
Carra News

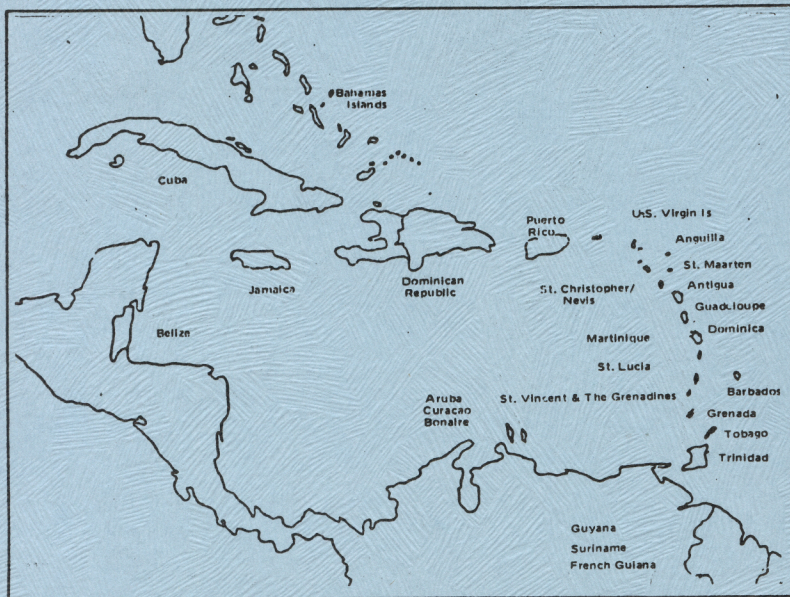
NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION



'The Tree of Life'
by Sharon Chacko
Cover of Creation Fire

Vol. 2 No. 3 SEPTEMBER 1988

FOCUS ON FREE TRADE ZONES



CAFRA NEWS

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

General Aims:-

To

1. (i) develop an approach to women's problems from the perspectives of race, class and sex, specifically to show how the exploitative relationship between men and women facilitates the continuation, maintenance and reproduction of exploitative capitalist relations, and how the capitalist system benefits from this situation;
(ii) develop an approach to the analysis of relations between men and women in non-capitalist and socialist societies;
2. develop the feminist movement in the entire Caribbean region; and
3. promote the inter-relationship between research and action.

Objectives:-

To

1. develop research priorities based on the needs of the women's movement in the region;
2. provide a supportive atmosphere for individual feminists;
3. bring a feminist perspective to bear on the work of existing progressive organisations and shatter the myth that "feminism divides the struggle";

4. provide a focal point for bringing together feminist organisations in the entire region;

5. foster greater communication and collaboration on events and issues relevant to the feminist movement;

6. develop a base of documentation on the women's movement in the Caribbean and issues relevant to it;

7. develop access to available sources of documentation which could be put at the service of women's organisations and struggles in the region; and

8. promote a continuous analysis of language in order to identify and correct the sexist assumptions embedded in its structure which are detrimental to women's expression and development at every level.

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Editorial

The establishment and operations of Export Processing Zones (or Free Trade Zones, as they are commonly called) in the region are matters of vital concern to all of us. This issue of CAFRA News examines EPZs through an edited version of a paper presented by Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen at the SPEAR Symposium on "Belize in Latin America and the Caribbean: Development, Peace and Integration" (held in Belize from 24-26 June, 1988), and through reports from Jamaica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. We have also included a bibliography of studies on EPZs in the Caribbean for those wishing to research the area.

We have been receiving a lot of positive responses to our invitation to CAFRA's membership to attend the first general meeting of the association since its founding, to be held on 12-13 November, 1988 in Barbados. We hope to see as many members there as possible so that we can assess the work of CAFRA up to now and decide on future directions.

Members and other friends passing through Trinidad and Tobago should note that we have moved office - to 15 McDonnell Street, Curepe. Unfortunately, our telephone did not move as quickly as we did; in fact, it was not reconnected for six weeks. Apologies to those who attempted to contact us during that time - we are now reachable by phone again.

In the last issue of CAFRA News we expressed excitement about having left the duplicating machine for the printing press. Now we have made the quantum leap into the age of the computer. Cutting and pasting have become a thing of the past, and we are busily learning new skills which we trust will

improve the appearance of the newsletter. Our thanks to CAR-IPRESS, especially Zorina and Soraya, for all their help and patience. We await your comments on the new look.

Tina Johnson

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Letters

We find your publication, CAFRA News, very useful and wanted to let you know how much we enjoy receiving it.

Because we notice that you frequently include information about the availability of new publications, we have enclosed review copies of It's Your Move Now: A Community Action Guide to the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and The Tribune #39: "Women and Housing". We hope that you will be able to mention these materials in your publication.

Joanne Sandler, International Women's Tribune Centre, Inc. USA

I am pleased to know that another meeting of CAFRA membership will be convened and will give members a chance to exchange ideas and also to discuss ways and means of improving the work of CAFRA. The draft proposal of the programme seems alright to me as it adequately covers some of the main areas of concern.

Why not consider the idea of all participants taking a piece of art or handicraft work of their country which can be presented to the Secretariat as a means of raising funds?

Indra Chandarpal, Guyana

Given the affinity between some of the topics of interest to CAFRA and the Institute of National Studies (IDEN) of the University of Panama, we would like to establish more regular contact between our institu-

tions, in the first instance through an exchange of publications and, eventually, by identifying the possibilities of working together on projects of specific research.

As you know, the construction of the Panama Canal added to our nation and our culture a significant contingent of Afro-antillean immigrants, whose descendants constitute one of the most important groups in the cities of Panama and Colon. Today, Panama simply would not be conceivable without these Afro-antilleans. Without a doubt, this group of Panamanians, who certainly retain strong family and cultural ties with the English-speaking Caribbean, has not been given just recognition. And what can be said about this group in general can be said with even more justification about the women.

Taking the above into account, our first reaction to CAFRA News is to think that eventually CAFRA can find a place in our country to struggle for your objectives, which will be of benefit to Panama.

Carmen A. Miro, Director, IDEN, Republic of Panama

Congratulations on your last issue. It was very clean and readable, and the networking services of great value. I always think that so long as we progress with each issue, we must be doing something right! And it's clear you are progressing. Keep up the good work.

Joan Ross-Frankson, SISTREN, Jamaica

After reading the beautiful report in Woman Speak! about the WAND/CAFRA Seminar on "Making Our History; Making Change" we would very much like to receive a full report

for possible review in News and Letters. I am enclosing a copy of News and Letters for your information. Please send us any other relevant information on your activities.

Neda Azad, Chicago, USA

Congratulations on the newsletter. It is a joy to read.

It has been our intention for a long time to write a small update with respect to an action-research project (project EMPOWERMENT) developing out here in The Netherlands with women of Latin America and the Caribbean. Please include the attached in the next newsletter.

Carla Foderingham, The Hague, The Netherlands

(see page 24)

Thanks so much for the newsletter. I read every bit of it and I am indeed happy to read about women contributing to the development of the Caribbean.

I would like to make a correction to the inside cover page of the newsletter. Comparison of this map with another Central American map will show the country of Belize lower, almost directly West of Jamaica and not North-West as it seems to indicate.

Amy Nicholas, Belize

(corrected from June Issue - ed)

W and Cafra Women's History Project

The Women's History project is developing slowly but surely. We have recently received information about two more projects: 'Itwaria: Her Story' (an exciting slide/tape show) from Red Thread, Guyana; and a Young Mothers' Programme, with special emphasis on self-help activities and women's issues, from the Social League of Women, Montserrat. We have also heard from CERES, the Social Science Research Centre of Puerto Rico, which has an on-going project on women's participation in Puerto Rican history.

In addition to being thus enriched, our project activities have been drawing eager attention from several groups and individuals interested in creating 'her-story'. Some of them, however, identified the need for more theoretical grounding in women's issues, and were also interested in the use of popular theatre in representing these issues.

Thus our first sub-regional seminar is geared towards promoting the understanding of feminist concerns and the role of popular theatre methodology, for participants from four territories: St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, St. Lucia and Barbados. This event will take place in Grenada on the week-end of 9-11 September. Two members of the SISTREN Theatre Collective, Joan French and Pauline Crawford, will be directing

the seminar through its various stages.

Since the participants are all involved in the ECPTO (Eastern Caribbean Popular Theatre Organisation) and are all theatre people, we expect great happenings, not only at the seminar

as possible so that this Directory can be a truly useful regional tool.

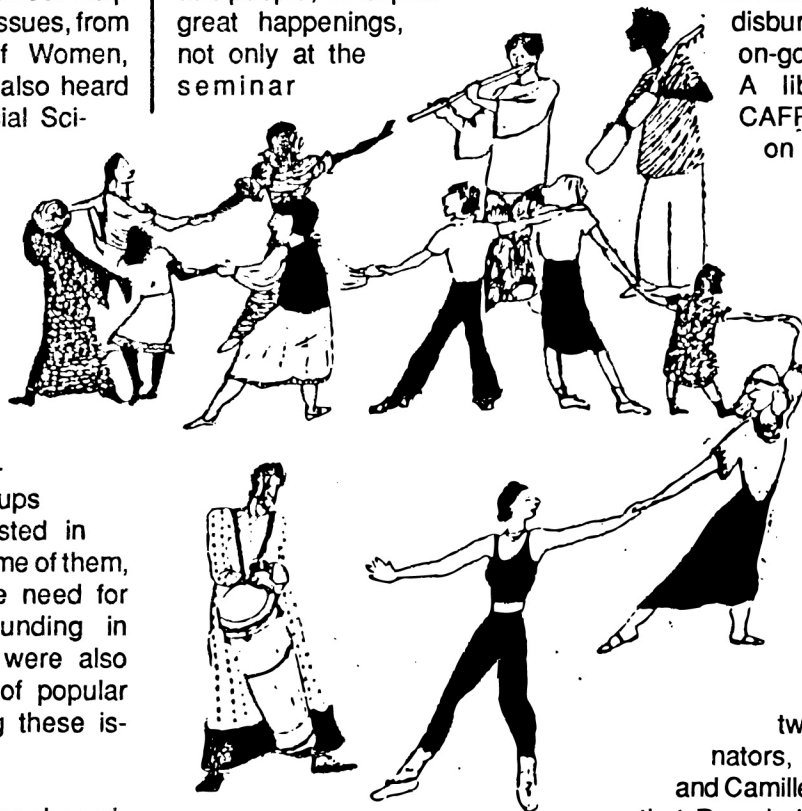
Future plans include a Creative Writing project, including a seminar. We will also be actively promoting the Brave Dange travelling exhibition, and disbursing information on on-going history projects. A library of WAND/CAFRA holdings will be on its way soon, and we are aiming at forging greater links with the non-English-speaking Caribbean.

