



AWARE



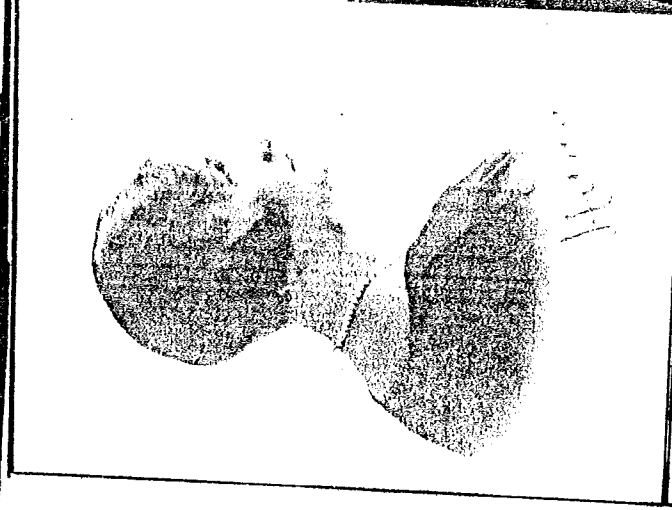
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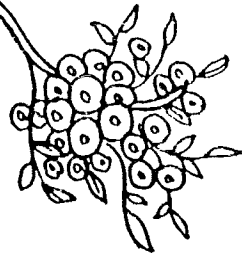


MERRY CHRISTMAS



“The
position of women in
a society
provides an exact measure
of the development of
that society.”

Gustav Geiger



Making Connections

Finding Our Power

WOMEN AND POWER

In choosing the theme for this newsletter we were directly affected by the Sydney Conference, "Making Connections; Finding Our Power". It seemed to make perfect sense in writing about the workshops and the conference itself that we continue the theme "Women and Power". The three hundred women that came together to work on issues, concerns, to share ideas, goals and strategies and to implement changes for women generated a powerful, inspiring experience for us all.

Power! How do we define it? In what context and in relation to which group or groups of people do we define it?

The dictionary definition of power is "to affect, act, implement". Another part of the definition is "to control, dominate, command influence". This latter definition is the model of power which predominates in our culture. It is aggressive, dominant "power over" which ultimately is the power of the gun and the bomb - the power of separation and annihilation that backs up all institutions of domination.

Yet the "power to", which we sense in a seed, in the growth of a child is the power in weaving, working, creating and making choices.

As an oppressed group we have little access to power as defined by men and male institutions. Some women, including Alexa MacDonough, feel that to make changes for women we need more women in politics and positions of power. Many women express great concern and distaste for the existing order and seek new ways to balance the present power structure.

As women we want to reclaim our power and we do this best in groups with like-minded women. Power means loving ourselves, our bodies, respecting our intelligence, integrity, competence and courage. Power means valuing our life-giving qualities; supporting, helping and educating each other; coming together in our collective power with strategies and challenges for change. Power means always being aware of and attentive to how we achieve our goals and allowing for the rights and dignity of all who share this planet.

If we are to take positions of power in order to make changes for women and other oppressed groups, indeed, for the continuance of life on this planet, then we must do it through a life-affirming process and not through dominance, aggression and greed.

When a group of women were asked, "What comes to mind when we think of women and power?" the following comments were given:

- Solidarity! Women must support each other.
- powerless on many levels
- courage, sharing and honesty
- male power/domination
- we emulate male power
- women have limited power in the home i.e., can't decide which car to buy, where the family holiday will be etc.
- money is power; men have more money and power; women defer to men
- women's work is not valued enough to be paid
- a woman must be twice as good as a man to succeed
- women lack self-esteem and self-confidence but have latent power
- intellectually it means control of our lives making our own decisions without being other-directed
- visually I think of Amazons, the statue of liberty and women at Greenham Common; inwardly, it is intuitive knowing, becoming whole as a person.
- freedom to do what they want, when they want to do it. It is a man's world. The dominant culture keeps women down.
- empowerment of women; individual empowerment of women
- political power over is scary and threatening the only example we have of power is one of dominance.

