

POLITICS

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COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS

Politics is something far removed from many people's lives - something a few people do in Washington and the State Capital, something we can vote about every two years, or something that people who are a part of "the movement" are involved in. But politics is more than all this, it is our lives.

Our collective of eleven women met for ten weeks with the object of producing an issue on politics. This magazine is the fruit of that not undifficult process. There are many topics we have discussed and written about that are not included in this issue. For instance, we debated socialism, anarchism and their connection with feminism. We tried to wade through the Arab-Israeli conflict; we talked of the extent of ageism in our culture; we considered the Equal Rights Amendment. We also talked about power relationships within our collective, and of our own interactions in the decision-making process. Some issues that we feel are important didn't even get discussed. Time was too short. We had to produce a magazine. This wasn't a study group.

At first no articles came in and all of us were having trouble writing. We panicked - didn't country women care about politics? Many articles were sent to us at the last minute. We were remarkably polite as we went through them trying not to eliminate on the basis of our disagreement over content. We tried to discover what stimulated, provided the most thought and discussion and perhaps would lead to the most action.

As women in the country, oftentimes from the privileged middle classes, we are isolated from the more frequent and obvious forms of oppression, but they exist and need to be changed. Ranging from lesbian separatists committed to creating a new women's culture to feminist women committed to working within local community institutions, we do not all agree on either goals or strategies. However, we did share on this collective, the need to deepen the political exploration of our lives. We have many of the same criticisms of the basic structure of our present society and are committed to work for change. Everyday processes do have political meaning. When we understand the political, as well as the emotional, creative and sexual aspects of our lives, then we can more effectively change society to meet our needs. Hopefully the articles chosen will contribute to this process for us and others as well.



FEMINISM and COUNTRY POLITICS

How do we feel as Canadian country women in deciding to contribute to an American issue on politics? If we are very conscious of our identity as Canadian women we still feel that there is much we share with our American sisters. The work and experiences of women in the country, from beekeeping and goat-raising to fishing and farming, knows no boundaries. In fact, the very lifestyle of country feminism seems to point in the direction of a politics that excludes nationalism. The vision of decentralized, self-sufficient, feminist socialist communities implies principles of cooperation and collective decision-making that militate against any type of nation state or central political apparatus. In wanting to take back from the state the power over our lives that it has been given, in wanting to control our bodies, our lives, and our future, our goals are similar. We realize therefore that our nationalist feeling is valid only in as much as it defines a certain attitude towards foreign investment and ownership of our land.

If our theoretical ideals seem relatively easy to enunciate the practical problems of how to expend our political energies in the here and now are not. Most of the debate within our group and within our individual heads arises from the conflict between personal politics and community politics. Theoretically, this could be described as the conflict between radical feminist separatism and party or community politics that involve working with both men and more conservative local elements. Practically it is the conflict between different emphases in the means of reaching the common long-range goal of creating viable alternative community structures. The party women, mostly associated with the New Democratic Party (the N.D.P.), consciously direct their energies towards the community as a whole and are concerned with political effectiveness and the very real problem of not alienating the indigenous community. The main emphasis of the non-aligned feminists is on self-politicization,

self-help, and the demand for consistency (in terms of feminist principles) in their personal, social and political life. Though both groups respect and, to a certain extent, share the beliefs of the other, the difference in emphasis has certainly slowed down the development of any uniform feminist political strategy.

This slow process is not entirely due to differences in priorities but also seems to be the result of the particular dynamics of a women's group like ours in the country. Unlike the city, where you can quickly pick and choose like-minded women with whom to work (as the range and scope of women's groups are vast), here in the country the number of women is much smaller. Consequently the number who have similar political visions is much smaller. The type of sectarianism that often happens in the city (e.g. the divisions between gay, maoist, marxist, and liberal feminists) is neither possible nor meaningful here. You are tied to all the women in your area by the fact that they are your neighbours - whether they live on a farm twenty miles away or in the house next door. When we meet there is one common denominator - our sense of isolation in the country, a feeling as real for those living communally with other women as for those living in a cabin in the bush with a man.

We now realize that the value of this long process has been considerable. Although the theoretical question of the relative merits of social democracy vs. revolutionary socialism vs. libertarian socialism vs. anarchism, has been far from solved, we have learned a lot from the diversity of political values in the group. The women in the N.D.P. have stressed the need to remain open to poor and working women. The marxist feminists have reaffirmed the significance of class divisions and the need for an economic analysis of our area as essential for defining any long-term strategy. A small wages for housework lobby has clarified the economic role of housework. Libertarians have constantly maintained

the need for non-hierarchical collective structures within our group and in the community. While hopefully all these diverse perspectives can contribute something to an overall long-range feminist political strategy (which we have not yet worked out), they have caused much immediate conflict. Whether we concentrate our energies on clearly feminist self-help projects or have our group serve merely a lobby function in affecting other political and community groups became a real question for many party women who felt the sole function of a women's group was consciousness-raising. Others wanted to develop a vocal radical feminist presence in the area, both critical of all male-dominated non-democratic local groups or parties and posing alternatives. Another group wanted to concentrate their energies solely on alternatives - from feminist food and working co-ops to day-care centres, alternative schools, a rural health collective, etc. There has also been conflict between those who felt that any project that did not personally benefit the women involved would lose energy and be ultimately ineffective, and those who felt it was their responsibility to offer a service to the women in the community, even if it did not benefit themselves personally. Last, but not least, have been the differences in opinion between those who felt accepting government grants involved the danger of co-optation and a betrayal of the revolutionary energy of a project, and those who believe grants would solidify and make concrete the commitment of the women involved.

These are the type of questions that have been part of the women's movement in the Courtenay area for the last two years. Despite them, we've managed to successfully hold a women's study course, film festival, have herbal medicine workshops, hiking trips, start a health collective, set up a political theory group, and last but not least, tried to effect a feminist presence in some of the community organizations in the area. The latter task has proved the most frustrating and problematic. A quick glance at two recent issues brings to light the dilemma of those who wish to set up alternative community structures or infuse present ones with feminist values.

One involves a local co-op set up by a small mixed group based in one of the three neighbouring towns. Though it involves plans for everything from food distribution, to a fishing co-op, oyster lease, woodworking shop, etc., its basic organizational structure (a board of directors and a coordinator paid by a government grant) is not sufficiently collective for those women accustomed to decision-making by consensus. Whether we should support the co-op as is, try to change it, or start an alternative, is linked to the question of whether a co-op should be directed towards the entire community or serve primarily ourselves. Would articulating a more vocal feminist line alienate the locals? Is it worthwhile working within an organizational structure that denies one's principles? Would a genuinely feminist libertarian cooperative be sounder in the long run or would it always remain isolated from the real community? What is more important - consistency between one's social and political life or the long-range goal of integration with the local community?

This dilemma constantly repeats itself with any involvement with local politics. An area where some of us have directed energy is regional politics. Through a locally formed alternative planning organization, we have been trying to affect the planning policies of the newly formed regional board in our area. Partly initiated by some women in our group, C.P.A.C. (Community Planning Action Group) has evolved into a male-dominated hierarchical organization with most of the knowledge and information divided between a few people. The radical feminists have refused to have anything to do with the group because it is male dominated; the women who have continued in the group have had little luck in changing the structure. As the significance of C.P.A.C. might be considerable if it becomes a credible lobby in affecting regional planning and policies on zoning for growth (!), the women remaining are torn between dropping out or spending time in endless wrangling with the men over organizational questions.

We would like to hear from Canadian women as well as from our American sisters who have experienced similar conflicts. Because we are still concerned with these tactical wrangles, we are far from having evolved a clearly feminist strategy that encompasses the economic, social and political future of ourselves, our community, and the coast of which we are a part. Many of us on the coast are moving towards a vision of a network of interconnected cooperative communities joined by boat or road, sharing or horse-trading goods, self-sufficient and providing a non-sexist, non-authoritarian, socialist world for our children. But this vision must be combined with the realities around us - the reality of the people who have lived here all their lives, the reality of speculators and investors, industrialists and local capitalists, who slowly erode from behind the ground we have so neatly cleared in front of us. We are not living in a vacuum. We have to propose real concrete alternatives that will provide the long-range conditions that will make our vision possible.

As can be seen we have a long way to go before a clear feminist strategy for community politics emerges. If anyone is interested in exchanging ideas, please write us: Denise, 61 Stewart Ave., Comox, B.C. ♀



how dare you presume i'd rather be thin!

The oppression of women is made so clear to me when I look at the oppression of our bodies, especially our fat ones. Fat women are invisible in the job market, on the street, and sometimes by themselves. Like children they are not regarded as human beings. They are never thought of as having any kind of sexuality. The fat woman is seen as the jolly celibate "friend". It is not just an accident that "fashionable" clothes for women are only sold in certain sizes. When a fat woman shops for clothes she is constantly reminded that she is not okay, not feminine, and that obviously she must change to fit into the only role that gives women any power-being a sex object.

Ever since I was ten I can remember being conscious of being treated as if I was "too fat," although in reality I was just big, strong, and "early developed", something not considered "normal" for a girl my age. This is when the need for acceptance led me to my dieting years which was also the beginning of my psychic and physically destructive years. It is also when I became aware of being seen as a sex object, as a girl becoming a woman. "Fat is not sexy," I learned.

To this day (I am nineteen) eating a potato or sandwich seems strange because for years it was engrained in my head and body that they were Poison with a capital P. "Those kinds of foods make you Fat." And somewhere in that assumption is the middle class value that only poor "sloppy" people are fat. "They are dumb. They eat lots of starch."

I do not want to debate how one gets fat, rather that Fat is Beautiful. I know that many people starve in this country. To see the middle and upper class people starving themselves on purpose seems very crazy to me. Fear is strong in our white, male, Amerikan culture, especially that

no man will love us if we are fat. And it is usually true. It's enough to cause one to starve oneself. Many women continually experience the fear, the frantic dieting, the gorging out on the "forbidden food" and then the guilt in "cheating" (which is really just eating).

Sometimes I felt rage and anger to a point where I got scared, turned my feelings inward and withdrew. Now as I recall those boiling feelings I see why.

It's not really rage. It's bottled up hysteria from all that dieting and self-hatred. It's those years of self-denial and starvation and daily traumas and sneaking food that make me cry now. It's all those clothes waiting for me to starve myself long enough, or to get sick long enough so that I am neurotic and crazy, but at least they fit me so I can be beautiful by The Man's standards. It's being grateful I have a boyfriend who doesn't say anything about "it". And when he does, I remember the hysteria, the rage again. I remember crying over my chicken because there were no vegetables and I was afraid I would be hungry and eat something I "shouldn't".

After ten years of hating my body, of losing weight, gaining it back plus more each time, of trying to be who men wanted me to be, cyclically fasting and gorging, I got fed up and quit. I stopped dieting.

Discovering the Fat Underground in Los Angeles was the beginning of a wonderful process of liberation I had been long since ready for. The Fat Underground is a political group of Fat Radical Feminist Women, geared towards fighting for the rights of Fat Women and helping women feel okay about themselves. They have organized consciousness-raising groups for Fat Women, written articles, made speeches and protested for the right to be fat. They can be contacted through the Women's Center at 257 Hill St. in Santa Monica. Thanks to my fat sisters in Los Angeles I was able to come out as fat and begin supporting myself and other Fat Women.

To stop dieting was a radical thing in my life, and it took a long time. It came about the same time I came out as a woman-identified woman. I was no longer male-identified or male oriented for my needs. Now living with women who let their rage out with each other in supportive ways has helped me get in touch with some of my hidden rage and pain from the years of oppression I have experienced.

Becoming a feminist and woman lover helped me realize how the culture I grew up in (white, middle class, Jewish Amerikan, diet pepsi, go-go girls) was telling me how to be. Including how my body was supposed to be, and what "sexy" was supposed to look and feel like. But unfortunately Fat oppression will also exist among the Women's Movement until women begin to make the connection too. Women still reinforce each other to be thin. I still hear among my well meaning sisters, "Have you lost weight? you look good." How dare you presume I would rather be thin!

Sometimes the issue of health is used to make fat women feel unhealthy and useless. As if being fat is worse than smoking, drinking, holding in your feelings until you get an ulcer, having an uncontrollable temper or eating sugar. All



these things are not manifested outwardly the minute you see someone. The stigma attached to them is not so heavy. The thin, strong do-it-all body is used to portray the perfect "liberated" woman.

It has taken me almost two years of not dieting to find a good relationship with my body that does not resemble the leftovers of hatred. My weight has virtually stabilized and, instead of yoyo-ing, I now eat much better than I ever did. But I will never be able to forget the years of eating mainly meat, water and sugar. Meat and water to make me think I was eating something. The sugar to bring me up and satisfy a deep hunger...I will never forget the craziness that kind of eating made me feel as early as ten. And still, when I visit my parents or go to the city, I am bombarded with this capitalist culture that makes money off of fat women through its Diet Industry. You cannot watch television, see a billboard, go to the store, without being told to lose weight and which product to use. Every kind of machine and diet food (most of which are cancer-

What's a...

I am a white woman. I am 5'4" tall, weigh 128 pounds, am 28 years old, and ain't bad lookin'. I have all my teeth and limbs. My blue eyes sparkle and I've been told my dimples are cute. I am also a "welfare mother" of two children.

"What's a nice girl like you doing on welfare?" is often the first question that falls out of the open mouths of people told the awful fact.

I was stupid. In high school, instead of learning to type, I read books. I read Ayn Rand, Albert Camus, Henry Miller; none of their heroines became pregnant.

I was stupid. In high school, I thought I might enjoy the physical beauty of sex without "protection" just once. I did enjoy it but I did get pregnant. Hard to believe, isn't it?

Once more, I was stupid. I decided not to risk my life by attempting a, then illegal, abortion. I risked my life and got married instead.

I stupidly tried to make an impossible marriage work for six years but finally saw the error of my ways and divorced. By then, I was the mother of two.

My husband was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown the week we separated. He has never been able to work a steady job since. He pays no child support because he is on welfare himself by virtue of his disability.

I started to smarten up, supposedly, six months after our separation and enrolled at Ohio State University as a first quarter freshman. I was determined to be smart this time. I worked hard. I became an honor student. I selected a major that was career oriented (journalism) and

producing) has been invented for women to "lose that ugly fat".

Keeping women dieting, addicted to speed, coffee and sugar, is a way to keep women crazy and speeded up enough to do all the duties of mother, wife, teacher, cook, cleaner, and sex object. In doing these things and trying to lose weight, a woman has no time to think positively of herself, to become strong in physical or intellectual ways, or to become important in the world. Her main importance is portrayed through her body. She is a good woman if thin; a compulsive, sick, lazy, sexless woman if fat.

The interesting thing is that now that I have given myself the permission to love myself, I really do. I love my body and its grandness. I love large women's bodies, and I take pride in identifying as Fat. Fat is beautiful. Let us make our sisterhood stronger by supporting Fat Women. We are strong, sexy, and important just like everyone else. Especially when we realize it and come out from behind our raincoats. Fat Women, Unite! ♀

even participated in extracurricular activities because I had heard somewhere that they helped you get jobs.

God, I wanted a job. Everytime I got a "B" instead of an "A", I cried. I thought it meant I might not get a job. I watched everyone who graduated and got a job, trying to isolate and duplicate the characteristics that got them that job.

Yes, I was poor. I had to beg the school system for shoes for my oldest daughter. I had to beg the Salvation Army for Christmas help. I went without toilet paper, warm clothes, ad infinitum; but I knew I would get a job. I kept telling the kids not to feel sad that we didn't have much time together because "Someday, I'll graduate and get a job. Maybe we can even move to an apartment with three bedrooms and you two won't have to fight so much." We often played the game, "What is the first thing you want to buy after Mommy gets a job?"

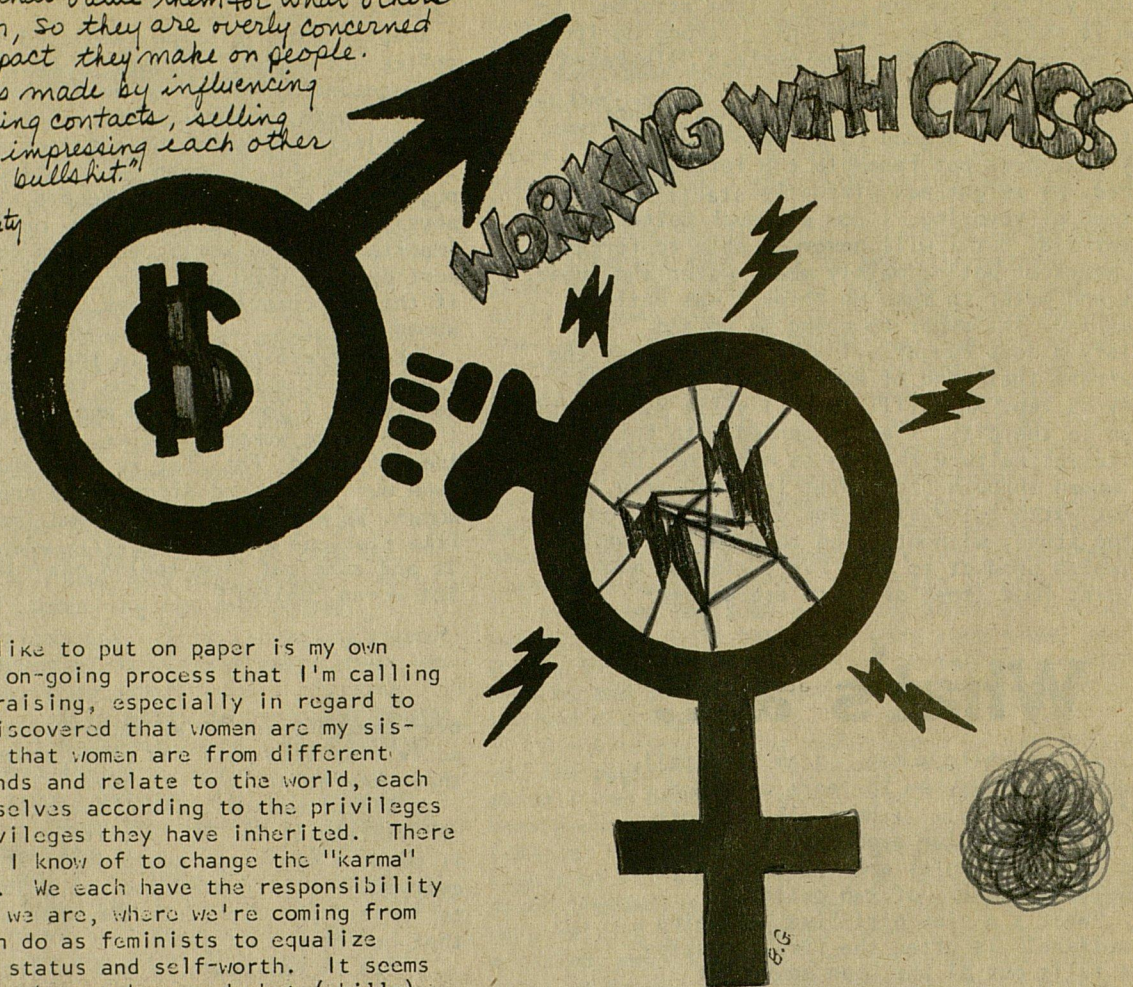
Why not? I listened to the experts. They told me college graduates earned substantially more than high school graduates. My mom always told me that if I wanted a good job I should go to college. High school counselors had said the same.

Now that I'm near graduation, unemployment is reaching up to the 10% level and they don't even count those who have given up looking for work! I feel a cruel joke has been played on me. Now, no graduates are getting jobs. Journalism graduates are reading the obituaries, looking for jobs.

Besides, no one wants to hire a divorced woman with two kids, and, after all, everyone knows what welfare mothers are like. Lazy. Despite my efforts, I have that dreadful feeling I'll be on welfare till the kids are over eighteen. I don't know how to tell them that the joke is on us. ♀

"Most of the middle class is employed in occupations that value them for what others think of them, so they are overly concerned with the impact they make on people. Their money is made by influencing people, making contacts, selling ideas, and impressing each other with tons of bullshit."

from Insanity
and Control:
A Class Trap
Alice Quinn in
Quest.



What I'd like to put on paper is my own reaction to an on-going process that I'm calling consciousness-raising, especially in regard to class. I've discovered that women are my sisters, and also that women are from different class backgrounds and relate to the world, each other and themselves according to the privileges or lack of privileges they have inherited. There is no way that I know of to change the "karma" of one's birth. We each have the responsibility to examine who we are, where we're coming from and what we can do as feminists to equalize wealth, power, status and self-worth. It seems to me that it's who you know and what (skills) you know that get you recognition and fame. Of course money goes hand to hand as a reward in that system. I still "kiss ass" too much; coming from a background of few privileges, I've found it always pays off to have the right connections. A working class woman finding her own self-worth seems like an extra handicap in a world of self-hating women.

I am a working class woman who until last month, didn't know for sure what my class background was; I have assumed it to be middle class, although I called it "lower" middle class. The whole mechanism came apart for me at the first class workshop I went to. In the room were ten women - eight middle and upper class and two working class, myself included in the latter. One woman was talking about her life; she has several thousand dollars in the bank, a fat family inheritance coming down the road, an unemployment check rolling in every month, plus a salary earned by producing events for the women's community. Several women in the group were criticizing her for accepting money from her sisters since her income is so much more certain than most. The other working class woman was close to tears with anger and frustration. I was very tense during all of this, and was defending this woman's right to have all the money she wanted. I thought the group was being oppressive to her, and finally the other working

class woman said to me, "where are you coming from? How can you sit there and say it's OK for her to be rich and you to be poor?" Before her questions, I had been feeling almost repulsion towards the working class woman and couldn't get in touch with my feelings at all. I felt totally tense, shaky and non-confrontal. After she actually looked at me and asked me where I was at, it was like a dam bursting open inside my chest. I said "Look, I don't want to identify with you - I want to identify with her." After I said those words we sat staring at each other for a long moment. I felt like crying but wouldn't let myself. She looked at me and said, "what do you do with all that anger?" I said, "karate". A lifetime of lies came up from my unconscious. My words had been like a blow which surprised everyone there, especially myself. Everything I'd ever seen myself as was gone and the reality of who I am became clear. I'm not middle class, never have been and have always tried to live "up" to whatever my image of being that is.

When I was fourteen I got my first job and had to turn over all my money to my family to help pay the rent. Going to college was out of the question, both because of no money and because I was a girl. I was encouraged to be a secretary from an early age and I was discouraged from pursuing the college prep classes I

was taking in high school. My family never paid for training in skills I was interested in. Growing up with virtually no privileges I have staked most of what I call success in life on friendships and associations with privileged people. To me, this has meant rich, college educated and successful because of skills that have been acquired through privilege. Being white has been my one advantage towards making money. I have passed myself off in life as a more middle class or more intellectual person than I feel like on the inside. I know how to not stand out as ignorant, uneducated, or "unrefined". The repression of trying to fit into a middle class value system has been with me all my life. Now the fury and resentment I feel towards the same people I've worked so hard to be accepted by is confusing.

It's certainly not enough to not have a job and be poor to understand the feeling of inadequacy that comes from growing up "under-privileged". Many women insist that these feelings are intrinsically part of the experience of being a woman. Of course, we all know that to men, we are inferior and all of one class: women. What I'm saying is that some of us come from real privileged backgrounds and some of us don't. These backgrounds which begin our attitudes towards our lives, towards each other and towards any future we might create which would be worth living and/or dying for are crucial. This revolution, this tearing apart of men's establishment(s), this so-called patriarchy begins here, now, today. We must confront in our hearts, and in our lives the lies which were taught to us as truth within this wheezing capitalistic nightmare. Lies that keep us, as women, thinking that "women are groovy and men are fucked up" and blind to the class distinctions between women which are virtually driving us crazy, keeping us apart and killing us.

I will no longer keep silent when middle and upper class women oppress me. The photographer who recently offered me photographs in exchange for my painting her kitchen had no comprehension that what I needed was money, and it took all of my working class consciousness to break the habit of pretending that I don't need money. A woman I work with expects me to do all the driving and has never offered me gas money; she seems to expect that other people don't have to worry about money because her husband and father pay her bills.

It's not nice of me to get so incredibly pissed off at so many women who I've called "friend" in the past. But it is good for me to know how I really feel, and not being nice benefits my better mental health. We are all part of this system that we must crack by telling each other about our money: how much we have, how much we want, how much we need, how much is stashed away and what for. Our secrets are the way we keep from exploring the possibilities for a decent way to live together.

There seems to be a myth about, let's say, ten women from different class backgrounds living together and deciding to basically give up most material goods and to be poor together. For some of these women this is called downward mobility; for some it's the same financial reality

they've always had. I think that without any class analysis going on in this group, people will still be coming from their privileges or their lack of them. The old stereotypical "loud, aggressive and emotional" working class woman and the "unemotional, reserved (let's see, what else?) making-everything-nice" middle or upper class woman will still be seen. I don't really think there are stereotypes; on the other hand, the way we grow up is fundamental to how much privilege we assume belongs to us, how much power we know we have, how inferior or superior we see ourselves compared to others. We often say that we are equals, but do we really know what that means? My privilege is being white, getting welfare amounting to \$192 a month, working very odd jobs for less than my worth and having the option to remarket my secretarial skills at any time and join the ranks of robots. There are no gifts from home (\$10 per year for Hanukkah) and there is \$50 a month for child support. I have the privilege of some talent toward music, not a moneymaking gift however, and I have the idea that self-defense through martial arts should be a fact of life and not a privilege that I pay \$25 a month to learn. I pay \$60 a month so my child gets to be in a decent child care group where I can leave him to do the things that I do.

I lay in bed at 2:00A.M. in a sweat of fear recognizing for the first time that for the rest of my life I will have a constant struggle to get money and/or somehow make a "living" for my child and myself. A sobering thought. A devastating thought to me.

I am stressing the importance of really examining our class backgrounds and how we, as women, oppress each other. ♀



venom II

I wonder about the
tight-faced
work-worried women
in cloth coats and curlers
who collect in surly women crowds
spitting hate
in Birmingham or Boston.

I worry about their
sullen spite
collected in years of
shabby schools and sometimes jobs
poisoned and prodded
by habits
by fears
by landlords and leaders
who revile them
provoked and pitted
against their enemy's
enemy.

What turns class hatred
inside out?
freezes a longing for freedom
into splintered cries of ice
to pierce the heart
of those
Black people
who properly
are allies.

What is the bridge
to you?
our struggle
must reveal it.



THE MACDONALDIZATION OF AMERICA

This article is a polemic. It is about the education of Harriet Bye. It is about buying grapefruit at the local health food store for 25¢ rather than at Safeway for 22¢ because I can no longer afford to support the industries that are leading us into a prepackaged Orwellian future. It is about the destruction of the American farmer and the take over of food production by large monopolies that produce neither more efficiently, nor cheaper, nor more nutritiously; but whose sole interest is profit without concern for the health of the soil, the beauty of the landscape, hunger, skyrocketing food prices, or an overburdening mechanization that causes unnecessary unemployment. This tendency towards giantism pursued in the name of progress is resulting in the total MacDonaldization of America. Meanwhile, the world is in the grip of a major food crisis. Half of all human beings suffer from hunger or malnutrition. Ten million people are expected to die of starvation in 1975 and 500 million more face famine. In the United States between thirty and fifty million people are malnourished, and food prices have jumped 50% since 1972. If we can isolate and recognize the surface causes and the underlying assumptions that have forced food prices up and brought starvation to many people, we might be able to do something about them.

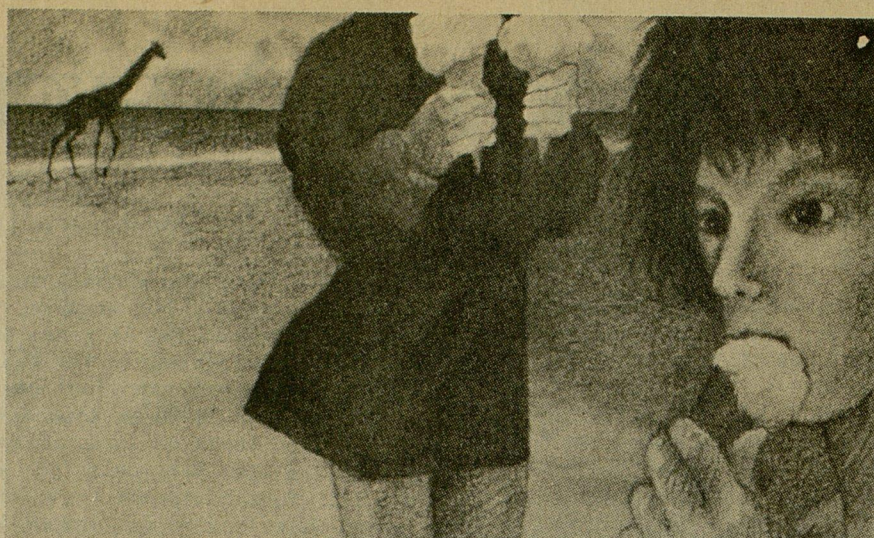
Bad weather, drought, the population explosion, and higher wages are popularly reported and believed to be the reason for higher food costs. But workers in the food industry are amongst the lowest paid in the country. It is extremely questionable how much the food prices are inflated by wages - the farm labor cost that goes into a head of lettuce is 1 1/2¢ and that same lettuce sells for 29 - 59 cents per head. Labor cost in preparing each pound of meat is 11 cents. This includes all the work the meatcutters and butchers do from slaughterhouse to supermarket. It isn't the butcher's salary that caused the rise in meat prices. In 1973 food prices went up 16% and wage increases were limited to 5.6% by the government controlled wage freeze. This meant an actual decrease of 15% in real wages. That same year, Nixon vetoed a minimum wage law that would have raised the wage level from \$1.60 to \$2.00 calling the proposed law "inflationary".

In the last twenty years, the food industry has been taken over by giant U.S. monopolies - agribusiness - which control every stage of the food process, from manufacturing farm machinery, fertilizers and seed, to cultivating, processing, storing, trucking, retailing, and exporting. Often, many different levels of food production are combined under one corporate roof. This push for "seedling to supermarket" control, called vertical integration, has eliminated the independent middle-

man and allowed the company to make a profit each step of the way. For example, few people have heard of Tenneco but it ranks as one of the 30 largest corporations in the U.S. Tenneco is financed by natural gas pipelines and now is a large investor in South East Asian oil. It farms 1.5 million acres of land, which is sprayed and fertilized with chemicals from its own chemical plants. Farm equipment from Tenneco factories fueled with Tenneco gas and oil work the land. Tenneco owns Heggelade Marguleas, the nation's largest marketers of fruits and vegetables. In 1972, Tenneco's profits were \$203,017,000 more than in 1971. The chairman (and I do mean man) of the Tenneco Board of Directors gets paid \$248,000 per year (1972 figures). Sixteen out of the twenty most profitable corporations in America are involved in some basic part of food production. Greyhound Corporation raises turkeys and beef; Dow Chemical Co. produces lettuce, as well as napalm; ITT bought out Wonderbread and Hostess Cupcakes shortly after it helped overthrow the Chilean government. It also controls much of the Breakfast for School Children Program with an artificially produced and vitamin sprayed pastry.

The second way agribusiness deludes the public is in its false representation of profits. At each level of production (farming, canning, processing) a few firms have driven out their competition and concentrated their control until they can pretty much dominate the market. For example, there are 32,000 food manufacturing firms in America - a number that would lead you to believe in pretty healthy competition. But in reality only 50 of these companies make about 75% of the industry's profits. This reflects a degree of market control that gets larger every year. Many old established brand names have been taken over by conglomerate corporations. For example, Beatrice Foods Company, a 3 million dollar a year business manufactures some 5000 food items selling them under 100 brand names that include: La Choy Frozen Egg Roll, Lambrecht Pepperoni Pizza, Rozarita Frozen Enchilada Dinners, Meadow Gold Milk, Louis Sherry Ice Cream, Dannon Yogurt, Rainbo Sweet Gherkins, Aunt Nellie's Pickled Beets, Gerhard Tamales, Fisher's nuts, Kitchen Fresh Potato Chips, Buttercrust Bread and many, many others. And the cruelest blow of all, even Hebrew National Salami is a subsidiary of Riviani Foods.

An oligopoly is what you have if a few sellers control available market supply of a product and the price it will be sold for. If as few as four companies control 50% of the production and sales of a product, they form a high level oligopoly, or shared monopoly would be another way of saying it. Most of the food we eat is controlled by oligopolies. For example, 91% of breakfast cereal sales goes to Kelloggs, General Mills, Post, and Quaker. To give you a further idea here are the 1966



statistics from William Shepard's Market Power and Economic Welfare on a few oligopolies and the percentage of the market they control: shortening and cooking oil - 80-90% controlled by an oligopoly; cheese - 60%; canned specialties - 80%; fluid milk - 60%; sugar - 50%; blended flour - 75%. This trend continues into everything related to food production and, although I don't want to blow you out with statistics, here are a few more important ones to consider as we see what the philosophy of "big is best" is doing to the American myth of free enterprise. One per cent of all farms produce 25% of the nation's food, and 8% get more than 50% of the sales. Six grain companies buy 90% of all U.S. grain. Two of these handle 50% of the world's grain shipments. Seven per cent of the cattle ranchers own 80% of the U.S.'s cattle. Del Monte grows 80% of all vegetables produced in this country, through contracts with farmers.