Finally, we have had to say farewell to Project Co-ordinator, Ramabai Espinet, who has resigned for personal reasons.

There are now two part-time co-ordinators, A. Claudia Kadera and Camille Antoine. We know that Ramabai's heart is still with us, and we wish her all the best in the coming year.

Camille Antoine

Picture credit: International Women's Tribune Centre.



but afterwards when their ideas are concretised into projects. We would like to thank Sobers Esprit and the ECPTO network for helping us to identify participants.

Our Resource Directory is inching its way to fulfillment. We ask those who received forms to please complete and return them as soon

W

omen in Caribbean Agriculture

The findings of the 'Women in Caribbean Agriculture' project in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Commonwealth of Dominica are now available. Highlights are:

The majority of women do not own land. (In the small male sample interviewed, most men owned land). Ownership was much higher in Dominica (44% of respondents) than in St. Vincent (17.3%), but only 28.9% of those who owned land in Dominica actually had titles. "Permission to work land" was the largest category of access in St. Vincent. In both territories, women access land primarily through males: partners or male relatives. The size of land women work in St. Vincent is generally under 3 acres, and in Dominica under 5.

While government land reform programmes are a significant vehicle for women to access land in both territories, such programmes are proceeding amid relative confusion in St. Vincent. In Dominica there is a tendency for men to acquire better lands.

The majority of women farmers are over 35. The percentage representation of younger women is relatively low. In Dominica nuclear households and extended households were the most common. In St. Vincent nuclear and single-parent households were most common. The nuclear households in Dominica were mostly legally married unions; in St. Vincent they were mostly common law. The most common household size

in Dominica was 1-5; in St. Vincent 6-7. The St. Vincent estate of Orange Hill had the largest households, averaging 8 persons per household.

Women in agriculture in these islands employ multiple strategies for earning income - 1-3 in Dominica and 3-5 in St. Vincent. This is because they cannot survive from agriculture alone. Food consumes the vast majority of household income in all households studied in depth in all communities on both islands. Five of the twelve households studied in depth in St. Vincent and 4 of the 10 studied in Dominica were unable to meet their basic maintenance expenditure. They lived in constant debt.

Women's hours of domestic work recorded in St. Vincent were 2-6000 hours per year for most women, and for Dominica 1-4000 hours per year. The highest rate recorded for men was 146 hours per year. While women participated extensively in productive work, men hardly did any domestic work. Girl children helped with domestic work, boy children helped with field work if they were of age and if there were no teenage relatives or non-relatives in the household to whom these burdens could be shifted.

Women and men in both territories do all field tasks when working on their own plots. When working as hired labour their tasks are sex-differentiated.

The main health problems identi-

fied among women in agriculture in these territories are nutrition and hygiene-related: hypertension, diabetes, anaemia and worms.

Most women find time for leisure, mainly church-related activities, but much of what they describe as leisure could be described as work (e.g. sewing and making of handicraft, tending of kitchen gardens, weeding around their house space). The main reason given for "no leisure activities" was "too much work to do".

The WICA research sought to address the lack of data on Caribbean women, especially in the Eastern Caribbean, the lack of recognition of women's work including their domestic labour, and the impact of this on women's self development and the welfare of their households. The research teams are now in the process of converting the findings into materials for popular dissemination. Recommendations to address the issues are being collected from the communities, agencies associated with the research, and national institutions.

The research was sponsored by CAFRA in collaboration with the Committee for the Development of Women in St. Vincent and the Women's Programme of the Small Projects' Assistance Team in Dominica. Valuable assistance was provided by CIPAF in the Dominican Republic, and funding was provided mainly by UNIFEM and HIVOS.

Joan French

Anthology of
Caribbean Women's Poetry



NEW!!
from
SISTER VISION
PRESS
Spring 1989

CREATION FIRE
An Anthology of Caribbean Women Poets

This is an explosion of Caribbean women's poetry. In this extraordinary new collection, the poems are nourished by oral tradition, and like fire, heat up the page drawing the reader into the Creation Fire. The material, divided into twelve themes - The Survivor, The Artist, The Guerilla, The Worker, The Mother etc., reflects the diversity of roles and issues of concern to Caribbean women. Creation Fire features the work of new and established writers living in the Caribbean and abroad.

Creation Fire is edited by Ramabal Espinet. She is a poet and is engaged in literary research in

women's studies and Caribbean and Commonwealth literature. She is active in the Caribbean women's movement.

This important book is a CAFRA initiative. CAFRA (Caribbean Association of Feminist Research and Action) is an organisation of feminist researchers and activists committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society and who are working actively to change the situation. Members of CAFRA define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action.

 **Sister Vision**
Black Women and Women of Colour Press
P.O.Box 217, Station 'E', Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 4E2.

I LSA

The Third Regional Meeting of the Project for the Defence of Women's Rights organised by the Inter-American Legal Services Association was held in Bogota, Colombia from July 29-31, 1988. From the Caribbean, the meeting was attended by Nelcia Robinson of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Margarette Macauley of Jamaica, and a representative from the Dominican Republic. Gaietry Pargass, who co-ordinated the project for CAFRA in the region, was unfortunately unable to attend. The following is extracted from a report submitted by Nelcia on her return:

There was an extremely good relationship between Margarette and myself from the time we met at Miami airport. We had two translators assigned to us (male and female) but soon acquired three other females. In addition, almost everyone understood English! Sessions were full (never beginning on time) and extending up to 7 or 8 p.m.

The first day featured presentations by Gloria Andaya of Bolivia and Gladys Acosta of Peru. Among the matters stressed were that women need to be treated as both political and social citizens, and that they must get involved rather than delegating to men and the state the right to make laws relative to them; also that women are separated from the state, but that the state intervenes in all aspects of women's lives and discriminates against them. After these presentations, the participants divided into working groups

for discussion of the various issues affecting women relative to the law.

The following day, these groups reported back to the plenary on the many different issues that they had discussed. Later, when working groups were again used to look at discrimination against women in the various countries, the Caribbean representatives (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic) got together. A document on "Social Legislation for Women in the Eastern Caribbean" by Kathleen Drayton was used to give an overview, and the paper from Trinidad and Tobago was discussed.

Some of the points raised included: the fact that although governments had signed the UN Convention on Human Rights, this was not being

applied by them; sexual harassment on the job; the low age of consent for sexual intercourse; the pay imbalance in favour of men in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; and the inability of female farmers to own land under the Government Land Reform scheme in the Dominican Republic.

A general education campaign was proposed, directed at both men and women, particularly in schools, universities, unions and popular organisations about the Conventions so that people could lobby for their implementation. It was also felt that the results of the ILSA meeting should be publicised in the region.

Day three looked at the establishment of a democratic network for



the analysis and exchange of information/experiences, mobilised around the rights of women, to carry out research, analysis, law reform and national and international campaigns. It was agreed with ILSA that the role of CAFRA in the project be on CAFRA's agenda for the General Meeting in November, after which an overview of the Caribbean situation would be documented and sent to ILSA. ILSA would continue to be the overall co-ordinating body to address these issues. Its structure would be democratic and representative.

The CAFRA delegates thanked ILSA for facilitating the Meeting. The warmth and commitment of the women was evident. We assured the delegates that "we have been strengthened by the acquiring of knowledge of the problems facing our Latin American sisters, and knowledge is strength. We wish closer ties as we continue the struggle for better conditions under the law and life generally. We hope to see you all in our beautiful Caribbean islands some day soon. God's blessings to us all in our struggle for the present and for the future".

Some cultural items were shared on the afternoon of day 2 while the lawyers were having a meeting. I read one of my poems, and it was requested for translation into Spanish and publishing (Women's Voice).

Kali

The black water flows in my veins For the women of Kall

Embodied in that shawl
With which my grandfather
Whipped us awake
With Ramayana,
You, Manisha, sang like a nightingale

I have searched for that song for 30 years
In odd corners of existence,
Distracted by other drums,
Other demands,
And taking dead-end marriages.

Now, knitting together threads
That have tripped me over and over
As I tried to harden my head
Badden my brain
To fit into this two-by-four
Trinidad;

Your voice calls
Like Calypso
Luring me, once again,
Onto the rocks of truth
With the flutter of my grandfather's shawl
That separates home from home.

Niala Rambachan

E Export Processing Zones

An Overview

The following article is edited from a paper on "Popular Movements & the Peace Process with Special Reference to Women" presented by Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen at the SPEAR Symposium on "Belize in Central America & the Caribbean: Development Peace & Integration", held from June 24-26, 1988 in Belize. The complete text of this paper is available from the CAFRA office.

The differences between the experiences of war and peace in the Caribbean and Central America are so great as to be a difference in kind, in dimension. Yet I believe that they can be placed along a continuum. In the contemporary Caribbean, apart from Haiti, we know little of military dictatorships which brutalize our people through the gross use of terror; which systematically wipe out villages of women, men and children; which commit acts of genocide against the indigenous peoples.

To the Central American trapped in a war which is hell-bent on destroying her or him, fleeing to a neighbouring Caribbean country must come as a respite, a break. Are we in the Caribbean, then, experiencing peace? Is peace the overt absence of war? I do not think that we are at peace for, as has been

discussed over the last two days, the Caribbean, like its Central American neighbours, is a focus of United States' aggression.

The Caribbean region has been the focus of a political war through a specific economic package designed to debilitate, to make us metaphorically 'anaemic', a shadow of ourselves. In a paper titled 'The CBI and Jamaica: Objectives and Impact', Joan French stated, and I quote at length:

"The political interests of the United States have led to the removal of regimes that were considered to be anti-US or at least not supportive of US interests. Jamaica and Grenada are cases in point. Elsewhere in the Caribbean the policy consists of supporting and rewarding regimes which prove themselves to be pro-US in terms defined by the US government.