Workshops, *

Incest - A Social and Systematic Disempowerment of Women

The workshop on Incest was facilitated by Brenda Richards who teaches at Dalhousie School of Social Work and chairs the special Metro Committee on Child Sexual Assault in Halifax.

Brenda describes incest as the sexual assault of children within the family. Incest roots children in powerlessness; it usually starts early in their lives and the betrayal they feel is profound. Incest serves to confirm concretely the social power men have and to reinforce women's and children's lack of power. Where the father is the perpetrator the risk of incest for girls is one chance in four, for boys it is one in nine. However the risk of sexual assault for a child increases when we take account of other male family members such as brothers, uncle grand-fathers, step-brothers, step-fathers and cousins who also have access to the child.

A Conference for Women

Incest continued.

The family is seen as a private, sacred domain. It is a social institution that can't be challenged. In our patriarchal world the man or the men hold the power. They "rule the roost." A child has a 100 to 1 chance of being assaulted in our own home over any other place. We cannot look at incest without looking at the family structure and recognizing it as a reflection of our social structure - the patriarchy. We must see the problem as male violence against the powerless in a society of unequals. Incest reinforces the powerlessness of women and can be understood as a means - a very destructive, violent means - of maintaining that social inequity.

As women we are co-opted into perpetuating our own oppression when

1. we are divided from other women,
2. we believe as we are told that mothers are to blame for incest,
3. we go through family therapy that doesn't incorporate a feminist analysis to focus on changing the male/female power imbalance
4. we believe the problem is being addressed as emphasis is placed on street-proofing and not home-proofing our children,
5. we see incest as an individual family problem and not as a social epidemic,
6. we treat the individual perpetrators and not the culture that creates them in such large numbers,
7. we doubt the child is telling the truth.

Incest is an economic issue as well. It is economic dependence that often keeps women from leaving abusive situations. Women must achieve economic independence. We should be able to live fully and independently without men to begin to take our power as equals. We must live with men only by conscious choice and must validate other lifestyles and relationships besides heterosexual ones. We must break our own silences with our sisters, our mothers, our daughters and our friends. We must ask, "Did this ever happen to you?" We must join together as women, stand up and be counted as feminists and tackle incest as the patriarchal social phenomena it is.



Women and Anger Workshop.

This was a very inspiring session. Helen Levine, at age 65 swept us away with her energy, power and humour, a dynamic facilitator! she started the session by stating we must break the silence around anger which is taboo for women. Anger is an important signal that something is wrong, that change is needed..

Angry women are punished ignored or threatened with abandonment

Our anger is seen as hysterical inappropriate or mad!! We are liked better when we are guilty passive and self doubting..

With the Womens Movement we are re-defining women's anger. There are lots of things to get enraged about "Violence against Women is everywhere and always."

Anger does not have to be a negative emotion, it can and must be Empowering. All of us as Women get angry, our rage is buried deep and contained and subordinate.

We did an exercise in the group. We split up and found a woman we

did not know, to share an angry experience.. We then came together to talk about our anger. With

our group we started the sharing and the first women to speak was expressing concern of anger being aggressive, and we don't want to

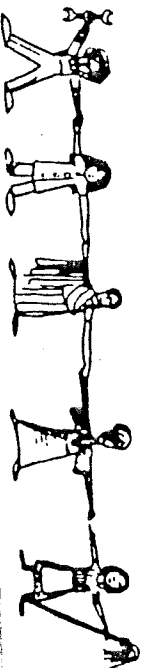
duplicate men's aggression, I think that has been a trap for women to keep them contained.. I like to think we can be aggressive without violence, we have a right to be in the world and we must stand up for ourselves!!

We are allowed to channel our anger in bitchyness, manipulation and depression.. It seemed that in getting in touch with our rage we more fully experience joy.. We expand with anger instead of being contained.