So what, you may be asking. Why is it bad to have our food controlled by these large companies? Isn't that inevitable considering that we need more food to feed our growing populations? No, the jolly green giant produces less food and less efficiently; his color and temperament are a product of his laughing all the way to the bank. The independent firms that are being merged into larger corporate structure are not failures, inefficient companies about to fold. On the contrary, they have been bought or forced out precisely because they were healthy growing firms most able to compete and possibly cause a loss of profit by threatening the monopoly growth.

The tighter the shared monopoly the higher the profits of the corporation. A 1966 study done by the Federal Trade Commission found that profits doubled in fields that were controlled by oligopolies in contrast to those where more competitive market conditions existed. Much of this profit is the result of artificially controlled prices; every penny of this profit comes from the buyers' pinched pocket books. The National Commission on Foods Marketing warned: "When a few large firms dominate a field they frequently forbear from

competing actively by price; competition by advertising, sales promotion, and other selling efforts almost always increases and the market power at the disposal of such firms may be used to impose onerous terms upon suppliers and consumers." This is exactly what is happening and the onerous terms are getting heavier every year. For instance, two General Mills cereals, Total and Wheaties are identical except that Total includes vitamins worth 1/3 of one cent more. Lack of adequate competition allows General Mills to create an eighteen cent price difference between the two cereals. This 5,400% mark-up of Total brings General Mills 10 million dollars a year. The consumer, the farmer, the factory worker gain nothing.

It is no accident that the fresh produce section of my local Safeway is about 1/20 of the total floor space. The more a company can do to a commodity the more they can charge. Fresh potatoes cost about 13¢ a pound. Make instant mashed potatoes and you can sell it for 71¢ a pound; try potato chips and pay \$1.10 a pound. Instant potato soup costs you \$1.57 for the same 13¢ worth of potatoes.

Not only is food being processed to death, but it is also being synthesized thus removing the need for the farmer in the first place. Candy bar conglomerates, like Standard Brands which produces Baby Ruth and Butterfingers, don't use chocolate any more but a synthetic substitute derived from cotton. Monsanto Corporation has produced out of its test tubes a total candy "system" that combines artificial flavors with a bulking agent that is then covered with an "undisclosed brown substance". Methylux is a synthetic ingredient that is advertised as "Instant Anything" to food manufacturers. It is used as a cheese extender, the phony fig paste in fig bars, and hundreds of other places. Mostly you don't know what you are eating is synthetic food. I have been a food junky for years but the realization of what actually goes into processed food, combined with my outrage at the profit motivation behind that synthesizing, not to mention the whole "oligopolic"

economic structure that produced the mess, has so turned my stomach that the thought of buying a frozen pizza or Betty Crocker Brownie Mix repulses me. This is a gut level emotional reaction as much as an intellectual decision - no amount of Adele Davis ever effected me that much.

To better understand the ways corporate monopolies effect food price increases, let's look at the year 1973 when costs really began to skyrocket. That was the year of the meat boycott, the year that consumer groups began to complain. Nixon's response in early '74 was that "the farmers never had it so good", even though by then the farm price of food had been dropping for six months. The supermarket price of food was, however, still rising. I remember chain store and corporate representatives pointing to demanding American women shoppers, the food stamp program, wage increases, and bad weather as possible causes of the price increases. Without a doubt, less food and more demand increased prices some, but the 50 biggest food companies still had a bonus year to remember profit-wise. Twenty seven of the largest chain stores, the same stores which complained that they had cut profits down to the bare bones in order to support the pressed shopper, were listed in Business Week as averaging a 32% increase in profits over 1972. In 1973, workers' wages increased 6%, food costs increased 16%, and the executive salaries of large food producers increased 18%, while one of the biggest supermarket chains took home 24% more than the year before, and that ain't beans. These weren't the same raises that the public relations people talked about.

International grain traders and feed manufacturing corporations were able to manipulate supplies and artificially boost prices in 1973 by cornering the soybean market. Companies like Ralston Purina and Cargil had bought most of the 1972 soybean crop from farmers at \$4.00 a bushel, a good but not unreasonable price. Instead of using the supply to make animal feed and other products like soybean oil, they just sat on it for some months until animal farmers got desperate. The oligopoly realized a world wide grain shortage

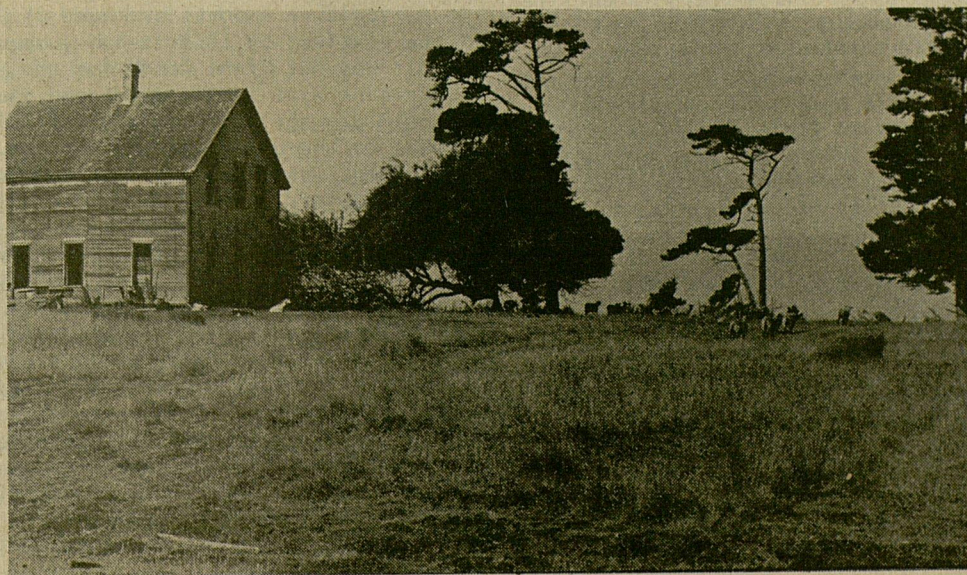
was being manipulated and they let the soybeans sit until they inflated to \$12.00 a bushel. Thus six companies made a 400% profit, while grain farmers got blamed, and dairy farmers' feed bills went sky high. The consumer, of course, paid for it all, and was shocked by one of the fastest price jumps in recent history.

These same six companies, by the way, monopolize the grain industry by buying 90% of all the grain produced. Although there are still almost a million grain farmers left, they are controlled by the Big 6 grain dealers, whose power is maintained by the fact that they own the shipping and storage facilities. Without any other way to get the grain to market, the farmers are caught having to mostly accept the terms of the Big 6. Likewise, these grain dealers can pretty much set the price when selling to bakeries and feed lots.

Not to be outdone though, the bakeries led by ITT's Wonderbread had a trick up their sleeve in 1973 too. They began an advertising campaign that would lead the American public to believe that the rise in wheat cost would soon bring bread prices up to a dollar a loaf, disregarding the fact that less than a nickel's worth of wheat is used in a pound of bread. They so alarmed the consumer that buyers were content when bread prices stopped at 80¢ a loaf not realizing that they had been fooled. A similar technique was used during the "gas crisis". It was called riding the psychology of inflation. Half the world goes to bed hungry while American ad men spend their time creating hoaxes to raise the price of food.

Inside government connections increased Big 6 profits too. In 1972 Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Clarence Palmsby and others went to Russia to set up the big grain deal. When they returned the grain dealers, but not the farmers, were told of the upcoming sale. Palmsby went directly to a job waiting for him at Continental. Continental and the other Big 6 bought all the available wheat quickly at low prices, taking advantage of the farmers' lack of information. Eight weeks later the same wheat was resold at huge profits, and Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, who had suppressed the report that would have informed the

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farmer, coolly explained that the farmers lost money because they weren't smart enough to take advantage of the situation.

Traditionally the giants of U.S. industry and finance have had an enormous amount of political clout. They have pooled their power and used their money to see that the U.S. Government responds to their needs. Many of the important governmental positions are staffed by agribusiness representatives. Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz came to the department from the board of directors of Ralston Purina. Clifton Hardin, the previous secretary left Washington and went directly to Ralston Purina. Do not pass go, collect \$200 is the name of the game. The U.S. has supported agribusiness all the way down the line. Land subsidies for not growing crops, irrigation subsidies to increase yield, export subsidies to assure high prices, tax-loss farming, and a 50% lower income tax rate for growers are just a few examples. In 1972 Tenneco paid no federal income tax. At the same time Earl Butz has promoted policies to raise the price of food stamps and to cut back free school lunch programs for the poor. The land subsidy program has stopped now but in 1970 more of tax payers' money went to large growers to not grow food than to all federal, state and local welfare combined. Why doesn't everyone know these facts?

Agribusiness/U.S. government strategy has also been to gain control over the world food crop, develop their international markets and try to make most of the world dependent on U.S. food and technology. This kind of policy has changed much of the Third World into a modern day plantation-like economy, forcing the production of cash crops like tobacco, rubber, coffee and cotton for export and fostering a dependence on the U.S. for food importation. Two-thirds of all plantable land in Latin America is now being used to grow non-nutritious cash crops whose production is mostly in the hands of United States' companies. A potentially rich country like Brazil, almost the size of the U.S., with half its population, grows coffee for exportation while half its people face starvation. If the land used for cash crops were used to grow food instead, the total world food output would increase by 10-15%. Unfortunately even when life sustaining food is produced, U.S. domination often prevents Third World countries from using it to feed their people. Agribusiness owns the fishmeal factories of Chile and Peru and sells almost its entire output to the U.S., Japan, and western Europe. Sadly two of the most protein needy continents, South America, and Africa, produce the largest quantity of animal feed in the world.

The "Green Revolution" has been touted as America's answer to hunger. It promised to increase food production in Third World countries through the development of hybrid grain seed. It was, however, based on massive use of petrochemical fertilizers, intensive irrigation and large landholdings that demanded huge amounts of capital to begin with. It put forth a technical solution to the food crisis and ignored social factors and neocolonial domination of a country's resources. It also increased a country's dependence on U.S. machinery, fertilizers, and tech-

nology. America, in 1968, used 57,000 tons of fertilizer to produce the same crop yield per acre in Illinois that 11,000 tons had produced in 1949 - a five fold increase to keep the soil at the same level of production that it was at 20 years before. Yet it is ironic that the country that produces this situation is trying to teach Third World countries how to farm. While food production did increase in Third World countries for a while in the mid-sixties, the social impact of the Green Revolution helped create a land-holding elite that produced food for profit rather than people. Meanwhile, peasants were driven from the land to the slums of the cities in search of jobs that didn't exist.

The super large technology of mass production is inherently violent, ecologically damaging, self defeating in terms of non-renewable natural resources and stultifying to the human person. E. F. Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful*, an extraordinarily insightful book, suggests the development of an intermediate technology that would mobilize the potential of human capabilities, support them with first class tools, and, using the best of modern knowledge and expertise, create an economy that was oriented towards production by the masses rather than mass production. This would involve a decentralization of power and a gentle use of natural resources. He calls it: technology with a human face.

The question is how human can the face of the American government and agribusiness be if it is dependent on 40 % of the world's resources? It is often stated that Americans, six percent of the world's population, use 40 % of the world's primary resources, but it is not the American people but the few corporations that demand this unfair piece of the pie. They are dependent on controlling world markets to maintain their giant profit rake-ins. When U.S. power abroad is challenged, by the uprising of Third World countries, U.S. domination of resources is threatened. Nixon's policies were designed to raise the price of food and make it a major export. This also served the needs of the largest food monopolies.

Agriculture exports averaged \$5.9 billion in the sixties; by 1974 it had jumped to \$20 billion. This was not "free food" for the poor. Fifty per cent went to the developed countries that could pay agribusiness's price; fifteen per cent went to the oil producing nations. Only nine per cent went to the neediest countries of South America, Africa, and Asia. "Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal weapons in our negotiating kit," Earl Butz declared, and that is the way it is being used both internationally and at home. By supporting agribusiness we are supporting an international policy of imperialism that operates in a system where monetary profits are the only measure of success. Ethical considerations, social impact, long term effects and a possible clarity of vision which can choose good over evil without having to put quotation marks around them are not seen as valid factors.

This lack of morals is justified in the name of progress, growth, and efficiency; but it is

obvious that food monopolies are efficient only at increasing their own larders; they relate progress to creating newer chemical treats and growth to mergers that eliminate competition. Ralph Nader estimated that by having the power to artificially increase prices, monopolies cost the food buyer 20 % of every dollar; Senator Phillip Hart, Chairman of the Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee has said it is as high as 40 %. It seems reasonable to state that food could be 25 % cheaper if we could deal effectively with the various strangling aspects of agribusiness. We pay not only through the pocket book but through the acceptance of ourselves as passive victims.

I believe that we can choose to create a more human economic food production system, but we must be ready to fight for it on every front if that's what we want. Tenneco is not going to give the land back to the small farmer anymore than Safeway is going to voluntarily stop building more stores. Groups like Food Action Campaign and Women United for Action have formed chapters in many states to demand the enforcing of anti-trust laws and educate people to the leading role that monopolies

play in food costs. Buyers, workers, family farmers, and the independent business people all have a stake in the structure of our food economy and together can gather enough

strength to be a decisive force.

Legislation and consumer groups are important but there is much to be done on a local level: Organize farmer's markets, Check into your school lunch program, start bread baking co-operatives, build and support food co-ops. We can organize a teach-ins, study groups, and Food Days. The material from the Agribusiness Accountability project will open your eyes. Support food workers' struggles; boycott Coors beer and Gallo wines - the United Farm Workers have been fighting monopoly powers for years. Shop at smaller groceries; eat out at locally owned restaurants, to give local people a chance to make a living; fight food stamp and welfare cutbacks. Support Third World countries' rights to build a self reliant economy and control their own resources. This can all be done by educating ourselves to think about the long term consequences of our acts and then to act on what we believe to be right. In this matter as in all others the personal is political and choosing not to act will create a nightmare jack-in-the-box world for some and starvation for others.

Economic giantism is not for people, it's for profit. Dropping out and growing your own food is good, but it's not good enough. Who do you have to buy your goat chow from? We need a human scale agricultural system in this country and with it a whole re-evaluation of what our goals as a people are. I was a perfectly sane person who would have never touched a non-union grape but it took me years to stop shopping at Safeway for those one or two really discounted items until it became clear that buying death at any discount isn't a deal.



Most of the information and statistics in this article was taken from the research done by the Agribusiness Accountability Project, a public interest group that has spent five years studying the role of monopolies in the food industry. Eat Your Heart Out by Jim Hightower, co-director of the project, is a stunningly logical expose of Agribusiness and effect it has on all our lives. Food Price Blackmail, published by United Front Press, S.F., Calif., a pamphlet in comic book form, was also a useful resource. ♀



WOMEN IN PRISON

I just received a letter from a friend in prison. She told me how excited she was about reading Country Women. Some of her friends have been reading the magazine; also, ideas from Country Women have appeared in the Clarion, the prison magazine. One friend of hers, who is deeply involved in women's spirituality, will be released on parole soon. She is interested in visiting/living with women in the country. I've worked with women in prison and would like to talk about our sisters in prison to encourage country women to open their homes to them whenever possible.

The rebellion of prisoners in the last few years has brought into our consciousness the politics of the capitalistic prison system. The white business elite would like us to believe that prisons are protecting society from bad, degenerate, subhuman types. In reality, our justice system protects middle and upper class property from poor white and Third World people. People get put in prison because they are poor and refuse to lay back and accept their poverty and the oppressive workday passively. They fight back by stealing. Or they get trapped in the man's drugs.

In general, since the white male government makes the laws, they can vary the number of women and men in prison to meet their corporate labor needs. Thus, the prison population increases statistically during a recession/depression. By putting the jobless in prison, the system controls their anger and tries to break their spirits. When factory jobs, janitorial and maid work, etc., become available again, laws get changed and prisoners receive shorter sentences. (For more details on how the prison system functions, see Jessica Mitford, Kind and Usual Punishment. Also Kathryn Burkhardt, Women in Prison.)

In addition to all these reasons, women end up in prison because they refuse to accept the white male's definition of them as passive beings who exist to serve their husband and children. Many have left their husbands (or killed them) and been forced to break laws to make decent lives for themselves. Women also bear the brunt of oppressive menial work in this country. Thus the women in America's prisons are poor white, black, Latina and other Third World women who cannot, like their well-to-do brothers and sisters, afford lawyers to get them off. Many poor people spend months locked up in jail awaiting trial because they haven't money for bail.

The California Institution for Women (CIW) is located east of Los Angeles out in the desert, where it is extremely difficult for the women's families and friends to visit them, especially if they are from northern California. There is no bus service.

The prison itself, at first glance, looks like

a college campus, with brick buildings and green lawns. Behind this public relations facade lies a horror that is more like a ghetto high school. Once incarcerated, you are stripped of your identity and self-respect. All control of your life is in the hands of authorities who treat you like a "girl" who must be disciplined and taught to obey prison rules.

You awaken to a noise of metal doors popping open that sounds like machine-gun fire. You eat starchy food in a huge noisy cafeteria. During the day you do the menial work necessary to keep the prison running. Or you work in a sewing factory for a few cents an hour. Or maybe you spend a few hours a day learning such trades as vocational housekeeping, clerical work, cosmetology, nurses aid training. Recently, a few token technician jobs have been made available. Prisoners' demands for college courses have been increasingly met. But the basic effort of the prison system is to turn out docile and "feminine" women who will easily fit into factory jobs, beauty parlors, or the clerical work force. (One woman told me how the parole board refused her parole and advised her to learn how to dress better and use makeup.)

One of the worst consequences of the new liberal notion of "rehabilitation" is the compulsory attendance at reality therapy groups. The aim of this therapy is to break a woman's identity down and they recondition her into a good, obedient worker. During the therapy sessions, the women are encouraged to tear each other apart verbally, to tell on each other, to admit guilt, etc. If a rule is broken, a fight happens, or some prison property gets trashed, the whole cottage or the women in the group are locked up until the "guilty" woman breaks down or her friends tell on her. All attempts are made to discourage women's trust of each other. Basically the whole prison experience intensifies feelings of guilt, self-hatred, incompetence and isolation. Women who remain too angry or depressed are kept tranquilized.

Survival in the prison and eventual release depends upon a woman's ability to hide her feelings and play the game, to say and do those things the parole board thinks necessary before it will grant release. Through a prison "reform" called Indeterminate Sentencing, the parole board can refuse to set the time a woman has to serve until it feels she is making progress towards rehabilitation - until she admits her guilt and is willing to conform to white, middle class standards of how poor women are supposed to act and feel. One wonders how it is possible to survive at all in such an incredibly oppressive nightmare situation.

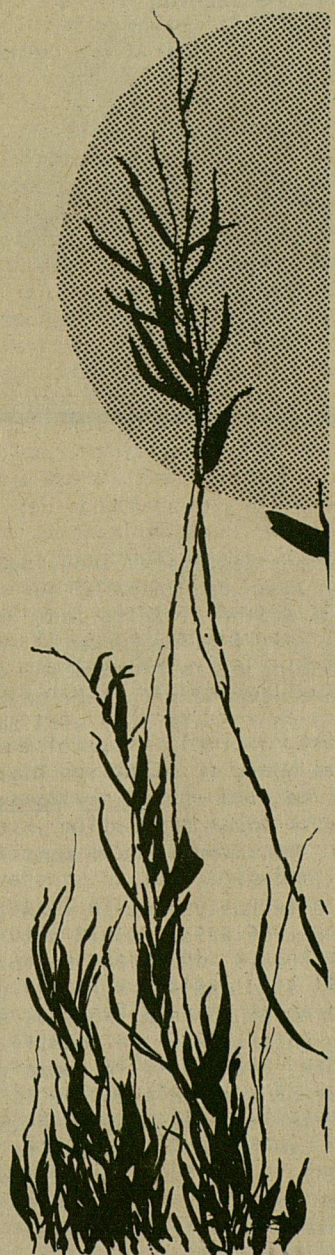
When I first went into the prison, I was scared that I would find hostile, withdrawn, depressed women who would hate me for being white and middle class. What I found were some

of the most powerful, warm-hearted, interesting women I've ever encountered.

Working inside CIW was my first adult contact with working class, white and Third World women. My family conditioning was lower middle class. I grew up in the World War II prosperity that believed that by going to college you could rise to the top, never be hungry or needy again, and thus achieve the American dream. My parents tried to realize this dream by pushing me and

my sister out of the working class, which they identified emotionally with pre-World War II depression times. I was heavily conditioned to view myself as better than my working class and Third World sisters with whom I went to grammar and high school - because I was to go to college. (CIW always reminded me of my high school in an east Oakland ghetto.) College was to be my "salvation" from oppressive work, which meant firm establishment in the middle

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the gone one

"Count Time! Count Time!"

One hundred twenty feet
scuttling toward respective cells,
outlined with goodnight embraces and kisses
(called "queer actions" by our keepers).
Instant silence as the whole shuts its mouth
for what, behind locked cell doors?
To pee, flush toilets, to masturbate its body
and life
searching for the brightness of come
trying to burn out the shadows of bars
transmitted on nosey moonbeams.

No voices now.

In crepe-soled hush puppy oxfords
the Guard (she calls herself a W.C.S. I or II
or III)
clomps ninety-seven steps
peeking in cells along the way
making a mark for each head she sees.
Totalling her marks she seeks a count
of sixty marks to equal sixty heads.

Furious pencil frightened guard
her count refuses to be but fifty-nine.

"Frozen Count."

The whole freezes.

Count again you female St. Peter!

Face red, steps angry
Pencil still furious unable to make sixty
Out of the true total fifty-nine.

A Sister Is Gone.

Gritty bitch, traitor to us cowards
Run gone one, run, while I sleep
with a smile just for you.

class with a good paying, prestigious job.

While I always knew that it was wrong to treat poor and Third World people differently, I still harbored the feeling that they were somehow "different". I felt threatened, as if they would expose some weakness in me, or maybe beat me up. I felt guilty. I also felt that they were closer to life than I. What I found and experienced working inside CIW was that basically we are all sisters engaged in the same struggle to regain our power. The women's movement was the key to this feeling of unity.

What I actually did inside CIW was help teach a class on women's liberation. This class became a women's consciousness raising group in which black as well as white women were talking together and sharing their lives. The only way the authorities can subject a thousand women the way they do is by dividing the women against each other, having them compete and fight for a scarcity of goods. In this way the prison is a magnification of the capitalistic essence of this society. In prison, as in society at large, the poor of different races are pitted against each other. The whites are given the more prestigious jobs. They work up front at the clerical jobs, while the blacks and Latinas work in the back at cleaning up. Our consciousness raising class felt so good because we were breaking down those heavily conditioned patterns of class and race differences by sharing our lives and getting each other's support and understanding and respect for our individual struggles. We read and discussed women's books, wrote about our lives, rapped, made a videotape on women in prison, celebrated each other's birthdays. (Norma Stafford, whose poem appears in this issue, was in our group.)

Country women's culture is so far limited to white women who are able to get together enough money to acquire land. This privilege has to be dealt with seriously if we are to build a truly communal culture. Ultimately the Man's cities will disintegrate as people gradually establish communities in the country. I don't know whether black and Latina women (and men) will create their own communities based on their own traditions, or whether we will join together. Probably both will happen. We can make this revolution happen by breaking down the racist and classist conditionings that keep us from sharing our lives and our privilege with our working class white and Third World sisters.

I know this idea is scary because of our heavy conditioning around the need to acquire and protect our little piece of property from the "hordes and armies of the needy." This fear is what keeps the prisons in business. This fear and the competitive mistrustful individualism that it supports is the essence of white male capitalism. The question is whether we can build an alternative.

We can start by sharing our women's country culture with our less privileged sisters in every way we can. This can happen collectively by contributing money and land to the Women's Land Trust. We want to set aside money or land especially for our Third World sisters. We can also make special efforts to invite them to share



our country festivals. Individually, each country woman can think of her own ways to open her home and her life to less privileged women in ways that feel comfortable to her. She may have working class friends she can invite to spend the weekend with her. Maybe a woman coming out of prison could stay with her for a while. Maybe she has land she could share. Country women who have homes or space available could use the Contact section of Country Women to get in touch with women trapped in prisons and in the cities. Each woman could send in a brief description of her situation.

Such alternatives would mean that a woman coming out of prison would not have to return to the streets, which end up for the majority of women as a one-way street right back into prison. Among women prisoners, there is a growing interest in the country women's movement, in natural living and in women's spirituality. Yet most of them have no way to connect with these interests. When a woman gets out of prison she is given \$200 with which to rent an apartment, buy food and and find a job until she gets her first pay check. There is no way she can start a new life by herself under such an oppressive situation. As sisters, we must overcome the divisive mechanisms of white supremacy, anti-working class and anti-gay biases, and we must work on sharing our privileges with our sisters behind bars. ♀

WOMEN OF THE WORLD

We are women of the country, and we are women of this world. The "system" that rules this land lays its heavy hand on many countries. News that comes to us, of bombs, of famines, of coups d'etat, is misrepresented and/or lied about. We are never told the reasons behind the bombs, famines, coups.

In the country, out of the city, there is often a sense of distance from the very real heaviness of people's struggles. It's important to remember that this distance, in actuality, doesn't exist. All of our lives are being manipulated and oppressed by the same entity - the same enemy - imperialism. I think the basic aspects of imperialism should be clarified:

1. to invest surplus capital abroad where the largest profits could be made. For example, from 1950 to 1965 the U.S. imperialists invested a mere \$9 billion in Latin America and proceeded to take home profits of \$25.8 billion. The Latin American people witnessed their money and resources being siphoned out while they were made dependent on the new imperialist economy.
2. to find markets overseas for American goods. Puerto Rico, a case in point, is the fifth largest market for U.S. investments in Latin America; over one-half of all U.S. investments in Latin America are there.
3. to secure control over the sources of raw materials. In India in 1966, hundreds of thousands of its people were dying from famine. At the time, India was trying to establish its own fertilizer factories, but U.S. oil companies wanted to own and control them. Thousands of tons of wheat were withheld by the U.S. until India capitulated to the oil company's demands.
4. to establish a global network of unchallenged military power. This is clear when we look at the U.S. bases worldwide. Puerto Rico, the U.S. military center in the Caribbean, has 13% of its arable land being used for U.S. bases, two of them for nuclear weapons. The Philippines, Guam, Chile, Brazil, Spain, Japan, all these countries and more are cozy homes for the U.S. military.

Imperialism forces people to take on the master's way. For example, in Cuba while the U.S. ruled the land, the entire life of the island was based on sugar, a cash crop, not a real need of the people. Workers worked for three months and suffered unemployment for nine months. During these times people were forced to turn to gambling and prostitution for survival.

Imperialism uses racism and sexism as tools to divide and strip the people of their pride. Viet Nam is a horrifying example of how the women were forced to change their so called Asian "defects" and become anglicized - so they could more easily sell their bodies to the American male. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese women underwent operations to have the slant removed from their eyes, to have their breasts expanded with silicone, their hips padded with silicone, their noses reshaped with silicone. Many wanting so badly to be like Europeans, they had dimples cut into their

cheeks, clefts dented into their chins, and even their fingers fattened.

Civilize and develop are the watchwords of our ruling class. Imperialism is their favorite dance.

The ruling class likes us to believe that those underdeveloped countries are poor. So poor in fact that they need the U.S. to tell them what to do with what they have. The real fact of that matter is, they aren't poor. Latin America has more cultivatable, high yield tropical soil than any other continent. It has the biggest timber reserves in the world, and huge buried reserves of oil, iron, copper, tin, gold and on and on. Their natural resources are rich. This richness whets the appetite of the imperialists. It drives them to extract any and all that they can from the people of these underdeveloped countries. The recently assassinated President of Chile, Salvador Allende, spoke of this selfish profit making in a December, 1972 speech. He said:

These enterprises exploited Chile's copper for many years; in the last 42 years alone taking out more than \$4 billion in profits although their initial investments were no more than \$30 million. In striking contrast, let me give one simple and painful example of what this means to Chile. In my country there are 600,000 children who will never be able to enjoy life in a normal, human way because during the first eight months of life they did not receive the minimum amount of protein. Four billion dollars would completely transform Chile. A small part of that sum would ensure protein for all time for all children of my country.

There are many struggles taking place to overthrow imperialism. Mozambique, located on the southeastern coast of Africa, had been ruled ruthlessly by the Portuguese for centuries. In the typical manner, the Mozambican people's lives were organized solely to give revenues to Portugal and her imperial allies. Every year one hundred thousand Mozambicans were separated from their families and sent to work in South African gold mines. Half their wages were paid in gold directly to Lisbon. Thousands more were forced to leave their villages and build roads or grow cash crops, such as cotton and cashews on Portuguese plantations. The people received no health care or education whatsoever. Frelimo, the people's army, stepped in. As their forces liberated areas, they set up whole economies. Agricultural production and hand crafts were done cooperatively. Scientific agricultural techniques were introduced and these regions soon became self-sufficient in their food production. Frelimo was growing its own food while at the same time, fighting the Portuguese.

Women in the liberated zones fought to play a full role. In 1967, a Women's Detachment of Frelimo was formed. Women received political and military training. They fought in offensive action and in defending the liberated territories. The Portuguese rule had split up families through forced labor, and it had encouraged prostitution

by denying women any means of support for themselves and their families. The Women's Detachment fought this and all the reactionary traditions in Mozambican culture that had shackled them.

It took only thirteen years for the people of Mozambique to win their independence, to outsmart the imperialist Portuguese and their grunting allies.

Imperialism is being battled even closer to home. In Puerto Rico, workers are challenging their exploitation. The Operators and Cement Workers Union has gone out on strike against conditions that are, in fact, worsening. The Ferré family, owners of the cement plants and controllers of the most powerful financial and political empire on the island, tried to cut workers' pension payments in half, and wipe out a medical plan from their contracts. They wanted to eliminate sick pay and establish a no-strike clause. The Union refused and demanded a restoration of the cuts, higher wages, an end to forced overtime, a cost of living clause and better working conditions.

Puerto Rico is, in fact, a colony of Amerika. The imperialists never let the Puerto Ricans forget that. They earn only one-third the wages of U.S. workers. They work long hours under dangerous conditions. Here in Amerika their plight is the same. Sixty per cent of all Puerto Ricans in the U.S. make less than \$100 a week. Amerika encourages Puerto Ricans to emigrate to the U.S. It is a way to defuse the Puerto Rican resistance

and to deal with the massive unemployment on the island. U.S. control on the island is tightened while the forced migration provides a cheap source of labor for low wage employers in Amerika.

When Third World nations reclaim their countries and their resources the ruling class feels the defeat in their profits. The rich are unwilling to accept this loss and they force the markets that they still retain to pick up the slack. We experience this in the tremendous price hikes in gasoline, building supplies, food, etc. We are forced to pay outrageous prices for necessities. Meanwhile, the companies' profit margins are soaring and our livelihoods diminishing.

We can learn from the methods of the victorious liberation forces how to fight our own battles in the U.S. Through their lifestyles, literature, and analysis we can get insight into the changes needed to gain our own independence.

Through discussions and criticisms of these Third World countries we develop models and strengths. By understanding international struggles we can gain energy to break down the national barriers set up to divide us as separate peoples fighting separate battles when in reality we are one people fighting a common enemy - imperialism. ♀

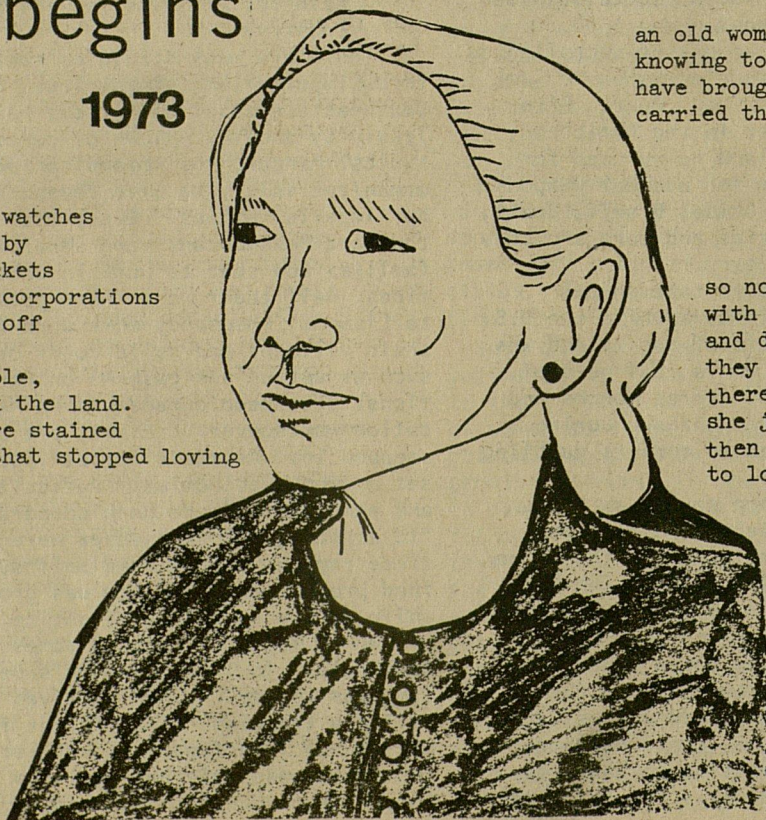
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chile as the killing begins

1973

an old woman sits
in her doorway and watches
the men goose-step by
in bloodstained jackets
bought by amerikan corporations
which steal copper off
the land she knows
belongs to her people,
the people who work the land.
yes, the jackets are stained
they cover hearts that stopped loving
and began killing.



an old woman sits
knowing too many men
have brought her promises then
carried them away in cheap caskets.

so now she lets them march by
with their bloody rifles
and dangerous souls.
they have chosen -
there is nothing to regret.
she just sits as they pass by.
then she goes inside
to load her rifle.