"The economic aspects of this pol-

economy with greater possibilities for self-propelled growth and greater opportunities for the poor. When these economies buckle under the pressure the US offers their economic prescriptions - aid and trade with conditionalities designed to facilitate the political interests of the US.

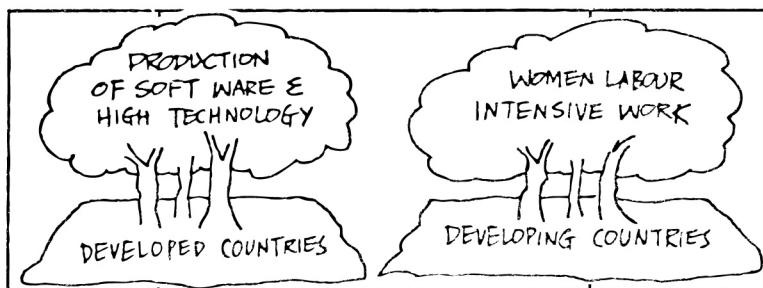
"The economic arrangements demanded by the IMF and other US-controlled lending agencies, and the economic objectives of the CBI, are part and parcel of the same economic policy aimed at redesigning the Caribbean to suit US interests.

"For this reason the IMF and the CBI can hardly be considered separately, since one is a necessary pre-condition of the other. The CBI operates within the context of the massive opening up of Caribbean economies to US imports (the 'free market' economy), the devaluation of our national currencies to

make US investment cheaper, the massive cuts in public service employment and government expenditure on social services which have seriously depressed the already low living conditions

of the majority of Caribbean peoples. This depressed and desperate population is then pressed into service in foreign companies being set up in Export Processing Zones (or Free Trade

icy have consisted of undermining attempts to create alternative models of economic development which promote greater social justice, and which explore ways of developing a more self-sufficient



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Zones). Here in the Caribbean they are paid wages a fraction of those payable to US workers. While support to people in areas such as price control of basic foods is withdrawn, these companies benefit from tax-free holidays, infrastructural support, and promotional services paid for by the sacrifices of the poor."

To the economic and political must be added the military dimension of the US presence in the region. Noam Chomsky and others have made the link between the US 'aid' funnelled to the many military dictatorships and right-wing governments throughout the third world, and the accompanying freedom of US and other conglomerates not only to exploit the natural and human resources of these countries, but to protect those interests using whatever methods are necessary (including low-intensity conflict, arming the military forces, and so on).

How does the specific question of women fit into this scenario? I shall analyse this by dealing with a single of many issues concerning the women's movement in the region today, and that is the phenomenon of Export Processing Zones. What are EPZs and how do they affect women?

If we look at what is happening internationally in the manufacturing sector, we shall see that EPZs are about the new international division of labour. Since the 1960's, the US and other first world

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M Monroe Doctrine

The origins of the USA's attitude to its Central American neighbours can be found in the early 19th century. A proclamation by US President James Monroe in 1823 was conceived as a policy against the further expansion of Tsarist Russia or Britain into the Pacific Northwest or by any European power into Latin America. However, by mid-century, the proponents of "Manifest Destiny" had elevated the policy into a 'doctrine'.

The Monroe Doctrine was firmly established. It prevailed in 1865 when the French were forced to withdraw from Mexico, which they had invaded in 1861. It was applied to the building of the Panama Canal. The Clayton-Bulmer Treaty of 1850, which had provided for joint Anglo-American control of the Canal was replaced by the Hay-Ponceforte Treaty of 1901, recognising complete US control. In 1896 US President Grover Cleveland invoked it for the right of the US to decide the border dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana. Cleveland's Secretary of State at the time, Olney, an-

nounced that the US was "practically sovereign".

During the 1930s the USA abandoned the Olney "paternal overlordship" rhetoric and "dollar diplomacy" which "intended to force all Latin America to depend entirely on the US for loans and investment" and espoused "co-operation and assent on the part of other American republics in place of domination".

In 1954 John Foster Dulles, another Secretary of State, speaking in Caracas, explained that a fundamental concern of US foreign policy was the possibility of Communist or pro-Communist governments on the American continents. Any contradiction you might have noticed between the doctrine's alleged support for Latin American determinism and this position has been explained thus: "the US attitude would presumably be that such a government must of its nature be subject to foreign influence and that this was directly contrary to the doctrine".

The US reserved the right to enforce the doctrine "when necessary for its security" and it has been invoked many times to justify actions against sovereign states of the Caribbean region.

from *Woman Speak!* No 22, June 1987

Cont 'd

manufacturing countries have been moving away from the complete manufacture of commodities and relocating particular stages of the manufacturing process in the third world.

How do women fit into this? In most Caribbean countries, women form a great reservoir of unemployed labour. Between 30 and 50 per cent of Caribbean households are headed by women. These very women also generally occupy the lowest paid and temporary jobs, and in recessionary periods like the present, they are the first to be fired. It means, then, that when EPZs are set up in our region, we have a female labour force that is ripe to be exploited.

I would like to discuss two specific industries within the EPZ model, the garment industry and the micro-electronics industry, and show the kinds of effects these industries have on the women they employ.

Let us take a look at the garment industry. Apart from shifting their focus from manufacturing in the metropolis itself, the US and other industrial powers are moving specific processes of the manufacturing industries into the third world. The processes which require high technology, intensive capital investment and creative skills such as research and design, are the stages that now take place in the metropolitan countries. To the third world are sent the stages which require little technological transfer, low skills and are labour-intensive.

In the garment industry, the so-called '807' programme is being implemented. Here, the garments are designed in the first world, cut there (and increasingly they are being designed by computers and cut using the most sophisticated laser technology to date where a single laser beam can cut about four hundred pairs of jeans, for instance). These are then exported to the third world where, along an assembly line, women put together these garments. How do they sew these garments? It is generally in a sweat-shop where workers are cramped, where a woman - and I am saying a woman since between 80 and 80 per cent of the workers in these industries are women - would spend her entire 8 or 9 hour day stitching a dart, tacking a seam, or doing any other of the micro-tasks into which the assembly of any single garment has been fragmented to maximize the production process, and hence the profit margin and the competitive edge of the company, which is usually a subsidiary or subcontracting firm of a multi-national corporation.

Another aspect of this industry is that women are paid by what is called 'piece-work'. Women have no access to basic facilities like lunchrooms in the majority of these factories. When they need to go to

the toilet, they are 'frisked' or checked and, on top of that, they are monitored and allowed to go only once a day.

So that not only are the low-skilled, labour-intensive aspects of the work done here, but also the conditions under which these women work are reminiscent of earlier forms of colonial exploitation like slavery and indentureship. There are no child-care facilities, and given a situation where between 30 and 50 per cent of Caribbean women head their households, where teenage pregnancy is high, and where governments do not provide such services, what happens to these children? In the Car-

ibbean, we have always had the support network of extended families; but that institution itself is cracking under the onslaught of urbanization and industrialization.

In addition to exploiting cheap female labour, governments, as part of their structural adjustment programme, are shrinking all other support services women depend on to make ends meet. Women in our societies have always borne the responsibility of childcare, care for the elderly, the sick and the needy. When these women are paid very low wages; when their children can't get access to basic health care; what the governments



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are doing is not just exploiting these women as a group, but lowering the standard of living of the entire working class.

I would like to share some information about the micro-electronics industries. These industries were first located in the first world, and then many of the processes were shifted, mainly to South-East Asia to exploit cheap labour and lax laws regarding industrial practices, toxic dumping, and so on. Many of these companies are beginning to move their operations to the Caribbean.

In October 1986, I visited the Philippines as part of an international link-up around the micro-electronics industry. When we walked into an electronics factory in an EPZ, we saw a modern working environment. The electronics industry was, in its early years, described as the 'clean' industry. It is air-conditioned, the fittings are modern, the workers are wearing protective gloves, boots, and so on, so you think, "this is no sweatshop; these workers are obviously protected". However, it is not the workers who are being protected by the gear they are wearing, but the microchip. To the 'chip', which is microscopic in size, dust is anathema. Any dust (and by dust scientists mean also human effluents such as dandruff and skin flakes) would damage the chip to the extent where it is unfit for productive use.

In fact, when you start examining the processes in the industry now taking place in the third world, some rather alarming facts come

to light. The design of the commodities (ranging from calculators to computers to parts of nuclear weapons) and the capital intensive stages of the production process occur in the first world. What reaches us are the components that need to be tested, sorted and cleaned. And just what are the cleaning agents being used in this industry? Chemicals include concentrated acids and alkalis, organic compounds and hundreds of other toxic chemicals. Since the manufacture of all items occurs along an assembly line, if you are working with concentrated sulphuric acid, for example, you are doing it all day. It also means that since you are operating in an air-conditioned environment for eight to nine hours a day, you are breathing in a combination of vapours, metal dust and radioactive emissions from all the toxic chemicals in use in the plant.

What happens after a few years of this kind of exposure? In the Silicon Valley of California, where 70% or so of the microelectronic factories in the United States are located, doctors have found that within three to four years the immune system of the worker breaks down as a result of inhaling all these vapours. They first affect the respiratory system, but since this is connected by the lymph and blood to all other systems, the worker begins to suffer from a disease which doctors have been able to compare only with A.I.D.S. One of the other sides of such exposure is the damage that is done to the reproductive systems of workers, mainly women. Women experience abortions, miscarriages, and

even infertility. All of these are proportionately related to the level of exposure they have had to particular toxic chemicals as well as their individual metabolic responses.

Another major dimension of the microelectronics industry is the phenomenon of toxic waste. What happens to the waste products at the end of the day? Obviously, multinational corporations do not take their toxic wastes back to the first world. They fill them into barrels which are sealed and then buried underground, or sunk into our oceans. In a few years these barrels leak, and the chemicals invade our underground water systems and interfere with the ecology. As has been proven by thousands of cases in the Silicon Valley of California, children born in such areas develop a range of cancers, and other congenital defects.

Export Processing Zones are therefore not simply an economic package. We are not only talking about companies that come foot-loose into our countries, benefit from tax-free holidays, pay marginal rates for infrastructure that we have put down, and leave if the situation changes; for example, if workers are forming militant trade unions and demanding increased wages. Hence in part the present move to the Caribbean. After two to three decades of EPZs, people in the Far East are seeing the effects, not only on their economies, but on their societies as a whole. EPZs are hopping around, and at the moment the Caribbean is the place to be.

