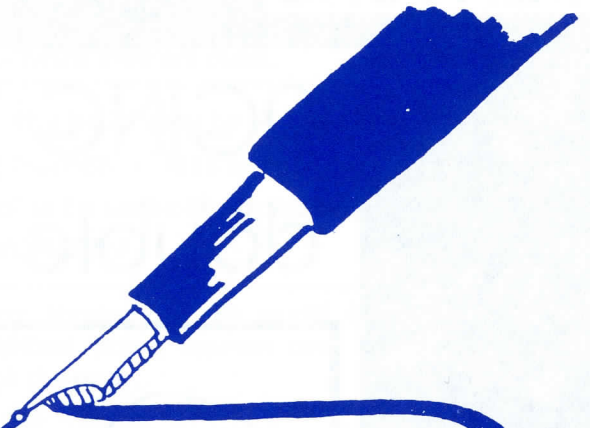
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Editorial



There are more elderly people in the world than ever before and the proportion is growing.

It has been estimated that by the year 2000, there will be nearly 600 million people in the world over 60 years of age.

The most dramatic growth in the aging group is taking place in developing countries like ours, where, at the same time, rapid economic and social changes are eroding traditional roles and support structures.

Vast numbers of Caribbean women who are now in their teens, will comprise the elderly of the year 2000.

Humanitarian and developmental issues related to the specific needs of women in general, and aging women in particular, demand solutions now, to ensure a better world in our lifetime.

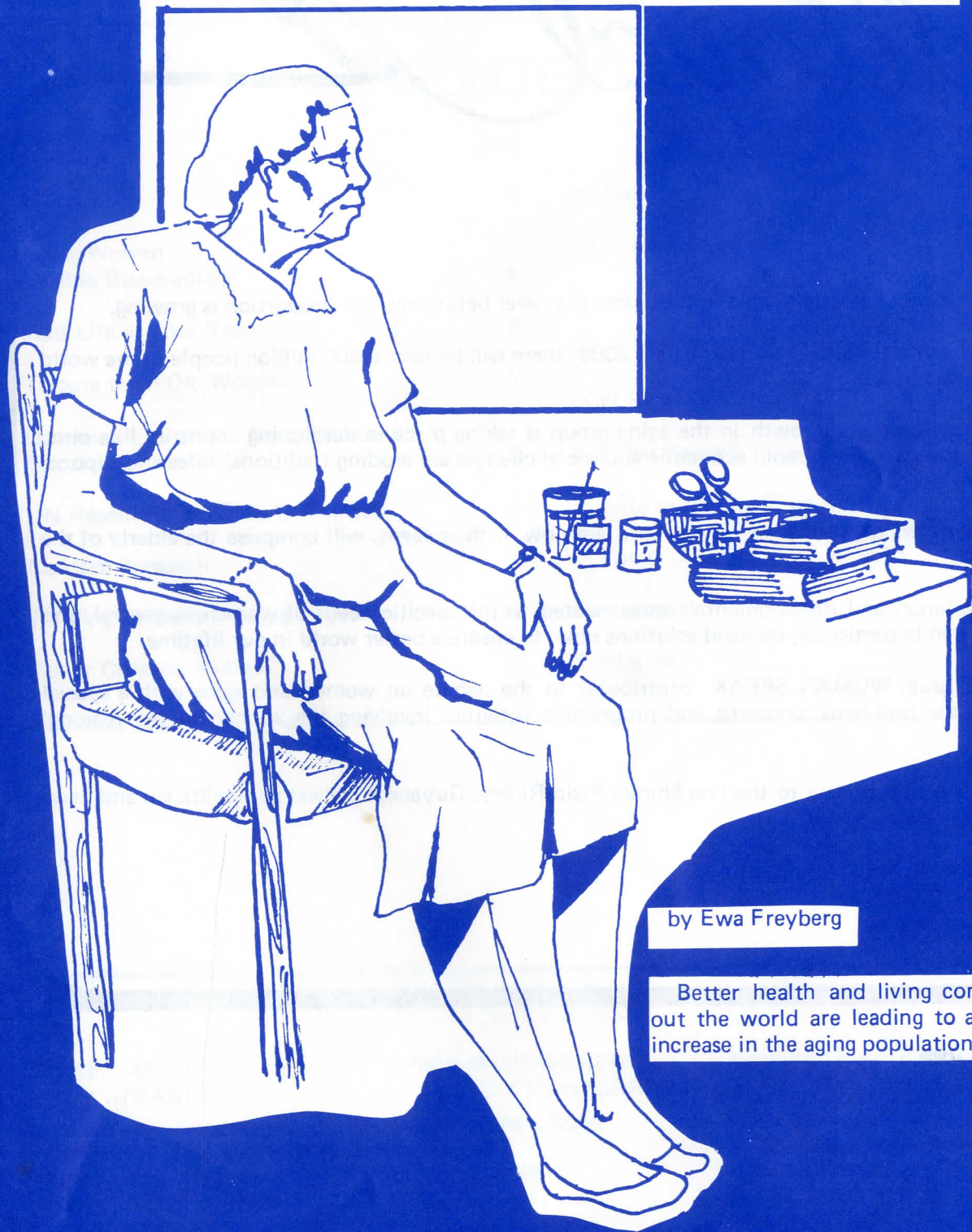
In this issue, WOMAN SPEAK contributes to the debate on women and aging with a special focus on the problems, concerns and programme activities involving the women of our regional family.

There is also a tribute to the late Shirley Field-Ridley, Guyanese activist and politician and news of general interest.

Let's keep in touch, in Sisterhood.

FEATURE

AGING WOMEN double disadvantage



by Ewa Freyberg

Better health and living conditions throughout the world are leading to an unprecedented increase in the aging population of countries.

The trend is most marked in industrialised countries where some 10 per cent of citizens are 60 years old or more. But it is becoming an important factor in developing countries where two to four per cent are in the aging group. By the end of this century, the aging population in developing countries is expected to increase rapidly.

Men tend to marry women younger than themselves, leaving women widowed in their later years.

An often overlooked consequence of this demographic shift is the particular problems of elderly women, who already form the majority of the aging in industrialised societies and will eventually predominate in the Third World.

The reasons why women, often widowed, are the largest aging group, and are likely to face loneliness, are clear.

Firstly, in most countries life expectancy is much higher for women than for men. Secondly, men tend to marry women younger than themselves, leaving women widowed in their later years. The third factor is the recent trend for older persons, particularly women, to live alone rather than with their families.

Some of the problems of elderly women are age-old.