Mendocino Tea Party

Eight years ago my husband and I bought a small piece of land on the California coast and proceeded to build ourselves a home. We built it over a period of six years at the lowest possible financial cost to ourselves without a mortgage, and we built it to code. Many of the materials were foraged. We bought used timbers for the rafters. Some of the windows came from a garage sale. Our fireplace was made from a round propane gas storage tank. Our toilet came from the dump. We scavenged ceramic tile for the kitchen and bathroom shower. We finished the outside of our home with 100 year old redwood siding from a derelict sheep barn. The whole barn cost us a dollar.

Our house cost us what we could afford (which was every dime we could lay our hands on). When it was finished, the tax assessor came around and assessed it not for how much it cost us to build, but for what other houses (contractor built) in the area were selling for.

The California State Constitution says that the property of individuals must be taxed at 25% of fair market value at its "best use." This means that if your house and land could be sold for \$24,000, you multiply $\$8.48 \times 60$ ($\$24,000$ divided by 4, making an assessed value of \$6000, divided again by 100), and you owe the tax man \$508.80.

If the land next to yours is bought as an investment and resold a few years later for twice what you paid for your land, then the tax assessor is duty bound to come by and reassess your land. That is what happened to us. Say you live in a neighborhood zoned for both residential and commercial use and the old house next to yours is sold and converted into an inn. An inn is worth more than a residential dwelling. According to California law, the tax assessor has to come back and reassess your house as if it too was an inn—because that is the "best use" of property in your neighborhood. No consideration is made of your social value as a resident, or your ability to pay. The only thing that counts is fair market value. However, it appears that there is a double standard at work; timberland is not reassessed upward when adjoining properties are sold.

On the Mendocino coast of northern California, several conditions have caused astronomical rises in property taxes this year. Land speculation is fast driving up the cost of land. The assessed value of commercial timberland was decreased by 50% due to a depressed lumber market. Timber corporations and developers are obtaining low assessments by placing their holdings into agricultural preserves as provided by the Williamson

Act of 1966. In 1973, timber companies owned 2.2 million acres of land and four lumber mills in Mendocino County, property valued at over 350 million dollars. Yet, that year because of agricultural preserve exemptions, they paid 1.5 million dollars in taxes. This is an average of 67¢ an acre and includes taxation on four large mills. In addition, 50% of the commercial timberland in our county is already removed from the tax rolls due to a law which exempts cut-over lands from taxes when 70% of the trees measure under 16 inches in diameter.

The result of all this to us homeowners is a huge increase in our taxes. Many tax bills here rose 100% this year — some went up as much as 1100%! Ours went up 109%. The end result is that about 80% of the property taxes are paid by 20% of the property owners — mainly small homeowners, small farmers, small businesses. Oil companies, agribusinesses, banks, insurance companies and the giant lumber companies all have a special body of laws exempting them from paying their fair share of taxes. When the notices of reassessment were received this spring, flabbergasted coastal residents asked for a hearing with the county assessor. A deputy assessor was dispatched to the town of Mendocino where tax hikes were the most dramatic, to give individual consultation. His advice to complaining residents was threefold. 1) You can't afford to live here anymore. 2) Go on welfare. 3) Don't worry — this is only an assessment — you don't know what the tax rate is yet. Assessments were not lowered, and by the time the tax rate was finalized, the date for formal appeals had passed.

In late September, three Mendocino residents called a public meeting at the Mendocino High School to present the idea of a taxpayers' strike. Two hundred people came to that first meeting. So did the County Tax Assessor. He reiterated the state law. There was nothing the county could do about lowering assessments. The state set the rules. Anyone there, he admonished the audience, could sell their house at the price it was assessed for, or more. The Tax Assessor was the calmest one in the auditorium that night. Many residents vented their feelings and proposed several solutions to the problem. The meeting, called to discuss a tax strike, was not focused on that means of protest. When the evening was over, only two additional residents had signed up to participate in a property tax strike.

What did happen that night was that the body as a whole agreed to form a group to be called the Coast Residents' Forum of Mendocino County. Its purpose was to provide citizens with a means of discussing community concerns, and of gathering and exchanging information, and initiating

Cont.

joint action when desired. A Steering Committee was delegated to study the tax problem and to report back to the members. I was asked to be on that committee, and we began meeting weekly in October.

I went to the first meeting unsure that a tax strike would work, or that even the initial 6% penalty was worth it. What I learned was that of the two property tax relief bills that had been proposed to the Legislature (one freezing assessments as of March 1, 1976, on owner-occupied property) -- the first had never made it out of committee and the second was floundering on the floor with little support. One of the problems was that neither plan offered any relief to renters. The present tax structures force landowners to raise prices on rentals to meet rising tax costs. Low and middle income housing in rural areas disappears and living in the country truly becomes a privileged way of life. I left that first meeting convinced that something dramatic need be done to get the Legislature to listen.

We elected officers at our first Steering Committee meeting - more officers than positions - both to share the work load and the possible consequences. It was suggested that there was a possibility that those of us on the Steering Committee could be prosecuted for conspiracy if we organized a tax strike. We sought several legal opinions. They varied. The concession we made to the conspiracy fright was to abandon the idea of pooling the withheld tax money for investment to offset the penalties involved in late payment of taxes. Also, we published a legal notice in the papers which stated that anyone who chose to withhold their taxes as a protest against exorbitant tax rates and extravagant, inefficient and unimaginative county government would do so as a matter of individual decision. With that settled we decided to forge ahead, on the principles that one can not conspire in public, that failure to pay taxes is not illegal, and that we do, in fact, have freedom of speech.

We composed a handout sheet to communicate our grievances, to attract new members to the Forum, and to learn how many people intended to withhold their taxes. We titled it: A DECLARATION, and in it we said, "... our system of property taxation has become discriminatory, unjust, inequitable, and unresponsive to the ability of property owners to pay outrageous taxes." We suggested that "a proper celebration of our national Bicentennial would be a restatement of our vigorous opposition to new and oppressive forms of taxation without representation." We resolved that "any resident of Mendocino's coastal community may, under protection of Constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and the right to petition for redress of grievances, make an individual decision to join the 1976 Mendocino County Tax Strike." We included information on why the strike was necessary, what it could gain, why our rates and assessments are high, what the legalities and penalties are for not paying, and what people could do to help.

Those on the Steering Committee who could write contacted the press and wrote stories on our progress, while other members let their



phone numbers be publicized and made themselves available to talk with people who wanted information. I designed a tax strike button and two people put up the money to buy them. We sent off the order for one thousand buttons in red, white and blue. The idea of sending a tea bag instead of a check for taxes (in memory of the Boston Tea Party of 1773) was born and was joyfully received along with a donation of \$10 to buy tea bags for the tax strike.

By the first of November we had our ship ready to launch. Two thousand copies of our declaration were printed and on a borrowed mimeo machine we ran off forms asking for tax histories, membership cards, forms asking for volunteers, and more membership applications. We began talking with people, distributing our papers and writing legislators. We spoke over our local radio stations several times and we set up information booths in town for three weekends in a row. We planned and publicized what we hoped would be a big meeting on the 18th of November at the Junior High School in Ft. Bragg. The tax strike buttons arrived the day before the meeting, and between three and four hundred people attended. The mood was quiet and serious. About half of the people there raised their hands when we asked how many planned to withhold their taxes.

When December rolled around, we took stock. Our two thousand declarations were mostly gone, the one thousand buttons had shrunk to a few dozen, and over 300 people had said that they intended to withhold their taxes. We decided to issue a bulletin, urging members and strikers to

remain firm and to mail in their tea bags on December 10th. We listed five reforms that were goals of the tax strike.

- 1) End the present "fair market value" system of taxation
- 2) Equalize the tax burden
- 3) Reduce the cost of local government
- 4) Reopen appeals on 1975 property tax assessments
- 5) Forgive penalties for late payment of 1975-1976 taxes.

This goes to press too soon to know how many tea bags were received at the tax collector's office, or how much tax money was withheld, but today's newspaper headline (12/11) is: Tea, not money, is pouring in. If the county's reserve and contingency funds of \$400,000 can be used up to cover the shortage of tax money, the county will be forced to declare a state of financial emergency in order to qualify for a loan from the State. But whether that happens or not, we will ask our Board of Supervisors for time on their agenda in January to discuss tax reforms, and to ask them if there isn't something that they can do to help those who face the loss of their homes due to the extraordinary tax increases.

At present, we are contacting other tax reform groups to learn about their tactics and ideas, and we're working on a series of maps which will show the assessed values of land in our area, making it possible to see the trends

and inequities at a glance. Eventually we will send an envoy to the state capital to talk with legislators and their staff members about our tax problems, and to urge them to create some remedial legislation, soon.

Our Mendocino County 1976 Tax Strike movement has captured the attention of newspapers all over the state and in fact, we've reached the Wall Street Journal. Radio stations have given us generous amounts of free time, and two television stations sent crews up here to do stories. Our state legislature has promised to reform our property tax laws for years, and they now predict that any reforms are still six to twelve years away. Meanwhile, the number of places now sold for taxes in California has risen to 1450 per month. Older people on fixed incomes are being forced out of homes they have built and maintained through generations. Those on limited incomes and young people establishing first homes are forced to accept a lower standard of living. In highly desirable areas like the Mendocino coast speculative pressures and resulting tax increases make owning land an exclusive privilege of the rich. It is a good time right now to pressure our legislators for immediate tax reforms in this and other states. We must overcome our fear of the Tax Man, we must band together and get busy. If we remain quiet and do nothing, the present tax system will force us to sell out, and we will be driven from our land--some sooner, some later. ♀



Womancenter and the Politics of Alternative Institutions



The building was built to be a bank in the 1920's, but after a year of operation, the Bank of America bought it out and closed it down. Then it was a grocery store. Faint outlines of a Langendorf's Bread stencil still remain on a window. The ceilings are very high, and from them are suspended six old-fashioned hanging lamps. On this stage the Penngrove Womancenter lived and died.

The following is an attempt to discuss some ideas about women's centers, the problems we experienced, and some mistakes I'd like to see other sisters not repeat.

What is a women's center, what does it do? The idea is a very broad one. Generally, women's centers try to provide an environment where women can be with other women in a positive, constructive way; where programs felt to be needed by women (such as support groups, childcare projects, abortion reform, cultural events, rape crisis centers, counseling, etc.) can be initiated. They are, in short, a place where feminist models of a new society can be tested and struggled towards, both through the center's effect on its larger environment, and through its internal workings, its structure, and its effect on its members.

The Womancenter made little attempt to more sharply define its own meaning and purpose. Initially, no written statement of the meaning of the Womancenter existed, and as far as I know, no serious attempt had even been made to formulate any policy about what the center was or was not. The center was spoken of in terms of "a place for women to come together," "growth," "a space of our own." The kind of firm statements which would have engendered conflict, probing discussion and resolutions which might have pointed out directions in which the center would logically have to go, were not made.

Such issues as membership and recruitment, volunteerism, relationships of the center to the larger environment, concrete goals, political beliefs, or the role of men in the center, were all ignored for short-term planning and day-to-day contingencies. In short, ideology was largely unstated, yet assumed as a shared framework.

In November of 1974, the Womancenter held a six hour workshop to discuss the frustration felt by its staff. We were someone's version of a functioning women's center, but not one, which suited us. Staffing was generally difficult, money was constantly a problem. More significantly, perhaps, power and responsibility lay with a few women. Attendance at such events as legal forums, health workshops, and coffeehouse nights was poor. Enthusiasm was low. Some fundamental questions were being asked: Who did we want to reach, and why? What effect did we want to have? What should we be doing? What was the relationship/responsibility/relevancy of the Womancenter to each of us present?

During this discussion, the words "community" and "collective" were heard so often and in so many contexts that soon everyone was demanding they be defined. No definition was forthcoming; but the power of the terms was such that they continued to be used in spite of the recognition that no one understood them. It is in exploring these concepts that the issues surrounding the Womancenter are, for me, clarified.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

The building of communities is a complex problem for women. Classically, the community is the lowest level within which the needs and wants of its members can be contained, a total system of institutions forming the basis for a complete way of life. This kind of community is

not at this time applicable to most women. Although growing numbers of women do attempt to meet all their needs through other women, it is a hard battle in a society where nearly all significant institutions are controlled by men. Most important in a political framework, there is a meaning of community which includes a self-consciousness on the part of its members, an awareness of a shared identity which links one to others. It is in such a sense that those involved with the Womancenter used the term "women's community".

The women's movement has tried to build such a community of woman-identified consciousness on a foundation of consciousness-raising (CR) groups, with the implicit assumption, I think, that the rise of conscious women's communities would somehow bring about major social change. But all was not so simple. To understand what pitfalls accompanied such an initial foundation and such an assumption, we must first take a look at the theory and practice of consciousness-raising groups.

The use of CR groups as building blocks in a revolutionary movement has not been an unmixed blessing. The theory goes that if women begin to seriously evaluate our lives, our experience, our values, we will begin to develop a group consciousness. We will find that we can begin to share and identify with other women, that we as women have certain oppressive expectations from and responses to our environments. The concept behind CR groups is known as "the personal is political" - i.e. that what we have considered as purely the unique trivia of each individual woman's life is often part of a dynamic of domination and subordination which adds up to a male supremacist society. In other words, consciousness-raising is meant to raise members of an oppressed, self-hating, separated caste which is totally bound to and identifies with its oppressor, to a militant, self-conscious, unified group committed to revolutionary feminism.

Unfortunately, such is not always the case. Those women who identify their oppression in terms of denial of basic material needs and rights, or who link their oppression as women with another form of oppression to which they are also subject (e.g. classism or racism), often feel alienated by feminists whose concepts of "oppression" seem much more superficial and whose commitment, therefore, seems more shaky. As of yet, the women's movement has not shown enough consistent concern with the needs of working class and Third World women to overcome this alienation. In addition, some of the educated, middle class women who came to feminism through CR groups obtain much privilege from, and are committed to, the present social order. These women may support minor reforms but oppose any radical changes which might cause them to lose their privileges, and they constitute a faction which further undermines the movement's attempts to unify all women. In any case consciousness-raising as a community building tool has had the disadvantages both of alienating some important groups of women, and not necessarily creating the kind of women's

community necessary for feminist revolution.

It may, in fact, be that the existence of conscious, activist women's communities will bring about major changes. However, we're a long way from that now.

Women in this area often refer to the "women's community" but, when I think about it, I find the term is used more to describe a number of women who hang out together than a community focussed upon a specific political consciousness. This usage worries me sometimes. I feel that we're claiming a group consciousness which still needs much development before we can rely on it. For sure, the fact of our bonding together is highly important, since it means a redefinition by the people involved of themselves as woman-identified. Yet will this alone necessarily spur social change? The many lesbians who live here associate almost exclusively with women, and can certainly be called woman-identified. They appear, however, at this point to be having little perceptible effect on the sexism and heterosexism around us. A commitment to active social change, and to connection with other movements, is, for the most part, lacking. We need a radical activist theory and practice if the women's community is to serve as a tool for such change.

THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

Unfortunately, we do not live in a society in which activism is a normative behavior. The question of how to motivate people to activism, that is, the question of leadership, has been a continuous problem for the women's movement. Jo Freeman's article, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," was an early response to this problem. Freeman pointed out that our pretenses to structurelessness act, in reality, to mystify the workings of the group and maintain the possibility for unchallenged control by an elite. More recently, Rita Mae Brown has emphasized the need for women to legitimize our leaders, in order that we may move forward and maintain accountability to one another.

But at the time, our anti-leadership feelings took the form of rhetoric about "collectivity". Collectivity, it should be noted, is an ideal of behavior in which members of a group share totally in the group responsibilities and rewards. Although labor may be divided according to skills or convenience, the power remains evenly distributed.

This ideal is not at all easy to achieve. Our society provides no models to emulate; those who have tried to act collectively find it takes much time, much relearning, much commitment to both the goal and the people involved. Generally, groups which succeed in approaching the collective ideal without much trouble are quite small and fairly homogeneous. The Womancenter wanted to act collectively, but had nowhere near the understanding and commitment which would be required to make it work. It did not work; nor did we face this failure and try to make it work. We did not find another structure, nor did we legitimize our actual structure. As a result, the actual structure continued, illegitimately.

This structure was one in which covert leaders did most of the office work, kept the organization together, represented the center to the press and public, and attended meetings continuously - all the while believing in, and trying to work within an ill-defined but potent model called "collectivity." These covert leaders would emerge, work hard, and drop out, all in a matter of months as the contradictions of their position became more than they could handle.

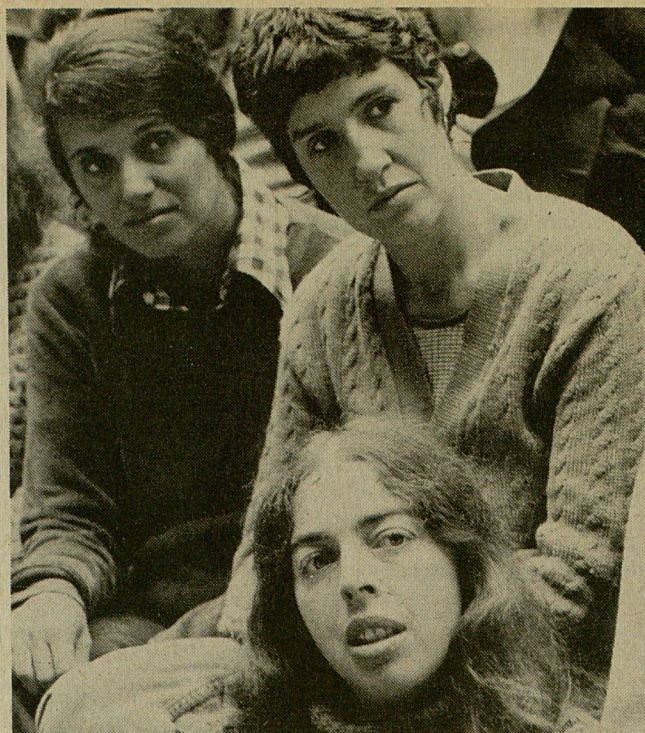
How could a viable leadership structure have been created? We were not ready for collectivity, in part because the business of the Woman-center was not at all clear. The covert leaders had acted from the private goals they had created for lack of shared goals, and therefore knew what they were doing. The remaining members did not. The private visions had never adequately been vocalized, discussed, and struggled over to arrive at a shared vision and specific purposes against which any given plan of action could be measured. Without such a group understanding, most of the members were unable to lead, leaving those with private visions to fill the vacuum once again.

THE QUESTION OF CONSTITUENCY

And just who exactly were these Womancenter members anyway? Our attitude was that any interested woman was a member of the Woman-center, welcome to any event and with a full vote at any meeting. Apparently the rest of the world did not share our opinion; while a few women each week came in and expressed interest, we were hardly besieged. Our active membership was not increasing much, and neither were we reaping the benefits of a closed, tightly-knit group. Attendance at meetings was so uneven that we constantly had to explain everything over and over again, and lost much energy through not knowing who would show, who was reliable, what had been done already.

Without specific ideas of our purposes and tactics, we could not place ourselves in our environment and analyze how we were or were not achieving what we wanted. The feedback from that environment was occasionally encouraging; but more often, not. We were frequently called cliquish. We were accused of being boringly business-like and of being maddeningly disorganized, of being manhaters and of being too pro-male, of being too touchy-feely and of being too coldly political. We were criticized for pandering to straight women and for being too dykey. We were: not ritzy enough; for rich women only; too foul-mouthed; too ingenuous; too tight; too loose; on and on. Undoubtedly all these things were true at one point or another; undoubtedly, too, they said as much about other people's weaknesses as about ours.

The group which formed the core staff and planners were largely single, white, middle class women students in their early twenties. Most would call themselves feminists and probably half would call themselves lesbians. Though there were exceptions to each of these categories, the character of the group did not



spread much from this initial base.

Accusations of cliquishness were probably fair in relation to this homogeneity. Though lip service was paid to including more women, it was never a priority. There were several reasons for this: limitations on energy and resources; disdain of "public relations"; a tendency to gear our activities to things that (at least somewhat) seemed appealing to us; and some deep, though unexplored, questions about who we really were interested in addressing ourselves to. Did we really want to deal with women who were into their husbands, women whose ambitions ran to mink coats or new cars? Could we cope with desperately poor women, women with childcare needs; sick women; lonely women? Could we cross generation gaps, lesbian phobias, class differences, anti-campus sentiments?

We never directly addressed these questions; we avoided them by posting flyers only in student areas, relying on word of mouth, giving out subtle and not so subtle signals to visitors. The question of constituency was dealt with by default.

At a November meeting, feelings were voiced that the Womancenter was not serving our own needs. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that we weren't meeting anyone else's needs either. Our plan was to form a number of collectives based on our own needs and desires. Staffing, which we saw as more other-directed, would continue, but on a smaller basis.

People were excited and eager over this plan. Yet, in the end, only three out of a proposed fifteen collectives ever had even a brief life. Again, the collective ideal undermined us. Again the goals were too vague. And perhaps such a plan demanded a degree of woman-identification which we did not yet possess. We were prepared to change other women's lives, to support and provide for them. We were not, it seems, so

ready to risk our own lives on each other and what we might create together.

THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONS

The very existence of the Womancenter was a political statement. It implies, at the least, that there exists an active sector of the population to whom working with women, for women, is more meaningful than involvement in any other existing channel for social action. It implies that we would rather create our own alternatives than direct our energy into the present system, even knowing that the latter retains most of the necessary social resources, money, people power, credibility, mobility and control. But was the Womancenter, and are women's centers, the most effective direction for our energy? There are some major questions about tactics for social change involved here.

The issue is often referred to as working within versus working outside of the system; but as Angela Davis points out, this is a misleading choice of terms. We are all within the system, shaped by its culture and subject to its demands. The question, then, may be better formulated as the tension between creating alternative institutions or taking over existing ones. Each of these possibilities has its strengths and weaknesses, and a complete strategy for change must include the conscious use of both.

Takeover of existing institutions is a long and frustrating process. The intrinsic rewards are few. One who struggles in this way must constantly focus on long-range goals, as the present is not likely to be rewarding. Meanwhile, the existing system itself is expert at various degrees of cooptation and coercion. It can offer much in the way of money, status and power, and even occasionally pays lip service to some radical goals.

Because of these frustrations and dangers, radical women tend to prefer not to directly attack the system on its own territory. However, unpleasant as direct struggle tends to be, it is crucial, for the system continues to control the lives of the majority of people, including those least able to struggle on their own behalf. We cannot rely on its collapsing of its own dead weight. The flexibility contained within existing institutions is not negligible. Nor can we forget that when alternative institutions prove a sufficient threat, the system retains the power to crush them if not restrained.

Nevertheless, creation of alternative institutions is vital. Alternative institutions enable us to demonstrate how we might do things better while reaching people at a grass-roots level. They often provide important services and a base for activities and support. They are more personally rewarding to work within; providing a chance for some autonomy, some contact with the people one cares about, and some scope for creativity and spontaneity. Subject to difficulties, however, they often fold for lack of resources and abundance of idealism. For example, often not enough thought is given to becoming financially self-

sustaining, so that when the first wave of energy runs out, no one is left with incentive enough to continue. Generally, too much is attempted with too little. Finally, alternative institutions can become solely personal solutions, available to the privileged few and offering no challenge to the power of oppressor institutions. This is especially true of certain communes and growth centers.

How can we know when we are being effective? What is a cop-out, what is legitimately alternative-building? The Hyde Park Chapter of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union has suggested three criteria for evaluating strategies for change:

1. WILL THE REFORM MATERIALLY IMPROVE WOMEN'S LIVES? Our lives as women are oppressive in many ways; therefore, we want to work to improve our lives now. Whatever our priorities, we must focus on meeting our immediate needs. When we can show that we can meet women's needs, they will want to join us. While we believe that sexist capitalism cannot implement all of the reforms we are for, it is possible to use its own rules against itself. That is, we can force change through pressure ... Nevertheless, the reform itself is not the only end. We also are oppressed by our real (and felt) lack of power to control that reform.

Cont.



2. WILL THE STRUGGLE FOR THE REFORM GIVE WOMEN A SENSE OF THEIR OWN POWER? We need to struggle around issues where success is obviously our victory rather than a gift from those in power. Our struggle for reforms must build our movement. Our movement's strength can only be sustained through organizations. Through organizations, individual women can collectively have a sense of power. Otherwise, even when we win, we don't know it or can't claim it. (Who forced troop withdrawals in Indochina - the President or the movement? Who forced abortion law reform in New York - the state legislature or the women's movement?) Through organizations, one victory builds on another. They have a life longer than the individual participants and strength greater than their parts.

3. WILL THE REFORM ALTER EXISTING RELATIONS OF POWER? Women in American society have little control over any aspects of our lives. We want not only concrete improvements, but the right to decide on those improvements and priorities. We want power restructured, wealth redistributed, and an end to exploitation. Those most closely affected by institutions have the right to decide what those institutions do.

It's important to evaluate our actions in these kinds of terms. While changing our own lives is the first step to revolution, it is still only the first step. Many of us are now finding, through relating to women and/or country life, immensely rewarding lifestyles. This is important, but only if we go on from there.

"Inside" or "outside" the system, there is only one way to make sure that you are not getting sidetracked. That is to find, or form, a group of people that you respect and can depend on, and continually check out what you're doing with them. Learn how to criticize each other in affirmative ways, and do it often. It is imperative that each of us create this support for herself. Otherwise, when surrounded by hostile values, we may eventually give way, or be thrown into one of the man's cages. All of us must have approval and feedback from somewhere - let's make sure it's our sisters we get it from. No one can be revolutionary in isolation.

This is true for groups as well as for individuals; groups must find other groups to interact with, for purposes of communication and solidarity as well as accountability. With this support system established, we must begin to choose our strategies. This means narrowing down the possibilities to what is do-able.

Womancenter suffered from the attempt to be all things to all women: service center, outreach center, support group, political union, social club, and a shining model of what women can do together. Charlotte Bunch has stressed that these functions should be clearly separated and priorities set, as no one group can perform them all. An outreach program, for example, should be as supportive and receptive to all kinds of women as possible, whereas a political union must stress creative conflict and a

committed membership sharing a highly developed political consciousness. Social clubs generally consist of people conforming to some fairly narrow social specifications. Probably none of these groups could perform any other's function effectively.

The clear articulation of goals and strategies is particularly vital for alternative institutions. The same idealism which created the organization can otherwise destroy it. The unspoken goal behind an organization such as the Womancenter is nothing less than to change the world. Unless more specific and achievable goals are set, members will become dissatisfied and drop out.

The Womancenter has closed, but the energy which created it is continuing. New projects and groupings are constantly forming. My own efforts have gone into the collective creation of a feminist bookstore. I am excited by the model of feminist non-profit businesses, projects which combine outreach to and education of the larger public, with service to the budding women's community and (someday, we hope) financial support of the workers involved. Projects which have sprung up since the closing of the Womancenter include a Lesbian Alliance, a Women's Collective, which has been producing women's events; a women's cafe; another women's center; as well as the many activities which have continued through the period of the Womancenter's existence to the present.

Unfortunately, many mistakes are being repeated. We have as yet no structure to learn from our past. It has been difficult to share the understandings I have gained with some of my sisters, and discouraging to watch the same scenes enacted over and over. But I continue to believe that slowly and painfully, we are all building a fund of knowledge and a path to a new world. I offer this article as part of that process. ♀

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Hyde Park Chapter, Chicago Women's Liberation Union, Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement, 1972, p. 11.

"The Tyranny of Structurelessness," by Jo Freeman, in Radical Feminism, edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone, Quadrangle, 1973.

Tapes from Sagaris, a feminist studies institute, Lyndonville, Vermont, Summer, 1975 (Courtesy of K. Balen): Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Centers" and Rita Mae Brown, "Leadership"

Angela Davis, lecture, "Third World Women and Feminism," Sonoma State University, Nov. 3, 1975.

Thanks to Moonstar, Tina, and K. B.

The Sexual Revolution, Revolution and Personal Politics

or

Who Was That
Knight I Saw
You With
Last Lady ?

My political thinking has been strongly influenced by a long career in personal politics which started years ago when I rejected the roles of wife and mother to become a communal freewoman, a quest which at this time has led me to a lesbian separatist commune in the country.

Having spent many years agonizing over

"changing my relationships" on a mixed commune, I am finding it none too easy in this supportive women's context either.

In the last eight months, two budding romances have gone awry, much to my surprise. Believing that I was to have a starring role in "they lived happily ever after" I wandered into the set of "heartbreak hotel" by mistake.

It was a pretty silly movie. Walking around in my chinese hat with my red star and my red cheeks and my red eyes, I felt like a fool for being involved in this "paltry personal problem" when so many are feeling the direct attacks of imperialism and when the land is being broken by the acts of men who are so insanely focused on profit, prestige and power that they do not care if they destroy the earth. My mental anguish seems so self indulgent compared to the pain being experienced by oppressed peoples around the world. How can I mix my groans with theirs?

Yet, in this country, a very great part of the anguish which so many poor people and women, whatever their class, feel seems to be coming from love. Just turn on a country/western, motown, or top 40 station and listen to the songs. Shedding tears for a lost lover is to join millions, to participate in one of the most common painful experiences in this culture. More violence is directly connected to acts of love than anything else, among the poor. Most women who are in jail for killing someone, killed a husband or child, someone they "loved". Today how many women will be beaten for looking at the wrong man the wrong way by a man who thinks he's right?

These are the acts of desperate people, the ones on the bottom of the economic pile. Others will do less drastic acts--drown themselves in a bottle, jump off a bridge, play "It's Crying Time Again" on the jukebox 75 times. While I am privileged to regard myself as corny and silly for fantasizing unspeakable acts of self-destruction, others are not so fortunate. Others do not have the post sexual revolution, post gay revolution support for creating alternatives to the game of love, which enabled me to wriggle out of my pain and go on living again. I thank my sisters for their loving support in my struggle against romanticism.

The game of love, the great fantasy phantastico romantic chase is supposed to be a primary compensation for giving our lives to the capitalist system. The economic security of the family is the only way for most women to have any economic security at all, and it is through love that we become familial, and thus secure. Men need our love to go on working, and we need theirs to go on living. While we can get paid for doing "women's work" in the schools as a teacher, in the kitchen as a cook, or in the streets as a prostitute; in the home, we get "love", and therefore perform these functions voluntarily.

As a system of love distribution, emotional capitalism (the entire heterosexual institution of the patriarchal nuclear family, monogamy, and its high point romance) does not provide for our emotional needs any better than capitalism as an economic system makes us all prosperous and happy. It is a road paved with broken hearts, but one in which there are no winners. As Rosy and the Riveters, a wimmin's band sings in one of their songs: "Angel of love, everyone's lookin' for you ..."

Though individuals may come to some good understandings of one another, and answer part of each other's needs within the family, these isolated units do not make a social life that is truly satisfying for anyone. My mother's "happy" marriage never made her happy. In a respectable and boring working class life, it was simply all she had, her family, her role. The work she did at the factory was monotonous and unrelenting; then there was the double duty of being a housewife and mother (dad never helped with domestic work, though both of them carried full time jobs). This year the happy couple travelled out of the state for the first time in their lives on a vacation to Florida - thirty years of tedious labor for that grand payoff of a trip to disneyworld - a just reward for wearing the traces so long and so well, like a pair of cocile horses. But my mother feels fortunate to have a secure family life, although until the kids left home they had hardly any friends, they were so insular in the normal "Amerikan" unit of two adults and two smiling children.

Since it is more middle class to have a "happy" family, which usually means a polite and repressed atmosphere in the home, emotional and physical violence - blowing it - is to be avoided. In my childhood, we were poor in money but well off in that kind of respectability. All of my mother's emotional violence - and she had plenty - was "safely" directed at the children, so no one would ever know that she wasn't on top of it all - working, trying to make ends meet, raising two children. How many of us still wear the scars of emotional upward mobility!

The heterosexual institution is so pervasive that no people who have brought about a marxist socialist revolution have superseded this cornerstone of private property, so pervasive that most lesbians live in couples, units modeled after the patriarchal nuclear family (or try to), so pervasive that even the most radical people find their buttons pushed by the very threatening idea of living in emotionally socialist ways, and that those of us who are trying to discover what those ways are, are encountering almost overwhelming internal and external resistance. On this issue, everyone is revisionist.

For as little love as the family gives, it gives us all we get. We are social beings and need to live together in some way. It is not just as a material economic unit that we cling to this old form, there are sexual and love economics as well holding us to what we have, for fear of getting none. Too often are these needs discounted; when our actions are so influenced by them. Silence and repression are built into the system, perpetuating cycles of covert manipulation.

As a young wummin I always knew that the key to my upward mobility was my ability to attract a husband from upstairs, although this lesson was passed on to me very subtly. I was glad I had a "nice bod", although it didn't do me much good until I was far away from the hometown where my class status was known, and I could "pass" in college, dint of my academic

abilities and intellectual aspirations, as middle class like all the other girls. Dropping out and becoming a hippy, which for middle and upper class people was "downward mobility" was a step up for me. Living with the radical sons and daughters of the upper classes, I have had the aristocratic privilege of not working, by manipulating the system to our advantage through welfare, inheritances, food stamps, and professional unemployment.

These manipulations that comprise the alternative culture are clever personal solutions, but rarely do they become the basis for a solid economic base, a "real" alternative. Like hustlers in the ghetto, hippies get by, but being by and large more middle class, get hassled less for these scams. As yet, the alternative culture has produced no broad-based real alternatives. Were it to do so, it is very likely that it would be attacked by the system in a heavier way.