S

St. Vincent & Dominica - Two Case Studies

The following article is extracted from "The New Enclave Industries and Women Workers in the Eastern Caribbean", a forthcoming LDC Women Workers in Industry Research Report by Cecilia Green, a joint project of the Caribbean People's Development Agency (CARIPEDA), the Centre for Caribbean Dialogue (Toronto) and CUSO (Eastern Caribbean).

PICO (St. Vincent) Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of PICO Products, Inc. of Liverpool, New York, manufacturers of cable TV products. PICO established operations in St. Vincent on 19 February, 1981. Today, over 100 workers assemble electronic filters used in security systems for cable TV (these scramble and unscramble signals for the benefit of home subscribers). PICO Products Inc. appears to be a small, sole proprietor, transnational venture. In addition to twin factories in St. Vincent and St. Kitts, and the parent company in New York, PICO has a factory in California, one in Miami that was closed at the time of the fieldwork, and two factories in the Far East (the Vincentian Assistant Manager spoke of one in South Korea).

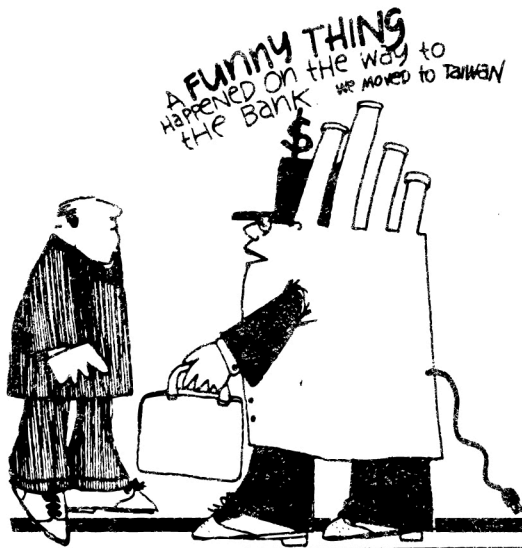
Dominica Glove Ltd. had the distinction, at the time of the research (early 1987) of being Dominica's only pure export/enclave enterprise. The parent company was named by the Dominican manager as Gloves Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts, which, according to rec-

ords of the former St. Vincent subsidiary, may be a subdivision of Safety House of New England Inc. In addition to the former "Caribbean Glove Company" in St. Vincent, this company was once set up in Barbados as Trident Gloves Ltd. The Dominica Manager described it as a sole proprietorship. A subsidiary in Haiti currently employs about 400 workers making plastic gloves.

The management styles at PICO

investigation of the histories of these companies revealed that the role of these local managers was primarily that of worker control agents. They were both charged with mandates to mould a particular kind of workforce, constituted overwhelmingly by members of their own sex. The bottom line was that they were to keep the workers organised in such a way as to preclude the need or justification for a union.

The median age-group of female factory workers in St. Vincent, as probably elsewhere, is 16-25 years old. The entire range in a workforce will typically encompass ages from 16 to 40 years, as was reported for PICO. While the median range is similar that what has been reported from the Far East, the big difference is that in the Caribbean this employment experience is not a pre-"marriage and parenthood" stage in the life-cycle of these young workers. Most of them already have babies (one or two mostly) and most of them are unmarried and will remain so for the next ten to twenty years, in accordance with traditional patterns of family formation in the Caribbean. Many of them, even those with babies, still live or at least share a household with one or both parents and/or other relatives. Some of them may have established independent households of their own based on a common-law relationship or, less frequently, marriage. One finds this to be increasingly the case as



and Dominica Gloves were in some ways reminiscent of each other, both run as they were by locally born women (both, interestingly enough, returnees) whose organisational methods appeared strikingly meticulous, thorough, bureaucratic and paternalistic/maternalistic. The top management, however, is male and foreign, specifically, white American. A closer in-

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one gets into the age-range beyond 25.

Whatever the living arrangements, however, the wages of these workers are critical to the support of the household. They do not merely go to help support the parental home, as is often, though not always, the case in Southeast Asia. Many of these women are the sole providers for their children.

Deidre Kelly has compiled a "composite picture of the 'average' St. Lucian female electronics production worker," which may be useful to look at here:

"She is in her early twenties and of African descent. She was born, raised, and still lives in a countryside village. Typically, her mother was a housewife and her father was a small-scale farmer. She attended primary school, speaks both English and Patois, and knows how to read and write. She is single, lives in a household with four to six other people, including one or two children of her own, and is the sole or the main provider for these children and, in many cases, for other relatives as well. In order to help make ends meet, her household maintains a home garden and raises fowl; one other person in her home circle also earns a wage, often in the service sector" (Kelly, 1984: 6 - see bibliography).

The preferred age-range for recruits differs somewhat from factory to factory. The manager at Dominica Gloves declares 17 to

be the "best age for training". Most of her "girls" were between 17 and 20, with the range extending to workers in their early thirties. She described optimum conditions for training as those provided by the willing, able and properly behaved 17 year-old girl with no allergies, who is not pregnant and does not plan on being pregnant during the training period. Recruits are warned that they will be dropped from the programme if they become pregnant during training.

The manager swore that workers "without families" were the most dedicated. She had found her first set of recruits among seamstress trainees in a small sewing programme run by her mother from her home. The bulk of the numbers needed, however, was supplied by graduates of the Skills Training Programme which was had conducted special glove-making modules for the factory's benefit, as was done in St. Vincent.

In compliance with what was described for St. Lucia's electronics factory workers, and what appeared to be generally true for St. Vincent and Antigua, workers at Dominica Gloves were recruited, not from Roseau, despite Canefield's proximity to the latter, but from rural and semi-rural areas.

According to the manager, only about 10% of workers in the factory were from Roseau and, in her estimation, even those were mostly Roseau-resident, not Roseau-born. It was a situation of which

she did not appear in any way to disapprove, citing poor work attitudes on the part of Roseau people. This tendency to be wary of urban-origin workers and to prefer rural or migrant recruits was noted by Kelly for St. Lucia as well (1984... 14-15).

The manager also said that she scrutinised mannerisms and speech and looked for girls who were tidy and polite. What was clear to this researcher was that management was prepared to go through a careful and relatively painstaking screening process in order to acquire the kind of workforce which would be amenable to - or, at least, not unduly at odds with - its openly anti-union stance.

As far as the researcher was able to determine, the factories surveyed paid the following wages at the beginning of 1987:



Dominican Republic A Tale Of Exploitation

Free Zone Areas, supposedly a "cure-all for unemployment", are a creation of transnational capital to benefit from the exploitation of an idle labour force. They are living proof of the unquestionable, oppressive and subordinate conditions that are experienced by women, and were written about by the Centro de Investigacion Para la Accion Femenina (CIPAF) last year in its collection of Popular Feminist Editions.

Printed in pamphlet form, Magaly Pineda's text, which is based on research work, is called The Female Labour Force in the Dominican Republic, with a sub-head ing..... "Women in Free Zone Areas". The second volume of this publication is entitled, When Work is Hell: Women and Free Zone Areas in the Dominican Republic.

The first volume explains how the Free Zones came into being, where they were located, what their interests were, and how they affected the lives of the workers. In the introductory paragraph, CIPAF notes that the publication gives "information on the different ways women are oppressed nowadays" and that "we'll fight together for

guaranteed and decent work opportunities in society, as well as the elimination of all kinds of injustice and inequality".

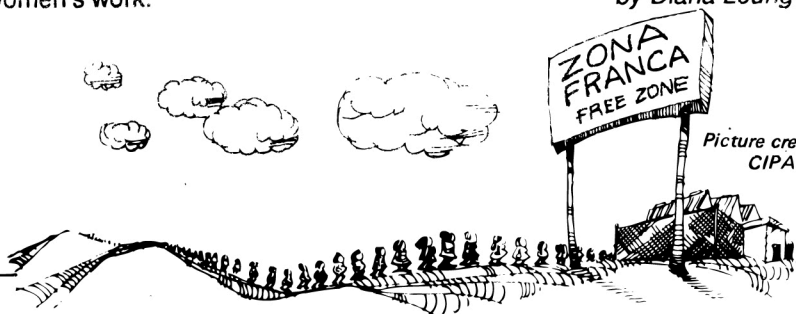
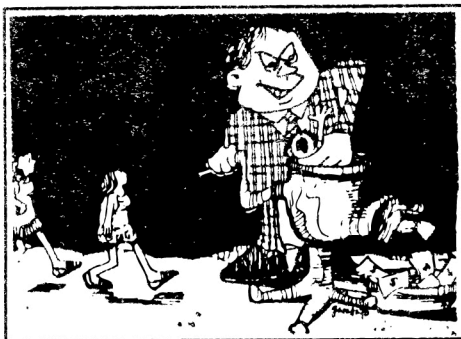
In volume 2, there is a description of the characteristics of firms with foreign capital looking to take advantage of unemployed labour, among other things. CIPAF includes some recommendations which would lead to an improvement in the Free Zone workers' situation, although it immediately recognises that "the very women who sell their labour in these firms are called upon to get, through their struggle and call for justice, working conditions that will put a stop to the consequences of the extreme exploitation to which they are being subjected".

Details are given on the characteristics of each Free Zone Area - number of workers, products manufactured, etc. The pamphlet then gets down to the nitty-gritty of women's work.

"The production quota is fixed by each firm on a guesswork basis as to who wants to earn more". "It goes without saying that, when under pressure and driven by necessity, workers would begin to exceed their quota so that they can earn a little bit more. This new figure naturally soon becomes the quota".

CIPAF alludes to the Free Zone workers attempts to assert their rights. 40% of the factories have tried to become unionised, but the bosses always ended up sacking the ringleaders "because the workers have no legal support and, moreover, since the owners are foreigners, mainly North Americans, they can threaten everyone with moving their factories elsewhere if workers demand increases and better working conditions". Finally, in the recommendations drawn up to get workers to fight for their rights, the pamphlet included eight specific suggestions - the first of which is that women in Free Zone areas stop believing the story that there is a 'law' in those factories prohibiting unions: "that's a lie, made up by the owners with the complicity of the government, to stop unions".

Translated from Quehaceres
by Diana Leung



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Trinidad & Tobago Women Against Free Trade Zones

The voices of those women in Trinidad and Tobago who are saying an emphatic "NO!" to the introduction of Free Trade Zones are rising to a crescendo and the sound is echoing across the country as women articulate their concerns, not only as a cause against the exploitation of women, but as an issue of national development and a struggle for self-reliance that could have repercussions across the region.