There are direct repercussions to Women's Anger.. We can lose jobs or lose relationships by being too uppity. Women expressed concern

about learning to live alone, to be autonomous, to be less reliant on men.. We also must remember that women can be destroyed by anger which can end up in physical and medical symptoms, and to end on a positive note "In our Anger is remarkable clarity.. when we are maddest we can have the greatest clarity..

We left with a renewed sense of energy and great admiration for this powerful woman, this self professed crone.... showing us a way through and beyond, anger to Collective Power !!!!!



WOMENS CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS CONTINUED.

Women and Reproductive Technology

Norma Scarborough

and Kathy Coffin (facilitators)

This was a very complex issue to cover in a workshop format with very little time to inform or understand the complexities involved.

We discussed four topics (in small groups) at least 40 women attended.

1. Surrogate Motherhood
2. In Vitro Fertilization
3. Court Order Intervention
4. Gender Selection.

The general response was one of dismay, if not horror at the fast pace and lack of control or knowledge we have on these issues. Women were voicing their concerns that men again are involved tightening their control over female reproductive processes. With regard to Surrogate M. women are concerned that the process might demean motherhood (W. as baby machines).

Woman's use of surrogate to gestate his child would lead to physicians and legislators attempt to control surrogates activities and behaviour during pregnancy to assure a more perfect product, and this could lead to similar constraints on all pregnant women.

In Vitro fertilization is expensive. risky drug laden (women have to take strong hormonal drugs at various stages) and with low success rate of live birth and questioned the excessive social pressures on women to be mothers and the dearth of other options or roles for women in society.

As regards court order intervention the stats show that 80 per cent of cases succeed. These interventions are class based, and used particularly on poor women, and women of colour.

Gender selection was particularly questionable given the preference for male children historically in our varying cultures.

In summing up while the media have heralded reproductive tech, lawyers and physicians have quickly cashed in on them and feminists are asking "are men trying to play god", and finally have more control in a process which they have envied and been in awe of in their relationship to Women throughout the ages.

"Free Trade", do we really know what it is all about? According to economist Marjorie Cohen Free Trade is the dream plan of Big Business, and Big Business is the only sector in Canada that likes it. Why???

"Free Trade" will reduce the power of trade unions, it discriminates against women and poorer peoples and will virtually wipe out the social system (including M.S.I.) in Canada. It will also adversely effect our manufacturing and agricultural industries.

Before being elected as Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney wouldn't even consider the idea of Free Trade, now he is trying to push it through parliament and he's not even being very democratic in his methods. Decisions are being made by a small group of people, with even provincial premiers having difficulty voicing their concerns. The issue is not open for public scrutiny. The result is going to precipitate in a political crisis when the public realizes what is happening.

The effect of Free Trade on women is a very negative one. We will lose jobs in the administration segments of large firms, in the textile industry, in the food processing industry, in the area of electronics and electronic products, in leather goods, in the agriculture and service industry which includes the fields of insurance, accounting, banking art, music, etc.

The above are all areas where many women are employed. The Gov't seems very comfortable with women losing jobs, with the biggest losers being older and immigrant women.

As a result of Free Trade employers will close up plants and pay lower wages. There will be no other jobs in the market place to take up the slack. Working conditions will deteriorate.

Then there is the issue of "binding disputes" mechanism. In effect this is really a fraud. Though the binding disputes clause is supposed to provide a avenue for fair treatment to both countries, a loop hole exists which will enable the U.S. to opt out of anything they don't like.

Still worse the Canadian Govt. is now spending \$12 million dollars promoting the advantages of Free Trade to Canada and Canadians. Surely this money could be better spent elsewhere.

As Marjorie Cohen stated: "Dramatic action is needed to stop Free Trade".