The emotional and economic consequences of widowhood, for example, seem surprisingly similar in countries of every type of culture and level of development. And, women in all societies are — to a greater or lesser degree — trained for dependency and are valued primarily for their nurturing roles.

To overcome this dependency will not be easy, even in countries where women have traditionally been a part of economic life.

Elderly women suffer from severe economic disadvantages. Just as their wages are lower during their working life, so the income of aging women is considerably less than that of elderly men.

Under most social security systems women are inequitably treated, on the grounds that they are homemakers assured of the male breadwinner's support during and after their working life. In addition, their earnings and years of work outside the home are almost always less than men's, and income disparity between the sexes grows in later years. Women's savings are therefore less and they find it much harder to

find work when they are older.

the best way to make the elderly - notably women - less isolated, lonely and marginal is to make them more productive and independent.

In short, throughout the world, in industrial or agricultural areas, women over 60 are the poorest of the poor.

Given all these problems, policy makers are asking what can be done.

One answer is to make it easier for men and women to remain in employment and to remove impediments to the elderly seeking jobs, particularly women who are likely to be discriminated against because of both sex and age.

Interestingly, the participation of older people in the economy is much higher in developing countries. This is partly because the concept of "retirement" does not really apply in rural societies where social security is less available, and the extreme poverty of many older people presses them into low paying and low productivity jobs.

But in all countries, policy makers are turning to the view that jobs for older people, especially women, cannot be treated as welfare. They are realising that the best way to make the elderly — notably women — less isolated, lonely and marginal, is to make them more productive and independent.

What is needed, are policies in rich and poor countries alike, to ensure the inclusion of the aged in all aspects of life: economic, political, cultural, social and the family.

Lessons can be learned from the experience of industrial societies who are already facing the problem associated with an increase in their aging population. Careful planning should make it possible for developing countries to take the best from the developed world's experience while avoiding negative features.

And maybe developed countries can learn from the approach to aging found in developing countries, such as how to reinforce the natural, informal network of the extended family and how to build on the solidarity of the local community.

Of course, a most important factor in these developments will be the requirements of elderly women — the forgotten poor.

This article was issued by the United Nations Division for Economic and Social Information.

Add Life To Your Years

by Dr. Lobe Monekosso



With the poet, H.S. Fritsch, we recognise that "Age is a quality of mind!" "If you take the best from life, if in life you keep the jest, if you hold on to your love, no matter how the birthdays fly, you are not old. But if you leave your dreams behind and if your ambitious fires are dead — then you are old!"

In the Caribbean, we are passing through a historical phase in which the proportions of the young in our population have not significantly dropped, whereas that of the elderly is rising rapidly.

Our life expectancy has reached the biblical "three-score-years-and-ten". We therefore share the characteristics of the industrialised developed nations (a high proportion of elderly persons) and those of basically agricultural developing nations (a high proportion of infants and youth).

The active working population (of the Caribbean) therefore has the unusual privilege of providing for the needs of both young and old.

In rural agricultural societies, the elderly person is a highly privileged individual.

In fact, in the traditional societies of Africa, age was a precondition for leadership and political power. It was a great privilege for a person to accept responsibility for the older member of the family. This was not merely due to the low life expectancy or the relative rarity of elderly folk, but because of an appreciation of the value of wisdom and experience.

The elderly more than earned their livelihood by inculcating tradition, culture and know-how in the younger generation — especially young children and adolescents.

There is need to fully exploit and capture the wisdom and experience of the past and transfer it to the young, to the mutual advantage of young and old.

In modern technological societies, the young can acquire knowledge and skills with astonishing rapidity, and this has led the young and the middle-aged to ignore the elderly who are less well equipped technologically.

Disease, disability, unemployment, isolation and loss of economic and social independence, have become associated with old age, but modern scientific knowledge tells us that aging can be a serene and beautiful process, imbued with tranquility and ending in a dignified death.

We have sufficient technology to ensure that we need not pass through all the seven ages of humanity described in Shakespeare's "As You Like It". In particular, we should be able to avoid the last age "that ends this strange eventful history, second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything!"

Edited from a feature issued by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute in Jamaica. Dr. Lobe Monekosso is the PAHO/WHO Country Representative in Jamaica.

TRIBUTE TO AN OLD WOMAN



by Onetta

Withered and grey
from past years of sufferance and encumbrance
Time has its story played its part
Bone-weary and footsore,
you've built the foundation
of this country's economy
laying away the stores of reaped sugar canes
for the yearly foreign income

Many a time your tears
have drowned the
Terror of facing a world of
Fears and frustrations
Many a time sleepless nights
yield a mental surge of

strength to battle and conquer
the conflict of facing yet
a morrow of
Anguish and pain
to feel the hunger
you can't fulfill
of financing the quest
for education
which your offspring
dearly strive for

Oft-times you have
held your belly and
dropped to your
boney knees
just wishing for
one moment
that rain
would bathe the
cracked contours
of the land
and provide
your impoverished
family with food
to quell the
growing, gurgling
noises of hunger
in their guts

Some unexplainable path
carves itself in the
rigours of your conflicted mind
Easing the tension
you suffer so
"It must be the
strength of my dead husband
rest him in his grave
He was god-filled
it must be him telling
me to go on
as he did in his
small span of life"
And because she has
humbled
She has conquered her
grave emotions
fastened to the strength
of faith
walked the road of pain
and sorrow
with a victory-veiled
masterful urge to
brave the foes of this
hazardous life

Onetta (Greene) is a 19-year-old Barbadian poet.

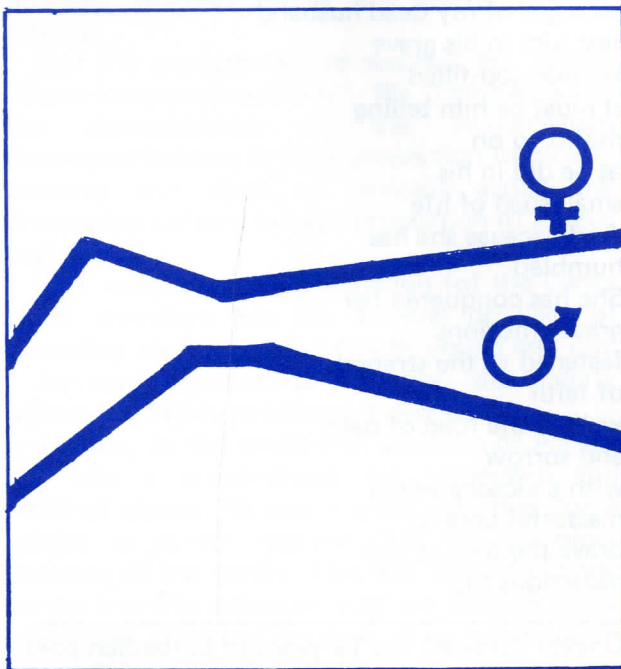
OVERHEARD ... on the International Circuit