Against a number of odds - among them an absence of funds and, to put it mildly, media indifference - an action committee called Women Against Free Trade Zones, undertook a public education campaign and the mobilisation of opinion on the larger issue of alternative economic strategies for solutions to unemployment and the range of fiscal problems facing post-oil boom Trinidad and Tobago.

A large dose of courage was needed, as the committee knew it ran the risk of being accused of working against the interest of those women who would find jobs in the Zones.

It was a risk the members were prepared to take, along with the onslaught of (mostly male) hostility that labelled them "obstructionists", backward people wishing to "turn back the hands of the clock to the age of the ox and the windmill", and "Wajangs" a perjorative word in the local dialect meaning 'loose, vulgar, rebellious'.

Perhaps the most unexpected accusation was the one coming from - shockingly - the Minister responsible for Women's Affairs who in Parliament spoke of those women who were comfortably employed and were no doubt themselves guilty of exploiting their household help.

Facing her from the public gallery as she made the statement were three (unemployed) members of the group of nine that comprised the action committee.

The committee's first task was to attempt to untie the knots of confusion created by the varying descriptions given to the Free Trade Zone system. The public was sold



images of free ports with cheap duty-free shopping, and the idea of a miracle system of industriali-

sation that would transform Trinidad into what was referred to as the "Hong Kong of the Western Hemisphere".

Then came the task of persuading the jobless that a Free Trade Zone job would not be the solution to their problems. More than this, that they must resist the Free Zone system because they owe it to themselves, and to their country's development. And so the education process was underway.

For a while, few people understood that Free Trade, or Export Processing, Zones form part of structural adjustment programmes recommended by the IMF, the World Bank and other US-controlled lending agencies, which result in enhanced profits for a few and further underdevelopment for the majority. Few understood the system to be a creation of transnational companies requiring cheap labour and an escape from the health and occupational safety laws of their own countries. People were unaware that workers in developing countries are being made to become the 'hands' in a system where the 'brains' are concentrated in the developed world; that under the system, "Third World" countries remain woefully ignorant of the new technologies that are never shared with them.

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Jamaica The Struggle Continues

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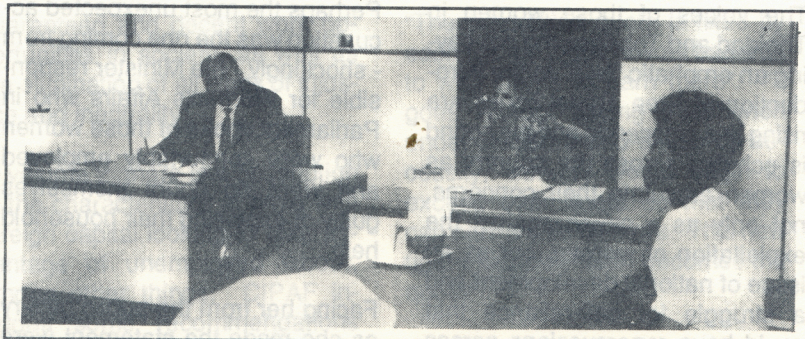
Women Against Free Trade Zones

The Women Against Free Trade Zones spoke out on these issues and advised the jobless that inability to meet unbearable quotas could result in loss of work; that trade union protection is undermined under the Free Zone system; and that in certain industries, most notably the microelectronics, they will be exposed to health hazards.

A call for public consultation on the issue was made to the Government by the committee. This was ignored. Legislation for the establishment of Free Trade Zones in Trinidad and Tobago was placed before the Parliament and passed.

Undeterred, the Women Against Free Trade Zones are taking their message from community to community, with panel discussions and a video production on the Zones. Their message is being well received by the public, and the range of alternative strategies proposed to the Government by the women is being augmented as minds come together in the struggle to save Trinidad and Tobago from yet another system that is designed to exploit its people, and further underdevelop the country.

Marilyn Jones



Scene from the Free Zone Inquiry - Jamaica

On Friday, March 4, four days before International Women's Day 1988, 2,500 women machine operators, menders, trimmers, spreaders and ironers from East Ocean Textiles, the largest factory in the Kingston Free Zone, marched through the Free Zone security gates and onto the streets of Kingston. They sang and danced in demonstrations for three days. A week later, the government set up a Board of Enquiry into the Garment Industry with special reference to the Kingston Free Zone and other Free Zones.

Mrs. Jacqueline Robinson, a former spreader, testifying on 23 June this year, described the issues behind the demonstrations:

"The main complaint was low wages ... at that time I was getting US\$0.40 per hour (US\$16.00 per week). Number two: the dust ... All that dust off it (the stored material), you inhale it and it catches on to your fabric ... you have on this black and white dress - when you reach home it turn red and black ... the third priority ... I witness a Chinese box a Jamaican guy because he took him off his production and

gave him some boxes to pack up which he wouldn't be getting pay for. He told him that he was not going to do it, an argument developed and he boxed him; that was the main thing that triggered off the demonstration which they tried to hush up".

Mrs. Robinson was chosen by the demonstrating garment workers to represent the cutters in a delegation of five who spoke with the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Edward Seaga, after they gathered outside Jamaica House. She was one of those picked up by the TV cameras. Two weeks later she was fired for "working below standard". Although she was a member of a team of five women, none of the others was even warned for poor performance. When her supervisor protested, he was told she would "soon get a job a JBC" (the national TV station). Despite reporting the incident to the Ministry of Labour, she has not regained her employment.

Her story of arbitrary dismissal, victimisation after standing up for her rights, and lack of representa-

tion (unions are not allowed to enter the Free Zone) is typical. Her testimony has identified the main issues for the women workers: very low wages, poor physical working conditions and high-handed, arrogant and, in many instances, racist management behaviour.

The Kingston Free Zone was set up by the newly elected JLP government in the early 80s. There are at present 17 companies, including 11 in garments, 3 in food processing, 1 in ethanol and 1 in pharmaceuticals. 95% of the 13,600 employed in the Kingston Free Zone are located in garment factories. Over 90% of these garment workers are women, the majority of whom are below the age of 25 years. Other Free Zones exist in Hayes (in the constituency of the Deputy Prime Minister) and Montego Bay.

Exports from the Kingston Free Zone grew by 45% from US\$72m in 1986 to US\$104m in 1987. However, there is little financial gain for Jamaica. Companies are allowed full repatriation of profits with 100% tax holidays, duty free imports on raw materials and capital goods, and the majority of the workers are paid below taxable wages.

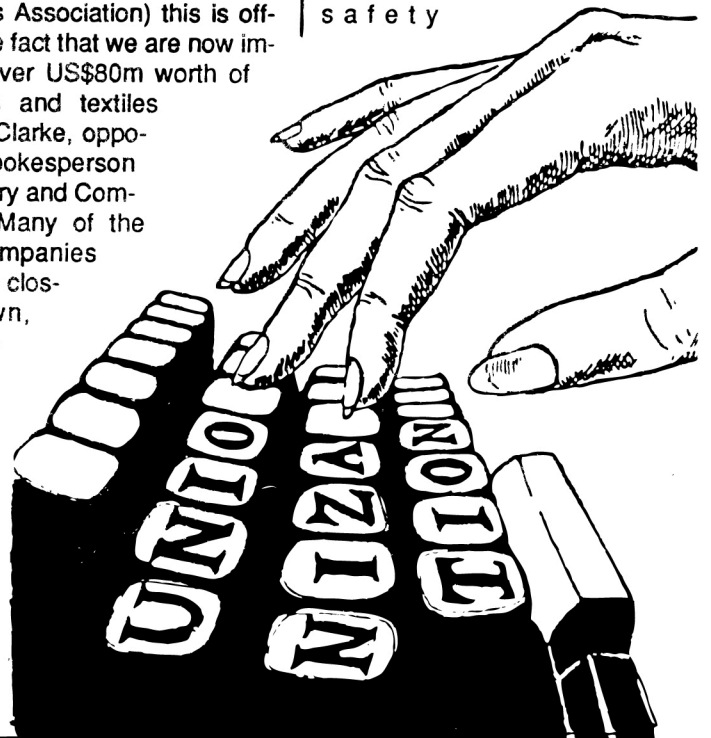
The garment export industry also needs to be assessed in light of the fact that under the present government's restructuring programme, scores of local garment manufacturing companies (many of which, e.g. Shelley Ann Jeans, had become household names) have closed down, unable to com-

pete with the flood of imports under the government's open import policy. The industry mushroomed again after the 1985 devaluation of the Jamaican dollar, but this time under the US 807 programme, no longer making garments for the domestic and Caribbean markets but assembling pre-cut garments for American companies. These companies, which had previously sent their garments to be assembled in Central America, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, have found it increasingly profitable to have the work done in Jamaica.

Thus, while earnings (and employment) in the industry have risen again, from US\$15m in 1984 to US\$85.6m in 1987 (Prakash Vaswani, President of the Jamaica Exporters Association) this is offset by the fact that we are now importing over US\$80m worth of garments and textiles (Claude Clarke, opposition spokesperson on Industry and Commerce). Many of the local companies are again closing down, this time
b e -

cause they have to borrow money at 30% interest rates and are given none of the government support available to the Free Zone companies.

Moreover in the Free Zone our women have found themselves working in what have been described as "industrial plantations" (Suzann Dodd, the lawyer who presented SISTREN's submission to the Enquiry. A 1986 participatory research project into the garment industry, co-sponsored by CUSO and the Joint Trade Union Research and Development Centre, found that the majority of allegations of low wages, compulsory overtime, physical abuse by non-Jamaicans, poor health and safety



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lations and denial of entry to trade unions were accurate. "They in fact characterise the international garment industry. Practices in the locally-owned industry are more favourable in general ... wages in both local and foreign companies are extremely low, with additional income based on piece-rate production, which produces a high level of stress ... The garment industry is unlikely to improve the status of women as wages are low, the level of skill required is minimal, training is severely limited, as are opportunities for advancement. These factors, combined with long working hours, are likely to impact negatively on the families of garment workers who are potentially an 'at risk' group in terms of nutritional levels".