Copies of Marjorie Cohen's book

"Free Trade and the Future of Women's Work" can be obtained from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

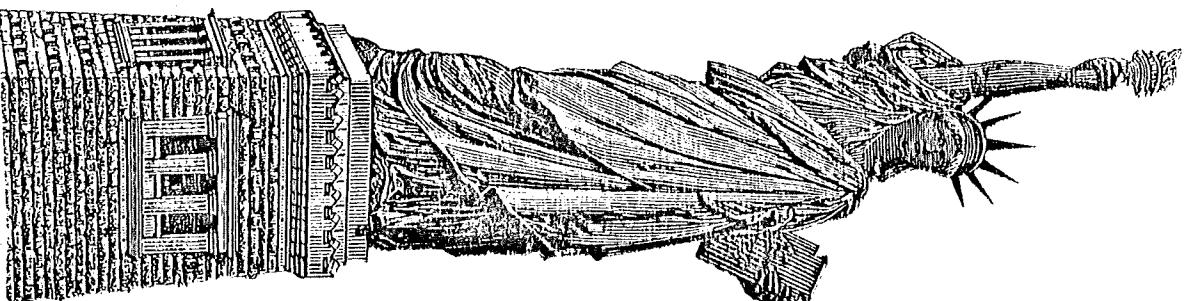
witnesses to the value of communications and lobbying, when women join together for a cause. Now we have the MEECH LAKE ACCORD which when it appears will obliterate much of what was won in the original charter. It seems that women are destined to keep struggling forever if they are to register any gains. So once again, the NAC has taken up the cause. Likewise, in the so-called FREE TRADE DEAL, women stand to lose the most and how little that seems to bother those who are in the SEATS OF THE MIGHTY.

Sylvia Gold spoke too of the problem of violence towards women. She lauded the work being done by the women in the NAOMI SOCIETY in Antigonish.

I would suggest that the main lesson to be learned from the Panel Discussion is that the empowerment of women can be won only by women themselves and that at the price of eternal vigilance and patient struggle. For, if the last hundred years of women's history have taught us anything, it is that men are not going to relinquish lightly their strangle hold on power.

HUMBLY SUBMITTED BY: Isabel MacDougall

EVERYTIME WE DONT STRUGGLE
WE MAKE IT HARDER FOR WOMEN
WHO DO.



Menopause-Illness or natural process?

At recent workshop at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Joan Semple, facilitator with the National Film Board and Phyllis Sweet, public health nurse with the Dept., of Health, discussed the myths and realities of menopause.

"For many years menopause was treated as a disease rather than a natural process," stated Ms. Sweet, "and estrogen replacement therapy was prescribed." "The research on ERT is inconclusive and should not be administered lightly," warned Ms. Sweet. Recent studies have shown that proper diet and exercise can help to curtail some of the more unpleasant symptoms of menopause. "Ginseng taken as a tea or in tablet form has proven to be very effective for some women," stated Ms. Sweet. Salt intake must also be monitored during this period in a women's life. Dressing in layers, wearing lower necklines, and choosing cottons can reduce the unpleasantness of "hot flashes." Proper rest and relaxation is important to avoid becoming overtired and irritable.

As part of the workshop, Joan Semple showed the recently produced film, "Is It Hot in Here?" Along with information about the possible symptoms, dangers of osteoporosis and the debatable medical treatments, this film, provides interesting and humorous insights on how it feels to be aging in a society consecrated to youth.

Ms. Sweet concluded the workshop by saying, "many women breeze through the menopausal years with little or no difficulty." In Ms. Sweet's experience as a public health nurse she feels that knowledge and the support of friends and relatives can help a woman go through "the change," as positively as possible.

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE WITH THE MEDIA.

Like all the other workshops at the conference this too was full. Joella Foulds & Ann Graham-Walker from CBC Radio, Sydney were the facilitators.

The workshop began with a 10 minute brainstorming session in which we all broke into small groups to discuss: "What Do I Want The Media To Do For Me?" The responses were as follows:

- exposure; non-biased positive coverage; to broadcast beyond 'our' small group- spread the word- inform the public & correct misconceptions; inform the public about various events; accurate reporting of issues; to listen & be interested; to use our language & words-not to change them too much.