The most real alternatives that have come about through the youth culture are the personal politics that have been so much a part of feminism. Feminists are learning to live alone, with other women, in more free form couples and without couples at all, working and often living collectively. I have been privileged to participate in much of this work in two communes, one heterosexual and one gay, and I say "privilege" and "work" very seriously. If I were much more up against the wall in terms of economics, I would not have the inclination or time to pursue the smushing of monogames and multi-pile relationships that I have done. I say "work" because this struggle has consumed so much energy. I say it seriously because as a woman with two children, creating an alternative to the nuclear family was a necessary part of the process of my becoming a whole person. As a freaked out hippy housechick, a revolutionary I was not.

But it is difficult to do this work, and not be consumed by it! The first two fronts of the three fronts in feminism (the man in your head, the man in your bed, the MAN) have so completely taken me up that I have barely begun to think about and take action against the third. I do not want to spend my life so internalized within myself and my small group that the MAN is free to oppress the earth and the people. I want to fight him, but how strong are the old ways within us!

For example, I have heard the words "falling in love" more times since I became a lesbian than ever before. It is the thing to do, the way to unlock our sexuality, still. (Oh, no, she's just a friend...) We must find ways to be more sisterly and friendly within the context of sexual expression, not keep them apart, as the patriarchy has kept sisters apart all these years. Let us touch and feel each other. Let us go as slowly and sensitively as we need to go, but let's go!

As for each other's children, the legacy of our heterosexual daze, are we going to regard them as a punishment that the lesbian mother deserves for not "choosing" not to have

children like the real dykes did? As if I "chose" to have children at all. I was not in my right mind. I was straight. These are not my children, they are ours. They would add so much beauty to our life to let them in. It is oppressive to be a mother, but it doesn't have to be oppressive to live with children, if we share them, if we learn to see them as people in their own right. We must not let ourselves become like some men on this issue. (One single man in my mixed commune always used to say "You laid 'em, now you play 'em") in reference to his lack of participation in collective childcare.

I do not want to talk about changing the power relationships in our most intimate contacts, creating new kinds of family, as if it were the total solution, as if we could insulate ourselves that much from the larger oppressive society. Obviously, the world will encroach until there is a complete social revolution and a free society, until there is no capitalist world to impinge on the ideals which impel us to live a better way. When such a revolution has been brought about, the privilege of personal political exploration will be a right. It is our right now, to live decently with one another; it is the repressive context of patriarchy that transforms our rights into privileges we must compete for.

We have a right to clean air, to live in the country, to explore our sexuality, to grow and change in our own ways, but like everything else, until we all can have them, these privileges will be ill-gotten gains that we have to fight to keep by defending how much we "deserve" them. When I talk to an oppressed Appalachian mother of six in the laundromat about how my four year old is off "visiting friends" and how much I miss her and want her to come back, when I know that woman hasn't gotten a day's break from her kids in years and can't expect one in years, I don't feel all that deserving. Yes, I have worked hard to collectivize my children, yes I have still so much more work to do to collectivize them among single lesbians, yes, it is an intense struggle to let go of my mother trip; but that woman in the laundromat who is not reached by these hip alternatives, deserves space from her children as much as I.

So when we use this privilege of personal politics, we must constantly remind ourselves that making a revolution in the world, so that everyone can have the kinds of choices we are making, is part and parcel of the process of changing the ways we are living right now. And we won't be making this revolution alone. The connections we are making by de-alienating ourselves, by becoming more co-operative beings, by unlocking the sexuality that will give us back our power as women, by howling at the moon as witches, by working collectively, by loving each other's lovers, by loving each other's children, by learning who we really are under all those roles we were taught to play - these are the connections that bind us together as a revolutionary force, building a new alternative where bread and roses will abound. ♀

Some Blooming

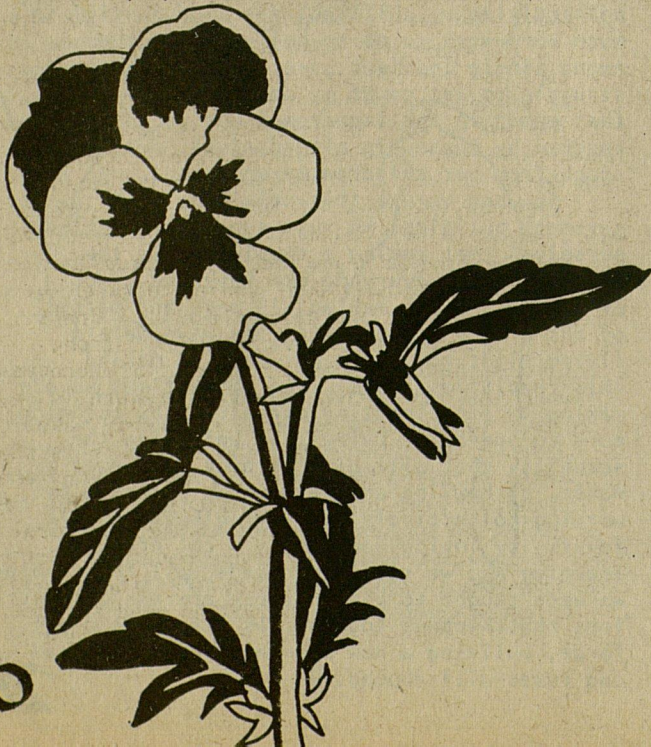
I think that some women's underlying assumption is that there is not enough politics in the country, that country women have nothing to do with politics, that they are too busy tinkering in their gardens and messing around with their animals to be seriously involved in politics. There is also the assumption that country women's privilege has allowed them to escape the dreariness and difficulties of the real world. Some of this warped, city chauvinistic thinking has to a certain degree been internalized by women who live in the country. The feelings of inadequate political analysis and feelings of guilt for not suffering in the cities are all internalizations springing from city and class chauvinism. City/man is more important, analytical, and active than country/woman. Women everywhere have internalized an aspect of this short-sighted thinking. We are always resisting, but still swallowing, some sort of "holier than thou" myth being shoved down our throats. It seems to me to be privilege to spend so much time arguing political philosophy...Separatism, Lesbianism, Marxism, Maoism, Anarchism, Vegetarianism, Spiritualism, Collectivism, etc, etc. I am not against discussion. I am, however, against using it as a measure for discerning the political nature of a community. Those of us in the middle classes have been trained to judge people by what they say and accept them for what they do, rather than accept them for what they say and judge them for what they do.

Some women in the country (perhaps recent immigrants from the cities) and some women from the cities have a tendency to analyze the situations in the country through their city, class and movement constructed lenses. This process is not unique, women do it to each other in the

city all the time. It is called chauvinism, internalizing the oppressor's methods, classism, ethnocentrism, racism, hetero- and homosexuality, fear and just plain not listening. It is trying to validate ourselves with verbal arguments rather than with constructive working. It is trying to validate ourselves at the expense of others with the false notion that one builds oneself up by tearing another down. It is the syndrome that my politics are more complete than yours, therefore I am more complete, therefore I am a strong person. I am no longer the piece of shit I used to be because now you are. It seems an un-ending, destructive process. It oppresses me that we are perpetuating the exact dynamic that the oppressors perpetuate to maintain their power -- competition encouraging self-validation through promoting the self-hatred of others, which leads to divisiveness, then, powerlessness and control. Make people feel like shit and then they will act like it.

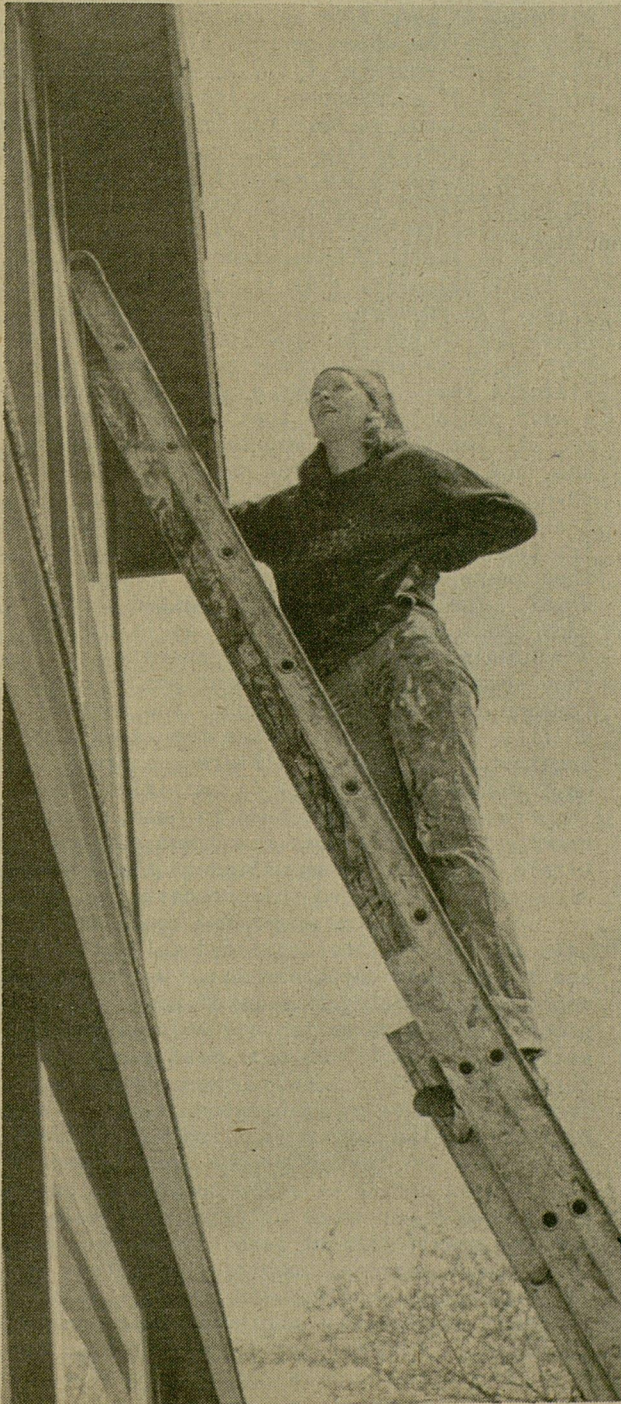
I believe women must undergo extreme self-analysis, to rid themselves of all vestiges of their internalized oppression. Revolution is a process, often reflected in nature. When a powerful event affects the environment such as a forest fire or earthquake, natural objects must change or die. Nature is constantly being challenged and perpetually adjusting and changing. It is part of the overall process of evolution. Human beings are similarly affected by the challenge of our overwhelming, patriarchal/capitalist system. We have two choices -- change it or die. We must accept the challenge and overthrow it or become extinct. We must internalize revolution, allow our bodies so long enslaved to conquer our minds, which will allow the expression of our hearts and souls and the release of our spirits. Then, each of us will have the healthy and clear framework to develop individual power/sense of self and eventually group power/sense of community.

I believe that women in the country are at the beginnings of this process of revolutionary self-awareness/political analysis. Country women are beginning to understand their power. When people recognize their power they seize it. When the power is seized, the question of whether there was the right political analysis will be a moot one. The right theory will be the one that works. Theory can be convenient to explain why oppressed people are going to seize their power, but it will not make them do it -- the conditions make people seize power. Theory explains to some people what is going on while other people are doing the goings-on. Theoretical analysis is extremely important to many people. It can have profound effects and for some is an indispensable stage in the development of self-actualization. Invariably though, it becomes for many the end rather than the means; it is used as the framework itself rather than the means of constructing framework and becomes rhetoric used for the purpose of stimulating more rhetoric. What is



Thoughts on Politics

necessary is to show women that they have power to turn women on to their strengths. Some women's consciousness is raised more from learning how to use a chain saw, from building a house, milking a goat, tilling the soil, than from the continuous reading and discussing of political philosophy. Some of us need that kind of studying, but it is not necessary to insist that we all inundate ourselves with rhetorical theory. Many women understand theories naturally through



their experiences. Those of us trying to understand intellectually should study, but we should also and just as importantly, learn how to run a chain saw.

In the meantime there is a wealth of information in all our communities. We should begin talking to each other about each other. Let's start learning about class differences and what that means by finding out what classes we all come from. Let's talk about racial and sexual differences among us. Let's come out of the closets with our varied backgrounds and educate each other. I am a lesbian who wants to talk with older lesbians about what it meant to them to have to hide for so long. I want to know about the effects of that sort of oppression. I am a middle class woman who wants to know about the effect this society has on working class women and third world women. In short, let us start to listen to each other. We might start by assuming now the differences between each other, let's begin to allow for these differences. Let's be vulnerable to each other so we can then begin trusting each other. Let's start trusting so we will be vulnerable, so that we can learn, change, grow, and take hold of the power which is ours. Let us not be so intimidated or intimidating...so fearful of a clenched fist or raised voice. We should listen to where that anger comes from, hear where the tears and the laughter come from. Those of us who express ourselves so vehemently might tone down to prevent misunderstanding.

If we really open ourselves to each other we will then begin to re-structure our warped lens systems, re-perceive our environment more clearly, thereby affecting it positively. We all basically believe in, and are struggling for, the same goal. Why not assume that we have different methods of defining that goal and that we will all reach it? We need not all do it the same way, behave the same way, talk the same way, march the same way. We must all carefully define ourselves, but we need not so carefully define others that we force each other through the same molds...we have different methods because we are different people. We will not have strong people or communities until we accept this. We must have strong self-defined/self-actualized individuals with individual senses of power before we can have strong communities. I don't believe a woman can become completely strong without the support of other women. The process of individual strength and group strength is one of mutual support and reflection -- they make each other grow. The sign of that growth is the sign of true political struggle, the sign of the beginnings of revolutionary awakening. This kind of growth has taken place in various rural women's communities all over the country. Action came from the flow of necessity. A flower knows how and when to bloom; without the need for self-conscious intellectualizing; a tree will bear fruit.

women's land

We sit together in a circle, hold hands, a moment of silence, and then the meeting begins. We go around the circle. Everyone says her name, why she's here, and what the Land Trust means to her. Fifty women, some are strangers to me, some are close sisters, met this weekend to talk about and create free land for women only, a corporation to attract donations, and a family. What are we doing here? I've traveled 500 miles from Albion to this cozy home twenty miles from Eugene, Oregon to visit a lover and to find my home.

Spes tells the herstory of the Oregon Women's Land Trust; conceived at a three day conference on money and power, expanded and evolved at meetings at the Women's Spirituality Festival, Country Women's Festival and WomenSpace. The Land Trust is relatively new, the idea being that we will form a corporation, maybe tax-exempt, solicit donations from individuals and foundations, and buy land. Some land would be open to all the women who came to it, including women who couldn't afford to buy land. Guthrie talks about the legal trips, tells what is necessary in order to incorporate, and presents the articles of incorporation which have been written up and need to be accepted. We break for lunch, and although I have not brought any food, there is plenty to go around. Fifty women eat and the kitchen stays clean, and together, spirits loving and high.

We count off and divide into five groups to try to answer the questions of the morning meeting and to evolve the structure of the Land Trust. My group talks about "articles of incorporation" and "by-laws". Where will the money come from? What is the structure of the Land Trust corporation? Who is the "board of directors"? Who are the "voting members"? We argue about how to protect ourselves from strangers and how to keep the board of directors from getting too powerful. Suddenly we explode with the understanding that we don't want any voting members -- we decide by consensus, remember? We can depend on our vision, our power and our trust of other women to keep the Land Trust going in the tradition in which it was conceived. No board of directors for us, but collectives, some of which may be disbanded as soon as their particular job is done. Although we were divided before, as soon as these ideas enter the discussion, everyone relaxes; they're right for all of us. To end the discussion, we pass a rattle around the circle from right to left, hand to hand, only the holder empowered to speak. We each say how we feel and everyone listens. We've spent the afternoon breaking out of the forms that the government imposed

on us, and finding our own.

General meeting: two other groups besides ours have talked about collectives and one evolved the structure more specifically -- a collective to find land, a collective to keep the books and answer mail, a collective to raise money, a legal collective, a collective to reach out to women in the cities, and a co-ordinating collective made up of one or two members from each of the other collectives, as well as a few outside members which will put out a newsletter.

After all the small groups have reported, we pass the rattle again. Ah, the passing of the rattle! This is a form designed to equalize; it insures each person time to develop her thoughts and space to speak them in. Although it came from an Indian peyote ceremony where the women weren't allowed to sing, it has been embraced fully by us women-loving-women, as if we'd known it for generations. Rattle in hand, we have the freedom to not be competed with, loving that space for ourselves, and cherishing it for each other. Sometimes it is difficult to sit and wait one's turn, but wanting to hear others as well as to be heard, we learn to understand that reception as truly valuable, that it is sacred to our lives. We noisier, more vociferous types bless the rattle for teaching us to hear our more quiet sisters; in our own silence each sister's reality becomes a part of our own. I wait patiently until that rattle comes to me, all but the most important ideas forgotten, and then I sing from my heart. I discover that the rattle itself empowers, so that if I listen to the rattle as I shake it, let the energy flow through me as I speak, then there is more power coming through than usual. The rattle which has passed through many hands has gathered power as it circled. The people speak their differences -- they seem irreconcilable sometimes -- until someone sees the way through. The reality shifts. People begin to see the ideas woven together. The fear of differences drains away; the positive energy is amplified, passing from hand to hand, head to head, heart to heart. The rattle goes round and somehow the circle is joined; I am united to those women with whom I've shared this process.

At this meeting women say again and again yes to the interconnected collectives and to agreement by consensus. We realize we don't want to delegate a lot of power to small groups, even ones as loosely knit as these collectives. We'll have to meet again in three months, even though women have come from as far away as Washington, L.A. and even Missouri. Also, women envision many different parcels of land under the Oregon Women's Land Trust, not necessarily in Oregon, but all linked together as a tribe. We begin to see the possibility of large amounts of women's land, women learning country skills from one another, experimenting with new ways to live together, to love one another, and to raise children in a nurturing, non-competitive society where the land is sacred, and it's eco-

logy has priority. It will be a place where we cherish each other and the universe.

I sense that what we've done today is the beginning of the new form, of how we live together on land: sensitivity to the use of power, commitment to the process, and care that we move in a way that fits our values.

Tired as we are, we party. Our energies meshing to drumbeat and dancing bodies is as important as all the talk and all the listening. How does this bond form anyway? Not just by words but by shared celebration as well. We've begun an energy process today, a powerful one, and now we let that energy flow through us, building, not stopping it, making it grow.

The next morning the circle meets again: again we pass the rattle. Ah, this is a hard meeting, thank the Goddess for the rattle! The meaning of what we decided the night before has sunk in: What! No laws forbidding men? What if heterosexual women want to live with men, and then they move away and the men stay? What about boy children? Pain goes through me! I was heterosexual last year and now I'm gay. I want this land to be a place where women can go through their changes in safety and care, surrounded by love, support and tolerance. I don't want to exclude women; I didn't want to live with men last year, but I also couldn't commit myself to a place that forbade them. The commune that I live with has, as one of its members, a nine-year old boy, and I feel responsible to provide him a nourishing environment. What we set up today may survive for many years into the future. Who can know what the shape of things with regard to women and men will be in fifteen or twenty years? But two sisters who have worked long and hard on the Land Trust, and other women too, know that they don't want any of their energy to benefit any men. Pain and confusion, fear and alienation go through us.

Many women say that we need to be open to women different from ourselves, women more open to men than we are; there will be many pieces of land held under the Land Trust and ultimately each group of women will work out how they want their community to be. We all agree, however, that under no circumstances would men be in a position of leasing land or of holding any power in the Land Trust.

I feel very tense -- it is the hardest meeting. The issue of men has divided us again! After such struggle, we each massage the woman to our left, so that we all sit in a circle massaging each other. We have a moment of silence, then we ratify the very non-committal articles of incorporation; then we cheer.

I watch Guthrie chair this meeting, her gentle persistence and responsibility. She and several other women here have worked hard energizing this vision of a Land Trust, getting the legal information and formulating the articles of incorporation. Yet, she does not speak more or louder than anyone else, does not map out how she wants things to go. If anything, she speaks more quietly. Al-

though she is a stranger to me, suddenly I love her.

After lunch I wander upstairs, and there are the women that I'm closest to. We all feel blown out. I suggest doing "mind control" to fantasize this land that the Land Trust is going to give birth to. Everyone's very ready; we start with a few women. Mye-ba says a chakra-cleansing meditation and by the time I've talked people into "alpha" -- a state of meditation, the room has filled with women. I feel my anxiety falling away as I become centered and in touch with that core of my being. When I instruct everyone to imagine ourselves in the future and to visualize the lands that we will have, my vision comes clear and strong: I was coming home after being away on a journey. It was fall; the colors and the light were all golden. I was walking very light on the earth. I knew the paths well; perhaps I wore moccasins. First the land was flat and I was passing trees -- orchards, large orchards of walnut and apple trees, then a large vineyard and it was our land. Then the path began to climb, and I was climbing and winding around a mountain and looking out over a fertile valley, also ours. I came to a niche in the mountain, a round grotto, where my family met for celebrations. As I passed it, it was suddenly nighttime, and I could see the moon rising over the valley as I'd watched it many times during our full moon ceremonies, and then it was daytime again and I rounded the curve and looked down on a forest, with a large clearing at the base of the mountain, and in the clearing a house -- circular, with a sloping circus tent roof covered with shakes, and a fire in the center, with a loft somewhere along the edges. I knew all this, though I was only seeing it from the outside. This was my family's mainhouse. Then, I had a panoramic view of the mountain, and I could see that there were other women's communities on other sides of it -- a tipi village in a meadow half-way up the mountain, and on another side, a stone house as the center house woman-built. In another place, a school, a plastic dome, with an incredible dance floor, for meditation and Tai Chi and other martial arts and dancing, and when I looked at this dome from above and afar, it shone like a crystal from the energy that had been generated in it at various times. In the same clearing I saw a pottery dome, and two other work domes. Leading out from the base of the mountain, there was a pasture land with sheep and other animals grazing. On the top of the mountain, a huge circular depression where we all met for high celebration. There was also a pole with our flag flying from the top.

This vision came to me full-blown, and full of energy. I felt it strong! I know that somewhere along the pathways of time and realities it exists. Other women had similarly strong visions, many like mine, though in different settings; four women saw the exact same circular house that I saw. I saw our women's land, and I

Cont.

know it exists. And because of it, I feel differently. I have a home, a real home. And so do you, all my sisters. That place is there for you too!

Now it's night, and we return to our meeting. Some of the collectives are formed. I am tired and uptight, and I want to leave, but I can't. The energy of the process holds me; we are still in the middle. We are in the birth canal, but we aren't at the end yet. The end is celebration—it has to be.

While we had our visions another group met and defined the first piece of land that the Land Trust will buy: 80 acres or more that will be solely for women, and specifically for women's celebrations, to be open to as many women as would be ecologically sound, hopefully to all the women that want to be there, but if not, to be worked out amongst the women involved, with no priority given to those who have been there the longest. These women will live there collectively. The women living there would understand that the primary purpose of this land is for women's celebrations and women's rituals, and that those who reside there are trustees for the upkeep and care of that land.

We ask for money pledges. Half the women have gone home but twenty-five remaining women pledge \$4000. \$5000 has previously been pledged from someone when we get our tax-exempt status. If anyone has money to contribute to this ven-

ture, let her send it to: 1821 Jefferson St. Eugene, Oregon 97402.

We close the Land Trust meeting as we began—we sit in a circle and pass the rattle. The energy is peaking. Again we talk visions. This time we build the vision in the center of the circle, each person saying what she can see as she looks into the future. Fran says she can see herself at 65 and gray-haired, sitting in a circle, looking at the faces in the circle, and some of the faces then are the same as some of the faces here in this circle. Estar says she sees a garden, and the garden is a cemetery, and look! that row of corn over there is her! The rattle completes the circle, the vision is built, we sit in silence in the midst of birth. Another vision comes to me in searing intensity: a matriarchal cross, sort of pulsing, faces in the center, I think a woman, a child and a small man, the energy of the cross vibrating intensely, changing to many people along the arms of the cross, a sense of many generations, people through the ages, a vision of the Matriarchy. At the same time, a new song comes through my sister Venus: "We are finding our magic; we are finding our power; we are finding our love."

And so the meeting is ended, and we drum and dance, and in the morning we drum and dance some more. We have created new forms, we have envisioned creating newer ones, we have made the space to evolve forms that we can't even imagine yet. ♀

A land trust is a way of removing land from the system of private ownership and restoring the vision of land as resource to be held in trust for people present and future. The land is held in perpetuity - never to be sold. The trust leases the land to the users on a long-term basis at an amount that they are able to afford. Absentee control and sub-leasing are specifically not allowed. The residents have secured rights to the land and are free to control and build their own community through cooperative groups or individual homesteads. There is a distinction between the land and its natural resources and the human "improvements" on it. Only the land is held in trust; homes and other buildings or industrial enterprises created by the residents are owned by them, either cooperatively or individually. The land trust can hold as many pieces of land as it wishes. Land is acquired by raising money through fund raising events, obtaining monies from foundations or receiving land and money from individual contributors.

To help you visualize how the Oregon Land Trust could operate, and relate to the needs of various women, here are some hypothetical situations in which women may find themselves. The comments are intended as relevant ideas, not dogma.

1. The Land Trust could raise money to purchase land and make it available to women who otherwise couldn't afford it.

2. The Land Trust could raise money to purchase a house or houses in the cities near other Land trust holdings, so that when members of the

Land Trust came to town they would have a place to stay and a place to contact city women interested in the Land Trust.

3. A group of women already own land and are using it fully; they could donate their land to the Trust in exchange for a long-term lease specifying their continuing rights on the land. They would be assured that their land would always be used for women, and they would be able to share their skills and products through a women's land network.

4. A group of friends want to purchase land and live together on it. By working with the Land Trust, they could homestead part of a large parcel of women's land, thus ensuring friendly neighbors, preventing speculation of surrounding land, and getting a cheaper price per acre.

5. A woman without money wants to create a women's sculpture park. Another wants to run crafts workshops. They could be matched with already existing pieces of land which have unused areas.

6. Several women, some of whom don't know each other want to start a women's healing center. The Land Trust group that receives "Use Proposals" could get them in touch with each other and use the idea to interest women with money who are looking for a worthwhile project.

7. A woman working in the city could join the Land Trust to connect with other women who share her interests, try out living on the land at workshops and festivals, camping and visiting.



COMMON VICTORIES

The women joined the Circle
gliding across perfumed parisian carpets
walked to the calm measure
of rice-pounding rhythms.

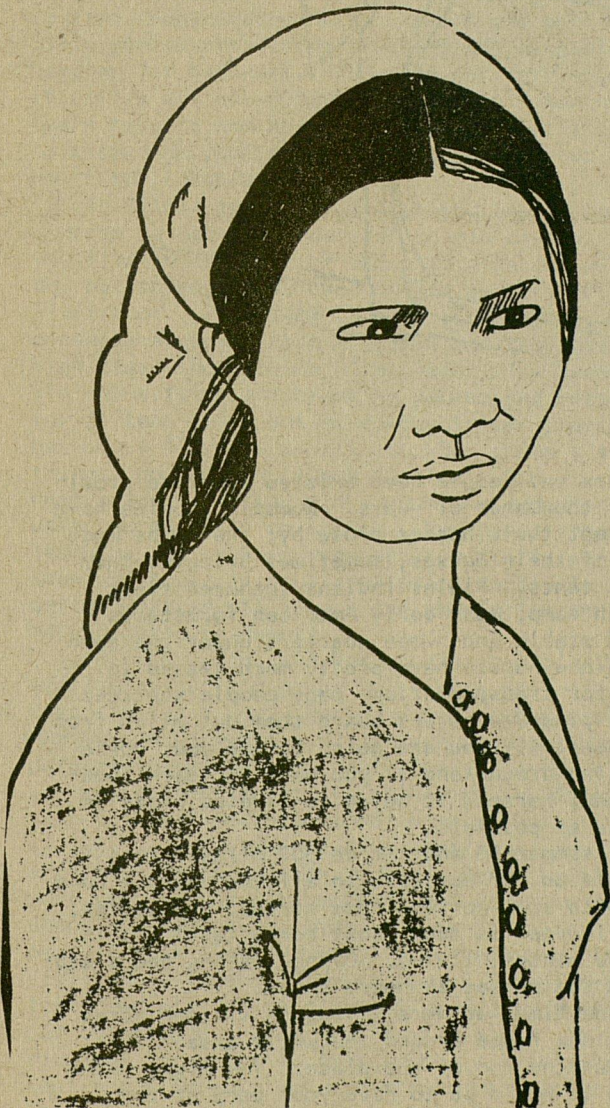
Thi Binh came victorious
her flesh torn and blistered
singed hair skin coarsened
from prison lye, barelegged work in the deltas.
She covered her mudcaked body
with crimson ao dai
dipped in
the blood of women
warriors
sacred red.

They saw red.
Her enemies
described their own fear:
"a fishwife." Shrill
cries of her countrywomen
rise from the ancient soil
I shall not resign myself to the usual lot of women.

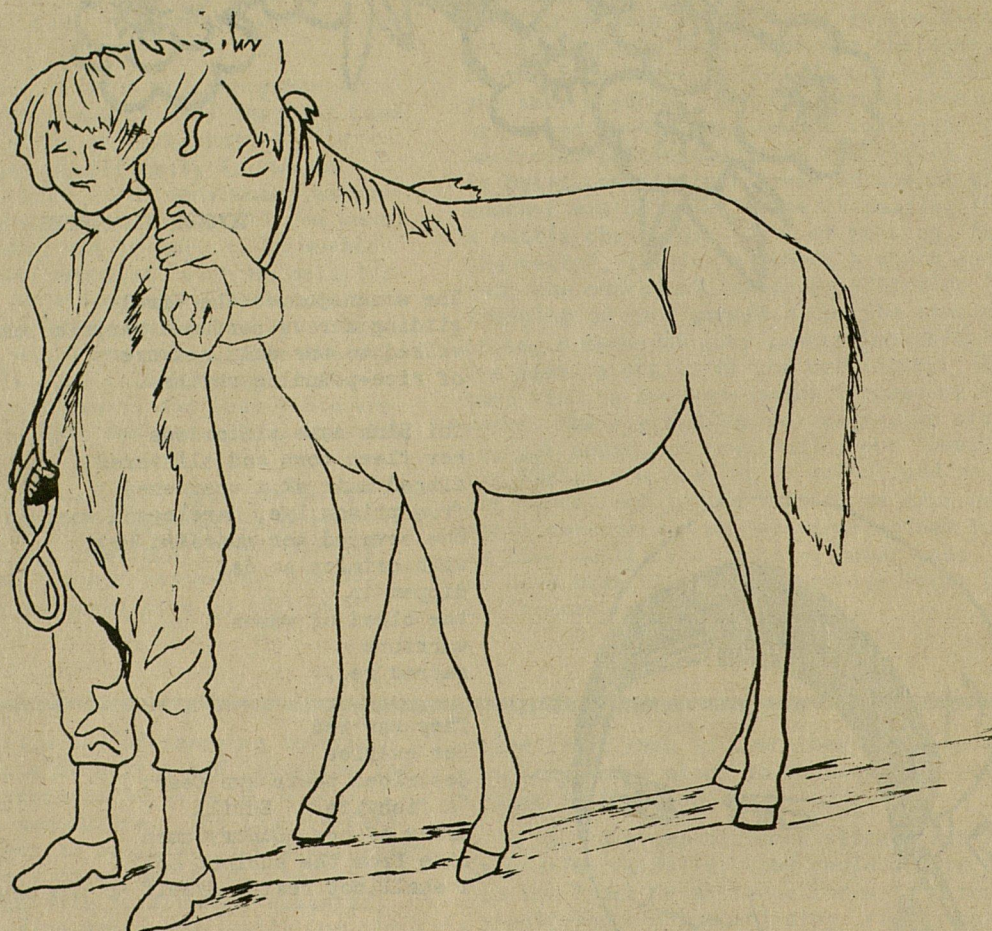
The cochin women
sat in high circles
crouched in caves
hidden in mangrove forests,
taking careful aim.
Her graceful hands
with nails ripped out
held the pen;
she made a sign.
The moon turned scarlet.

Now the children can be born.

(Mme. Binh was the chief negotiator for the Vietnamese National Liberation Front at the Paris Peace Talks.)



TAKING CARE OF A HORSE



Hardly anybody uses horses for transportation anymore. Even the gypsies have moved into mobile homes. The Amish people live half a continent away. When I mention the possibility of getting around on horseback, some folks think its reactionary (ha, ha, you shoulda' lived back in the horse and buggy days). Some think it's revolutionary (far out, when the world runs out of petroleum we'll start riding horses again).

It seems to me there's no time like the present. Cars are still a necessity for some things but I am sort of sick of them and the whole trip that goes along with them, rip-offs for gas and oil, rip-offs for repairs, rip-offs for insurance, registration, etc., etc.

If you have a little grassy spot you can keep a horse for much cheaper than a car. Even if you have to do it the expensive way and stable and feed the horse bought hay and grain, it still costs no more than \$1.50 a day. Why not save your car for long trips, things you can't easily do with a horse and try using the horse for visits, going to town for a few groceries, camping trips to the mountains? Stretch yer imagination some, it's fun.

Horses and people have existed in close proximity for thousands of years. Nomadic peoples have always kept their horses close by; the Arabs made friends of their horses, sometimes bringing them into the tents. Plains Indians tethered their ponies in camp; many early American farmsteads combined stable and human quarters under the same roof. Since horses have pretty much ceased to be used for transportation, many people who keep show and pleasure horses board them out miles from their homes. If you are going to use your horse for getting around and if you want to learn something about horses, it helps to live as close to the horse as possible.