"Imagine if you were one of those old great screen queens like Clara Bow, let's say, who was always called the "IT" girl. Imagine being an "IT" girl at 80. It'd be pretty weird. There are victims of this ... there's the sort of Marilyn Monroe syndrome, where it almost isn't allowed that the person ages and becomes another, not the beautiful goddess figure that she's been. Generally, when screen queens are brought back to the screen in this day and age, they are cast as some monstrous villainess — old — and everybody sits in the audience and gets that hideous sort of vicarious feeling: 'look at her; what's happened to her now.' ...I've found it never mattered how old people are as long as they have their own personalities. I just find old people in a way fascinating when they don't care, when they don't present you with just their age."

Actress Diane Cilento, writer and director of the film *Last Tango with Rudolph Valentino*.



LIFE EXPECTANCY RANGE



"Aging is really a woman's problem. Unfortunately for (our) half of the human race women do live longer and sometimes it is as much as 10 per cent more life expectancy for women than it is for men. I do not think that the biologists are really satisfied that they understand precisely why. It is clearly something genetic rather than societal or cultural. The older ages, .. the frail elderly, this is largely a woman's group; from 75 onward there are probably four or five women to one man. I hope that the World Assembly is going to address itself to this particular problem of women and ... are going to attempt to determine the reason for the .. longer life-span of women or the shorter life-span of men and see what protective elements there might be that can be applied to the male half of society and see if we cannot all end our last days, men and women, together."

William Kerrigan, Secretary General of the U.N. sponsored **World Assembly on Aging**.

U.N. RESOLUTION ON ELDERLY WOMEN

Resolution 1982/23 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, adopted May 4, 1982:

- **URGED** that the special problems of elderly women, such as income security, education, employment, housing, health and community support services, be given explicit and full attention by the World Assembly on Aging and be dealt with in the plan of action to be adopted by the Assembly;
- **REQUESTED** the United Nations and its Member States to continue to collect data on the situation of elderly women to serve as a basis for formulating and implementing policies and programmes to define their special economic and social planning needs;
- **URGED** all Governments, national and international organisations —both governmental and non-governmental — the mass media, educational bodies and all individuals concerned, to strengthen their efforts to adopt or change national laws to ensure that elderly women have equal opportunities to live in health, dignity, self-reliance and self-fulfillment.

OFFICIAL WAA LOGO



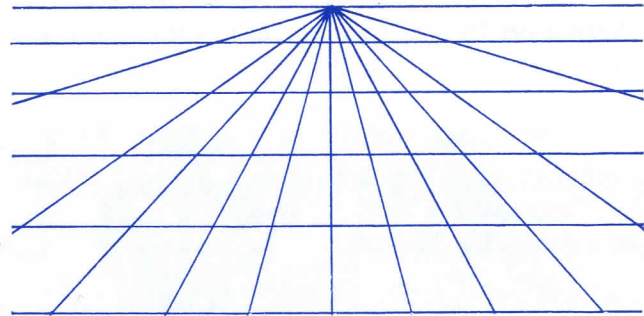
A banyan tree, symbolizing longevity, self-reliance, continuing growth and a community meeting place, was chosen as the logo for the World Assembly on Aging. It was designed by Oscar Berger, an 80-year-old artist from the United States.

An unusual shaped tree, the banyan spreads out hundreds of feet beyond its main trunk. In many communities its canopy provides shelter for market places, social gatherings and meetings of village elders. In some societies the tree has religious significance and is also a focal point for political and social ceremonies.

The banyan tree is a native to tropical areas of Asia. Varieties are also found in Africa and Latin America, including the Caribbean. From its main branches the tree drops aerial roots which establish themselves in the ground to form additional trunks. These trunks also send out aerial roots and thus the tree can grow to cover an immense area. Some trees reach 2,000 feet in circumference, providing shelter for 20,000 people. It can grow to a height of 100 feet.



CARICOM PERSPECTIVE



by Dr. Kurleigh King,
Secretary-General,
CARICOM Secretariat.

Partly because of the attention that has been given in recent years to the problems of the very young, there is a relative increase in the numbers of the elderly. In 1979, it was estimated that there were 300,000 persons over 65 years of age in the Caribbean Community, but this figure is expected to rise to 500,000 by the year 2000.

As the expectation of life in the Caribbean countries is higher for women, there are more women than men in the more advanced years and attention should be given to assessing their special needs.

The constant movement of young people from the country into the towns means that the elderly are often left behind in rural areas, increasing in number and relatively deprived of means and of services.

One of the things we need to do in each member country is to gather information about the numbers, conditions and needs of the elderly.

This is the year in which we should begin to examine the issues under at least three headings.

Firstly, the major problems and needs of the elderly, including their disabilities, their health status, housing, reduced incomes, financial insecurity due to unemployment, recreational facilities, their emotional security and their need for continued participation in community life.

Secondly, the services that are available for elderly people, e.g., the health services, special housing facilities, assistance for those elderly people who remain at home, special ways of reducing their environmental hazards and their rights in the social security system.

Thirdly, the development of national policies, including the development of objectives for the care of the elderly, the role of non-governmental organisations, special training of those who care for the aged and systems of information about their status and services.

All this we cannot do in one year in the Caribbean Community, but this is the year in which we should begin.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT

19 January 1982

WORKING TOGETHER

JAMAICA: Directory of Elderly Experts

The Bureau of Women's Affairs in Jamaica is compiling a Directory of Elderly Resource Specialists for distribution to government and other agencies.

The Bureau hopes that through this directory the elderly persons involved will receive orders for the products they make and thus earn some extra money.

Meanwhile, the Bureau is following up a liaison with some of Jamaica's elderly which began earlier this year, when the Bureau held two workshops to demonstrate the rare or unusual skills of the elderly. The purpose of the workshops was to have the elderly pass their skills onto the young.

Since then, the Bureau has arranged for two elderly persons to train six young people, predominantly young women. Further arrangements are being made to bring 12 elderly and 72 young people into the first phase of this Elderly-Youth Training Programme.