We then discussed the publicising of events - Joella suggested that initially the story is the most important aspect to be developed - we should talk about it first & then later publicise the event - tie it in to the main fabric of the story.

We then delved deeper into what a story was and came up with various points for consideration; i.e. clarity of idea; should be a new story or original; need to humanise the story - need 'real' people involved (those involved personally). A story also requires an element of activity 'a happening' and of course, tension, not only in the story but in the interview too. Joella & Ann role-played various scenarios to further our understanding of impact & newsworthy items.

A further concern for the workshop participants was with regard to giving out information. Joella stated that everyone should receive press releases. Phone calls & personal visits to the radio station/newspaper were important. We should note the paper printing deadline & when to call the station, i.e. there is no point in calling the station when the programme one is interested in is airing. Choosing the spokesperson is also important, they need to be articulate & fully cognisant with the issues. Therefore, several group participants should be prepared to be spokespersons so that they gain the experience & the broadcaster can contact anyone as representing the group. It was also noted that women may not want to be representatives of the group, thus, they need support & encouragement. Stories are easier on the radio than on T.V.

For strong women

A strong woman is a woman who is straining.
A strong woman is a woman standing on tiptoe and lifting a barbell while trying to sing Boris Godunov.
A strong woman is a woman at work cleaning out the cesspool of the ages, and while she shovels, she talks about how she doesn't mind crying, it opens the ducts of the eyes, and throwing up develops the stomach muscles, and she goes on shoveling with tears in her nose.

A strong woman is a woman in whose head a voice is repeating, I told you so, ugly, bad girl, bitch, nag, shrill, witch, ballbuster, nobody will ever love you back, why aren't you feminine, why aren't you soft, why aren't you quiet, why aren't you dead?

A strong woman is a woman determined to do something others are determined not to be done. She is pushing up on the bottom of a lead coffin lid. She is trying to raise a manhole cover with her head, she is trying to butt her way through a steel wall. Her head hurts. People waiting for the hole to be made say, hurry, you're so strong.

A strong woman is a woman bleeding inside. A strong woman is a woman making herself strong every morning while her teeth loosen and her back throbs. Every baby, a tooth, midwives used to say, and now every battle a scar. A strong woman

is a mass of scar tissue that aches when it rains and wounds that bleed when you bump them and memories that get up in the night and pace in boots to and fro.

A strong woman is a woman who craves love like oxygen or she turns blue choking.
A strong woman is a woman who loves strongly and weeps strongly and is strongly terrified and has strong needs. A strong woman is strong in words, in action, in connection, in feeling; she is not strong as a stone but as a wolf suckling her young. Strength is not in her, but she enacts it as the wind fills a sail.

What comforts her is others loving her equally for the strength and for the weakness from which it issues, lightning from a cloud. Lightning stuns. In rain, the clouds disperse. Only water of connection remains, flowing through us. Strong is what we make each other. Until we are all strong together, a strong woman is a woman strongly afraid.

Marge Piercy





WOMEN & POWER CONTINUED.....

REFLECTIONS OF A HOMEMAKER.

Power and Powerlessness of Women

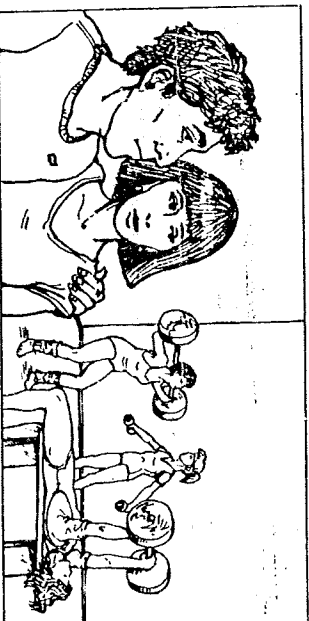
POWER! A big strong word! We as women know powerlessness better. Because we live in a mans world, ruled by men, females rate as second class citizens. Being taught from the time we are little girls that we must nurture and take care of others, we learn that we are not powerful. We are told that we dont need power to do what we were meant to do. Getting married, pleasing our man, having and caring for his children. We dont need to be powerful to do these jobs, we just have to be there, in the home where we belong, so we are told.