In 1988 the women began to fight back. In June, workers at Gazapati garment manufacturing company, which employs 900, followed their East Ocean sisters and took strike action, demanding increased pay and better working conditions. The price for these demonstrations,

however, has been high - many workers have been laid off. The fact is that with unemployment running at over 65% among young women, there are many anxious to take up the jobs. None of the women's groups who have made presentations at the Enquiry has called for a dismantling of the Free Zone. What they have asked for are:

- higher wages, a minimum of US\$30 per week;
- a re-examination of excessive quotas;
- unimpeded access for Trade Unions (officially the Free Zones are subject to all the Jamaican Labour Laws);
- better health schemes (at present many Free Zone factories spend only US\$6.60 per worker per year);
- meal subsidies;
- modifications of work schedules to allow time off for health, school visits, etc.;
- formal appointment of persons to jobs after a probation period; and
- in-depth opportunities for women to learn their rights.

The trade unions have also called for the Joint Industrial Council originally proposed by government after the demonstrations but withdrawn under pressure from the Free Zone employers.

Some Free Zone managements have made slight improvements (there are significant differences between factories); one of the worst managers has been removed; lunch-time at East Ocean has been extended from 1/2 hour to 1 hour; slight wage increases have occurred in some factories; and there have been some health scheme improvements. The fact is, pressure can have some effect.

A Women's Action Committee was formed after the Dunn research findings were presented and involves over 16 women's groups, church groups and trade unions. Some Free Zone workers are meeting in their communities. The struggle continues ...

Jennifer Jones



Book Fair

The International Feminist Book Fair has become an important biennial event in the publishing and feminist calendar. The Fair was launched in London in 1984 and continued with greater participation in Oslo in 1986. This year over 160 publishers, booksellers and distributors participated in the event. They included feminist publishers such as Virago, Press Gang, Firebrand, Isis International and Kali for Women; university presses; feminist periodicals such as Fireweed, Sojourner, The Women's Forum, Woman of Power and Woman Speak!. The Caribbean was represented by CAFRA (at the Sister Vision booth), the Belize Rural Women's Association and the University of the West Indies.

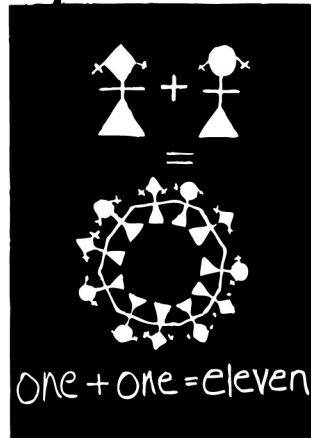
The Book Fair provides a unique opportunity for feminists to network and discover each other's work, while, at the same time, making feminist authors known to a wider audience. The event also celebrates women's cultural and literary diversity and fosters an exchange across continents, languages and disciplines. Over 180 writers from 50 countries took part in a series of panels organised around the themes of Memory, Power, and Strategies of Feminist Thought. From the Caribbean there were Maryse Conde, Cynthia Ellis, Ramabai Espinet and Merle Hodge. Ayanna Black, Dionne Brand, Afua Cooper, Marlene Philip and Makeda Silvera are writers who were born in the Caribbean and now make their home in Canada.

The first two days were reserved for feminist publishers to network, negotiate rights and make distribution arrangements. From June 16, the fair was open to the public and for the next four days, feminists from around the world shuttled to and from the four venues at the University of Montreal campus, to attend the series of panels, workshops and readings. The impossibility of being in four places at once, hunger and sheer exhaustion prevented even the most dedicated feminist from maximising the packed, immensely interesting programme.

The panels varied in quality due to the capabilities of the panellists, time constraints and the limitations of simultaneous translation. The quality of the ensuing discussion compensated somewhat for the deficiencies of panels. The most memorable one for me was the panel "Speaking of Power", because it addressed some recurrent thorny issues of feminism: the lines that divide (class, race, sexuality and the role of men in the women's movement) and the ties that bind (sisterhood/feminist solidarity). The speakers were Audre Lorde of the USA, Miriam Tlali of South Africa and Daysi Zamora of Nicaragua.

The poetry readings were truly

enjoyable and were grouped as follows: Canadian, Spanish-speaking, Quebecois, multilingual, lesbian, native (Amerindian) and Francophone.



Finally, mention must be made of two actions which had a significant impact on the Montreal Book Fair. The first is the boycott of the Fair by the Congress of Black Women of Concordia University. The Congress decided to take this action to protest the non-inclusion of Montreal's non-

white communities in the planning process of the Fair. Instead, the Congress organised three events focussing on women of colour, to coincide with the Fair. Through lobbying, it also succeeded in putting the issue of racism on the agenda where it belonged.

The second action was the invasion of the Mohawk territory of Kahnawake by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on June 1. The invasion was brought to the attention of Fair participants by Donna Goodleaf of the Kahnawake territory. Petitions were signed, a telex was sent to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and an international feminist network of solidarity was set in motion to condemn the action by the Canadian authorities.

Cathy Shepherd

F

**eminism, Womanism
and The Third World**

Angela Davis teaches Black Women's studies at San Francisco State University. She was in Montreal on October 16 to speak on "Feminism and Women's Liberation in the Third World." The following is excerpted from her talk.

I think I would like to begin by asking you to give a definition of feminism, or western feminism. (If I did) the result would be an array of vastly different and more than likely contradictory interpretations. There are conservative feminisms, liberal feminisms, radical feminisms, there is socialist feminism. There are women who would discard the label altogether even though they are active in the women's movement. The bottom line is that (we) all strive to improve the lot of women in societies that are manifestly sexist.

But I would have a hard time accepting any notion of a common denominator. As a black woman whose loyalties are with the working class, I would find it extremely difficult to asso-



ciate myself with women who are striving to reach equality with the boys in the executive suites in the capitalist corporations who support apartheid in South Africa and exploitation at home.

I don't intend to explore all of the contradictions and ambiguities of the many feminisms that have de-

veloped over the past century in the capitalist western countries. So I would simply point out there are ambiguities.

Alice Walker has subtitled her book, In Search of our Mothers' Gardens, "Womanist prose" rather than "feminist prose." She prefaces the book with a definition of womanist: "from womanish, the opposite of girlish, i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious. A black feminist of colour. From the black folk expression used by mothers to female children: you're acting 'womanish,' i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered good for one. Interested in grown up doings. Acting grown up, being grown up..."

But why have black women found it necessary to go to great pains to distance themselves or qualify their association with the mainstream feminist movement even as they have made significant and indispensable

contributions to the development of the campaign for women's equality?

Throughout the history of many of these mainstream movements there has been a chronic problem, one which plagues the movement today to a lesser extent than yes-

terday, but which nonetheless persists. The problem consists in basing an analysis of sexism on the very specific experiences of one group of women who have most vocally labelled themselves as feminists.

As a consequence, there has been a tendency towards universalizing a particular experience of sexism. And thus oversimplifying the structure of sexism. Of failing to understand that sexism is informed by racism, by class exploitation. By the militarization of our society. By our governments' imperialist policies vis-a-vis the developing countries.

Women of colour and working-class women of all racial backgrounds have instinctively rejected definitions of women's oppression that focus on the domestic and personal expressions of male supremacy to the exclusion of its economic and political dimensions. Women in South Africa, Chile and Nicaragua have also found it difficult to embrace a feminism which has historically ignored the requirements of national liberation.

An issue around which there has developed a great deal of controversy between certain circles of western women and women in Africa and the Middle East concerns practices of genital mutilation. And in some countries in Africa and the Middle East, women are still undergoing clitoridectomies, which is the amputation of the clitoris, and/or intubulation, which the sewing together of the

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vaginal lips.

A number of years ago, several feminist groups in the United States began to campaign against this practice of genital mutilation. It was not difficult to detect the underlying racism characterizing the campaign. I recall speaking with African women in countries where this practice continues, and many of them pointed out that while so often women from the capitalist countries found it so horrifying, so difficult to believe that they could be subjected to such a practice, they themselves could not understand why women in capitalist countries mutilate their breasts and go to plastic surgeons and found it just as hard to understand.

The Association of African Women for Research and Development points out: "...In trying to reach their own public, the crusaders have fallen back on sensationalism and have been insensitive to the dignity of the very women they want to save. They are totally unconscious of the latent racism which such a campaign evokes in (their own) country where ethnocentric prejudices are so deep rooted. And in their conviction that this is a just cause, they have forgotten that these women from a different race, a different culture, are human beings and that solidarity can only exist alongside self-affirmation and mutual respect."

Now I want to talk a little about the Women's Movement in the United States, the capitalist country that I know best. Feminist movements

and other movements have undergone a process of maturation in recent years. We have had to mature. Ronald Reagan has seen to that.

This process of maturation has been largely stimulated by the increased economic assaults on the working class, by the intensification of racism, by the violations of human rights, by the policies supporting the most fascist regimes throughout the world. And today we can say that the organized Women's Movement is increasingly acknowledging the centrality of economic issues in the process of attaining women's equality. It was once the case that anti-racist demands were integrated only into the agendas of movements organized by women of colour. These demands have gained acceptance in virtually all progressive circles of the Women's Movement. Anti-imperialist solidarity and peace activism is no longer deemed irrelevant or secondary to the feminist process.

I would argue that a pivotal event for this development in the United States was the 1985 conference that took place in Nairobi marking the end of the UN-declared decade for women. There were unprecedented (numbers of) Afro-American women attending the

forum in Nairobi, and they were able to join women from most of the world's nations in trying to build bridges between women's equality, economic development and peace.

(Their) experience stimulated an even more profound understanding of the global implications of the quest for women's liberation. For the first time in the history of the inter-national Women's Movement, white women from the western capitalist countries found themselves in the minority and of course that minority status accurately reflects the composition of the world population.

On the other hand, women of colour, who unfortunately have grown accustomed to being part of a minority in North America, found ourselves to be part of the majority at Nairobi. The exchange of ideas and experiences between white women and women of colour, between women from the capitalist and the socialist countries, between women from the developed countries and women from the Third World marked a very high point in the international Women's Movement.