Last summer Bo and I rode 500 miles across California on our horses. In all the years I have worked with show horses, race horses, and ponies, I never learned as much about horses as I did in those two months, living, moving, eating and sleeping with the horses 24 hours a day.

At one time, we were living on sixteen acres that had one fence around the whole area. The horses had the run of the place. You might think how cute it would be to have your pony at the back door all the time so you could give her/him

tidbits and go for a ride anytime. Well, it is nice in some ways but can also be a pain in the ass. With little kids around it can be a hazard because the horse can kick and step on them. Our horses quickly learned where the goodies were. The "kitchen" was outside due to the small size of the shack and the horses were continually stomping, crashing and nosing through the stuff, breaking dishes, knocking things over and eating whatever they could find. On the positive side, it was nice because horses are good company. One friend has a beautiful big draft mare who sometimes came up to the shack in the middle of the night and scratched her 1500 pounds on the corner of the house. First time it happened, I thought it was an earthquake.

The day before my daughter Clara June was born (she's six months now), my mustang pony Angie split from the herd and spent most of the afternoon next to the hammock where I was sitting. It was as though she knew I was in labor. When Clara finally came at 3:00 a.m., Angie was standing right outside the window.

When living close to horses, though, it is nice to have a little yard or someplace where they can't get in. It's good to have some privacy from these equine rats. Horses and particularly ponies can become trashers and hang around begging for handouts. They can get very angry if treats are not forthcoming. That's how horses learn to bite and become aggressive. It's good to encourage your horse to be sociable, but don't spoil her/him.

The first thing to do when you buy or borrow a horse is make friends with an old cowboy. If you live in the east or midwest, a farmer will do, but cowboys have used horses as part of their livelihood. They tend to have a practical, no-nonsense approach that breeders and trainers of high class show horses often lack. I've been riding, driving and breaking ponies and horses for fifteen years, but my cowboy friend Charlie has about 40 years on me. So when there's something I don't know, I ask Charlie. But you need also to be aware of people who set themselves up as authorities on horses. You never stop learning and anybody who gets too stuffy about knowing it all is usually a prime candidate for getting bucked off into a mud puddle (horses have a sense of humor).

SHELTER: The USDA has good stable plans available, but I'm going to suppose most of us have limited money. Horses don't need fancy accommodations anyway; your average easy-going all purpose horse can live very simply. A horse will get along fine generally (unless she/he is an elegant thin-skinned blueblood) with a shed or lean-to just to break the wind in winter and provide shelter from the sun in summer. Range horses do well year-around with nothing but trees to stand under and ravines to hide in from the wind. However, a fine show horse that has been kept in a stall, conditioned, blanketed, and fed high-protein feed will go to pieces if suddenly turned out to pasture in the middle of winter. So when you look for a horse, look at the way it's being kept and figure if you can afford to support the horse in the style to which she/he's accustomed.

If you already have an old shed or barn, check it over carefully for any hazards like sharp protruding objects, rotten boards, loose boards with nails in them, etc. The ceiling should be eight feet or so, high enough so your horse won't crack her/his head if she/he throws it up suddenly. All places where horses hang out should be kept free of objects that horses can get hurt on, like old wire, scraps of metal or wood, tools, beer cans and pop tops, bottles, tin cans, boards with nails in them. A nail puncture in the bottom of a hoof can go unnoticed and is a great breeding ground for tetanus.

The best flooring is plain dirt, or if you are going to do it up real fine, clay with gravel under it for drainage. Some old barns have cement floors which are bad because they are hard and cold. If you have to confine a horse in a stall with a cement floor, provide lots of bedding, about eight to ten inches of straw or what-have-you. On wood or dirt floors, six inches of bedding is plenty.

FEEDING: The best natural feed for a horse is pasture. You deviate from this when you don't have enough land for adequate pasture, when you live where the winters are too harsh for year-round grazing, when you want to confine your horse where you can catch and ride her/him easily, or when you work the horse so much that she/he needs concentrated feed.

You can roughly figure a horse will eat about two acres of grass per year, but that's flat country with good grass. On marginal land that is rocky, hilly, wooded or full of brush, swampy or overgrazed, you have to allow for a lot more.

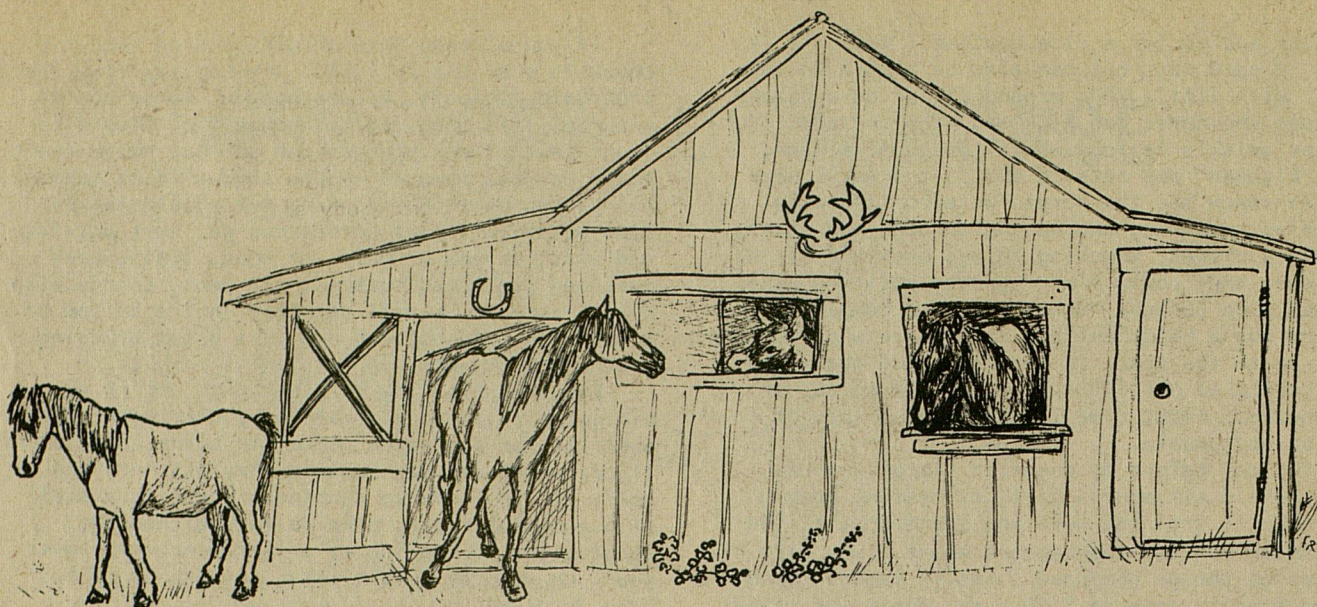
It's best to have your pasture divided into two sections that will allow you to graze one section one year and let the other section rest. This also breaks the worm cycle. Even if you don't have enough grass to rotate yearly, you can change off sections every few months. For a really good pasture, seed and let the land go ungrazed until the second year.

A horse that's been fed hay all winter should be introduced gradually to lush spring pasture. Let her/him graze for half an hour the first day and increase grazing time by one half hour each day. Keep an eye on the shit to make sure it's not getting real runny. As grass matures, it loses its laxative properties.

When you keep your horse in a small corral and feed hay, keep the place clean of manure, so as to not contaminate her/him with greater worm infestation. Hay mangers are nice but not necessary. It is good though to have a large, very sturdy wooden box to feed hay in. Hay thrown right on the ground gets trampled and contaminated with shit and worm eggs. If you have a lot of animals to feed you may have to put the hay on the ground, giving each horse a separate pile with plenty of elbow room, to prevent fighting. Horses have lots of pecking order trips, so if you have a weak or thin horse that needs extra feed, you'd better take her/him out of the pasture to where she/he can eat alone. Otherwise, the others might run the horse off her/his feed.

Store all feed in tight containers like 55 gallon drums or metal garbage cans with tight

Cont.



covers. Tight to keep out moisture, vermin, and horses. Preferably keep these containers where horses can't get at them. Horses, like people, are dumb enough to eat themselves to death. A horse has no vomiting muscles so a little upset tummy can be fatal. Last spring we went on an overnight ride and left the pony home. The grain was stashed in the back of a panel truck. When we got home we discovered the pony had opened the back door, climbed in the truck and eaten about twenty pounds of grain. The nearest horse vet was about fifty miles away so we just kept an eye on her and hoped she would be o.k. She never showed any sign of a tummyache, so overeating isn't always fatal but there are lots of dead horses on account of it. So, if your horse overeats on grain, get a vet quick if you can.

Drinking water should always be fresh and clean. A pond can be o.k. if it's spring-fed. But a horse shouldn't have to drink funky, stagnant water. An old bath tub makes a fine water trough for horses if there isn't a good stream running through the pasture. If you have a number of horses, put the trough in a place of easy access. A couple of horses at our place got hurt because the landlord put the trough in a small pen next to the pasture. The timid horses would go into the pen to drink and the bullies would trap them in the corner. After a few horses got trashed, he moved the trough to an open area and now nobody gets hurt.

If you don't have a stream or some naturally wet place you should let the trough overflow enough to keep the ground around it wet. This is important in dry weather to keep the horse's feet from getting hard and brittle. Conversely, if you live where there's a rainy season, the horse needs a place to stand out of the mud or her/his feet will develop thrush (hoof rot) from too much moisture. A grassy or rocky hill or a dry shed will serve this purpose.

FENCING AND TETHERING: The best kind of fence is chainlink, board, or post and rail. Chainlink is prohibitively expensive for most of us and so is wood unless you're clearing a wooded area.

Woven wire field fencing is o.k. but horses sometimes get their feet stuck in it. Electric fence is great if you have a nice flat area with not too much brush. Not too many people use it in my area because the land is too rough. Barbed wire isn't very safe for horses. They get hurt in it. But it is a commonly used type of fencing. You can use two strands of wire for horses, but you need three to keep ponies in.

The tighter a fence is stretched the less likely a horse is to get hurt in it. Check the posts and replace rotten ones. If your fence is funky, expect occasional escapes. Ponies especially are talented at getting through fences and opening gates. They can go through holes that even you can't squeeze through. (I stopped writing at this point last night and went to bed. At 5:00 this morning our neighbor walked over the hill to tell us our horses were safe in her corral. They stopped by her house on the way to town...it's sure nice to have helpful neighbors!)

Inspect your fence often. If you have an electric fence, you have to maintain it, cutting brush or anything that might ground it. With barbed wire, make sure there's no loose wire on the ground where horses can get tangled in it. On metal or western gates a chain that goes around the post will keep most horses in. A horse can use her/his prehensile lips or rub with her/his head to open a latch or bar. With a wire gate, make sure the wire loops at the top and bottom are tight enough or a horse can get her/his nose under them and work them off.

How close you keep your horse will have a lot to do with how much you use her/him. A large pasture is good for breeding or young stock, but a horse you plan to ride every day should be kept conveniently close. We have our horses on a 200 acre pasture now and they come up to water about twice a day but otherwise they can be pretty hard to locate.

If you ride a lot and have a small pen and some hay, you can catch the horse and feed her/him on the days you want to ride and then turn

her/him out to pasture the other days.

Another way of keeping a horse close is by tethering. This works if you have a horse that is rope-wise but even then it's a good idea to have somebody around all the time just in case the horse gets badly tangled in the rope. Cotton rope is best for this because it won't make bad rope burns like manila or nylon rope will. You can turn the horse into a corral with the rope dragging until she/he learns to keep her/his feet free. Then tie the rope to something strong like a tree or fence post and keep an eye on the horse. Some horses are too nervous or just too dumb to ever learn how to keep out of the rope. Others catch on right away. Tying the rope above shoulder level when possible will help prevent tangles. Threading the rope through old garden hose will also make it stiffer and less easy to tangle. If you tether your horse, you can move her/him so she/he gets plenty to eat. I know some people with a large unfenced field. They tie their horse to the tractor. Every couple of days they move the tractor to a fresh patch of grass and tie the horse up.

Last summer on our ride, we carried 30-foot tether ropes with us and camped right next to the horses. A couple of times the horses spooked and took off, breaking their ropes, but mostly it worked o.k. By the end of the ride, the horses were really tether-broke.

Some people use hobbles to turn a horse out where there's no fence. The one time I used them the horse took off at a gallop with the hobbles on her front feet, so I can't speak with any authority.

Our friend Jim turned his mare loose in a brushy pasture and couldn't find her for three days. She was hung up in the brush by her unbreakable nylon halter. Luckily she was o.k. At a pack station where we worked last summer, one of the horses put his hoof through the nose part of one of those nylon rope halters and broke his neck. Don't use those rope halters. If you have to turn a horse out to pasture with a halter on, use a leather one. It will break if the horse gets it caught on something.

There's a few basic things about horses to remember. One is how big they are. A thirteen hand pony will weigh six or seven times as much as you. They're also excitable. Their main defense is the ability to run from danger. Hence if a horse loses her/his footing or becomes caught in wire, her/his defense is threatened and she/he may become hysterical. A horse tangled in barbed wire can struggle until she/he bleeds to death. A frightened horse may run blindly from real or imagined danger and get hurt much worse than if she/he had the sense to stay put.

One evening when we were looking for a field to crash in, my horse Jesse caught her foot between two strands of down wire that was hidden in the grass. If I hadn't been carrying wire cutters, her leg would have been badly cut up.

Carry wirecutters all the time when working around horses. If you have to run and find your wirecutters, it might be too late.

At a stable where I worked a mare put her foot through the chain on a gate and fell over taking a whole section of fence down with her. She was thrashing so hard I couldn't get her out of the mess. (I was only thirteen.) So I sat on her neck until help came. A horse that's down can be immobilized by somebody sitting on her/his neck close to the head.

Now that you've read all this it may seem like horses are pretty stupid hysterical creatures and all they do is break out of their pastures, overeat on grain, and get tangled in barbed wire. If you're feeling like taking care of a horse is an awesome responsibility, you should know that I'm telling you about these heavy situations so they can be avoided or at least minimized. In truth, a horse is easy to care for. If you have the horse on good pasture with a source of fresh water, you can leave her/him untended for months, just checking every once in a while to make sure everything's o.k. You will find a horse takes a lot less care than a goat, sheep, dog, rabbit or almost any other domestic animal besides maybe a beef cow. And riding a horse beats walking just about anytime. ♀



Wood Shingling

A good friend of mine who had been hired to shingle the roof and sides of a very large building once complained to me that it was something like trying to crochet your way around a barn. Although I can empathize with her point of view, I must admit that I find shingling to be very enjoyable, almost meditative type work. The tools are simple, the materials often beautiful and the results satisfying to a soul who desires some order from an otherwise chaotic universe.

Wood shingles are the oldest form of roofing that is still being used in America today. Formerly they were all split by hand, smaller units being called "shingles" and thicker, longer pieces "shakes". Shakes were more commonly applied to the sides of a building whereas shingles were used on a roof. Today the terms are often used interchangeably. A good shake roof will last from twenty years to the lifetime of the building if treated correctly. This means periodically applying Thomson's water seal, linseed oil, or even used crankcase oil, to protect them.

Compare this to a possible five year lifespan for roll roofing and a fifteen to twenty year one for asphalt or fiberglass shingles. The longevity of wood shingles accounts for their popularity.

It is still possible to make your own shakes. Many people have also acquired shingles by carefully tearing down old chicken coops and other farm buildings. This process is like crocheting in reverse. To buy new shakes is an expensive venture. In northern California, they cost about \$50.00 a square. A square will cover 100 square feet. The comparison price of both asphalt and fiberglass shingles is around \$20.00 a square. Again, the familiar problem arises of balancing aesthetic design with amount of available funds, and considerations of how long it will be before the job has to be repeated.

PREPARATION: Roof sheathing (what goes beneath the shingles) can be 1" x 4" square edge boards (spaced the same distance apart on center as the amount of shingle exposed to the weather), solid boards, or plywood. The minimum pitch for a shake roof is a rise of 4" for every 12". Side walls should be sheathed with solid boards or plywood and then covered with twenty pound felt paper. Make sure you start the paper at the bottom of the building, overlapping each successive row by at least six inches.

LAYING THE ROOF: The starting row is always laid double and should project beyond the lowest roof board by at least 1 1/2" to form a drip that will cause rain water to fall clear of the roof.

Along the rake or sloping edge of a gable or shed roof, the end shingles should project about 3/4" for the same reason. Joints (where one shingle touches the next) in the second layer of the starting course (first row) and in each successive row after that must miss those in the preceding layer or row by at least 1 1/2"; otherwise, rain might find its way down and into the roof. In other words, joints in each row should come approximately in the middle of each shingle in the row below. This is very important and takes constant attention at first. Shingles are spaced between 1/4 and 3/8 inch apart so that they will not crack when they expand with rain.

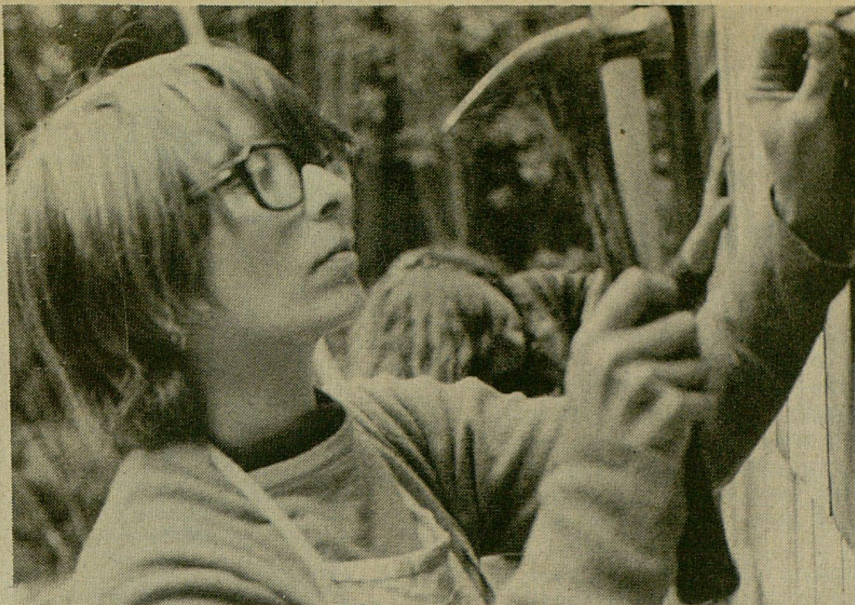
When your first row is done (twice, it's a double), it is time to move on and up. But first, a word about heights. My first day on a roof, I learned what the saying "paralyzed by fear" meant. I stepped off the ladder onto the roof and could not move. I just wanted to cry, I was so afraid, and my fear made me mistrust my step even more. So I had the people I was working with tie a very heavy rope firmly (and I stressed firmly) to the top ridge of the roof. I tied the other end around my waist. With this guide I was able to make it through the first day. The second day, I used the rope only when I was walking around on the roof, and by day four, I felt quite comfortable without it. Although I did not venture a tap dance, I did manage to look up to see the six beautiful old fir trees surrounding the house, and discover the fact that being high could be just that. I also took a certain joy in the fact that the demands of my seven and two year old children had to be directed elsewhere because mommy was on the roof. This quiet time alone, amongst the tops of trees listening to the wind and the rhythmic tapping of my hammer is one of my fondest house building memories.

Now upward. The succeeding courses are set up from the first row a distance that depends on the length of the shingle and the effect desired (see the chart). If you measure the distance from the eave to the ridge, you should be able (by finagling a bit) to divide it into a full number of rows, thereby avoiding a short row at the end. Rows are kept straight with the help of a chalk line. Measure up the desired distance, snap your line, then lay the bottom or butt end of

each shingle along this line. For greater accuracy, I usually measure from the bottom of the roof for each line I make. Instead of a chalk line, a straight board can also be tacked to the roof and shingle butts placed against it. With a two woman team this method is usually faster.

Each shingle should be nailed twice about 3/4" in from the outside edges and 1 1/2" above the butt line of the next course so that no nails are exposed. Nails should just be driven flush with the shingle. Driving too far in will cause splitting and projected heads will keep the next row from lying flat.

SIZE	EXPOSURE TO WEATHER	
	roofing	siding
shingle length		
16"	5"	7 1/2"
18"	5 1/2"	8 1/2"
24"	7 1/2"	9 1/2"
shakes		
18"	8 1/2"	9 1/2"
24"	10"	11 1/2"
32"	13"	15 1/2"



Be sure to use galvanized nails long enough to penetrate the several thicknesses of shingles and the roof.

At this point you know the few rules. Continuing your way up the roof, you might meet such nuisances as skylights, protruding pipes, chimneys, or the upper end of plumbing stacks. The general rule is to always place the lower end of the flashing over the last row of shingles and the upper end under. Since these are crucial areas I suggest you consult a carpentry book for details on correct flashing techniques for your individual problem. Most shingling hammers have a small ax on one end which allows you to split shingles to fit at those certain times when you need a 3 1/4" width and the only shingles on the roof anywhere near you are all over six inches. If you don't have a shingling hammer, any small ax will do for these vertical cuts. I found at times a small saber saw plugged in and kept on the roof for special tailor cuts around vents, etc. saved me many trips up and down the ladder.

Wood shakes are applied much the same as shingles. Because of their extra width and length they can have a greater portion exposed (see the chart). However, shakes are not smooth on both faces and because wind driven rain might enter, it is best to use an underlay of tar paper between each course. An eighteen inch wide 30 pound felt paper is made for this purpose and should be stapled down under each course with the bottom edge a bit higher than the desired shake exposure. This will prevent its being visible. Then the shakes can be laid over the paper with the butt ends extending 1/4" inch or so. A 36 inch strip of felt paper is used at the eave line.

Assuming you successfully made your way past the forementioned demons, you might be casting a wary eye towards the top ridge or hip, knowing something special must be in store. I found the easiest closure is to first nail a flexible metal flashing over the ridge, using asphalt cement or wetpatch under its edges. Then nail two long

boards called saddles over each slope of the ridge or hip. Cover the nails with wetpatch. The alternative is the fancier Boston Ridge which substitutes shingles for saddle boards. The shingles are all cut to the same width and laid with the long edge parallel to the ridge rather than at right angles to it. The shingles are overlapped the same as the rest of the roof, but nailed in place so the exposed side edge is alternated between the two slopes. If these instructions seem confusing, hunt out an already shingled roof with this style ridge and take a careful look. It is not as complicated as it sounds. These same two methods are used for the corners of side walls as well.

SIDE WALLS: There is little difference between shaking a roof and shaking a wall. But because water is less likely to work its way through, the amount of shake exposed to the weather can be increased. If sheathing is 3/8" plywood, be sure to use ring shank or threaded nails (this is also true for the roof). Begin with the twenty pound felt paper (see "Preparation"). Shingling starts with a double bottom row of shingles at the bottom of the wall. These shingles can be second grade since they are covered. As on the roof, all joints in the succeeding rows should be at least 1 1/2" from the joints in the preceding row. Spaces between shingles can vary depending upon the effect desired. Areas above doors and windows are treated like a first row and doubled. Use two nails for each shingle, each nail 3/4 inch from the edge and one inch above the bottom line of the next course. Shingles may run all the way to the corner with the exposed edge alternating from one wall to the other in each successive row. With this method, corner shingles should be backed with heavy builder's paper. Or, alternatively, boards may be run down the corners and shingles fitted snugly up against them. Don't forget to use caulking of some sort around windows and doors, insuring a dry, pleasant winter inside your well-shingled home.♀

LOOKING AT DEATH

She was my sheep. "Mine" in that I had a particular relationship to her life and death. She was a creature of the earth and she lay dying and because she was "mine" I suffered and tried to pull her through. When she lay down in her pen in the barn and could not rise despite my many days of ministrations, it was clear she would die. She lay for several days motionless, on her side, her placid large eyes gazing ahead, her breathing steady.

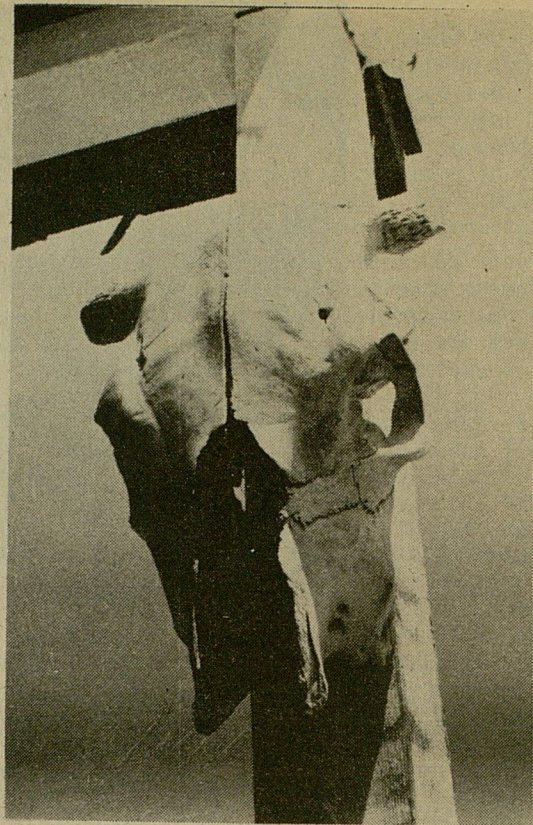
It was lambing time. I had 49 other ewes lambing. One died abruptly of complications. The remaining ewes and lambs needed the space in the barn occupied by a dead sheep and a dying sheep. Friends helped carry them to my truck. I drove them up the hill to the place where the buzzards would find them and so dispose of their flesh. I dragged them out onto the hilltop. The dying ewe looked quietly ahead with her large gentle eyes. She could not move. I did not want her death to be an agony. I thought I should kill her mercifully. I did not know how.

I looked down at her helplessly. This was the end of her life. Because she was "mine" I wanted to make it an easy passage. At least I could render her unconscious by hitting her over the head with a log. But there was none available to try it with, and I was not sure if it would work with the hard head of a sheep. I had a knife with me. I thought of cutting her throat. I realized I could not spill her blood. It was an act of violence upon her body that I was not prepared for. There was nothing in my past experience to prepare me for this moment. Everything around me seemed out of focus, I was not aware of the trees or grass. Only this one thing, this one life going out. This one body that I could not act upon, to offer the final gift of a quick death.

My own body burned with indecision, with guilt, with inadequacy. My own blood roared in my ears. It was about to rain, and I thought of her lying, dying, dully conscious, in a rainstorm. I turned and walked away; I could not look any longer. I had 48 other ewes to look after, waiting in the barn. I turned my back on the death of my sheep.

Why have I not known death before now? I must learn to look at it.

I never got to look at my dead grandmother, or my dead rabbit, or my runover cat, when I was a child. "It's all right, dear, father will take care of it. It's too bad that had to happen. Come away now, and don't look." That was the cat. The rabbit "went away" and the grandmother "passed away".



What am I doing? I am living in the country now, surrounded by many animals and many deaths. I am implicated in the deaths of animals, for I eat meat. I am raising sheep to be eaten by others. I have entered into the balance. I have made a decision: this one dies that that one may live.

When I was a child, food was what my mother put upon my plate. I took it for granted. When I grew up food was what was purchased at the store or in a restaurant. It couldn't be taken for granted. It was necessary to go to work to get the money to purchase it. But now, here in the country, food is living things turned into dead ones. The edible dead. It costs less in money. But the price is stiff. Here you kill what you eat.

I started out my life in the country wanting to take responsibility for my body's needs. I built a house, ran in water from the spring, grew a garden, raised my animals. It is not enough. It is necessary for my hand to know the gravity of killing that which sustains my life. To that extent, I must participate in death.

Don't eat meat: you are taking a higher form of life; you are poisoning your body with flesh; you are feeding your bestial nature; you are slaying one of your own kind.

Don't eat milk: you are ripping off a cow's life energy; you are depriving a calf of a natural relationship with its mother; you are shortening the life span of a cow; you are poisoning

your body with a baby's food.

Don't eat eggs: you are taking the life of an embryo.

Don't eat vegetables: you are taking the life of a plant, or the seed for the next plant. Plants scream when we harm them. Plants rejoice when we are happy and in harmony with the cosmos.

Don't eat grains, seeds, or nuts: you are taking the seed which will continue the species.

Fruit. That's what's left. A tasty package surrounding the seeds, offered gratis. Enjoy. Save the seeds and replant them.

If we revere life is it possible to eat anything besides fruit? I want to come to terms with the death, if I can, and still revere life. I decide I want to eat more than fruit. So I choose to start right up there at the top and see if I can come to terms with killing animals. I choose to start with a chicken.

Killing my first chicken occurred at a time when a group of us who shared a common chicken house decided to slaughter all the non-laying hens. A friend taught me how to go into the coop with a flashlight when the hens were perched for the night. They could be easily handled and would not move off their perches unless we lifted them down. To see if a hen was laying or not we measured the size of the rear opening through which the egg passes. I learned to hold three fingers flat together and try to insert them into the opening. If they fit into the opening, the hen was laying. If she was not laying the opening was shrunken and three fingers would not fit. (two fingers is the test with Bantams.) We put the non-layers in a cage with only water, to clean out the digestive tract. After a day, they

were ready for slaughter.

We talk about killing in a clean way, efficiently, without undue commotion. To kill this way it is necessary to have a very sharp knife, cleaver, or hatchet. It seems ironic that we are trying to be swift, to prevent pain or fear, to be as it were kind, while committing the unkindest act of all.

I used a burlap bag to put the hen inside of with a small hole in the bottom to stick her head through. I found it easy to lay her out on the board in front of me and hold her steady. I held my hand on the bag and absorbed the feeling of the living creature inside. I said, "I apologize for taking your life. I am going to incorporate your body into mine." Then I brought the cleaver down, hard and fast. Suddenly I found myself holding a bag which contained a headless chicken in paroxysms because its endocrine system had been turned loose making the muscles go wild. I held it's neck down so that it would bleed onto the ground. When the death throes stopped I placed the body in a pot of boiling water so that the feathers would loosen and come out easily. After being plucked, an inverted V cut from the top of the belly toward the legs opened the area of the guts, still warm. I could identify the stomach, the intestines, the liver and spleen. Most everything inside can be pulled out with the hand, all the way up to the heart. Another cut from the throat down to the breastbone creates a top opening for removing the windpipe and lungs. The crop is here with its apportionment of sand and grit for grinding up food. In the region of the belly were many tiny egg yolks in various sizes of development. Should there be a large egg encased in a shell, it is a sign of mistakenly having picked a laying hen.

Cont.



At night in bed, I think "What have I done? I have become a killer." In the refrigerator there is a chicken which I killed today. Had I not entered the scene, put my actions into the balance with all the rest, that chicken would still be alive. Drawing in its breath, experiencing this night. Life, that precious mystery, has been snuffed out by my hand, a hand ignorant of how to restore life.

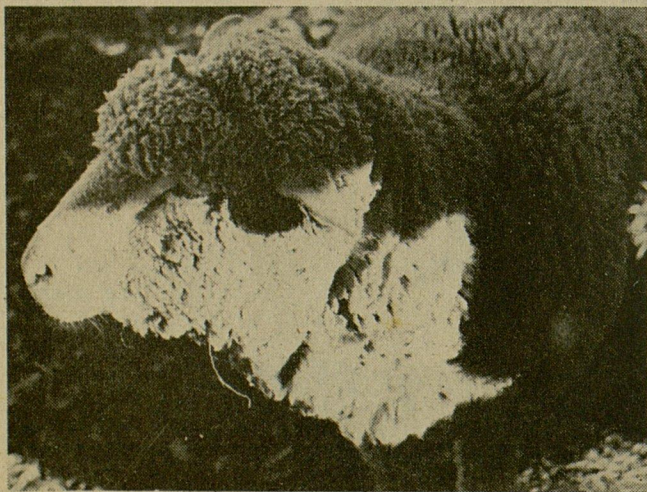
I feel I have put my life in danger by entering this game. The news will go out, and my predator will come stalking me. If I am predator, then surely I must take a turn and be prey. Although I have been trained to think otherwise, there is no mistaking the fact that I too live in a mortal body, a piece of meat.

I imagine a form of life upon our planet superior to humankind in intelligence and capability, which eats people. Imagine villages set up by these creatures to house humans. Large fences surround the village. At intervals vehicles arrive outside the fence and toss food over the fence to the inhabitants. The people run eagerly to greet the food trucks. Fat youngsters disappear regularly, as well as everyone past childbearing age...

Come back to the facts. What I killed was a chicken. Do I celebrate my own mortality or this chicken's mortality with these fears? To look into death is certainly to behold one's own mortality.

The following day I ate that chicken. It was delicious. I ate and enjoyed with the most intense awareness that this creature had the day before enjoyed life itself. I grieved that I had taken life and I enjoyed the meal at the same time.

There are many sheep upon the land where I live. They dot the hills in picturesque arrangements, white ones and black ones, because we specialize in raising black fleece sheep. In January the lambs are born and frisk and frolic together upon the green hillsides. In June those same lambs are of an age to be slaughtered. For the ones picked out to be meat lambs, life is six months long.



I pay special attention to the killing of lambs because it is my business to raise meat lambs. It is illegal for me to sell lambs which I have butchered myself. They must be butchered in a government inspected plant. Since the lambs have been raised on their mothers they have no special attachment to me nor I to them, as would exist for instance with an orphan animal that I was raising on a milk bottle. I am glad they have not come to trust me as a substitute mother, for then it would seem unpardonable to deliver them up to the butcher. I round them up from the hills where they have been grazing, select out the meat lambs, put them in my truck, and drive them to the butcher. I have a song which I sing to them, which is a sad song. It goes something like this:

Little lambs this is the end of your lives.
Today you will come to the end of your road.
This life will stop
that you may become meat
to be incorporated into another living body.
I apologize for taking your life.
It is a mystery beyond my understanding.
One day I too will become food.
And my molecules absorbed into some other
living thing.
I apologize. I apologize.