As a young girl, education is the farthest thing from our minds. All we can think of is getting married and living happily ever after with our powerful husbands. This accomplished with two or three small children, we find our selves alone three quarters of the time. Raising these children alone, while our knight in shiny armour is out celebrating one thing or another"

Depression sets in about this time. Loneliness, anger and powerlessness. We feel we are powerless to do any thing. Our nerves are on edge what do we do now? Do we give up? Become the weakling our male counterparts say we are? No! We are Power, we are strong, we have small children who depend on us. We must go on and our inner strength tells us so.

As Women we find our Power Together
We are strong and

Powerfull!!!



Power ♀

Women are taught to be uncomfortable with the idea of having power. (It is as unladylike as being physically strong!) Often when we "do what is expected of us" we abdicate our power almost entirely.

I always arranged my life around Larry. When we were first together I was beginning a career in teaching. But soon he got a job offer in another city, and so we moved there. Then he wanted to have children, which I didn't really care about. But he wanted them badly, so it seemed all right to me. Then we moved again, this time to a fancy house in a fancy suburb, but I had no car—he took it—and I was quite lonely. The children became the center of my life, and I loved them and my husband deeply. Several times I thought of returning to school part time to get my certificate. But Larry was not willing for me to do that; he did not want the responsibilities for the house and the children to fall on his shoulders. And he said he was glad to support us, which I think he really was. Then, one day when the children were still quite young (our son was not even a year old), I learned something that terrified me.... that for more than a year Larry had been having affairs with other women. They were all women whom he met in his job as a supervisor, professional women, very bright and competent and unattached and ten years younger than I was.

When I confronted him, he said that he found me dull, always talking about the house and the children—of course, since that was my world!—and that these other women were far more interesting, as they had professional lives and were more worldly and more knowledgeable than I was about things which interested him in his work. He did not say, but I think it is true, that he also hated my asking him to be more involved with the children and the house. He ran to these women whenever I criticized him, looking for the things in them which he discouraged me from developing in myself. When I was younger, I did not see any problem with my shaping my life around Larry. Now I know I have paid a very high price.



TRIBUTE

We would like to pay tribute to Sr. Mary MacLeod who recently died. We know that Sr. Mary worked hard for the A.W.A. in the last number of years. She was by example a source of inspiration, compassion and justice in her work, and her ways of relating to people and the world. She will be greatly missed!!!!

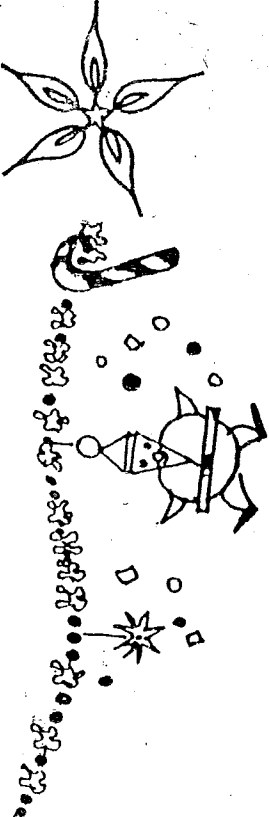
Her interest and dedication to the rights of Women was an essential part of her work, and much valued and appreciated by her friends at the A.W.A.

To mark her memory it has been decided to institute a Sr. Mary MacLeod Annual Memorial Bursary for a young woman student. The intention is that we can keep her inspiring spirit alive with us and pass it on to young women who are making their way in the world.

When we think of Sr. Mary, these words would best describe her:

A Courageous Spirit,
Clear Soul
and Gracious Woman

May we remember her thus.....