Angela Davis
Reprinted from Women's News/Bulletin Femmes, vol. 2 #3,
November, 1987

CARIFEM Update

SURINAME



ZIJ AAN ZIJ (SIDE BY SIDE) is the name of the newsletter of the National Centre for

Women, inaugurated in Suriname on 14 March, 1988 by Ms. Elfriede Alexander Vanenburg, Minister of Home Affairs, District Administration and People's Mobilization. In her opening speech, the Minister emphasised that the Centre needs

to operate upon signals given from the field, i.e. the women's organisations, and that the Centre is the instrument with which the women's policy of the government will be implemented. Ms. Hellen Kerk is the Centre Co-ordinator.

SIDE BY SIDE, Year 1 no. 2, the copy received by CAFRA, starts its cover page with an article on May 1st, a Day for the Working Woman and Man, which highlights circumstances in relation to unemployment in the country and government's concerns and plans to address the issue. It states that there are no unemployment statistics in the country at the moment, as since 1968 only those unemployed who have voluntarily notified the government have been registered as such.

Other articles in the newsletter include one on "handelingsonbekwaamheid", meaning women's incapacity to act legally, which deals with an amendment to the relevant law. The Editorial mentions an increased concern in society with regard to the incidence of violence against women, specifically sexual assault, rape, maltreatment and murder.

CAFRA News also heard from Nadia Ravelas of the National

Women's Movement about the IWD celebrations in Suriname. The theme was "Women and Health", and thirteen different groups cooperated to host activities and to draw up a petition, which was presented to the Minister of Health, with resolutions and actions to be taken for a better health programme for women.

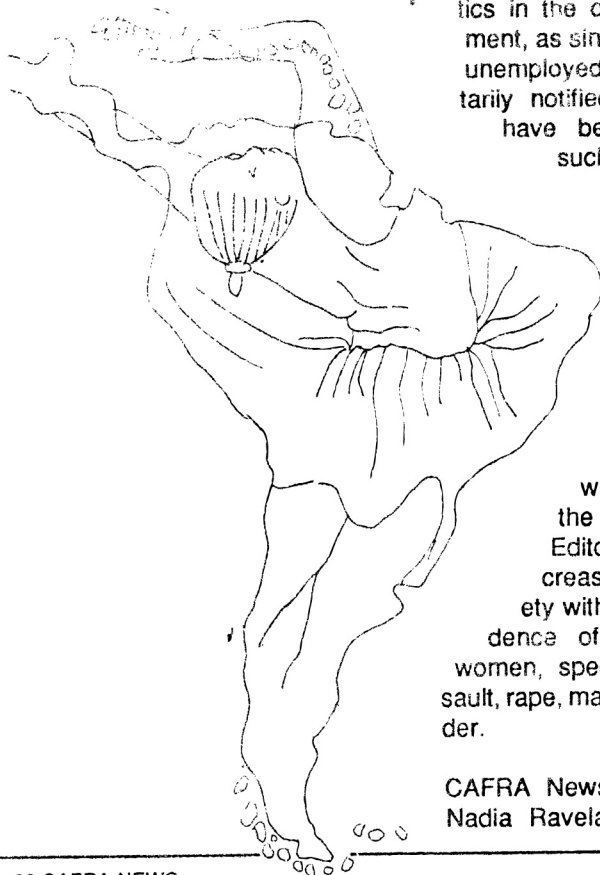
Thanks to Sonia Cuales

PUERTO RICO

In January of 1986, the Council of Higher Education commissioned the University of Puerto Rico and the Chancellor of Cayey University College to prepare a proposal for the establishment of a new study programme to be located at the Cayey University College campus.

The new project was to address the issue of the subordination of one gender (woman) to another (man) and closely examine the web of social relations that underlie such a phenomenon. In Puerto Rico, as in many other countries, an overwhelming transformation in women's situation has occurred.

Their increasing participation in the labour force and student bodies, for example, has nullified the dogma that labelled women only as mothers and housewives. New tools were needed to analyze,



Cont 'd

study and understand this new reality.

Puerto Rico is one of the few countries that have granted equality to all citizens in its constitution, yet sex discrimination is still a harsh reality in many spheres of the Puerto Rican society today. For example, women are significantly marginalised in the occupational structure, confront a great subordination in marriage, and are far from acquiring real power in the political arena. Evidently the legal and constitutional prohibitions against discrimination and prejudice is through reforms in the educational and political systems. So it was important that the University of Puerto Rico, the major educational centre, give its enthusiastic support to the Proyecto de Estudios de la Mujer (PRO Mujer), the Women's Studies Project.

It is felt that PRO Mujer embodies the interests and concerns of a wide variety of sectors within and outside the University of Puerto Rico system. Three working areas constitute the Project: an academic area whose purpose is to promote curricular reform and new courses related to gender issues; the establishment of a Research and Documentation Centre; and a community programme, that will integrate orientation and education, and at the same time help identify problems associated with women's issues.

During the last ten months, the Project has offered a variety of symposiums, seminars, activities

and conferences. It co-sponsored, for instance, for instance the First Sexual Education Symposium. It was also honoured to receive the visit of Dr. Krishna Ahooja Patel from INSTRAW, who was one of the guest speakers in the Seminar "Men, Women and Development", last April. During the celebration of Women's Week, the first publication of the Project's official bulletin, TENEMENEJE, took place.

PRO Mujer intends to continue explaining some of the most severe problems that directly affect women. The Cayey University College, as a place for deep reflection, constructive criticism and discussion, engaged in the never-ending search for knowledge, will encourage through its Women's Studies Programme the innovative ideas that will enrich and improve our society.

(Yamila Azize, Director)

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

The Women's Coalition of St. Croix was an outgrowth of a symposium held at the St. Croix campus of CVI, March 1981. The event, the Women Writer's Symposium, was developed by Dr. Gloria Joseph, and partially sponsored by a grant from the V.I. Council on the Arts. On the last evening of the symposium, a question was raised: "What are we women going to do here in St. Croix to continue what has been started at this symposium?" One of the writers responded, "Pass a sheet of paper and all interested in



WOMEN'S COALITION
of St. Croix

forming a women's group, sign up."

As a result, a group of about 20 women began meeting regularly at the Public Library in Christiansted. It was decided that the purpose was to promote equality for women in the USVI through education and advocacy for women's rights, and to sponsor programmes designed to promote freedom from the oppressions of sexism and racism. They became the Women's Coalition of St. Croix.

The WCSC is actively concerned about violence against women, in particular the crimes of rape and wife-battering. An outstandingly effective Advocates for Women in Crisis Program to help victims of rape and battering has been in operation since December 1981. The WCSC airs information about violence against women whenever and wherever - at community health and justice fairs, before professional and service organisations, in schools, on the radio, etc. They have a weekly newspaper column and produce a quarterly newsletter.

Project Empowerment

It may surprise CAFRA readers to learn that there are many Latin American and Caribbean sisters working as prostitutes in the Red Light Districts of The Netherlands, mainly in the form of prostitution known as 'window prostitution'. For many women of our region, there are many factors which have resulted in their presence in this part of the world - factors such as the lack of employment opportunities tied to the debt crisis situation.

For many of the sisters working as prostitutes in The Netherlands, the price of survival is high and the risks numerous. Many of them are here as undocumented workers, i.e. illegally, and this status effectively silences them from speaking out for their rights as workers in an industry where the rights of the Dutch prostitute/co-worker are respected.

Many sisters have been 'bonded', i.e. borrowed large sums of money at high interest rates in order to migrate in search of employment, and the repayment of these loans means long working hours. Others have been trafficked against their will into prostitution in this country.

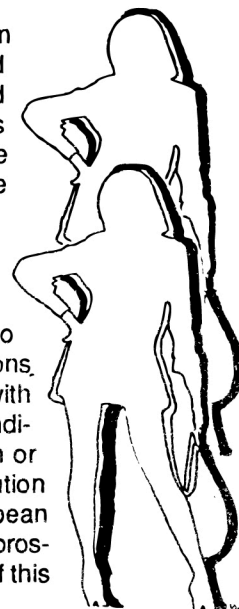
The action-research project named Project EMPOWERMENT began in March 1988 with the aim of creat-

ing an organisational base from which the needs, interests and demands of Latin American and Caribbean women working as window prostitutes in The Hague could be addressed. There are three workers on this project, who are from Colombia, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago.

Project EMPOWERMENT also aims to establish a communications network to exchange material with women's groups, researchers, individuals and activists working on or interested in the issue of prostitution in Latin America and the Caribbean and the trafficking in women into prostitution both within and outside of this region.

Anyone interested should contact Project EMPOWERMENT, Postbus 577, 2501 Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Maria Isabel Casas, Tatiana Cordero and Carla Foderingham.



MEETINGS, COURSES, FELLOWSHIPS, ETC.

OCTOBER 1988

3rd Encuentro Women's Meeting: "Latin American and Caribbean Women in the 80s: Evaluation, Prospects and Challenges" October 3-7 1988, Havana, Cuba. The topics of the meeting are: (i) Political dimensions - women's perception and self-perception. Ways of

organising. Women's organisations: links with other social sectors. Specific and general struggle; (ii) Women and the crisis: Its influences in rural and urban areas: Survival strategies. Foreign debt; (iii) Means of communication. Experiences in alternative communication. Common action. Use of communication technology in mass communication projects for women; (iv) Right to life: Solidarity. There will also be a Women's Festival every night at the hotels with musical and theatrical perform-

ances, painting exhibitions and videos. Contact Esther Velis, Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas, Paseo 260 esquina a 13, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba.

APRIL-JUNE 1989

Women and Agricultural Development, 20 April-30 June, 1989, Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Centre, University of Reading, England. The content of the programme is presented under the following headings: Agri-

C Conference Report

Cross-Cultural Black Women's Studies Summer Institute

We were often referred to as "Women of the World" because we came from Angola, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Canada, Colombia, England, Germany, Holland, Japan, Lesotho, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, the USA and Zimbabwe. We gathered together in New York city (called "the bowel of the beast" by a native) from July 11-30, 1988 for the Cross-Cultural Black Women's Studies Summer Institute. The focus was Communications.

There were three weeks of communications by means of lectures, seminars, public forums, small group discussions, workshops, a film festival and cultural performances. From the sister from Palestine, we heard of the landlessness of her people, their resistance being met with rubber bullets which

have fatal steel tips. The sister from Aotearoa, who refers to herself as one of the first world people, told us of the fights of the Maori people to have land treaties implemented; also, that the peoples of the Pacific are not as afraid of a nuclear war as they are of a nuclear accident. We also heard of the exploitation of women who work in the mines of Colombia. In other words, the kind of information which we do not receive via the US TV network.