Among the skills being imparted to the young are ancient clay pottery, traditional methods of food preparation, fruit preservation, several types of needlecraft, belt-weaving and antique furniture restoration.

MONTSERRAT: Home Nursing Care

"The standard of living of the aged in Montserrat has definitely improved over the past 18 years, and the Old People's Welfare Association has been ensuring that life for the elderly is as comfortable as possible."

So says Mrs. Margaret Dyer, M.P. from Montserrat, and a founding member of the Old People's Welfare Association.

Mrs. Dyer reports that the Association provides services such as housing, food allowance, home-help nursing care, geriatric equipment, beds, bedding and clothing. It also holds an annual Christmas party for the elderly.

The Association was started by Mrs. Patricia

CARING TOGETHER



Griffin, a geriatric nurse, with the assistance of her husband, the late Dr. N.C. Griffin. Other members who were instrumental in establishing the Association include: Mrs. Ann Bramble, Mrs. Dorothy Edwards, Mrs. Ellen Peters and Mrs. Emily Lewis.

The Association was 18 years old in June. "The old people are cared for by their immediate families in most cases," Mrs. Dyer noted, "however, we do find that more and more old people are being left neglected because of financial and other social constraints."

To remedy this, the Association provides an allowance of EC\$25 per month to some of the elderly who are in need but who do not qualify for public assistance.

The Association's greatest concern now, says Mrs. Dyer, is to provide home nursing care to those elderly who are left alone.

BARBADOS: Girls' Industrial Union

In Barbados, the Girls' Industrial Union has been providing cheer to a group of elderly women and men through its annual Christmas party, since 1971. After the party the old folk receive hampers of food and toiletries.

During the year members of the Union visit the old folks to ensure that they are comfortable.

MONTSERRAT: New Hospital for Elderly

In Montserrat also ... the needs of the elderly are met through the Government Welfare Programme which provides a fortnightly allowance of EC\$20 and assists the old folk with house repairs.

The Government also provides medical and dental care for those over 60. Reports from Montserrat say that the Government is also trying to include the elderly in the proposed national social security scheme expected in the near future.

A new geriatric hospital is now being built to provide adequate institutional care for the elderly.

Church organisations also take care of the elderly in the island, among them the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Catholic Church, the Guild of St. Luke of the Anglican Church, and the Adventist Church.

The Montserrat Christian Council has also arranged for representatives of all churches to visit the proposed geriatric hospital regularly to provide spiritual cheer and social activities.

GUYANA: University reaches out

The Departments of Extra Mural Studies and Sociology of the University of Guyana, are planning a training programme for the staff of residential institutions for the elderly in Guyana.

A report from the university says the programme would cover the following areas: the psychology and social implications of aging; primary medical care; nutritional needs; occupational therapy — with emphasis on the transference of skills to younger members of the community — and the relationship between the family, the community and the institution.

The programme is expected to provide for the development of the entire staff in some areas and specialised staff in others. It is also aimed at encouraging community awareness of the residents.

Members of staff of the two departments recently met representatives of the institutions and service organisations, to discuss the proposed programme and other areas of need.

Concerns aired at this meeting included: the need for provision of meals to some of the elderly; the need for night staff in some homes; the residents' need for more access to doctors in

the home; the need to have residents' sight tested, and the need for activities in the home to reduce loneliness.

The meeting suggested that the service organisations adopt a home or provide various services to the residents. A call was also made for a national body to be concerned with provisions for the elderly. A steering committee was formed and Mrs. Yvonne Barrow, social worker, appointed Co-ordinator.

Meanwhile, a survey of residential institutions for the elderly, carried out by the two university departments, has revealed that more women than men live in these institutions.

Of the 13 institutions surveyed, seven provided accommodation for women only and one for men only.

The survey was restricted to Georgetown. A directory of the names of the institutions, facilities available and other pertinent data is expected to be compiled shortly.

GUYANA: WRSM Annual Treat

The Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement (WRSM) has also been working with Guyana's elderly.

At Christmas, the WRSM entertains elderly folk throughout the different regions of the country and distributes gifts of clothing, food-stuff, toiletries and money to residents of various senior citizens' homes.

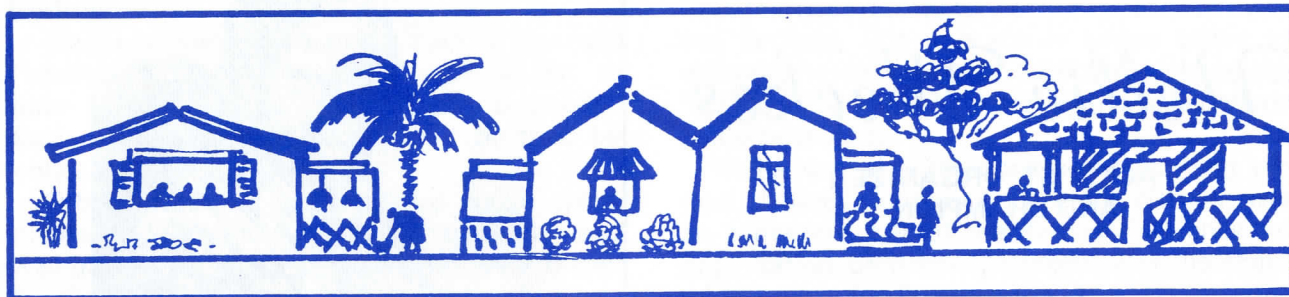
This annual treat is organised by the WRSM's social service sub-committee.

Throughout the year, members of the group visit elderly persons and discuss topics of national interest with them. They also assist these persons with their shopping and help to clean their homes.

When necessary, the group makes the funeral arrangements of its elderly members.

The WRSM regards these activities as a fulfillment of its aim to "pay special regard to the welfare of children and the aged, by working towards the maintenance of existing day nurseries, day-care centres and homes for the aged, while striving for the establishment of additional centres."

SENIOR CITIZENS' VILLAGE



"A village for the 'forgotten tribe' who will not admit they need anything."

This is how the President of the Barbados Soroptimists, Annie Jones, describes the Senior Citizens' Village established by her organisation.

"These are people who are able to take care of themselves, but whose income or pension is not enough, who may have had a home but had to let it go," Miss Jones explains.

For these people, the Soroptimists created a village at Eden Lodge, St. Michael, where they could get the assistance they needed but still maintain their dignity.

"The village is not a nursing home or an old people's home," Miss Jones stresses, "the residents are proud of their little homes, and we want it to stay that way."

Mrs. Muriel Garnes, who has lived in the village since December, 1981, agrees that living there is something to be proud of. "You're independent," she asserts, "and living in your own home."