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Nov. 15 Jane Gordon Potluck Supper
Women's Centre, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 22 Deborah Sinclair - Understand-
ing Wife Assault-Room 138
Nicholson Hall, Film Breaking
the Cycle will be shown.
- Nov. 29 Women's Centre-Lynn James-
Wife Assault, A Personal
Experience, pot luck supper, 7pm

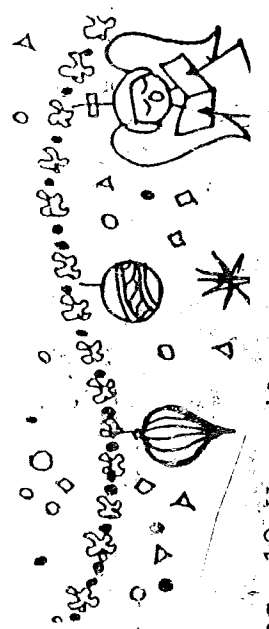
Social

JUST WOMEN NOVEMBER 13
Superstitutions - Myths and Women, 7:30
International Lounge
Coady Bldg.

Bring finger foods and friendly spirits

At this time we will be encouraging new members to join - the membership fee is \$12.00 a year. This includes the AWA newsletter and participation in a number of programmes and events.

Dec. 6 Male Batterer-An In Depth
Analysis, Turning Point Group
from P.E.I. will facilitate.
Room 138 Nicholson Hall, Film
"To Have and To Hold"



Dec. 19 Wassail outside the Royal Bank
on Main St., presents will be
FREE collected for needy families.
These will be distributed by
for **CHILDREN** Naomi Society and Big Brothers
CAPITAL Big Sisters. **1 to 3 PM.**
THEATRE. 3 to 5 PM.

-- A.W.A. --

Christmas Party
December 11, 1987

INTERNATIONAL LOUNGE, Coady Bldg.
8 pm.

Please dress up and be prepared to
kick up your heels!!!!!!
We are asking for contributions of
appropriate presents for a feminist
Christmas Stocking which will be
auctioned off at the Party.

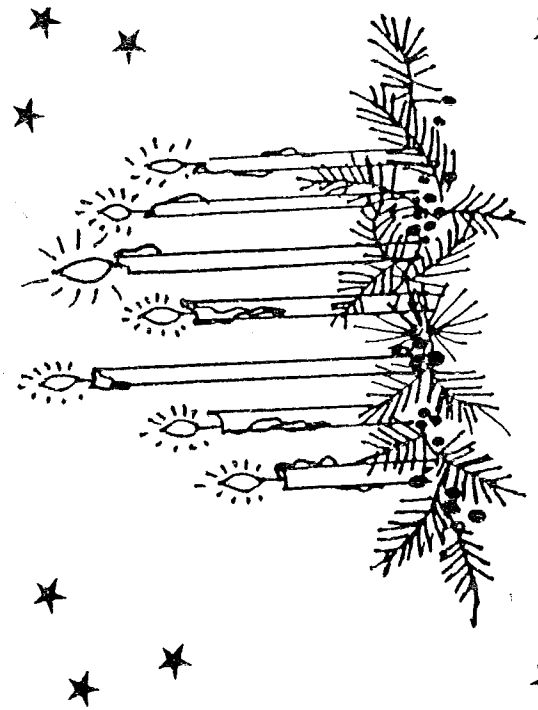
Suggestions for the evenings
entertainment will be
joyously received.

As always bring your own stimulating
refreshments !!!

To Be Sent To India
in Time for Christmas

We are humbly beseeching you
to share your largesse at this
time of year, and make a donation
of money to help a former
Coady Student to initiate a
sewing industry. The purpose
being to make clothes for children
in an impoverished village in India
and to provide extra food for

Hungry CHILDREN -
PLEASE DROP DONATIONS CARE OF
SANJEE HUMPHREYS AT THE WOMENS
RESOURCE CENTRE. URGENT



Merry
Christmas.