At the practical workshops, I learnt to use a video camera, lights, etc. Unfortunately, I had to miss those on literature, still photography and oral tradition. Then there were the performances.

What can I say about them? They were produced, performed and video-taped by the participants and guests. They formed a kaleidoscope of poetry, short stories, plays, dance and music. I particularly remember the humour and subtlety in the play of the Native American sister; the strength and



culture; Women and Development; Food, Nutrition and Health; Extension, Education and Training; and Study, Recording and Communications Skills.

The course is intended to meet the training needs of women development staff engaged in working with rural women in the field, and those



in administrative posts concerned with women's affairs for which there may as yet be no specific training available. For more information,

write to Ms. J.E. Smithells, AERDC, The University, 16 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ, England.

emotions of the poetry of Sonia Sanchez and Audre Lorde; and the response of the sisters in the audience to dance at the call of the drums. The climax was a song composed and sung by a young South African sister entitled "The Walls Must Fall".

Space does not permit me to tell the whole story. However, in October a newsletter will be distributed to participants about this year's Institute. The next Institute will be held in Zimbabwe from 17 July to 5 August, 1989. The theme around which it will be organised is "The Politics of Food". Sisters interested in attending, please contact me through CAFRA.

Stephanie Pile

W Women and Shelter

In April, the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) which is an alliance of NGOs working in the field of shelter, invited a small group of women representatives of that organisation from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, North America and Europe to meet in New Delhi, India in order to draw up a global action plan for HIC that would address the role of women in the development of Human Settlements.

Unfortunately, the representatives from Latin America were unable to attend, but the women that did spent an exhausting but exhilarating week putting together a plan of action that has been aimed at encouraging women's groups world-wide as well as settlement oriented NGOs to really become involved in shelter and housing in a way that is gender sensitive.

The group has based its plans around the launching of a Women and Shelter Network that will have a newsletter as its initial means of communication. This newsletter is to be produced at the Mazingira Institute in Nairobi, with contributions being drawn from the network as a whole. Focal points throughout the world will serve as centres for collecting information, articles, and so on and distributing the newsletter once it is produced. The Construction Resource and Development Centre Ltd. (CRDC) will be fulfilling this role in the Caribbean, and I hope everyone who is interested in becoming a member of the network and in contributing to the newsletter will get in

touch with us by filling out the form enclosed in CAERA News. Eventually, it is hoped that each region will be active enough to produce its own newsletter, with a global edition being made up of selections from the regions.

Other plans made by the HIC Women and Shelter Group are focussed on research and documentation of the effects of women's access and lack of access to land, housing and services; the development of materials that will sensitize policy makers and funders to critical issues affecting women in the development of shelter programmes; the co-ordination of exchange visits between women within regions and between regions who are working in settlement development, particularly at the grassroots level; and the writing of a book that will examine the experience of women with respect to shelter.

Nearer home, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines hosted a regional seminar on Women and Shelter in June. NGOs were, unfortunately, only sparsely represented with most of the participants coming from government agencies. However, the seminar proved to be not only

dynamic, but also a real milestone for professionals working in the shelter field.

It is hoped that follow-up activities will be arranged in the near future. These are likely to include the establishment of a regional network on women, family and shelter (which hopefully will be facilitated by the network proposed by the HIC Women and Shelter Group); a review of housing policy in four Caribbean countries from the point of view of gender-re-

lated issues raised at the seminar; widening of the attempts to encourage women to participate in the building and construction sectors; and the development of a regional training programme for people who are working in settlement development at the community level.

Anyone interested in receiving a fuller report of the seminar should contact:

Margaret Gill, UNIFEM, P.O. Box 625C, Bridgetown, Barbados
Ruth McLeod, CRDC, 166 1/2 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, Jamaica
Gwendoline Williams, Women's Study Group, U.W.I., St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

Ruth McLeod, Jamaica

Decent shelter is a woman's right



INSTRAW  

1987
International Year of Shelter
for the Homeless

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_____, Report on Women in Industry, a participatory research project on garment workers in Jamaica. Kingston: JTURDC and CUSO, 1987.

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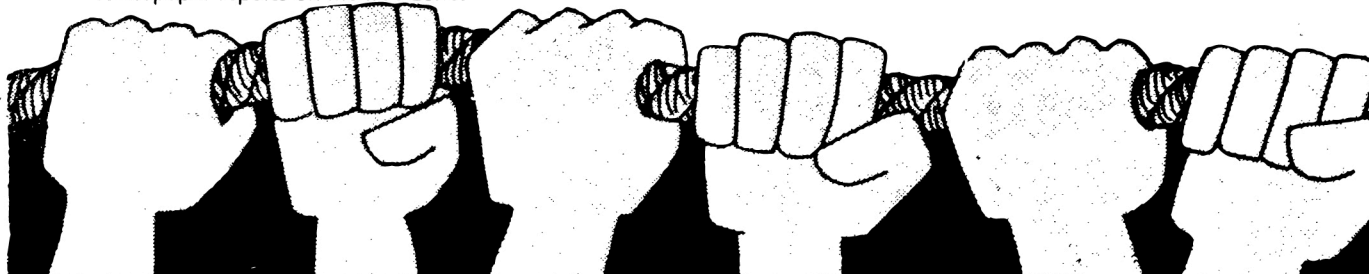
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LONG, Frank. Employment effects of multinational enterprises in export processing zones in the Caribbean: A joint ILO/UNCTC research project. Geneva: ILO, 1986. (Multinational Enterprises Programme, working paper 42).

SOARES, Judith. Women in industry: the case of the Jamaican free zone. Kingston: CUSO and JTURDC, 1987. Newspaper reports on the free zone.



N ews

CAFRA has been asked to sit on the Management Committee of the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) which is expected to guide, direct and oversee all policy of the network. Its first meeting was held on 22 July at the Vigie Beach Hotel, St. Lucia, following closely on the heels of CNIRD's Assembly, held on 28-30 June at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. CAFRA Co-ordinator, Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, attended on behalf of the association.

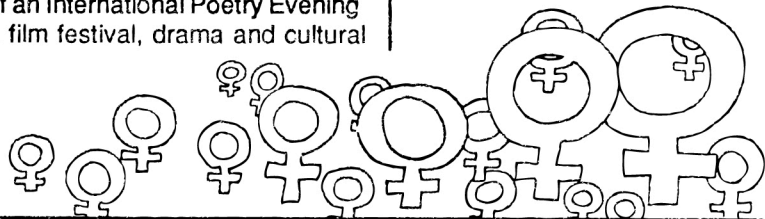
The Second Caribbean Peoples' International Bookfair and Bookfair Festival will be held in Trinidad

and Tobago from 19-30 October, 1988.

The first such Bookfair and Bookfair Festival was held in Trinidad and Tobago in June of last year, and attracted over 200 participants from the English, French, Dutch and Spanish speaking territories of the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, Europe, West Africa and North America. The organisers - Vanguard Publishing Company Limited in association with Classline Publications Company Limited, Banyan Limited and Sankh Productions - note that this year's Festival will be comprised of an International Poetry Evening a film festival, drama and cultural

presentations as well as forums on political, social and cultural issues. "In addition, participants will be afforded the opportunity to attend the internationally acclaimed unique Biennial Steelband Music Festival and the Celebrations of the Hindu Festival Divali.

"The Fifth Anniversary of the events of October 1983 in Grenada, and the continuing economic, social and political crisis in the region provide the background against which we will examine many of the important issues facing Caribbean and Third World peoples".



L ast Words

The CAFRA office is struggling along on a tiny budget since at present our funding is almost all project-specific. We are sure that there are members in countries outside the region who would like to help CAFRA in some tangible way, and who could assist us with our stationery needs (typing paper, envelopes, scrap pads, paper clips, or whatever). We also have a Canon AP150 typewriter that eats typewriter ribbons and correction tape at a horrendous rate (the former cost US\$8.00 each locally).

Whatever you can supply will be gratefully received and put to good use. Why not bring it with you to the November meeting, or send with another member who is attending?

We also want to remind members and subscribers to CAFRA News to please PAY UP! Paper costs have almost doubled since the recent devaluation of the TT dollar, and the newsletter operates on no budget at all.

CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION

We are an organisation of feminist researchers and activists committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society and who are working actively to change this situation.

Members of CAFRA define feminist politics as both a matter of consciousness and of action.

PRIORITY RESEARCH/ ACTION AREAS

PRIORITY AREAS FOR RESEARCH

- (i) The Caribbean Basin Initiative.
- (ii) Population Control Policies in the Caribbean.
- (iii) Peace in the Caribbean.
- (iv) History of women's labour and struggle in the region.
- (v) Women's cultural expression as an instrument for the building of power.
- (vi) Sexual violence.
- (vii) Women and trade.
- (viii) Social and Economic conditions of women.
- (ix) Women in Caribbean Agriculture.
- (x) Caribbean family forms: - history, present trends and future directions.
- (xi) Women in Caribbean Literature.
- (xii) A directory of feminists and female professionals in the Caribbean region.



STRUCTURE OF CAFRA

1. The Secretariat
 - (a) The Executive
Co-ordinator - Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen
Admin. Assistant - Tina Johnson
 - (b) The Committee
 - Ramabai Espinet
 - Patricia Mohammed
 - Gaietry Pargass
 - Stephanie Pile
 - Rhoda Reddock
 - Cathy Shepherd
 - Gemma Tang Nain
2. The National Representatives
 - Belize - Diane Haylock
 - Dominica - Noreen John
 - Guyana - Indra Chandarpal
 - Jamaica - Joan French
 - Martinique - Liliane Marchal
 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Nelcia Robinson
 - Suriname - Marja Naarendorp
 - Trinidad and Tobago - Gemma Tang Nain

In the following countries, CAFRA has members but no appointed National Representatives: Anguilla, Bahamas, Barbados, Curacao, Dominican Republic, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, St. Christopher/Nevis, St. Croix, St. Maarten.

There are Associate Members in Canada, England, The Netherlands and U.S.A.

MEMBERSHIP

Open to Caribbean women within the region who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives. Caribbean women living abroad may join as Associate Members.

Annual Membership Fee

Individuals: U.S. \$10.00

Organisations: U.S. \$15.00

(Payable by cheque, money order or cash in U.S.\$ or equivalent local currency).