What my song lacks in poetic value it makes up in feeling. I cry as I drive my lambs to the butcher. Then I put them in a pen outside the slaughterhouse.

The butcher kills lambs by first stunning them with a heavy hammer blow on the head. In an instant they are out. He immediately passes them from the outside pen into the slaughter room through a chute, hangs them up by the heel, and cuts the jugular vein. As soon as the bleeding is finished, they are skinned. The pelt comes off entire in about two minutes, after being loosened with a knife from the legs and then punched with a fist to separate it from the tissue underneath. The lamb is gutted with a single knife slash from the crotch down the belly. The four stomachs can be observed, the intestines, liver, spleen, heart, kidneys and lungs. The inner organs are laid out where the government inspector can check them for evidence of parasites or infection. In about twenty minutes, the lamb is skinned and gutted and moved into the cooler where it is hung for ten to fourteen days at 34°F. During this time the enzymatic action will break down the tissue so that it will become more tender.

The two butchers in this plant are crafts-people. They move around quickly in their yellow rubber aprons, their hard hats and rubber boots. As they work they constantly spray water to keep everything in the room clean. They use their knives to make quick cuts, exposing the inner miracles of the body, rapidly removing and dissembling parts until there is nothing left but meat. There is a beauty to their craft, yet who ever goes to visit the slaughterhouse? Who even knows that they exist?

Why is it so hard for us to look? Do other animals find it hard to look when they take their food? It is as though we, having risen above innocence into knowing, are ashamed of what we do,

and hide it from the public eye. Or horrified by what we do, stay away.

There are no butchers in nature. The act of killing and eating is one act.

The gun, the great absolver. A turning point in history when it became possible to kill without getting your hands bloody. The bullet serves as a butcher, removing you from the death.

With a hand tool or weapon you cannot help but know that creature's life as you take it. Knife or sword, and you are there, in touch with the pulsing of blood, the quivering of limbs, the strength, the wildness, the will to live.

Bob taught me how to cut the throat of a sheep. Bob has been a sheep rancher for forty years. He is sure of what he is doing. He is at ease and gentle in his own world.

Bob uses a pocket knife. "You always have a knife in your pocket," he said, "and you always keep one blade sharp. Best one's the one with the pointy tip."

We knelt together behind the lamb, clearly sick and deformed, which was held on its side. "Now right here below the ear," he showed me, "under the jaw bone is where the knife goes in. The blade is facing out, same way the throat is facing. Now I'm going to slip the knife down behind the jugular veins and the windpipe, and then as I pull it up it will cut them." The throat was opened in one quick cut, and with the windpipe severed the head could be jerked way back until the neck broke.

"Now, I stick the knife in through the open throat, right into the backbone, I just find any opening and stick it in there. That'll cut the spinal cord." As he did that the animal's limbs twitched and then lay still. The whole process took about ten seconds.

It was the way I would have wanted to learn, as though from a parent, one whose calm knowing hands and body conveyed to me the assurance that this was an OK thing to do at certain times in certain places, and that I was now ready to learn how to do it. In such a way would I have wanted to learn from a parent about fire, the tracks of animals, the uses of plants.

I acquired a pocket knife and carried it with me. In no time the day was upon me. Mary brought in a lamb which the dogs had attacked. It seemed to have only a few puncture wounds, but when we stood it on its feet we could see that its back was broken, and its rear quarter sagged to the ground. There was no hope of saving his life. I was glad I knew what to do.

The long pointed blade went in under the jaw bone just beneath the ear. As I cut the throat I pulled the head back across my knee until it snapped, and with the point of the knife blade I pushed into the spinal cord. There was a twitch of the limbs and stillness. In my mind I thanked Bob for the lesson.

The mechanics of the job is not the death.

Once I blinked and looked away from the death. Later I looked at the mechanics and pretended I was looking at the death. Mostly when the death is happening one is busy swinging a hatchet into the chopping block, pressing a trigger, cutting with a knife.

But the death is the act of a disappearing spirit. Who looks at it? How to observe it? How to relate to it?

Of the people I have sought to learn from, there has been little indication of any ritual or rites of passage for a spirit. Perhaps each handles it in their own way. Among hunters, I have observed a laughing bravado which I suspect masks discomfort and fear. Among others, a joyful sense of triumph. With some, a fusion of sexual energy and excitement comes with the act of killing. There is also the methodical cutting and dissembling of the butcher who has been through it too many times already.

What do we each see? I can only speak for myself. I have seen my own fears. I have blinked and looked away. I have seen and practiced the mechanics of killing, and insofar as the death was instantaneous I have partially ignored the passing of the spirit to pay attention to the dead meat. But with Gary's method of killing a lamb I have come closest to being present at the death.

Gary's method is not instantaneous. To understand this method it must be understood that sheep and lambs go limp when they are seized and held in a firm and steady way. This makes it possible to shear them, trim their hooves, and administer medication with little problem. A good shearer can shear an entire sheep by just resting it against her knees or holding it with one hand against the ground.

Gary seizes the lamb and lays him on his side on the ground where he goes limp. Gary explains that he is taking his life to eat him. He then cuts carefully into the neck so as to sever the jugular veins without cutting the windpipe. The animal lies calm and limp continuing to breathe while he bleeds to death. This method brings me closest to the mystery of death. I hold my hands upon the animal and meditate upon his life force leaving his body. The bleeding takes about twenty minutes. Near the end the animal's eyes become a translucent blue color. The passage from animate to inanimate happens right beneath my hands and I feel in some relationship to the spirit of the animal, in some sense I am absorbing his spirit into my body as it leaves his body. I am paying homage to his life and his death through touch, and the aura of mystery and reverence remains after we hang him up and do the work of skinning and gutting.

I feel that in trying to look at death, to see death I am circling around an invisible hole. I can see manifestations on the physical plane which only suggest the presence of an invisible something in the hole. The invisible something is the mystery. I try to approach it empty of my own fears and desires, to pay it respect for what it is. The coming and going of the Life Spirit is an awesome thing. We all exist within its shadow. We are all its manifestations. q

Starting Seedlings

This year you can start your spring garden several weeks earlier than outside weather would allow by planting seeds in shallow boxes kept in a greenhouse or in a sunny window of your home.

Our growing season starts in April so we begin planting in the greenhouse at the end of February. Young seedlings do not need a rich soil as they get their first nutrients from the seed they sprout from. But if you're uncertain, as we are, about when you'll be able to transplant them, it's good to plant in a soil that contains some nutrients. The ground here can remain too wet to transplant in thru April. We don't want the seedlings to stop their growth from lack of nutrients or space, therefore, we use a deeper, richer planting mix than is necessary in other places.

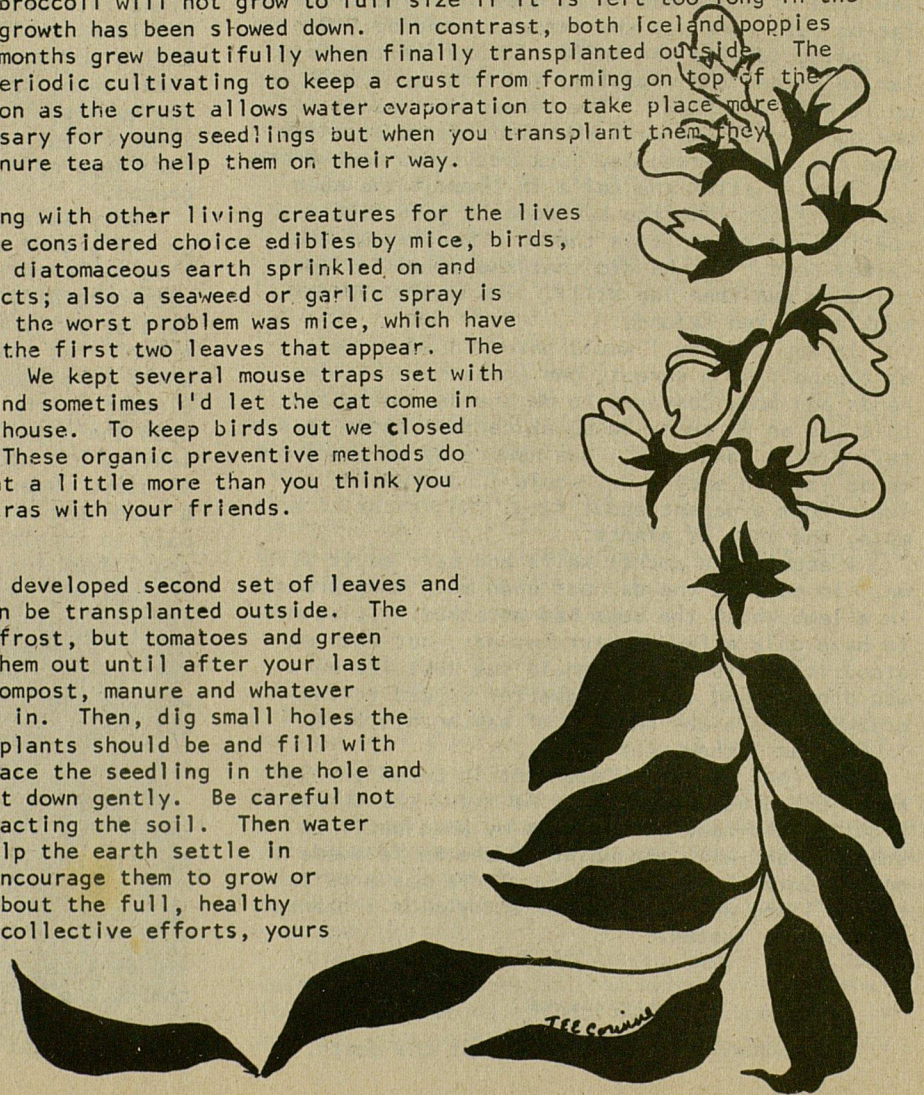
A loose, non-compacting soil is needed for good root growth. This can be made by mixing one-third sand or leaf-mold or peat moss or vermiculite with one-third compost and one-third garden earth. The sand should be coarse river sand not salty sea sand. If you have an acid soil, you can add in a little lime to sweeten it. The soil should be about three inches deep in the box.

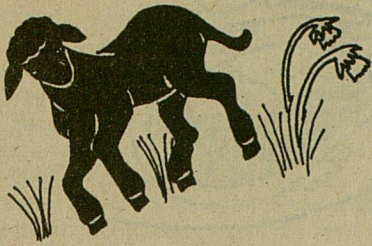
The plants that we start early are various types of flowers, the cabbage family, (broccoli, brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, collards and kohlrabi), tomatoes, celery and green peppers. Such early growing vegetables as peas and spinach we plant directly outside. Spinach does not transplant well, and peas do okay in cold wet weather. Vegetables which need to be planted in warm soil such as beans, corn and squash we leave until later.

Plant your seeds only about as deep as the seed is large, and sow thinly so the seedlings won't come up in a choked mass. Make the rows four inches apart. Keep the soil moist but not soaking as that can create conditions in which a damping off fungus kills the seedlings. When the seedlings are an inch tall, thin them to an inch apart. Later, as they grow thin again to three inches apart. If they are not kept thinned their growth will be stunted and they may never develop fully. I have found that broccoli will not grow to full size if it is left too long in the boxes, because its normal rate of growth has been slowed down. In contrast, both Iceland poppies and snapdragons left in boxes for months grew beautifully when finally transplanted outside. The boxes will also need weeding and periodic cultivating to keep a crust from forming on top of the soil. This helps moisture retention as the crust allows water evaporation to take place more rapidly. Fertilizing is not necessary for young seedlings but when you transplant them they appreciate being watered with a manure tea to help them on their way.

You may find yourself competing with other living creatures for the lives of these little plants for they are considered choice edibles by mice, birds, and a variety of insects. We used diatomaceous earth sprinkled on and around the seedlings to repel insects; also a seaweed or garlic spray is helpful to keep bugs away. For us the worst problem was mice, which have a distinctive way of nibbling off the first two leaves that appear. The naked stem will not produce again. We kept several mouse traps set with peanut butter which worked well, and sometimes I'd let the cat come in with me when I worked in the greenhouse. To keep birds out we closed up all the holes they flew thru. These organic preventive methods do not insure 100% protection so plant a little more than you think you need, you can always share the extras with your friends.

When the seedlings have a well developed second set of leaves and are two to four inches tall they can be transplanted outside. The cabbage family and celery can take frost, but tomatoes and green peppers will freeze so do not put them out until after your last frost date. Enrich the soil with compost, manure and whatever minerals it requires, and till this in. Then, dig small holes the distance apart that the full grown plants should be and fill with water. When the water sinks in, place the seedling in the hole and push the earth around it, packing it down gently. Be careful not to smother the plant by overly compacting the soil. Then water again to get out air bubbles and help the earth settle in around the roots. Sing a song to encourage them to grow or just think some positive thoughts about the full, healthy plants which will result from your collective efforts, yours and the plants's.





PULLING LAMBS

I thought the ewe was probably in trouble as I watched her strain to bring forth her lamb, then get up and look for the lamb on the ground, then strain some more. After twenty minutes, I saw the tip of a hoof sticking out of her vagina, while she walked about pawing the ground.

The hoof meant the lamb was in the birth canal, and time became precious. If this was a rear hoof the lamb could be in a position to break the umbilical cord before it could get air. If it was a front hoof, we had the grace of a little more time.

Kat and George and I separated her out from the others in the lambing field and ran her up into the smaller barnyard pens and into the barn. I did not relish the thought of that lamb getting jogged about as the ewe ran, but I knew it did not have to be fatal. I had known a number of lambs to be hanging partially out of their mothers as the mothers ran and still be born alive. We put the ewe in a pen which had a good overhead light and clean bedding.

I grabbed a bucket of water, the Lysol, and the Vaseline. I pushed my sleeves up above the elbow and rubbed my arms with Lysol, then rinsed, dried and greased my arms. Kat and George held the ewe down on her side so I didn't have to dirty my arms by handling her.

As I started to work my hand into the vagina I shut my eyes and concentrated all my sensing abilities into my hand. Here was Life asking to be born and my hand was coming to meet it, while somewhere far up in the rafters of the barn the Shadow of Death sat waiting. My hand encountered a leg; it was a foreleg. There was the nose and head just beyond it. The other foreleg was missing. I could not get my hand past the lamb's head to try to find the other foreleg. So I gently pushed the lamb's head back and both head and foreleg slipped back into the uterus. It went quite easily. My hand followed through the tight circle of the cervix, alternately constricting and dilating about my wrist. My hand was suddenly in an amazingly hot place, where everything was loose, flexible, gelatinous, floating. I stretched my hand to feel for the edges of the space but there were none. Spongy floating surroundings with no resistance. So hot, so hot. And in the midst of these loose floating walls the only solid object this little lamb waiting to be born. The vortex of creation.

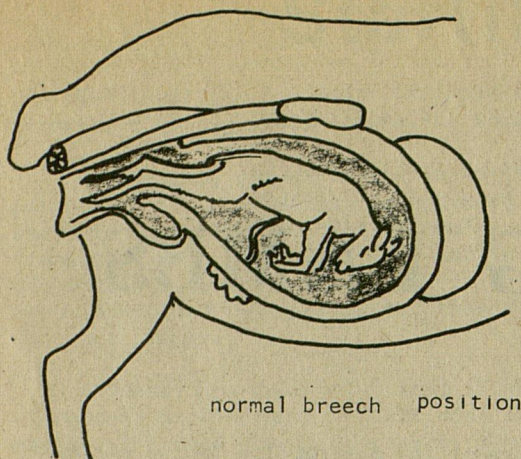
In the more spacious uterus I felt the missing foreleg lying back along the lamb's body.

It was the cause of the obstruction in the birth canal. I pulled it forward and it came slowly up to its mate. In the soft fluids and sliminess it was hard to hang onto the lamb. I got a good grip on the two forelegs by my knuckles squeezing its knuckles with a finger in between, and pulled slowly toward me.

The contractions of the uterus were urging the lamb outward, but it did not come. I felt the precious minutes slipping by. My body was feeling the strain of trying to act quickly and sensibly and with strength. I let go of the forelegs and reached for the head. I could no longer feel it anywhere. I carefully followed the line of the body back to where the head should have been and found nothing but soft hot spongy walls. Suddenly I felt exhausted and reckless, so desperate to get this lamb out on time that I wanted to simply yank on the two forelegs and somehow force the head to come along out. The contractions of the cervix were pressing painfully against my wrist.

I pulled my hand out and opened my eyes. I was panting. There was blood halfway up my arm. I knew the blood was o.k., nothing had been ripped. It was probably one of the sacs that had burst. "I can't locate the head," I told Kat and George, while catching my breath. George volunteered to try for a spell. He slowly started to probe with his hand, eyes tightly shut. After a few minutes he said, "The head's underneath the body, it's hanging backward and over the left side. I can't get it; my hand's too big to maneuver." George returned to his position holding the ewe quietly down on her side. I reentered the uterus with my hand. I followed around what I imagined to be the uterine wall on the left side, groping in the spongy material. Sure enough, the head was down there. Once found it slid back up easily enough. The three parts were ready, two legs extended and head between.

But they did not move outward. The position was correct. The contractions were continuing, quite miraculously it seemed after so many minutes. I could only pull the two legs with my one hand, and when they moved forward slightly the head did not seem to come along with them. I felt it was likely the head would once again loll back and down. Discouragement swept over me. My thoughts raced through catastrophic fears. Will this be the one that Death gets? What if I can't get it out? Will I have to break it up and pull it out piece by piece to save the mother's life? Cont:



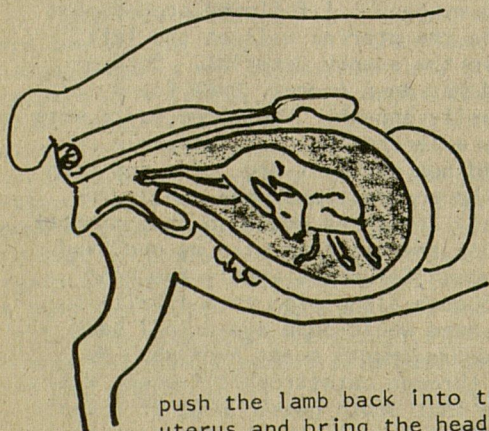
normal breech position

I released the lamb and pulled my arm partially out. I tried to insert my other hand. My two hands palm to palm did not exceed the thickness of a lamb. Nor did my two arms. The vagina extended to allow both to enter. Getting past the tight contractions of the cervix was harder, but I managed to get both hands in far enough to grasp the head of the lamb. I had it under the jawbone and by the top of the head. I knew the position was right. I pulled with all my strength so that my arms were shaking. Nothing moved. I remembered then to pull slightly downward. I kept up my pulling pressure as contraction after contraction rolled over the lamb and my hands, tidal waves pushing toward life. Then, with one contraction there was movement. Only about an inch.

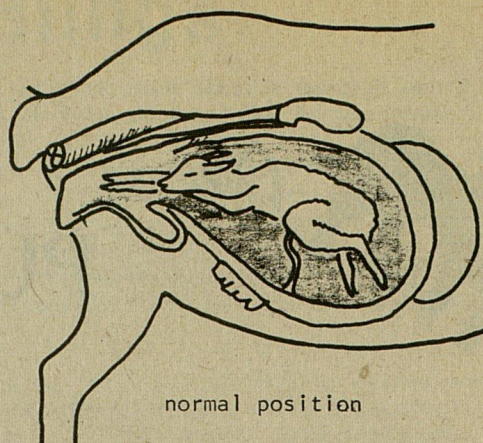
"It's coming!" I said, hearing my voice shake with the intensity of our efforts.

Another contraction, another inch. I stopped my heavy pulling; and only pulled with the contractions. "Now!" I exclaimed as the head passed the cervix. The pulling was over. I kept my hands around the head as the forelegs emerged, then the head was visible, then in one slithering movement the body of a coal black lamb slipped forward onto the straw.

Oh little body. Are you alive? After so much time and such pulling? I checked the mouth for mucous and watched the sticky wet still form. Motionless. Then suddenly the chest heaved up and down. The first breath. And then another, and another. The eyes flickered open.



push the lamb back into the uterus and bring the head between the front legs



normal position

We smiled at the lamb. We smiled at each other. I felt tears in my eyes. Welcome to the world, little lamb.

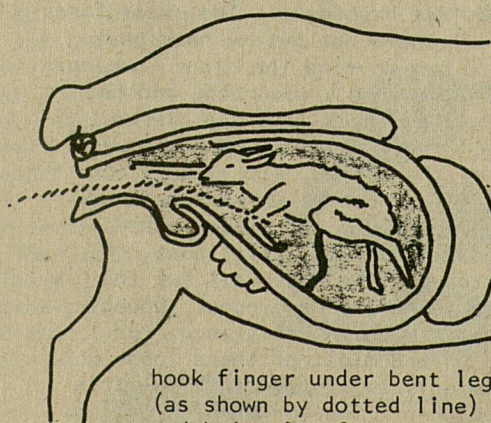
I still had to check the ewe for a twin. If there was one, there would certainly not be enough strength in her contractions to bring it out after all this. I re-entered the uterus for the last time and found it empty of lambs. Withdrawing my arm, I grabbed the towel that always hangs in the lambing pen, wiped off my arms and then rubbed the lamb briskly. He lifted his head unsteadily and folded his legs under his body. I lifted the lamb and put him by his mother's nose. She still lay on her side. When she smelled her baby her head came up and then she struggled to her feet. She started energetically licking the lamb.

All that remained to be done was to apply iodine to the lamb's navel, and give the ewe antibiotics against any possible uterine infection from our hands.

We stood outside the pen, hanging over the edge and looking in, reluctant to leave. Life, so newly arrived, was starting to run its course. It gave us joy.

LAMBING EQUIPMENT:

- clean pail
- soap
- lubricant: mineral oil, linseed oil, or vaseline
- uterine capsules and injectable antibiotic
- clean towels and rags
- soft heavy string



hook finger under bent leg (as shown by dotted line) and bring leg forward to normal position

BASIC PROCEDURE:

Be sure to thoroughly wash your hands and arms and to keep them clean through the whole process.

Don't enter the ewe until you have all the equipment you'll need within arm's reach. Call a helper if you can.

Wait to try to pull the lamb until you've made a careful examination and have the lamb in the proper position for birth. To distinguish between front and hind legs, feel above the knee. The hind legs have a prominent tendon there, the front legs have muscle.

If one front leg is turned back, try to gently pull the lamb from side to side. If that doesn't work, gently push the lamb back up the birth canal until you can hook a finger under the bent leg and bring it forward.

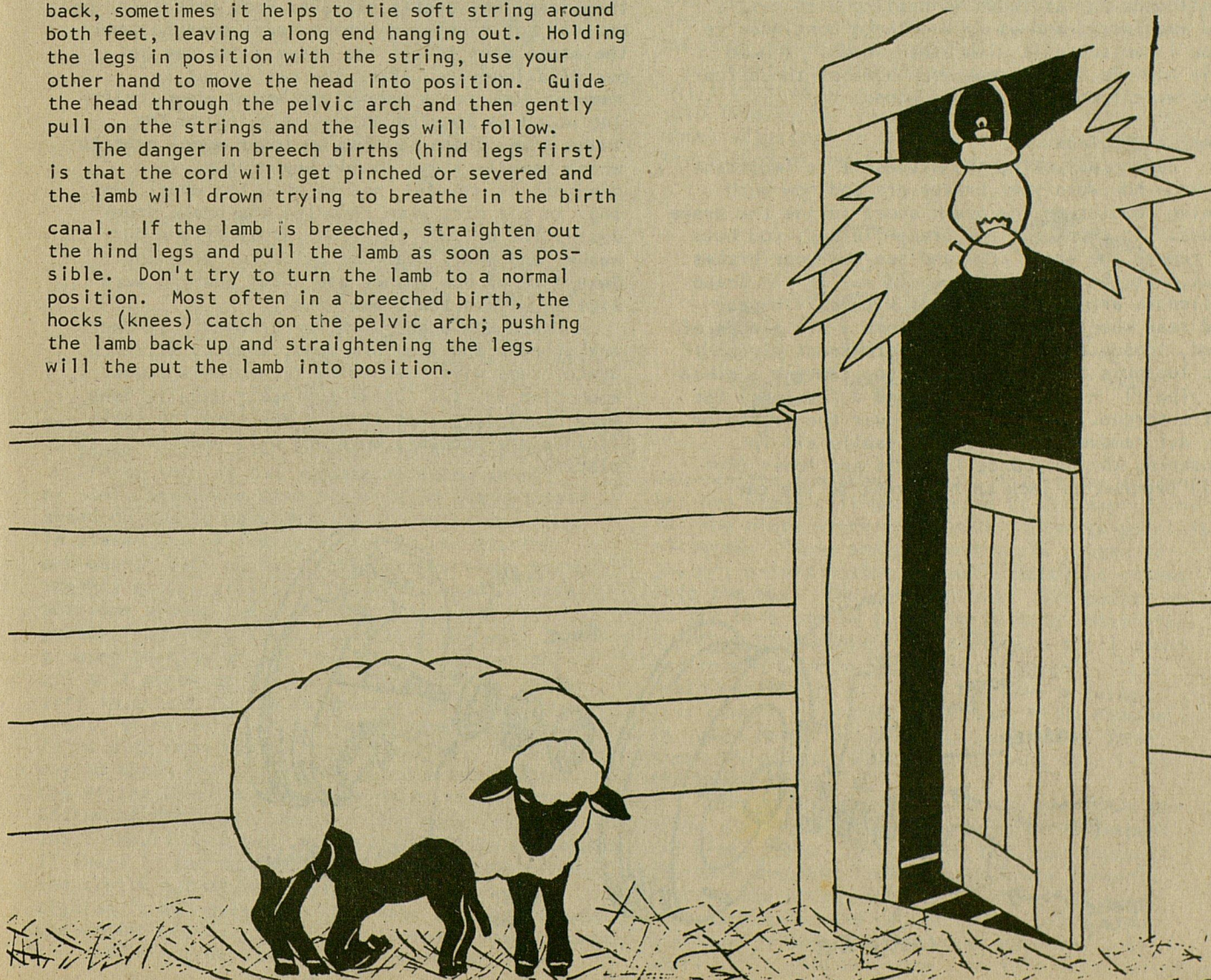
If both legs are bent back, you may be able to slip your fingers down the side of the neck and flip each leg up. If not, you will again have to work the lamb back up the canal until you can reach the legs. Be sure to start the head through the pelvic arch before the legs, once the lamb has started to come.

If the legs are coming but the head is bent back, sometimes it helps to tie soft string around both feet, leaving a long end hanging out. Holding the legs in position with the string, use your other hand to move the head into position. Guide the head through the pelvic arch and then gently pull on the strings and the legs will follow.

The danger in breech births (hind legs first) is that the cord will get pinched or severed and the lamb will drown trying to breathe in the birth canal. If the lamb is breeched, straighten out the hind legs and pull the lamb as soon as possible. Don't try to turn the lamb to a normal position. Most often in a breeched birth, the hocks (knees) catch on the pelvic arch; pushing the lamb back up and straightening the legs will put the lamb into position.

After the lamb(s) are delivered, the ewe needs to be protected from uterine infection. Farm supply houses and most pharmacies sell uterine capsules which are inserted into the ewe's vagina as close to the cervix as possible. Watch this ewe carefully for the next week or so for any bad-smelling, unusual looking discharge that would indicate infection. If this happens, you will want to treat the ewe systemically with a broad-spectrum antibiotic until the symptoms disappear. In the case of a really serious infection, you may want to call in a veterinarian to flush the ewe out with a suitable antiseptic medication.

Always keep the lamb with the ewe unless it becomes clear that she won't accept it. Set it near her face and use your finger to feed her some of the sack from the lamb. Encourage her to lick the lamb. If she is down and listless, sometimes standing her up will get her back to normal. Especially with sheep unused to close contact with humans, they may become simply paralyzed until they are up again and you have moved away. Mothering the lamb will lead to a speedier recovery for the ewe.♀



Adjusting & Bleeding Brakes

Brake adjustments should be made every 10,000 miles or so. If the brake pedal goes half-way or more to the floor it's time for a brake adjustment. If your brakes are spongy or for any reason the brake line system, master cylinder or brake cylinders have been opened to be worked on then it becomes necessary to bleed the brakes. The following article deals with brake adjustments and bleeding the brakes. In the next issue of Country Women I will deal with rebuilding brake cylinders, replacing brake shoes and linings and adjusting the emergency brake.

Don't be mystified by the job, with a lot of patience and soap you'll do real well. If you don't own the tools try to borrow them from a friend. Tools are always a safe and a rewarding investment, they more than pay for themselves in the long run. The money I saved by buying my own car parts and fixing my own car has more than paid for my tools. Besides the economics of fixing my own car, I have gained so much more confidence and strength in dealing with metals and machinery, and as my knowledge continues to grow I can share it with other women. I hope this article helps break down some of those fears that were forced upon us as women.

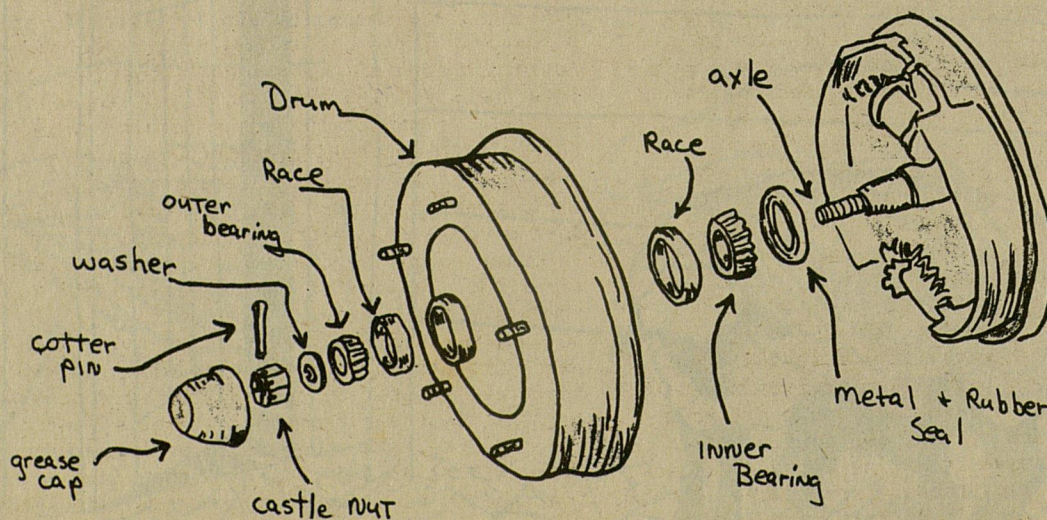
BRAKE INSPECTION

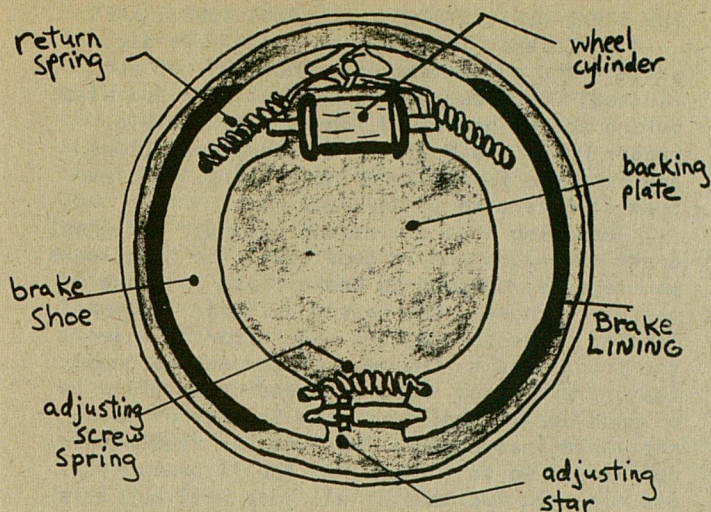
Before adjusting the brakes it is important to know how worn your brakes are and how much lining remains on the brake shoes inside the brake drums. To check out the brake linings, you have to remove the brake drum and see how your brakes look. At the same time you can see if the brake cylinders are leaking. First: With car in gear and rear wheels blocked with some 4 x 4 pieces of wood, loosen the lug nuts of both front tires. If the lug nuts are frozen tight you can use a piece of pipe (1 - 2 inches thick and 2 ft. long) for extra torque. Place the pipe over the wrench or lug nut remover and it should really aid in loosening the nuts. Once lug nuts are loose (not off) proceed to jack up the front of the car

(find a secure place for jack such as bumper or near wheel frame) so one wheel at a time spins freely and put some pieces of 2x4s or 4x4s under the front axle in some secure place that will hold up the car without the aid of the jack. It is very important to never use a car jack by itself because it can fall easily. Make sure the blocking is very secure, because you'll be crawling under the car. Now, remove the lug nuts of one wheel and take off the tire.

The next step is to find the dust cover from the front wheel bearings (looks like a steel cup). See diagram below. This needs to be removed. You'll need either vice grips or pipe wrench. If you don't have either of these tools use a screw driver and hammer and tap on one side and then the other side until the cup or dust cover is free. Next, with a pair of pliers and a screw driver, remove the cotter pin (looks like a bobby pin, from the wheel spindle or castle (this is a large nut with lots of grooves on it) and then screw the castle nut off. From this point on be sure not to step on brake pedal because once the brake drum is off the brake shoes can get out of alignment. After the castle nut is removed look for a washer and outer wheel bearing which is located on the axle inside the brake drum. There is also an inner wheel bearing which usually stays inside brake drum. (see diagram) Be careful not to drop the wheel bearings in the dirt when removing the brake drum. Just slide or pull the brake drum off and put washer and wheel bearings aside for greasing. Take note of how washer and wheel bearing were sitting within the brake drum.