Mrs. Garnes moved into her new home from an apartment where she was paying far more than the \$110 she now pays for her single unit. She has not regretted her decision to move.

"I am very happy here," she claims.

The houses are built in clusters of five single or semi-detached units. Apart from the kitchen and bathroom, they really consist of one room divided by a portable wooden screen and opening into a small balcony. Each home is self-contained, with its own fridge, stove and telephone. The Soroptimists pay for the telephone and the water while the residents take care of the electricity bills. Major repairs are also handled by the Soroptimists.

"After all," Miss Jones points out, "they are tenants, not mendicants."

The village was officially opened in 1975, but not until 1978 were the first five units ready for occupancy. The project calls for 25 units, but so far only 10 have been built ... some through a grant from the Canadian International Develop-

ment Agency (CIDA).

Since 1978, the rent has been raised from \$80 a month to \$100 for a semi-detached unit and \$110 for a single unit. However, those residents who moved in under the old rate can still pay the same.

Should one want to live in the village, the procedure is quite simple. Applications are obtained from the Soroptimists and returned to be screened by the Village Committee – a body made up of past presidents of the organisation. A group from this committee then interviews the applicants, who must be over 65, able to take care of themselves, and sponsored by a younger person.

The village is ideally located within the community at Eden Lodge, since it is within easy reach of various facilities such as a polyclinic and several small shops. It is also on the bus route.

The next step in the village's development is an activity centre – where people could leave their elderly relatives or friends for the day.

"A kind of 'daycare for the elderly,'" says Miss Jones. "The person running the centre could be one of the residents of the village, and if the day visitors have a skill they could teach it to young people who would teach their skills to the older folk in return."

"As new avenues opened up to them, the old folks would feel they had spent a worthwhile day ... being a part of things, because they usually have nothing to do and nowhere to go. They get depressed and feel unwanted and in their family's way."

Whether the Soroptimists' dream of an activity centre will come true, depends on their finances. They have tried to raise their own funds throughout the project, but at the same time they have received assistance in many forms from several groups within the community.

PROFILE

Nellie Weekes

— ACTIVIST, ORGANIZER
AND CHAMPION

By Avonda Burrowes

At a time when Barbadian women are continually making their voices heard in their quest for equal opportunities with men, we should remember that such rights were fought for in the 1940s by a woman who helped to pioneer the movement of her sex into the political sphere.

In the vanguard of the struggle for women's rights was Muriel Odessa Weekes, popularly known as "Nellie," who, today at 86, remains as witty and outspoken as a much younger woman.

Nellie was the only Barbadian woman during the past four decades who had the gumption to go forward and, ignoring all criticism, speak out against the "evils" which women were facing in those days.

Born August 26, 1896, Nellie grew up in My Lord's Hill, St. Michael, along with such prominent Barbadians as the late Sir Grantley Adams — who was later to become Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation — and the late Sir Winston Scott, Barbados' first native governor-general.

One of 13 children of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Walcott, she was educated at Belmont Girls' School and Lynch's Secondary School. On leaving school, she entered the field of nursing, working first at the old General Hospital and then the St. Michael Almshouse (now a district hospital) where she studied midwifery.

After serving for some years as an obstetric nurse, Nellie entered the political arena. Her decision to do so was based on the fact that she had devoted much time to social and welfare



services and was not content just to contribute to those areas.

Thus, she moved nearer to the area of policy making and began to pave the way for women today.

She unsuccessfully contested a seat in the House of Assembly for St. George, as an independent candidate, in 1942 and again in 1946. At her first mass political meeting on October 13, 1944, all the speeches were delivered by women.

She was eventually elected a member of the Vestry (which administered parochial affairs) as representative for the parish of Christ Church.

Recalling that she had constantly been told that women had no chance, Nellie says she had realised this at the time, but nevertheless had wanted her voice to be heard.

She also remembers that Sir Grantley Adams had been one of the persons who always asked her if she knew what she was doing. But, strong-willed and determined, Nellie was never to be discouraged and always replied to her critics "Yes, I know what I am doing."

Throughout her political career, the diminutive Nellie became known for the fearless and straightforward manner in which she supported a number of legislative measures.

She saw the need for women to have some say in the legislation of the country, and among the measures she supported were ones particularly concerned with the welfare of women, such as better salaries for elementary school teachers, the majority of whom were women.

Nellie also wanted to see increased salaries for hospital nurses and all other government employees, especially those in the lowest paid positions.

Claiming that the method then in use was "undignified to motherhood," she sought to have an amendment made to the outmoded Bastardy Act so that cases might be tried by police magistrate in camera.

Other measures supported by Nellie were: provision of a properly cooked and well-balanced diet to persons who were dieted by Government; better salaries for policemen, firemen and postmen; Government control of all public utilities, so as to afford a cheaper rate for telephone and electrical services; and, the appointment of a general wages board to fix proper minimum wages for store clerks and counter hands.

Today, Nellie is of the opinion that "things have developed so highly, that women have the opportunity to become whatever they want." But she points out that she constantly advises women to cooperate with men and not to get 'top-heavy,' since she would not want to see them trampled.

Nellie herself always had the support and co-operation of her late husband, Charles Nathaniel Weekes.

Together they were actively involved in the hotel and catering business, and were synonymous with such names as the Ritz Hotel, Weekes' Canteen, the Colonial Hotel and the Standard Hotel . . . all once-famous Barbadian

watering holes.

Nellie and her husband were the first people who voiced the opinion that Barbadians should have the opportunity to learn more of their African heritage. She says she is happy today to witness the existence of facilities such as the Yoruba Foundation where such a programme could be taught.

Nellie was also responsible for opening the now defunct Culinary School for Women, was an active member of the Barbados Alliance, an organisation of women; a member of the charitable body, the Dorcas League; and, the initiator of the Choir for the Animation of the Sick.

She has travelled widely, visiting such countries as England, the United States, France, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Canada, as well as within the Caribbean.

Today, Nellie is not as actively involved in the community as she used to be, for age has taken its toll and she recently had to have her legs amputated. Nevertheless, her past contributions have already earned her a place in Barbadian history.

Barbadian women, in their campaign for equal rights, should pause and pay tribute to Muriel Odessa "Nellie" Weekes.

Avonda Burrowes is a reporter with the Barbados **Advocate** newspaper. The above article is reproduced by kind permission of the **Advocate**.

FIT *but winding down*

To celebrate World Health Day (April 7) this year, the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI) compiled for the media, a collection of articles on different aspects of aging.

It was hoped that the information would stimulate awareness of the importance of affording elderly people their deserved role and status in society.

WOMAN SPEAK excerpts pertinent comments from some of the writers.

ON ORAL HEALTH

"As one grows older, the mouth undergoes changes of its tissues, just as do other parts of the body. However, just because we grow older doesn't mean we must lose all our teeth. We should be aware of the changes taking place and how we can maintain good oral health.

As we grow older we are most often afflicted with periodontal disease (or gum disease). The bacteria (germs) that cause the infection come from the dental plaque (the sticky covering of bacteria on the teeth). The disease attacks the gums and bone and begins to destroy them; if it is not controlled, after a number of years the tooth becomes loose and may fall out on its own. So it is very important to practice good oral health.

If you use a toothbrush clean your teeth and gums gently. The actual movement is far less important than achieving a clean mouth. Try to get the bristles to pass between your teeth. To do this you should press the brush against the front, back and sides of your teeth and move it up and down gently. If you use a chew-stick the same applies.

For those who wear dentures it is important to keep the dentures clean. The dentures should be removed at night, cleaned and placed in a container of water. They should also be cleaned after every meal. A good brush, soap and water should be used. It is wise to scrub them over a basin of water so they will not break if they are dropped."

Mrs. Ethel Jackson-Lee,
Dental Officer/PAHO, Jamaica





ON PHYSICAL FITNESS

"Some older people do not spend enough time in physical activity. As a result they are often depressed, bored, and lazy or have physical problems. Now that so much emphasis is being placed on energy-saving aids, devices, gadgets and means of transportation, elderly people expend much less energy.

Irene Gorean, an authority on the elderly, maintains that the older person has an even greater need for physical activity than younger people. She tells of problems resulting from inactivity, such as sluggishness, weakness, difficulties in coordination, joint problems, malfunction and degeneration, problems with circulation and getting around.

Studies have shown that physical exercise in elderly people helps in their general circulation, respiration, digestion, strengthening of muscles, hearts and lungs — all of which will lead to a more vigorous life and a feeling of well-being. Exercise at any age improves breathing, coordination and posture and maintains or increases the range of the joints.

A daily life routine of the older person should include walking and simple exercise. If there is a physical problem, consult a physician, physical therapist or a public health nurse who can assist in developing a workable exercise programme to increase or maintain the physical capacity of the body."

Mrs. Ann Diloreto, Consultant in
Nursing Education, PAHO

ON NUTRITION

"People age at different rates. One person of sixty with hardened arteries and high blood pressure may appear old, while another with healthy arteries and a normal blood pressure may remain active and vigorous well into his 80's. We should not confuse chronological age — a person's years — with biological age and should make sure that healthy old people are not treated as invalids but retain an appropriate status and role in society.

With advancing age many people cut down on their activities and so expend less energy. Unless they cut down on their diet as well they will become obese. Obesity has many bad consequences and no good ones. It puts a strain on the heart and joints, to name but two disadvantages. However, some old people maintain an active life so do not need to cut down on their food, but they need to maintain a good and adequate diet.

A risk when older people cut down on their diet is that their nutrition will suffer. Most West Indian diets are reasonably balanced; but they often do not have great excess of any individual nutrients. While an elderly person may need to cut down on calories, in doing so she may also cut down on other dietary elements below what she needs each day and so become malnourished. How can this be avoided?

To make sure that the diet does not become unbalanced, the old person should eat a good mixture of foods. She can cut down on margarine and oily foods and not take too much sugar. She can ensure that she does **not** have at one meal rice and yam and plantain and breadfruit and dumpling and other starchy foods — even if these are all available in her home garden! However, she should not cut down on green vegetables, like callaloo, or yellow vegetables, like pumpkin. She should eat plenty fresh fruit. These foods are nutritious and keep her bowels operating.

The family of old people need to know how to combine foods from different groups for the nutrition of all its members. Particular care must be taken by the person preparing the meals to see that gran'ma or gran'pa gets an adequate mixed diet, including something from each group at every meal."

Dr. Michael Guernsey, Director, CFNI

... NEWS FROM WAND ...

CRAFTS EXHIBITION DURING CARNIVAL

Participants from various WAND-sponsored crafts workshops recently held an exhibition of their work in Antigua, to expose the type of crafts they have been producing.

The exhibition focussed on participants' upgraded skills and new designs they have learnt using available local materials.

It was held to coincide with carnival in Antigua in the hope of attracting a large market. Invitees included owners of shops, boutiques, hotels and crafts industry personnel.

The exhibition was co-sponsored by CADEC and co-ordinated by the Antigua Ministry of Community Development.

MANAGEMENT TRAINING WORKSHOPS

WAND has sponsored and coordinated a series of management training workshops in St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Montserrat, Grenada, Guyana and St. Lucia. Plans are now underway for workshops in St. Vincent and Dominica. The workshops were aimed at upgrading the operations of small businesses and income-generating projects. Sessions were geared to help participants become more aware of the need for management skills, and were conducted in an atmosphere which allowed participants to exchange, and learn from their mutual experiences.

Sessions were designed to meet the specific needs of each country but general subjects included the concept of self as manager, effective communication, risk-taking and entrepreneurship, credit facilities, record keeping and marketing, planning and evaluation.

The training programmes were developed in collaboration with local government and non-governmental agencies, and in the case of Nevis and St. Kitts, hosted in association with the CARICOM Secretariat.

POPULATION COUNCIL PROJECT MAKES PROGRESS

Phase I of the project to "Assess the Impact of Rural Development Schemes on Rural Households and the Role of Women" has ended, with the research teams from the countries involved sharing in a workshop.

The countries — Dominica, Jamaica and St. Lucia — are collaborating with WAND in the project, which is testing a strategy for analysing the impact of large-scale development projects on rural women.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to present and discuss the draft research designs of each country prior to the actual field work in Phase II. Participants had an opportunity to raise questions and concerns about the project, clarify and compare the relevance of design being selected against original project objectives, etc.

Phase II of the project is now going ahead, during which time the principal research team will actually conduct research. A second workshop will be held at the end of November this year.

The strategy is expected to help planners and policy makers understand what factors they should consider or include in national development plans, to ensure greater access for women to resources, training and support systems.

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MILESTONES

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Senator Margherita Alexander is now Minister of Education in the St. Lucia Government.

Moravian Minister

Rev. Cicely Athill of Antigua has become the first woman minister to be ordained in the Moravian Church in the Eastern West Indies Province. Rev. Athill is also the first woman minister of a religious denomination in Antigua.