Check the brake drum for grooves. If there are grooves and they are deep, chances are the brake drums will need to be turned (this means smoothing out the inside surface - usually done by a machinist). If this is the case the brake linings are probably worn and will need replacing.





The brake shoes are connected to the stationary backing plate. The brake shoes are curved to fit the brake drum. They are fitted with a soft heat resistant fibrous pad - called a lining. When the brakes are applied the brake shoes linings are pushed against the brake drums to stop the car. The soft lining prevents metal on metal contact and minimizes the heat caused by the friction of the two moveable parts rubbing together. The brake linings should have at least one-eighth inch thickness. If the thickness is less than one eighth you'll need to replace them. But in this article we will assume your brake linings and drums are in good shape.

The next step is to adjust your brakes. Notice what direction the adjusting screw, star or nut moves the brake shoes (details later in this article). Keep a note of this. Make sure there is no grease on brake shoes, if there is sand off grease by using medium sand paper. It is very important that shoes and drum are always free of grease and grime. Now put back the clean brake drum using the reverse order of taking it off. If the drum is hard to get back into place, you'll have to move the brake shoes inward by turning the adjustment screw or nut or star, until the drum slips on in place. Read ahead on how to make adjustment. With the drum in place, the next step is to put the bearing and washer back on. But first make sure the bearing has enough grease on it; if it needs grease, put some around the grooves. Grease can be gotten from any gas station. Slip the well greased bearing on and then put the washer on and next screw on the castle nut by hand. It's very important not to screw this nut on too tight, so screw it on by hand and make sure there is no slop when moving the brake drum. A good way to check for slop is to put one hand at the top of the brake drum and the other hand at the bottom of the drum. Now try to wiggle the drum. There should be a very very slight bit of movement. If there is too much movement and you can't move the castle nut anymore by hand use a wrench to tighten it but only move it a tiny bit and recheck the amount of play. You probably won't have to move the castle nut very much if it screws on fairly

easily. With castle nut in place and lined up with the holes that the cotter pin fits into, proceed to put back the cotter pin and tighten it down by separating the two legs. Put the dust cover cap back by tapping it lightly in place with a hammer. Repeat this whole process on the other front and rear wheels.

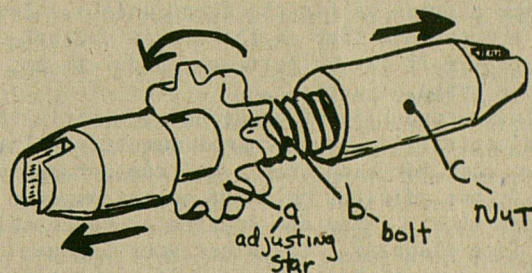
BRAKE ADJUSTMENT

When adjusting the brakes you are moving the brake shoes as close to the brake drums as possible without letting the lining rub against the drums, so that when you push on the brake pedal the shoes have the shortest possible distance to travel.

The linings wear down after a while due to the constant rubbing on metal which then causes too big a gap between the brake shoe lining and the brake drum. When the brake pedal goes halfway or more to the floor before the brakes work then this gap is too great; and the brakes are unsafe.

I know of four different types of brake adjustments; 1) Bendix brakes with star wheel adjusters (very common), 2) cam-adjusting brakes, found usually on older Chrysler and American model cars, 3) self adjusting brakes, usually on newer models, and 4) disc brakes. I'm most familiar with the first two types of adjustments and feel they are the most common, so I will explain how to do these types of adjusting.

Hopefully, the front part of the car is still blocked up so that your front wheels can spin freely. The tires are still off. The star-wheel adjusters in the Bendix system are found at the bottom of the backing plate (see diagram)



between the two brake shoes. This brake system has one brake cylinder located at the top of the backing plate where the bleeder valve (nipple) is situated. There are two main parts to the adjuster, a long hollow nut and a bolt that screws into the nut. The bolt has star like points on it so the bolt can be turned by pushing these star points with a screwdriver through a small opening in the backing plate (see diagram). This small opening or port hole may have a rubber dust plug in it, which will have to be removed in order to get at the adjusting star. Sometimes the opening for the adjusting star is in the brake drum.

With a screwdriver, turn the star down towards the ground (counter clockwise) to expand the brake shoes. By turning the star downward the bolt unscrews from the nut (gets longer) forcing the brake shoes to move further apart from each other and closer to the brake drum. Continue to turn the star wheel down until the wheel can't spin any more. At this point the Cont.

brake shoe linings are pressing directly against the drums. Next you want to back off the brake linings from the drums a tiny bit. So with your screwdriver back-off (pushing up on the star) a few notches-usually between five to eight notches, until the drum spins freely again, making sure there are no heavy rubbing sounds. It's okay if there is a light rubbing sound due to slightly warped drums. If you back off eight notches or more and the drum continues to rub heavily there is probably something wrong with the brake shoes, so go get some advice from an experienced friend. Remember how many star notches it took to move upwards until the brakes could spin freely. For an even adjustment the other front wheel should take the same amount of back off.

When you finish adjusting one front wheel move to the other front wheel and repeat procedure: push down on the adjusting star until the wheel locks, back off (push up adjustor) as many notches as the other wheel until the wheel is free. If the wheel turns easily then they should be well adjusted. If not, then you'll have to count how many more notches it took. If adjustment on all wheels is not equal, when applying the brakes the car may pull to one side because the tightest brake shoe will hit the drum faster.

Now that you finished the front brakes, jack up the front of the car, and remove the blocks, lower the car, move to the rear of the car and jack it up and block it. It is important to make sure the hand brake is off and the car is in neutral so the rear wheels can spin easily. Repeat the same process as for the front wheels. Test drive the car and step on the brakes several times to see if car pulls to one side. If so, redo the brake adjustment.

The second kind of brake adjustment is the cam adjustor (old Chrysler products, etc.). There are two cams for each wheel, one cam per shoe. There is one adjustor bolt for each shoe, two for each wheel. They are located on the backing plate (see diagram). To adjust your brakes you'll need to be turning the bolts; one direction will tighten the shoe against the drum the other will loosen it. You can figure out which direction does what by trial and error. Now, with a wrench tighten one bolt (shoe) until the wheel locks. Then loosen the bolt just a hair so the wheel spins freely. Repeat the procedure for the other bolt, then move to the other wheel and repeat the process.

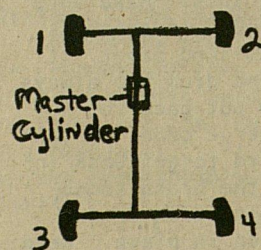
The self-adjusting type brakes are just that, they adjust themselves if working properly. Check out what type of brakes your car has before starting. It's a good idea to get a manual for your car and a good source book is The People's Primer-Fixing Your Car, published by San Francisco Institute of Automotive Ecology.

THE BRAKE FLUID SYSTEM - BLEEDING YOUR BRAKES

The brake fluid must be clean. If dirt is present the system should be drained out and flushed. Check out the master cylinder and also, before adding new fluid, check out flexible rubber hoses and brake lines and connections and fittings for leaks or worn parts. Replace them if defective in any way.

Assuming that the master cylinder and wheel brake cylinders are in good condition - no leaks, we are ready to pour in brake fluid into the master cylinder. The master cylinder is usually located under the drivers side floor or under the front hood to the rear of the engine, near the driver's side. Make sure the brake fluid is of good quality and meets the Society of Automotive Engineers' specifications and requirements. Buy about two to three cans. You'll probably use close to two cans if all goes well but it's good to have extra on hand.

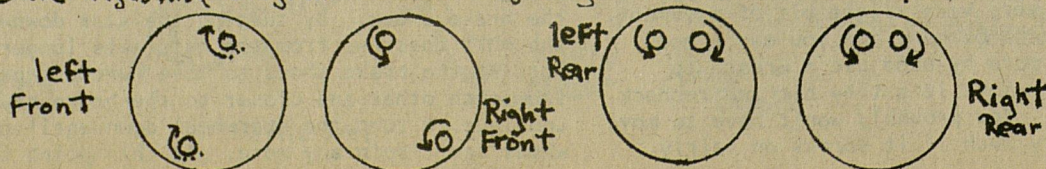
Before adding brake fluid make sure all dirt and grease is cleaned from the top of the master cylinder and filler plug. Fill it one half inch from the top. Never let fluid get lower than one half inch in master cylinder as to prevent air from getting sucked into brake lines. Always keep a check on the fluid level. It's a good habit to keep a can of brake fluid on hand for this purpose. If for any reason the brake system has been opened and air gets into the lines it will be necessary to bleed and adjust the brakes. Removal of the air is known as bleeding. This condition (air in lines) is easy to recognize by the spongy feel of brake pedal when brakes are applied or if the brakes "pump up" when applying brake pedal several times. This takes us to the next step - how to bleed the brakes.



This job will require two people so grab a friend and do as follows. One person will sit in the car and work the brake pedal (the cleaner of the two jobs). The other will crawl under the car and expect to get quite dirty. When bleeding the brake lines and cylinders always start on the wheel which is farthest away from the master cylinder, the longest brake line. In most cases it's the right rear that is farthest away from the master cylinder. Then bleed #3 and then #2 and finally #1, (see diagram). I have found this procedure of bleeding the brakes to be most efficient because it tends to get rid of the air fastest using less brake fluid.

After you've figured out what brake cylinder (wheel) is farthest away from the master cylinder

Brake adjusting diagram for cam adjusting brakes on some Chrysler-made cars.



der you locate the bleeder valve screw (looks like a nipple) near the top of backing plate where the rubber brake line connects to wheel cylinder on back plate. With your friend in the front seat with her foot on the brake pedal you ask her to pump the brake pedal five or more times then tell her to keep pressing her foot down on the pedal (yell "foot down") and have her yell back to you "foot down" when she's got her foot holding down the brake pedal. With the brake pedal being pressed down you loosen the nipple (bleeder valve) screw a quarter turn or so, using a small wrench. Be very careful not to use too much force when turning (opening) nipple screw because they easily get damaged (stripped). A rush of brake fluid probably mixed with air bubbles will sputter out. Then you tighten up the nipple and yell at your friend to lift her foot up from the brake pedal - "foot up", and have her yell back "foot up" when she lifts her foot up off the pedal. Then repeat the same process on the next wheel farthest away from the master cylinder. Pump up brake pedal, brake pedal down, loosen nipple, brake fluid squirts out, tighten nipple, brake pedal up and repeat until the fluid squirting out is a steady flow of fluid.

Important point - after two or three times of letting brake fluid squirt out from nipple be sure to CHECK THE FLUID LEVEL IN MASTER CYLINDER. Add brake fluid if the level of fluid has dropped

(which I'm sure it probably has since your squirting fluid out of the nipple). Make sure the fluid level never gets below half full.

Note; on some models especially older cars, (Chrysler products) separate wheel cylinders are used for each brake shoe in the front brakes. Therefore on the front wheels there are two bleeder valves (nipples) one for each wheel cylinder. It is necessary to bleed both wheel cylinders following the above directions.

Now move on to #3 or the next wheel farthest from master cylinder and repeat the same process then go to #2 wheel and #1 wheel. Always make sure the brake fluid level in the master cylinder is full.

By now the brake pedal should be showing some signs of pressure. The pedal shouldn't go all the way to the floor. To be safe, bleed all the wheel cylinders for a second time, to make sure all air is out of the system. Sometimes it takes three times. By now the brake pedal should be grabbing a few inches from the floor.

If the pedal is still sinking to the floor or is spongy, my guess is that you are leaking brake fluid somewhere. If this is the case then you should prepare to thoroughly check out your brake cylinders and master cylinder. I will cover this process in my next article.

Diana Press Publications

Diana Press is a collectively run feminist printer and publisher in Baltimore, Md. These women produce some of the most graphically and aesthetically pleasing work I've seen anywhere. The quality of their printing, their attention to design, paper quality, type-face, and color are inspiring. As publishers, they have produced some valuable books reflecting the evolution of feminist and lesbian/feminist analysis. I hope they will continue to print more which reflect our growing and deepening analysis.

Class and Feminism (\$2.25), my favorite of their books, is, like two other Diana Press books, a collection of essays originally published in The Furies. These essays explore the nature of class and its effects within the women's movement. Written through personal experiences, the book gives meaning to words we have heard thrown around for years. It provides the basis for each of us to better understand class realities and to change class prejudices that divide our lives. One working class woman speaks of the experiences of being poor, of feeling constantly inadequate and unacceptable in the college which was to be her passport to social acceptability, and of her feelings living with feminist women who glorify survival struggles and being "poor". In another essay, a middle class woman shares the painful process of coming to realize how differences of attitude, expectation, and behavior deeply divided a supposedly egalitarian feminist collective.

This book is a powerful and concrete look at class realities within our society, within our lives. Living in the country, I found it an important door to understanding divisions too long ignored.

Women Remembered (\$2.25) is a delightful collection of short biographies of women too nearly "lost" from our collective history. "These articles have a bias - not to prove that any particular woman was a lesbian - but to show that there were women in the past who sacrificed much and achieved much in their struggle against female oppression." The sketches range from Queen Christina of Sweden in the Seventeenth Century, to Anne Bonny and Mary Read, pirates in the Eighteenth Century, through Gertrude Stein in the Twentieth. They are a poignant and pointed reminder that we are not the first or even the second wave of women in struggle but that we follow generations of women who have been forthrightly whole people.

Send orders (with 15% added for postage) and requests for information to:

Diana Press Publications
12 West 25th St.

Baltimore, Md. 21218

Also published by Diana Press:

The Day Before 1976 Datebook (\$3.50) and Garland Calender (\$2.50), both with original drawings. Lesbianism and the Women's Movement (\$2.25) a collection of introductory essays to lesbian/feminist theory.

Songs To a Handsome Woman (\$2.00) and The Hand That Cradles the Rock (\$3.00), books of poems by Rita Mae Brown.

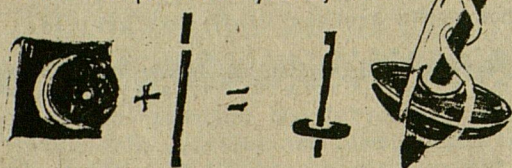
These Days by Lee Lally (\$1.00) and Forty Acres and a Mule by E. Sharon Gomillion (\$1.00), two other fine books of poetry. ♀

BUILDING A SPINNING WHEEL

If you are anxious to buy a spinning wheel immediately you will probably not have too much choice in the matter, because spinning wheels are not abundantly stocked anywhere that I know of. Most likely, you will have a two to a six month wait. This is a perfect time to master the art of spinning with a drop spindle, if you are not already spinning with one. Drop spindles are invaluable for learning how to handspin; you may even find that you can spin enough yarn for your particular needs to never use anything else.

There are lots of different kinds of drop spindles: Navajo spindles which are used sitting or kneeling on the ground; fancy ones you can buy from most of the wheel or loom manufacturers; potatoes with chopsticks in them; etc. I won't go into these any further, except to diagram one which you can make with a disc of wood and a piece of dowel.

Over the past few years, I



have tried out lots of different spinning wheels, and I think that this is by far the best way to choose one. However, because of the number of wheels imported from outside the U.S., the fact that you may not live near a place that makes or distributes them, and the possibility that you don't yet know how to spin, this may be difficult. The information here is what I know about how to get a wheel, which ones I like and why. Some of the imported ones I recommend because I have spun on them and know them to be consistent; others I am listing because I know them to be from good manufacturers, but I have neither seen them nor tried them out.

If you are interested in designing/building your own wheel, the best suggestion I could make would be to look at as many wheels as possible, and to try out as many as you can to get a feel for just how much precision work is really necessary. I'm not a carpenter, but I think there's quite a lot to building a good wheel. If you think you are a good builder but would rather not have to design a wheel on your own, it may still be difficult. What I have seen and heard of available wheel plans isn't too promising.

Craftplans (8011 Lewis Rd., Minneapolis, Mn. 55427) makes a set of size plans for a vertical Saxony wheel, but according to one successful wheel builder, there are plenty of mistakes in the plans.

Rural Industries Bureau (35 Rump Rd., South Wales 19, England) also makes wheel plans (3" = 1' or 1/2 full size) but I've had no better reports on following these instructions.

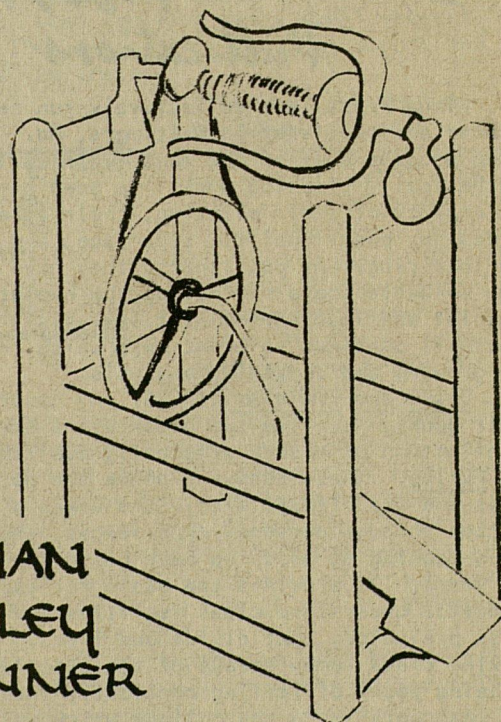
The best for home building I've heard of is

a little book by Thresh Publications called Anyone Can Build a Spinning Wheel. "All that's needed is a bit of woodworking skill, or lacking that, a strong desire to build your own wheel for under \$25.00" - 32 pages of plans and illustrations for \$1.50 (443 Sebastopol Ave., Santa Rosa, Ca. 95401).

There is also one more set of plans in the April - March 1967 issue of Workbench Magazine.

If I was going to put together a wheel, I'd probably try to find an old sewing machine treadle and then buy a used or a new head to make what is called an Indian Spinner. There are a few places that make Indian Spinners; some are built onto old treadles and some are built with base and fly wheel of wood and cast iron. These wheels take up a lot of space and aren't very portable, but they have certain advantages over some of the finer Saxones and Castles (which I'll describe a little later) in the same price range. Firstly, they are incredibly sturdy and comfortable to sit at, and secondly, the orifices are usually very large for spinning heavy yarns. Of course, you can spin fine yarn on it as well.

You can get a handmade spinner called the Indian Valley Spinner for \$160.00, or you can order the head alone for \$55.00 (both have walnut woodwork, hand-rubbed finish, machined steel parts). One more advantage to this wheel is a maximum thirty day waiting period if the full payment is made when ordering. (This wheel and all others mentioned in this article which are available through stores and distributors will be listed with their suppliers at the end.)



INDIAN VALLEY SPINNER

The Branscomb wheel is another Indian Spinner of the treadle type, for which you can also buy the head alone. It is also very good. Order from Wilderness Road Weavers, Branscomb, Ca.

Before I get into describing the more traditional Brunswick (Saxony and Castle) spinning machines (credit for which, by the way, is given to Leonardo da Vinci, by students of his drawings),

I'll mention another less conventional wheel available through a distributor in Berkeley. This wheel is from India, called the Charka or the Gandhi Wheel, and is by far the most portable machine for spinning, save only the drop spindle. Because Gandhi felt that spinning exemplified the simplicity of life (a condition of spiritual perfection), the officers in his government were required to spin for several hours each day. This was meant to be as much a demonstration of national solidarity, an attempt to boycott foreign cloth, and an uplifting of the status of home industry as it was a spiritual exercise. The Charka wheel is built into a small suitcase, so it can travel anywhere; its price is \$22.50. This wheel would not be particularly good for production; it's not a whole lot faster than a drop spindle. Mostly, I'd suggest it for collectors, school teachers and/or historians.

The unconventional walking wheel is so large that you stand up to work with it. There is no treadle; you turn the wheel with your right hand and work the wool with the left. I've only seen a few of them, in museums, art centers, and fairs. I'll list the source for these wheels at the end of the article...the price is \$200.00.

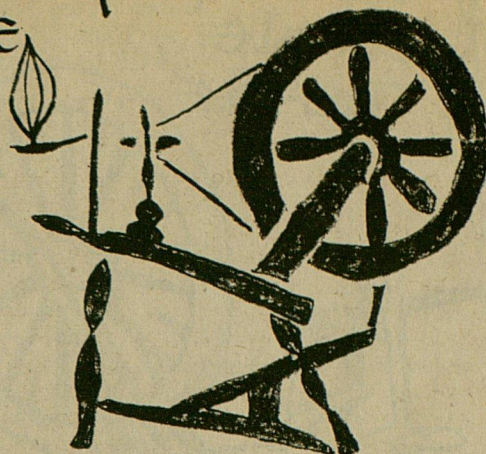
Traditional wheels, such as those used in England and the U.S. prior to the Industrial Revolution for spinning flax (linen), wool, and some cotton, come in two basic models: the Saxony wheel which looks like the one you saw pictured in "Rumplestiltskin" or "Sleeping Beauty", and the Castle wheel. I'm pretty sure that the one the somnabulist princess pricked her finger on was a Saxony, but the sharp point was not, as Walt Disney said, a spindle, but more likely the distaff. The distaff is a pointed stick onto which flax is wound and tied to keep it together for the spinner to feed into the orifice.

Linen was always more rare than cotton, but particularly after the Industrial Revolution, flax spinning became a drawing room occupation for genteel and otherwise unoccupied ladies. I am also told (for another piece of undocumented history) that for a time in England all women were required to carry a distaff around with them all the time like an ID card, to prove that they were working for Mother England and to show as in India that they were contributing to the economy.

There are always "antique" wheels around for sale and a number of them are just such quaint pieces of drawing room furniture, beautiful and dainty, as well as fragile and not much good for spinning wool because of the small wheel diameter and tiny orifices. Because the yarn must pass through the orifice to wind up on the bobbin, it can only be as thick in diameter as the orifice. I would recommend these wheels for antique collectors, debutantes and elves.

There are sturdier old wheels to be found, however, many of them from Canada and New Zealand. They can be quite good but the problem with them is usually that there are missing parts, badly damaged, or parts from several different wheels collaged together to look authentic. (I've heard of wheels screwed down to the uprights!) When I first became obsessed with spinning wheels, someone offered me a beautiful old hand-turned

SAXONY Type



spoke wheel. It wasn't until after many hours of repair work on the tension screw and the mother-of-all that I found out the flyer and spindle didn't really go with that particular wheel, and it was beyond my minimal wood working skills to make a new one. I abandoned the wheel back to its owner and I believe it still remains antique, unused.

Of all the parts to consider when looking for old wheels, consider the flyer first. If it is damaged, don't buy the wheel. After that, problems other than a wobbly wheel or a cracked rim are fixable. My advice on buying old wheels is: don't get one unless you can spin on it first and/or you make and/or repair the missing parts.

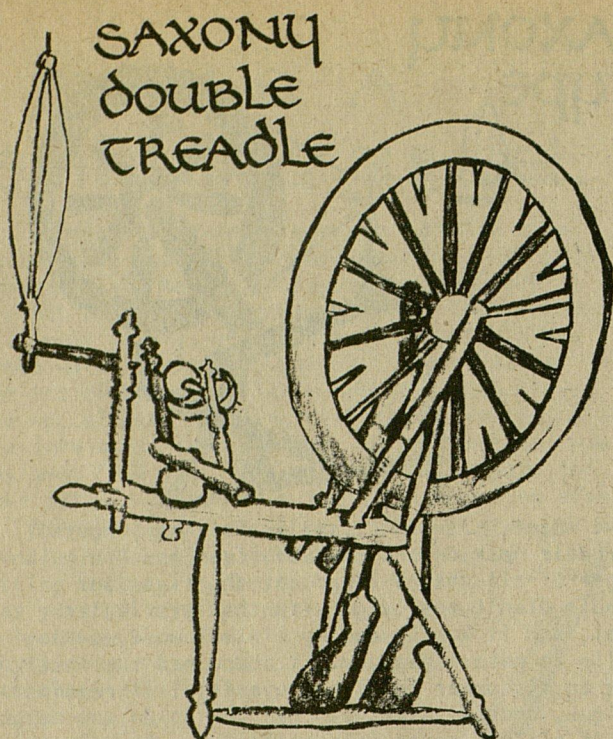
As for new wheels, there are a few very beautiful and well-made wheels which are technically flax wheels although they can spin wool quite well. One of these is from Finland, The Saxony Wheel, constructed of birch with fine turning and details. It has a fairly delicate wheel with a diameter of eighteen inches (45.5 cm), so it is a very fast and smooth spinner, a characteristic not particularly recommended for beginners, although it probably wouldn't take too long to get accustomed to the speed. It has a double drive band and comes with three bobbins. It can be shipped unassembled in two boxes by regular mail, which saves crating fees. Unstained. \$105.00.

Another, similar wheel is the Saxon, also a fine spinner complete with a beautiful wooden distaff. Wheel diameter is also eighteen inches. Made of various hardwoods stained medium (Fruitwood) or dark (Walnut). \$129.00 includes shipping and crating. I have never spun on this wheel so I recommend it on reputation only.

The distributors of this wheel also sell a larger Saxony-type wheel called the Double Treadle. It has a wheel diameter of thirty inches (76 cm) which is very large; I presume this is why it has two treadles. The entire wheel measures 46" x 46". This wheel is meant for production spinning, but I have never spun on it. It costs \$190.00; I presume this includes shipping.

If you have been looking into wheels already, you probably know about the Ashford New Zealand. It is the least expensive, least fancy of those yet mentioned, but still a very functional wheel. It also seems to be the most popular imported wheel. Ashford makes a so-called do-it-yourself kit; this means that they send you the parts, some of them unassembled, and you put the wheel

Cont.



together. The Ashford's best use is for people learning to spin, especially classes or groups, because of its compactness, portability and the discounts offered for quantity orders. (For import duty purposes, spinning wheels are classified 670.06TSUS. If sent for educational purposes, classify 851.40TSUS and you will save several dollars.) The Ashford is quite adequate for a beginner, but if you think you are going to be doing a lot of spinning, you should probably consider a somewhat sturdier, smoother-running wheel, designed for more specific and accurate tension and speed adjustments. You may order this wheel finished or unfinished; for the \$14.50 difference, it would be worth your while to invest in a can of Danish finishing oil and polish it yourself (never polish the wheel rim). Allow at least four months for delivery, although it could be less. The wood is New Zealand Silver Birch; wheel diameter is twenty-two inches (56 cm). It comes with four bobbins and "EZ" assembling directions.

Castle wheels are somewhat more portable than Saxony wheels because of their compactness, although they can be just as heavy or heavier depending on the materials used. Design-wise I personally think they are handsomer than other wheels. Perhaps my view is because I spin on a Castle wheel; nevertheless, I've tried out the following designs and found them all most adaptable to my needs.

The Little Peggy is another popular import from New Zealand, and is designed after one that many early settlers brought there. It is small (45 cm diameter wheel) but sturdy. Built of natural hardwood with some special features: a built in lazy kate, a small carder and three bobbins. Little Peggy can be mailed to you (rather than crated) but don't expect it for at least three months. You may send one third to half price as a deposit until you are notified of its arrival by the distributor. Its price is \$125.00.

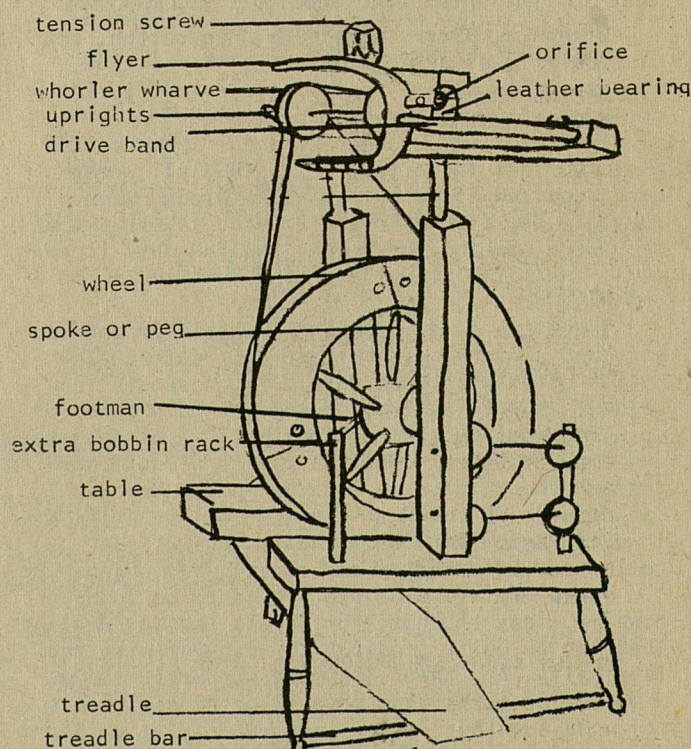
The Wendy is another New Zealand Castle wheel

at \$163.00. It has a double driving band (that's my preference) and a counter-balanced wheel. That means, when it stops you can start it going again without having to use your hands (no big deal). It is very compact (60 cm) with a wheel diameter of 42 cm and it weighs only nine pounds (designed to fit in a large suitcase).

My own wheel is a Castle wheel designed and built by two wonderful Berkeley artists, John and Carol Mortensen, a woodworker and a textile artist. I don't know if John is still building wheels. Even if he isn't, should you ever get the opportunity to spin on this wheel, do so (but be careful, you may get spoiled).

The wheel I like next best to this one is the Nagy wheel. This Castle is pretty expensive but Mr. Nagy only makes 200 a year and each wheel is carefully made and tested and guaranteed for the life of the maker against any faulty work (man?)-ship. They are made of very fine, hard Kauri wood, hence the high price and will last at least your lifetime. The wheel has a single drive belt and scotch tension. This means that instead of a double driving band, the brake band is attached to the bobbin and the mother-of-all and the tension is adjusted by tightening or loosening this band. It feels very solid and treadles quite easily. It has a built on bobbin rack for plying yarn from two bobbins and for storing yarn on the two others. The orifice is large for thick spinning and the wheel is counter-balanced, like the Wendy. I have heard that Mr. Nagy also makes a Saxony wheel for \$110.00, but I don't have any more information.

I'm going to finish up by listing a few more wheels with brief descriptions from the distributors; none of this information is from my own experience. I hope from among the wheels mentioned



castle type

in this article, you will find one to enjoy for a long time.

The Sleeping Beauty wheel: parts held together by wing nuts. Large wheel and flywheel for smoother spinning. Graphite Novasteen bearings. Large orifice, large bobbins. Double drive band. Legs unscrew and treadle unhook for portability. About \$110 if ordered from the manufacturer in New Zealand and \$127.00 from the distributor in Oregon.

The Thumbelina: made by the same makers as the Sleeping Beauty, this is a small Castle wheel. Has the same attributes as above, pertaining to tension and bobbins. Comes unfinished and unassembled with simple step by step directions for screwing together.

Hallcraft Kit #2710 Early American Spinning Wheel: Saxony type. Complete assembly instructions. Solid Maple; brass and iron fittings; unfinished. 45 cm wheel, Includes distaff.

Den Norske Husflidsforening: Three Saxony models. A Finnish model uncarved. A Norwegian model and a Norwegian handcarved one.

Gordon Ham Studio: Colonial Wheel (Saxony) of solid black walnut with a 45 cm wheel; \$200.00 plus shipping. Also: Compact Wheel (Saxony) of black walnut, \$125.00; Castle Model with a smaller wheel diameter, \$150.00; and a Student Model of birch plywood with black walnut spool and flyer.

Finnish Upright Castle: made of solid Birch with a wheel diameter of 39 cm. Unstained, three bobbins; distaff holder but no distaff. Double drive belt. Delivered unassembled; four to six week wait. \$105.00. ♀

NAMES OF WHEELS AND WHERE TO GET THEM:

ASHFORD WHEEL

Ashford Handcrafts
Straw Into Gold

SAXON and DOUBLE TREDLE

The Spinning Wheel Shop

WALKING WHEEL

Tromp and Treadle

NAGY

Istvan Nagy
Straw Into Gold

EARLY AMERICAN SPINNING WHEEL

Hallcraft

SLEEPING BEAUTY and THUMBELINA

Baillie and Watts (manufacturer)
Siskiyou Spinning Wheels

LITTLE PEGGY

FINNISH SAXONY WHEEL

PIPY

INDIAN VALLEY SPINNER

GANDHI (CHARKA) WHEEL

THE SAXONY WHEEL

Straw Into Gold

STORES AND DISTRIBUTORS:

Ashford Handcrafts Ltd.
P.O. Box 180
Ashburton, New Zealand

The Spinning Wheel Shop
Audrey and Jerry Jensen
17521 North Wind Lake Rd.
Wind Lake, Wis. 53185

Tromp and Treadle
41401 Woodbrook Dr.
Wayne, Mi. 48184

Istvan Nagy
P.O. Box 9673
Wellington, New Zealand
or 107 Dariell St.
Newtonon, N.Z.