Honoured

Jamaican folklorist, poet and entertainer, Louise Bennett-Coverly, "Miss Lou", will receive an honorary degree from the UWI, Mona Campus, at its graduation exercises in January next year.

NEWS FROM CARIWA

ANNE GETS THIRD TERM

Mrs. Anne Liburd, President of the National Council of Women in St. Kitts, was returned as president of the Caribbean Women's Association for the third time, at CARIWA's Sixth Biennial Conference in St. Kitts, in May.

Other members elected to the Executive were the late Shirley Field-Ridley, Guyana, deputy president; Hyacinth Thomas, Guyana, secretary; Ruth Antoine, Trinidad, treasurer and Helen Burton, Antigua, public relations officer.

More than 150 delegates and observers at the conference witnessed the adoption of 12 resolutions submitted by member states, nine of which were submitted by the Barbados delegation.

Included were resolutions calling on regional governments to pay more attention to the areas of agriculture and handicrafts, particularly where women were involved.

CARIWA was also called on to campaign against all vulgar advertisements in which women were portrayed, throughout the region.

CARIWA is expected to meet again in 1984 in St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles.

CCW REPORT

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

The Antigua sub-region of Caribbean Church Women and the local Ecumenical Study Group in St. Vincent recently held a series of regional seminars to look at women in industry.

The objectives of the seminars were to make women workers understand the importance of their labour to society, and the influence of labour on their livelihood; to make them aware of their ability to exercise greater control over the use of their labour, and to facilitate worker unity among women in industry.

Case Studies of the subjects under review were presented to support analysis.

Among areas examined at the seminars were employment practices, the work situation, alternatives to present forms of management and labour laws and labour unions.

The seminars ran from July 19-20 and attracted 40 participants.

Did you know ?

That

- In Jamaica, the number of people over 60 is estimated at 10.6% of the total population?
- In Africa, Asia and Latin America the percentage of women under age 15 is about twice as high as in Europe and North America, but the percentage of women over age 50 is only about half as high?
- A woman's life expectancy in Africa is about 50 years, as opposed to 75 years in Europe? One reason is that the chance of dying in the first year can be up to 10 times higher in developing countries.
- In Sweden, a pension scheme has been established whereby women can count years where they stay at home caring for a child (up to age three) as wage earning years!! The overall pension is paid according to what has been earned during the 15 best working years, out of a total of 30 years.
- By the end of the 20th century, there will be an estimated 590 million people over 60 years of age in the world?
- The number of elderly people (over 65 years) in the Caribbean community is increasing and is expected to reach 500,000 by the year 2000?

Tribute to Shirley Field-Ridley



Shirley Merle Field-Ridley died June 26, 1982.

Her death was untimely, for there was still much she could have done for Caribbean women at both the international and regional levels. Earlier this year she was elected to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and, shortly before her death, was appointed Deputy President of the Caribbean Women's Association (CARIWA).

Born in Georgetown, Guyana, on August 24, 1937, Shirley soon demonstrated her natural intelligence. She won a scholarship to Bishop's High School, and followed up with a scholarship to the UWI where, in 1958, she gained a B.A. with first class honours in history. A UWI scholarship took her to London to study law, and in 1962 she received her LLB.

In 1968 Shirley became a candidate for the People's National Congress of Guyana. The following year, when the PNC came into power, Shirley became Minister of Education . . . one of four Ministries she held throughout her political career. The others were Health, Information and Culture, and Sports.

After 11 years in government, Shirley retired to return to her original campaign – the status

of women. She became chairperson of the Council on the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana (CASWIG), the umbrella organisation for women's groups in Guyana, a post she held up to the time of her death.

The Women and Development Unit joins the rest of the CARICOM region in paying tribute to the late Shirley Field-Ridley. In the words of WAND's Tutor/Co-ordinator, Peggy Antrobus:

"Shirley Field-Ridley was a model of militancy for all women and people of the region. Her passing has robbed us of one of the most outstanding, articulate and fearless representatives of women in the Caribbean. As a young woman she took it upon herself to prove that women were equal to men, and she once said, 'All those people who said that girls couldn't do this or that must be answered. I would be the one to answer them.' Shirley spent her whole life answering them and there was no one who could do it more implacably. WAND was shocked at the news of her death, especially as she was a member of our Advisory Committee. We will miss her brilliance, her dynamism, her leadership and we will miss her force . . . for Shirley was a force."

INFOCUS

BARBADOS

ISER Project Conference

The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) UWI, Cave Hill, held a regional conference on the "Role of Women in the English-Speaking Caribbean", from September 13-16 this year. It was based on the findings of a comprehensive three-year research project sponsored by the Institute. The project was completed in May.

The conference was held at Sam Lord's Castle, St. Philip, Barbados.

The objectives of the conference were to: demonstrate the relevance of academic research to the planning process, with special reference to issues affecting women in development and to ensure the inclusion of major recommendations from the project into ongoing development programmes.

The conference also sought to devise mechanisms for implementing recommended action programmes, and to expose the concepts and methodological techniques developed for critical assessment by regional and extra-regional academics.

From within the region, participants attended as representatives of governments and of international organisations which maintain offices or programmes related to women in the region. Field workers and respondents from the project territories also attended.

Extra-regional participants came from international research centres and research institutions in other Third World countries working in the area of women and development.

Some persons who have assisted the project attended in their personal capacity.

TRINIDAD

The Breast is Best

The existence of a Caribbean pressure group to stimulate interest in the issue of infant feeding and to promote the concept that the "breast is best" may soon become a reality.

Mrs. Hazel Brown, Trinidad-based Caribbean

Co-ordinator of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) has been visiting Caribbean countries to discuss with groups and individuals the formation of such a Caribbean Action Network.

Mrs. Brown has held talks with Ministry of Health officials in the various countries, concerning their progress in implementing the code of marketing of breast milk substitutes drawn up by the World Health Organisation.

The aim of the code is to "contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of breast feeding and by ensuring the proper use of breast milk substitutes when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution."

BAHAMAS

Trade Union

Education for Women

In June, about 30 women drawn from trade unions within the Caribbean took part in the second of three regional seminars scheduled for this year, in the Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions. The seminar was held in Nassau, Bahamas.

The first seminar took place in Jamaica and the third is scheduled for St. Kitts in October. The objective of the seminars is to train women for leadership positions within the trade union movement.

The Nassau seminar focussed on the roles of the trade union woman as person, citizen and worker.

The Project is coordinated by Marva Phillips for the Trade Union Education Institute, Mona.

ST. LUCIA

Women's Desk in the Offing

In St. Lucia, a task force set up to explore the need for a women's desk, is drafting an awareness-building programme to expose the public to the concept of a woman's desk and to get feedback to the idea.

"Participation is expected from both male

cont'd on pg. 22

IN FOCUS

and female groups," says Martina Mathurin, Community Development Officer and Interim Women's Desk Co-ordinator. "Males will be included on the different committees of the desk, we will not leave them out because it is a women's desk."

The task force will work at the national and community levels to implement the programme.

At the national level, a 15-member working committee will use panel discussions, a question box, advertisements and the media to implement the programme, while a nine-member committee will take the programme to the community through lectures, questionnaires and discussions.

The task force comprises representatives from government, non-governmental organisations, trade unions and women's groups. Individuals are also represented.

ST. LUCIA

Multi-Purpose Centre Opens

The Multi-purpose Centre of the St. Lucia Save the Children Fund at Anse-la-Raye, has been officially opened.

Among the facilities offered at the Centre are a bakery and food preservation unit which can provide training for six persons in the management of a small business and the production of bread and preserves.

The sewing and crafts unit of the Centre continues to offer training in these areas, while providing trainees with the opportunity to earn an income from the work produced.

The centre also plans to cater for 40 children, particularly the malnourished children of the district.

DOMINICA

Social League Trains Teachers

The Social League's Pre-School Education Project in Dominica provided training for 45 teachers last April, as part of its ongoing programme of regular training courses, monthly workshops and classroom supervision.

The subject of the April course was "Increasing teacher effectiveness in the classroom and community."

Its objectives were to continue the upgrading of teachers' professional and personal development; reinforce teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students; develop teachers' confidence in dealing with adult education programmes and emphasize the importance of proper nutrition for the all-round development of teachers and students.

Among the courses covered were language arts, mathematics, family life education, movement education, music, drama and educational psychology.

BARBADOS

Extra-Mural Lectures

"Women in Small Business: Stumbling Blocks and Stepping Stones," was the theme of a lecture and discussion sponsored by the Extra-Mural Department of the UWI and the Barbados Small Business Association, last May.

The discussion was the second in a series aimed at examining and focussing attention on some important aspects of business organisation, especially the functions of small businesses in Barbados.

Mrs. Gertrude Eastmond, President of the Barbados Employers' Confederation, led the discussion. Members of the panel were: Mrs. Carmeta Fraser, President of the National Organisation of Women; Ms. Marjorie Blackman, Co-ordinator of Parent Education for Development in Barbados; Mrs. Mary Smith, Managing Director of Office Assistance and Mr. Everick Eastmond, Programme Manager of the Small Business Division of the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity (BIMAP).

ANTIGUA

Health Clinic Opened

In Antigua, the Nurses of the Spring Gardens Moravian Church have opened a health clinic where free health care is offered.

The clinic is sponsored by the Spring Gardens Women's Fellowship and was the brainchild of vice-president, Mrs. Estella Phillip.

Head Nurse at the clinic is Sister Doreen Mason, who is also chairwoman of the Co-ordinating Council of Women in Antigua.

The opening of the clinic marked the 250th anniversary of the Moravian Church.

HAITI

Appeal to Caribbean Sisters

The Union of Haitian Women wants its Caribbean sisters to support the union in a struggle to free the many Haitian women who, it claims, are political prisoners of the Duvalier regime.

The women particularly want the support of Caribbean women in political, religious, trade union and other organisations.

The Washington-based Haitian Centre of Information, Documentation and Social Action, has released a pamphlet in which the Haitian women list the names of a number of women purported to be political prisoners in Haitian jails.

BOOK NOOK

On Aging.

Resources for Feminist Research, July 1982
This issue of RFR focuses on aging in women, through a number of articles on various aspects of the theme. It also includes an annotated bibliography, book and film reviews, course descriptions and a section on research in progress.

Available from:

Department of Sociology, OISE, 252 Bloor
St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6

Older Women — ISIS Documentation Packet on Women's Issues, No. 2

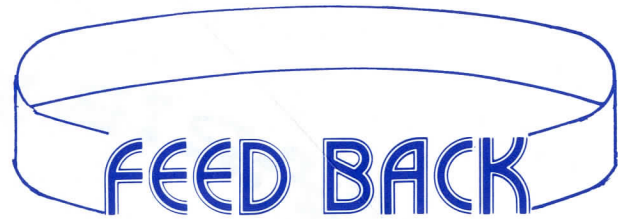
This Packet, the second in the ISIS Documentation Packets Series, covers the loss of role, social and sexual life, old age homes, pensions, illnesses and therapies, personal experiences and a bibliography. The ISIS packets are selected collections of articles, anecdotes, stories, references and graphics on a specific theme of "burning concern" to women. They are prepared by the ISIS Collective on request and published in different languages.

For further details write to: ISIS, C.P. 50
(Cornavin), 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

New at WAND.

Women and the Law by Norma Monica Forde, is the first in a series of studies on women in the Caribbean, arising out of the ISER's "Women in the Caribbean Project." The book collects, under one head, the laws which mainly affect women throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean. It covers the areas of constitutional guarantees, marriage and divorce, maintenance, matrimonial property, succession, domicile, employment related areas, criminal law and citizenship.

Stephanie Daly's **The Developing Legal Status of Women in Trinidad and Tobago**, provides a picture of the present legal status of women in Trinidad and Tobago and focuses on the developments of the last six years.



We welcome your comments on this issue and forthcoming issues WOMAN SPEAK.

"WOMAN SPEAK is very interesting, particularly the article "The Nature of Women's Work in Agriculture" written by Lorna Gordon . . . really glad to know we have a quarterly newsletter about Caribbean women. Looking forward to receiving more."

Beverly Hanson, SISTREN, Jamaica

"Thank you very much for sending us your esteemed publication WOMAN SPEAK which is quite valuable for our information activities in the field of international co-operation."

Susumu Kato, Japan International
Co-operation Agency, Japan

"Congratulations on your excellent magazine. May we purchase back copies for distribution in girls' schools and other public places frequented by women in Belize? This would be an excellent way to acquaint young women here with activities of women around the Caribbean."

J.E. Meighan, Women's Bureau, Belize

"I find I do not know what women in the Caribbean are doing and the newsletter helps to fill that vacuum."

Monica Joseph, Ministry of Legal Affairs,
St. Vincent

NEXT ISSUE ...

WOMEN AND HEALTH