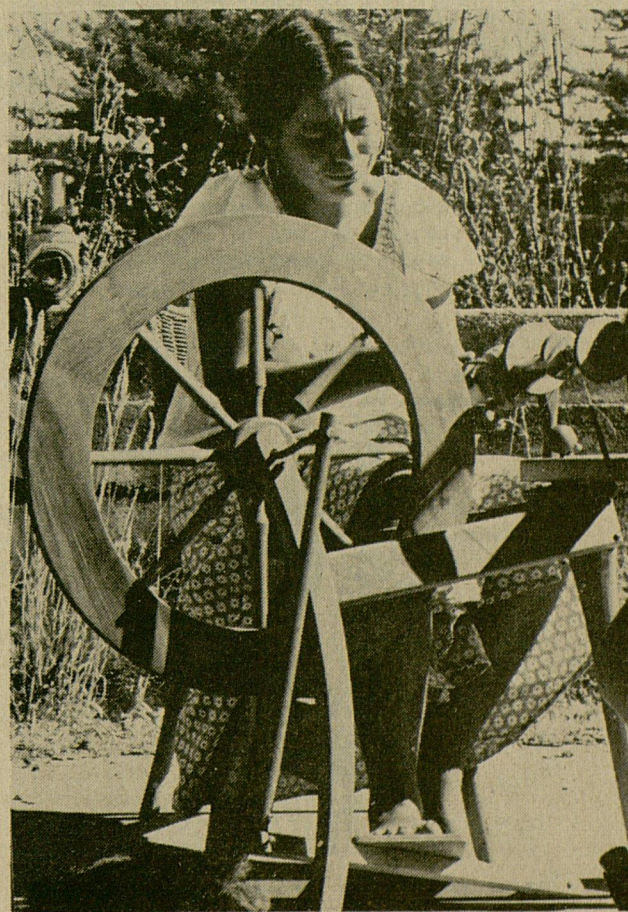
Hallcraft Kits
Midway Ornamental and Manufacturing Co.
1708 State Route 558
Salem, Ohio 44460

Siskiyou Spinning Wheels
Star Route, Box 131 Elk River Rd.
Port Orford, Ore.

Den Norske Husflidsforening
Box 38
Møllertgt
Oslo, Norway

Gordon Ham Studio
1335 McHenry
Modesto, Ca.

Straw Into Gold
P.O. Box 2904
5509 College Avenue
Oakland, Ca. 94618.



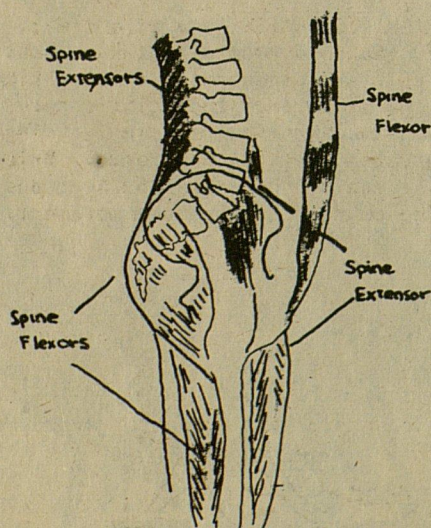
Back Care

Most all of us working to gather the harvest, chop our wood, comfort the children, finish the shelves for the canning, load the laundry in the truck, or however we use ourselves, know intimately the gnawing ache that can grab hold of the low back and buttocks (and sometimes even travel down the leg as far as the foot).

More often than not, the cause of this pain comes from straining the muscles and ligaments that support the spinal column by doing some unusual chore (not done daily) or from working up to and past the point of fatigue so that we've lost the smooth co-ordination of muscle action that was with us at the start of the day.

Other causes can stem from lack of calcium, proteins, or some vitamins in the body, infections in the system, weight gain, weakness following abdominal surgery or childbirth, or being confined to bed for awhile. Life's situations, provoking such emotions as grief, resentment, guilt, anger, or anxiety can affect us too by taking up residence as tension in our weakest and most susceptible parts.

The main support of your low back is the abdominal muscles. By their action of pulling up on the pubic bones they cause the pelvis to tilt backwards and tuck the buttocks under so that there is a straightening out or stacking up of the vertebrae one over the other. When the vertebrae are stacked, weight of the upper body can be transferred down through the bony column, avoiding the ligament strain that can happen as pressure from above forces a vertebrae to move forward on the one below it. This "pelvic tilt" position also helps avoid pinching pressure on the nerves as they travel out of the spinal column to the muscles nearby. Sometimes this pinching causes tension in your buttocks and hips.



Strain caused by forward pelvic tilt

Keep your weight evenly distributed on both feet. Avoid locking your knees all the way back (one or both of them): locking the knee forces the pelvis into a forward tilt position increasing the curve of the lower back. This is a hard one for most of us to remember because we all tend to stand around resting on the hip of one leg with the other knee bent. When standing around for long periods, lean on something.

Picture yourself suspended from a string at the top of your head. Feel taller, lighter; straighten up your shoulders. Then let them fall directly down into a relaxed position, not forward again. Raise your consciousness - your awareness of your body in space.

When sitting, pick a chair that fits you. Your hips and knees should be flexed to at least 90° with your feet on the floor (or stool or box). Preferably, your knees are higher than your hips. Arm rests help support the shoulders and upper back. A chair that's too high increases swayback.

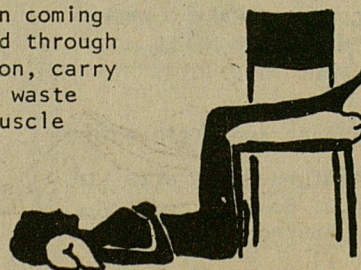
Sleep on a firm mattress with a low pillow so you won't strain your neck forward (but high enough so you can sleep on your side and have your neck supported).

Here are some suggestions to follow if you strain your back. Avoid further strain; rest your body; jump into a hot tub; wrap a hot water bottle with a damp towel and put it on your back. Comfort and care for yourself and you'll heal more quickly. You'll need about three days of good posture awareness and body mechanics, light exercise and lots of rest depending on how badly you've strained yourself. If the pain is really severe and you feel you have to see a doctor, then see an orthopedist, a specialist in the field.

Pillows packed under the knees when on your back will take the strain off the lower back. You will have to experiment to find how many will be comfortable for you. (It's a lot of company to have in bed suddenly.) Do not sleep on your side with your legs on those pillows - you could really twist your back. On your side with your knees bent and a good pillow under your neck and one between your legs is a good way to sleep if you haven't strained yourself too badly. Pack a hot water bottle back there wedged with a pillow.



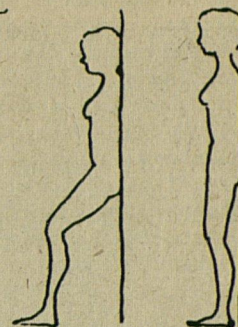
A good way to relax for five to twenty minutes is to lie on your back with heat under it and put your legs up on a chair with a pillow on it. This will take the pressure and weight off the back and legs. The heat will increase the blood and oxygen coming into the muscles and through increased circulation, carry away the irritating waste products from the muscle tissue.



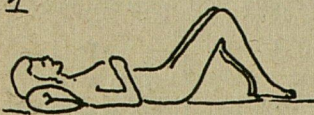
Massage a strained back as if you were rubbing away torn tissue. Probably, that's what has happened closest to the bones. Massage slowly, steadily, gently. It's good to use an oil or something to avoid friction or sudden little skids

Following are some back exercises to ease strain and/or strengthen your back. If you have strained your back you may want to wait a day or two before doing these exercises. It might be better to rest yourself, although some people say they feel better pretty fast by doing these. Check yourself out kindly. These exercises should not hurt you or cause you pain. If it does, then it is too soon to do them, or you are doing them without supporting your back properly. At first do each exercise five times for each side or for each whole exercise. Then build up slowly. Don't forget to keep breathing.

4



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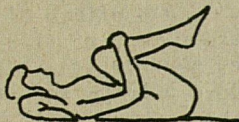
1 PELVIC TILT: lying flat on your back, with your knees raised, contract your abdominal muscles, roll your pelvis back, squeeze the upper buttocks. Flatten your back against the floor and keep breathing. Eventually you should be able to hold this position indefinitely. You want to build the strength of your abdominals so they will just naturally hold you in the correct pelvic tilt without you even thinking about it.

4 STANDING POSITION: Stand four inches away from the wall. Now sit against it, bending your knees slightly. Tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles. This will tilt the pelvis back and flatten the lower spine. Holding this position, inch up the wall to a standing position, but straightening the legs. Now walk around the room, maintaining the same posture. Place your back against the wall again to see if you have held it.

2 Starting in the same position as exercise #1, raise one knee to your chest, leave it there, then raise the other, stretching your back slowly. (Because the muscles that start the bending of the hips are attached to the lower spine and pull from there, this could strain you if you raised both legs at once.)

5 Lying flat on your back, with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, bring one knee to your chest, stretching the back muscles slowly. Then bring your foot down and raise the other knee to your chest, stretching again. This is a warm-up exercise as much as anything.

2



5



3 PARTIAL SIT-UP: Start flat on your back with your knees bent. Because you don't want to use that same muscle pair (iliopsoas) referred to in #2, only raise your shoulders and upper back off the floor. Reach your fingers toward and over your knees. Important: do not anchor your ankles or toes (you'll use iliopsoas). Hold yourself up there for endurance and strength; keep breathing. Do this five times to start with. If your neck or shoulders seem to strain, relax them more - it's your stomach you are working! or you can cross your arms over your chest.

6 STRAIGHT LEG RAISE (one at a time): Lying flat on your back and from a bent knee position, slide one leg flat. Then raise it very slowly to stretch the hamstrings and sciatic nerve, and to strengthen the abdominal muscles. Going slowly builds greater postural endurance. Bring your leg down flat again, then bend the knee and slide the other leg down to do the same movement. ♀

3



6



MERGING THROUGH DANCE

This is the second in a series of articles about dancing. Let's begin with the warm-up series at the end of the first article. You are in a squatting position catching your breath. Take as long as you need to recover, but try not to sit down. When your heart and breath have slowed down and you've had enough of the wonderful after-effects, slowly raise yourself up. You're probably on your toes and hands. First, lower your heels, raising your pelvis as much as necessary, hands remaining on the ground. Straighten your legs as much as you can without removing your hands. As you straighten your legs all the way, lift your torso from the pelvis up --that is, let your torso, arms, and head hang; shake your head, is it loose? Rise up by making a tower of your vertebrae--building blocks--one placed on top of the next, arms and head hanging. The building blocks of the spine extend into the back of your head; build them up one by one, arms and shoulders hanging soft--do not hunch --until your shoulders settle into their relaxed place and the head balances on the spine. Stand a moment and feel your body tingle with energy. Try this folding down and up a few times, rolling through the spine. Remember in coming up that your pelvis leads the movement; your shoulders cannot lift you. During one of your moments in the squat position, take a few easy bounces to loosen up, and straighten your legs with fingers on the ground. Bounce, bounce, bounce and straighten--a few times--before rising all the way up.

On your last rise to standing, keep the movement flowing upward by raising your arms out and above your head (where's your breath?), reaching as high as you can, stretching to the sky--let it bring you up to your toes, reaching--touch the sky--as high as you possible can--look up to get even taller--until you EXPLODE at the top and collapse. A few times at this and you will have either had enough for the day or feel energized enough to go on for hours!

A few prances to make sure the feet are warmed up. This is a great way to practice rolling through the foot, the means of getting the most efficient, buoyant and smooth movement. Roll one foot until just the toes rest on the floor. This is technically called the half-toe position because of ballet's practice of putting weight on the tips of the toes, which they are not at all meant to carry. Lower the heel and raise the other foot; repeat several times. Now roll through the toes entirely off the ground so the whole foot points down. The movement actually begins up in the thigh socket (attachment to the pelvis) with your feet and toes helping to push off. Lower by rolling back down through the toes and into the foot. Try this a few times, increasing your speed as you get better.

What is involved here is a shifting of weight from one leg to the other, so let's go back a minute. When your weight is on both legs, it is centered

between them. To bring one foot to half-toe, you must shift the weight so that it is mostly, though not entirely, over the standing leg. To lift a foot entirely off the ground, all your weight must be centered directly over the standing leg -- right on top of that thigh socket, thigh bone nestled deep into its socket like a palm embracing a fist. With that in mind and practiced, you won't lose your balance.

To start prancing, you do the same shifting and rolling through the feet, only faster -- one foot lifting as the other lowers. Try this in place and then travel with it. To really prance, each foot comes entirely off the ground before the other one comes down. This involves a tiny leap as you shift weight. Your feet should be well warmed up after a bit of prancing.

Back at center, stand and breathe. After awhile, just let your body respond to the breath -- any way you want -- rising and falling, lifting and lowering, opening and closing with the breath. Let the arms and legs respond like tassels.

Let's come to a sitting position for awhile. Sit in a cross-legged position. If you put your hands under your seat, you will feel a bone pressing into each hand. These are your sit bones, and that is precisely what they're for. It is upon these that you balance as you sit. All your upper weight rests into the pelvis, spine straight and balanced as in standing. Arms hanging softly, hands resting on your knees. Simply sit lightly and breathe from your center. Make sure your upper torso is not leaning too far forward or back. Check with a friend or in a mirror.

Begin by rolling through the vertebrae as in the standing position. Start with the top of the head and roll down, one vertebrae at a time, keeping your pelvis steady. When you cannot curl any further, deepen into the pelvis, curling over your legs as much as possible. Hold here, release and relax what you can, and slowly roll back up. Do this a few times. The last time down, stretch your arms on the floor in front of you and lie as low over your legs as possible. Hang here; let go; let your breath out with strong exhales; sink into the floor. Then, uncurl to center.

Let your head roll around your neck, heavy head on your long, beautiful neck, stretching it all around, and back to center. Your head literally balances on your spine. Feel the point where the spine fits into the skull. Feel your scalp, move it back and forth on your head. See how much looser it is when your facial muscles are relaxed.

Some bounces to loosen up. Make an angle of your upper torso over your legs, keeping it straight, moving from the pelvis. Bounce a bit in this position and return to center. Try it backwards, keeping your spine in one line. Now curl over your legs from the top, and gently and easily take a few bounces, deepening as you go, into those thigh sockets, long curl through the Cont..



neck; and uncurl to center. Twist from the pelvis (details on twisting in the section on standing exercises) until you're facing over one leg. Take easy bounces over the leg, uncurl, and untwist. The same over the other leg. When you finish the bounces, recenter your energy.

A word about contractions before we go on. They are important to understand and know in your body, to develop new dimensions of expression, for balance, for support and flexibility, quickness and exactness, and more. Contractions, like everything, start in the pelvis. The word as it applies to muscles, means to shorten. When you contract your sitting or standing body, from the center, you shorten the distance from pelvis to shoulders. The back rounds and the chest softens inwards, the pelvis tips. It is as if someone hit you in the solar plexus. Press yourself or someone else there - what is the natural response? That is a contraction. It is not slumping. The hips and shoulders maintain their line and position as the back rounds. The shoulders do not move forward. Try sitting straight, then contracting, then straight, then arching, then straight. It is the same idea for arching. It is a motion of the pelvis with the spine reacting; the shoulders do not press back. When you contract, you roll back a bit behind your sit bones. The more you relax your bottom muscles, the smoother the transition.

To change legs, contract and roll behind your sit bones. Let your legs respond by their deepening into the thigh sockets and coming up off the ground. Hang here a moment, arms rounded forward also from the contraction, with everything hanging into the pelvis, loose and balanced. See if you can swing your legs around a bit without losing center. Hang like a baby, everything weighing inward, perfectly centered. Switch your legs in the air so that when you return to sitting, the legs are reversed. Try contracting back, kicking and reversing legs gently, returning to the sit. Do this a few times.

Now take your bounces over reversed legs. For side lifts, bring one arm up to the side, over your head, and lift from the pelvis over to the other side, though still planted on your sit bones. Return to center and do the other side, taking easy bounces. Switch legs and do it again.

A delicious contraction dance is to contract back letting your arms respond by rounding forward. Come up to sitting (pelvis leads, but be careful not to arch) as your arms open to the side. Leaving your arms open, lean forward with a straight back. Fly back into the contraction, arms folding, then back to center, and tip forward. Get into smooth, flowing transitions with no dead ends; each movement flows right into the next. Try it with a count of three for each movement.

With your feet together in front of you, find your spine balance. Take your forward bounces, floor meltings, side lifts, and contractions in this position. Try a dance of curling slightly, keeping shoulders over pelvis; then deepen the contraction, bounce forward, and rebound, uncurling to center. Open your legs so they're straight and wide. Open them just enough so that you can remain on your sit bones with a

straight spine using pelvic support. Try all the things we've done in this position, too. Keep increasing the angle of your legs as you get more comfortable.

This is a good place to check your leg alignment. Flex one foot so that the toes point up and the knee comes off the ground; the heel does not move. Are your knee and toes lined up, pointing toward the sky? Try the other leg, deepening into the thigh socket, pulling from the thigh socket with your foot as added push. Try alternating, one leg up as the other goes down; then both together. Try pointing your foot as it goes down.

Bring your legs straight in front of you and try all the exercises. At first, as you bounce forward, let your knees flex slightly. Then keep them straight. This is a good position to work with your feet. Point them, curl the toes, stretch them, spread the toes. Raise one in the air and rotate all around the ankle. Rotate them on the ground. Dance with them.

To work on foot sensitivity as well as other benefits, from this position, draw one leg into the thigh socket, brushing the foot caressingly along the ground as it follows, knee bending upward. Slide it back out smoothly. Control it all the way from the thigh socket so the weight never drops and the foot doesn't stumble. The muscle that's doing all this work is the psoas muscle from the top of the thigh bone into the toin. Do one leg at a time and then both together.

Now sit with your knees up, feet planted, back slightly contracted. As your back straightens, twist to the side, legs softly folding over until they rest on top of each other on the ground. Your arms open; your feet roll, but don't leave their position. Roll back through center with a contraction, and on to the other side as you straighten. The feet stay soft as you roll back and forth over them.

Try sitting with legs curled to the side, the way we were taught to be "lady-like" as we sit on the floor. Do your side lifts. With one arm on the side for support, lift from the pelvis enough to let your legs stretch out to the opposite side smoothly along the ground. (Movements like this especially could really use a good smooth floor until you're a complete expert.) By means of a contraction, draw them back in again to sit. One of my very favorite movements is to swing from this position. Straighten the legs to the side, push off with your pelvis aided by your supporting arm as you contract and swing your legs, still straight, around in front and out to the other side, decontracting as you get there. Contract to curl in. As you get more practiced, see about swinging all the way around, pivoting on your seat.

Return to center and take a walk on your sit bones. Use them as feet and walk forward and back, using your real feet as supports. In a centered sit again, work with your hands. Squeeze them, stretch them, claw the air. Shake them as if trying to throw them off - then hold still and feel the tingle. Play with them, let the fingers dance. Explore your shoulders: lift and lower them, circle and bounce them. Try moving

your rib cage from side to side.

Open your arms to the side, not so high that they do not hang; slightly lower and in front of straight out; slightly rounded and soft; hands held in the same curve, not drooping. Feel the soft, loving, strong beauty of the arms. Let one hand trace the inner curved line of the other arm, from fingertips to sternum.

One last position at the sit: the square. Right leg curled behind, left curled in front so that the left leg and right thigh make three sides to a square. Try resting the weight onto both sit bones, deepening at the thigh joints. Try your side lifts. Try twisting the spine around. Try extending the back leg out to the side as you twist to the other side, using a hand for support. Do this on both sides. To change sides, unfold, swing around, fold in.

Let's change levels for awhile. Lie down on the floor on your back. This constructive rest position allows you good, efficient rest. Lie with your feet planted on the floor, knees up, leaning against each other, holding each other up. Lift your arms directly up toward the sky and from there let them fold over your chest, hanging restfully. Relax. Think about your breath, inflating the pelvic balloon. The natural way to breathe from a lying position is from this center. It is from here that you breathe while sleeping - it increases consciousness. Take as long as you want. Luxuriate in this healthful position! Back resting into the ground, head sinking its weight in the earth, let the ground or floor cushion you. Give all of yourself to what lies beneath you.

When you're ready to start moving open your arms onto the ground at your sides and lengthen your legs. Notice how your spine curves some off the ground. Contract into the ground, letting your legs come in, your arms fold, your head fall back. Relax. With someone holding your feet, if you need it, come to sitting by a contraction, deepening as your head and spine curl up to a sitting position. Contract to roll down, vertebrae by vertebrae, returning to the ground. Let go and rest at the bottom. Try coming to the sit by means of an arch. First, simply arch and let the rest of your body respond, head remaining on the floor. After a few times, let it pull you all the way up to a sit. Contract as you roll back down. Relax - every muscle. Think of each part of your body and let go as it comes to mind. Close your eyes and float away on the water. Have someone wiggle parts of you to test their looseness.

Lengthen each leg by extending through the heel. Relax. Lengthen your arms by extending through the heel of the hand. Relax. Let your tensions fly away in the breeze. Melt into the earth. Slowly, roll over to one side, shoulders soft; deep rolling onto your front, right over that soft arm. Let the other one curl in as it naturally wants to, delicious and soft. Roll back easily and onto the other side and over; sinking into the earth.

On your back again, draw your legs in so the feet rest on the ground. Let one leg at a time fold deeply, gently into its thigh socket as the knee responds coming close to your chest.

Rock it is this position, gently increasing the flexion in the joint; softening, deepening. Bring it down with control, not letting it drop. Work both legs for awhile, noting the spine deepening into the ground as the angle increases. Bounce your folded legs. Stretch them toward the sky easily, keeping their weight resting into the pelvis, balancing over the pelvis. A nice, swinging leg dance is to start with feet on the ground. Deepen one over the chest, extend it along the floor, foot sliding easily; continue the momentum up straight and back toward your head; rebound the extended leg back to the floor (don't drop it). With the foot sliding in response to deep thigh muscles, bring the leg back folded over the chest; and lower the foot to the floor.

Another delicious stretch is to bring the legs up toward the sky, open them as wide as is comfortable, and with hands on inside of thighs, bounce them open. Bring back together, fold down, and return to floor.

Make up your own combinations of leg exercises, concentrating on deepening the thigh socket, controlling the legs' movements from the psoas muscle.

Roll onto your front and relax into the earth. After awhile, by means of your arms alone, pull yourself around, body hanging, legs dragging. Move forward and back and spin around. From here, you can push up to your knees. If you want to come to standing from lying on your back, roll to your side as you curl in; contract to come to sitting with legs curled to the side, push up to a squat. Stretch out one leg at a time behind you and bounce on those toes. Back to the squat, and slowly uncurl to standing.

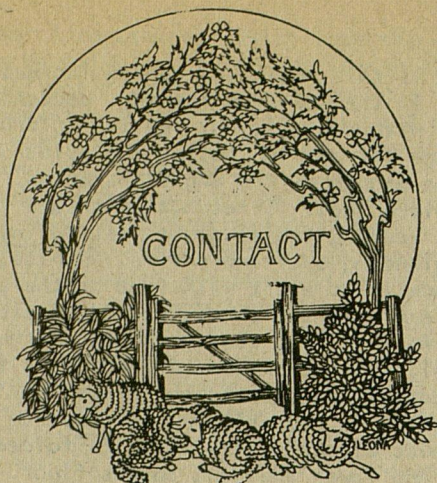
On your knees is a hard position for many because we are so unused to it, so take care of them. Put something soft under them at first if you need it and work on relaxing away the tension there that causes the pain. It is the same for sitting back on the feet. Put something soft under the feet and work on letting go of their tendency to hold tight. Try sitting back on your feet for awhile. For breaks, put weight on your hands. Align your spine in this position. This is a great one for contractions and arches, letting your arms swing in response to the spinal action in their figure eight pattern. Lift your pelvis up to a stance on your knees and back to the feet. Let your arms rise up over your head as you swing up, and lower as you lower the pelvis down. Try side lifts from this posture.

On hands and knees with back straight, go into deep arches and contractions. Crawl around with your back in different positions. Pick a nice spot and let one leg at a time swing in, knee coming to meet the head, and back as you arch, leg extended behind. Do it also with the back remaining straight.

Last of all before getting up, try walking around on hands and feet, belly up!

Come to standing in an easy, slow way. Take a moment, as is always beneficial, to center before moving.

In the next issue, we'll explore movement from a standing position, covering space, and improvisation. ♀



Shannon farm looking for women and men into forming small communal living groups(6-20)-- focus on bisexuality, feminist consciousness, open relationships, fleshless 50% raw foods diet, ecological awareness, personal growth and social change. Have 500 acres in Va. Contact: Brook, c/o Shannon Farm Association, Rt. 2, Box 183, Afton, Va. for more information.

I'd like to meet/correspond with a woman (with children?) who has her life pretty well in hand. I'm 32, gay, a writer. Contact: Leslie 3619 E. 18th St., Long Beach, Ca., 90804.

Non-profit organization lends books through the mail to members--homesteading, shelter, food producing, building, home medicine, animals, etc. \$5 membership, write for more information. Contact: Earthbooks Lending Library, Sweet, Idaho 83670.

I am looking for work or apprenticeship with another potter anywhere(except middle of a city) after June. Contact: Margaret Jolly, 12585 Jones Bar Rd, Nevada City, Ca. 95959

Lesbian feminist radio collective in Seattle wants newsletters, news releases, calendars of events, ideas & outlets for shows. Also have tapes ready to air or use. Contact: Lois or Janine, c/o KRAB, 1406 Harvard Ave., Seattle, Wash., 98122.

Would like to communicate with others in this area(North and South Carolina) who are working to develop an organic homestead on a small farm, to exchange ideas and possibly work in gardening, livestock care, herbology, and over all material self-sufficiency. Contact: Addrienne Manns, Rt.1, Box 478-A, Forest City, North Carolina, 28043.

JoAnn & Tiffany in Alaska: Write us again; we lost your address. Jennifer from Country Women.

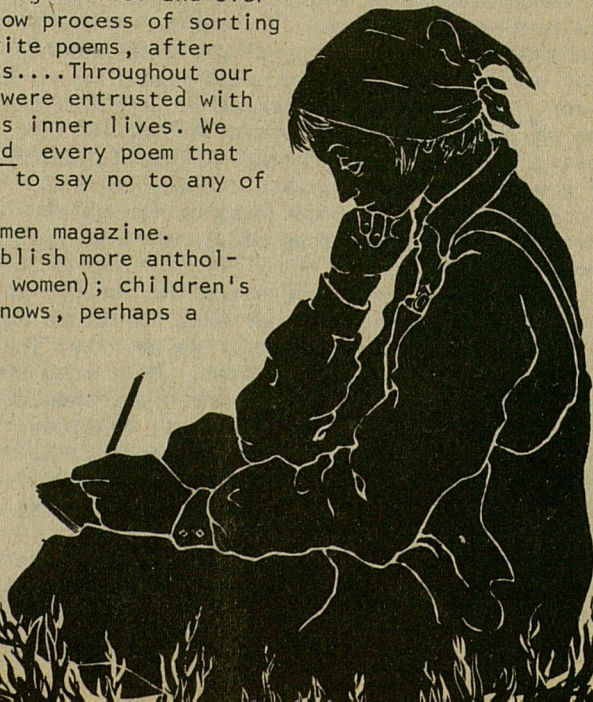
COUNTRY WOMEN'S POETRY

128 pages, paperback
\$2.00 plus 25¢ postage
from: Country Women's Poetry
Box 511
Garberville Ca. 95440

The first Country Women anthology is now available. Edited by Christina, Marnie, and Jennifer from Harris, it marks a breakthrough in many ways: our first book, our first close working relationship with women from outside our community. We came to know each other through the process of creating this book.

With poems and graphics by 71 women, this book takes us more deeply into our shared lives as country feminists. It has grown out of our collective culture, through a collective process. As Marnie says in the Introduction: "We were gratified and overwhelmed to receive over 200 poems, and began the slow process of sorting and choosing. This anthology represents our favorite poems, after reading them over and over again for six months....Throughout our work on this anthology we have felt that we were entrusted with a special and personal expression of women's inner lives. We realized that at some level we had accepted every poem that was sent to us, and this made it difficult to say no to any of them...."

This book was financed by Country Women magazine. Profits from its sale will be used to publish more anthologies: photography(portraits of country women); children's fiction; and short fiction. And who knows, perhaps a second volume of poetry!



FUTURE ISSUES

THE INTEGRATION OF MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH: What is health? What is the reciprocal relationship between our bodies and our states of minds? How do we relate to sickness? What is the politics of mental and physical health? (Deadline - March 1)

THE POLITICS OF FOOD: Production, distribution, consumption of food. The reality of running small farms and the connections with agribusiness. (Deadline - May 1)

We are also collecting material for an issue on movement between the city and the country.

We are trying especially hard to improve the appearance of Country Women. Doubtlessly you read our plea for graphics each issue, but this time please take us seriously. Our current file of graphics has dwindled down again to practically nothing. By graphics we mean pen and ink drawings, ink washes, wood or linoleum block prints, etchings, engravings, sumi brush drawings, black and white photographs, even fingerpaintings. But clear, crisp reproducible material is what we need. When you send us your graphics, please print your name and address on the back of each one.

P. O. BOX 5502
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GRAPHICS CREDITS

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Dashu: back cover

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Alice Flores: 42, 44
Harriet Hartigan: 13
Lynda Koolish: 1, 2, 7, 22, 24, 25, 41, 61

This material free on request to feminist publications. We are on file at Women's History Archives, 2525 Oak St., Berkeley, Ca. and on microfilm at Bell and Howell in Wooster, O.

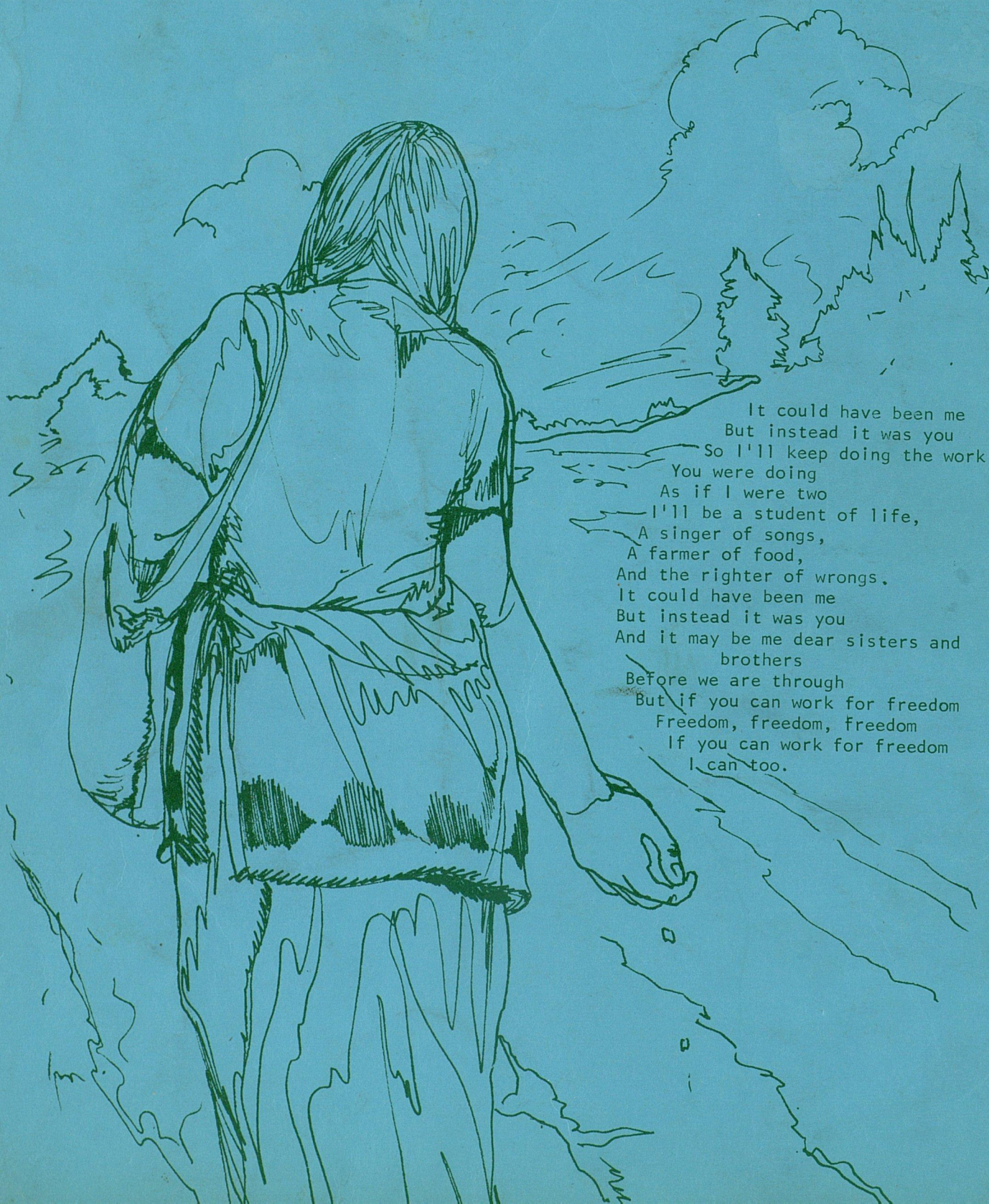
Anthologies

Photography - portraits of country women and their lives. Gone to press, will be available soon.

Fiction for Children - short stories or works. Send to: N.O.T.A. Ranch, Star Route 1, Box 38, Covelo, Ca. 95428

Country Women's Fiction - short stories or fictional prose. Send to: Box 508, Little River, CA. 95456

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It could have been me
But instead it was you
So I'll keep doing the work
You were doing
As if I were two
I'll be a student of life,
A singer of songs,
A farmer of food,
And the righter of wrongs.
It could have been me
But instead it was you
And it may be me dear sisters and
brothers
Before we are through
But if you can work for freedom
Freedom, freedom, freedom
If you can work for freedom
I can too.