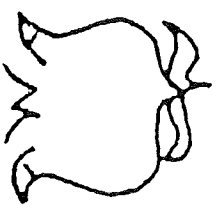


# AWARE



NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

RESOURCE CENTER

863-6221 Spring 1996

## ▼ SISTERS OUTSIDERS LESBIAN WOMEN



Love, in its early transformation,  
And only love, may so design it  
That the self flows in pure sensation,  
Is all dissolved, and found at last  
Without a future or a past,  
And a whole life suspended in it.

from "In Time like Air"  
May Sarton

The theme of our spring

newsletter is "Sisters Outsiders" in which we will look at the experiences of our lesbian sisters in a homophobic culture, in our community and in the feminist community. We work on a daily basis with lesbian women and, we recognize how they are silenced, demeaned and dehumanized by homophobia in all its cruel manifestations.

They are also rendered invisible by our reluctance to acknowledge their personal and emotional lives. Over the twenty years that I have lived and worked in Antigonish I have been inspired, touched, enlightened informed delighted and renewed by the friendship of lesbian women. Women who I have admired for their strength and courage in coping with the double oppression of being women and gay in a heterosexual world. Women who I respect and admire for who they are, their unique selves irrespective of the

political challenges they face. They are my friends and have taught me a lot about my homophobia and how insidiously it is imprinted in my thinking and my behaviour whether it is on a conscious or unconscious level. I hope in this newsletter that we can raise the consciousness of our readers and bring attention and support to gay and lesbian rights and the rights to sexual preference. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that our sisters do not continue to be "outsiders" this work is urgent and immediate and each one of us can contribute to ensure we have a more just and equitable world. We can contribute by naming and challenging homophobic attitudes in ourselves, our workplace, our social gatherings and our families. We can work in solidarity as women to erase sexual orientation biases from our laws and our workplace policies.

Heterosexual women can voice the concerns of lesbian women in places where it is not safe for them to speak. Homophobia is an issue that affects all of us.

written by: Barbara Hayes



I was in grade six the first time I remember encountering the word "Lesbian". It was in Star Weekly magazine in a review of the movie "The Children's Hour" based on Lillian Hellman's play. They made it pretty clear that whatever being a lesbian was, it was so bad you didn't have to be one, all you had to do was think you might be one and that was cause for suicide. I didn't know exactly what lesbian meant, but I did know it was something to do with sex. By then I'd been given a very clear message that anything to do with any kind of sex was shameful, disgusting, and bad and adults would do anything to they could to avoid talking to you about it.

Romance on the other hand, was OK. I remember walking up the hill with my friend Joanne - "What boy do you like?" she said "I don't like any boy," I said. "But you have to," she said. "OK, I like Alan," I said. And my unsuccessful career as a heterosexual was launched.

It took me another sixteen years or so to get back in touch with my essential self and realize that despite the fact that I was not debauched or depraved



If Lesbians were purple, none would be admitted to respected places. But if all Lesbians suddenly turned purple today, society would be surprised at the number of purple people in high places.

--Sidney Abbott & Barbara Love, Sappho Was a Right-On Woman, 1972.

Sappho  
Willa Cather  
Colette  
Sylvia Beach  
Jane Rule  
Audre Lorde  
Mary Renault

Amy Lowell  
George Sand  
Virginia Woolf  
Sarah Bernhardt  
H.D.  
May Sarton

Madame de Stael  
Gertrude Stein  
Bessie Smith  
Eleanor Roosevelt  
Adrienne Rich  
Martina Navratilova

and many doctors, lawyers, dancers, teachers, professors, wives, mothers ...



It may seem elementary to state here that lesbians cannot be defined simply as women who practice certain physical rites together. Unfortunately, the heterosexual image--and sometimes even the feminist image--of the lesbian is defined by sexual behaviour alone, and sexual in the most limited sense. It therefore seems important to reiterate that physical love between women is one expression of a whole range of emotions and responses to each other that involves all the mysteries of our human nature. Woman-related women feel attraction, yearning, and excitement with women. Nobody and no theory has yet explained why for some women, despite all cultural conditioning and societal penalties, both intellectual and emotional excitement are aroused in response to

(as near as I could tell), did not look like a man, and was not suicidal, I might be a lesbian. And luckily for me, it soon became clear that contrary to what I had been led to believe, there were more than two or three other lesbians in the world. In fact there were quite large numbers of them - and they were attractive interesting, came from all walks of life, and most of all, seemed to be blessed with a sense of humour. My clearest memories of my early years in the lesbian community are of how much I laughed and how blown away I was by how creative and how just plain funny these women could be.

What am I trying to say?

I guess I want to say two things. One is that the lesbian community is full of lively, funny, fun loving, intelligent, diligent, concerned women - women well worth knowing. And the other is that spending your life censoring yourself because it is unsafe (and it truly is) to be honest about who you are is a soul destroying process.

Anonymous Feminist Lesbian Sister.

### HETEROSEXISM: SELF TEST

(excerpt from a workshop conducted by Anne Bishop and Jan Morrell)

Heterosexism is a social structure which discriminates against gay, lesbian and bisexual people. It is parallel to racism, sexism, able-bodied-ism, agism, class and other discriminatory social structures. Even though it is primarily a collective phenomenon, it shows up in individuals in three ways—a negative reaction to people in the oppressed group (feeling level), ignorance about the oppressed group (intellectual level), and actions which maintain the oppressive social structure (action level). Everyone who is part of a heterosexist structure has some heterosexism in them, even lesbian/gay/bisexual people! Here is a quiz to reflect on your own thoughts, feelings and actions.

Feelings: Would you feel uncomfortable if:

\* you knew the person sitting next to you was a gay man or a lesbian? Would you feel differently about

sitting next to a lesbian than you would sitting next to a gay man? If so, why?

\* a close family member (parent, child, sibling) told you s/he is gay or lesbian? What would you say to him/her?

\* you felt attracted to someone of the same sex?

\* your child's teacher were gay/lesbian? or if your doctor were gay/lesbian?

Knowledge: Mark the following statements true or false:

Homosexuals abuse children more often than heterosexuals.

Lesbian/gay parents have more lesbian/gay children than heterosexual parents.

One gay man/lesbian in 20 experiences "gay bashing" (being beaten, injured or killed for their sexual orientation).

Anyone can change their sexual orientation if they really want to.

Same sex attraction is not as natural as opposite sex attraction.

People do not become gay or lesbian until they are adults.

Actions:

Do you have lesbian/gay friends?

What do you do when you hear someone tell a nasty joke or use insults like "queer" or "fag"?

In social or work situations, do you assume people's partners are of the opposite sex? Do you use words that will allow for either pronoun (e.g. partner)?

Have you contributed to any effort to change heterosexism, such as writing a letter to a politician or journalist who makes a heterosexist remark, or supporting a campaign for inclusion of sexual orientation in Human Rights legislation?

True & False: All answers are false, including #3 since the rate is much higher.

DEAR, THE  
WHOLE FAMILY  
WANTS TO KNOW  
WHY YOU AREN'T  
MARRIED YET?

TELL THEM...

TELL

THEM

I FORGOT!

MARRIED YET?



"REMEDIAL VISIONING" : EARTH CONSCIOUS ART.  
by PAIGE PRICHARDKENNEDY.

Main exhibit at Lyghtsome Gallery with selected works on display at the AWRG.

Exhibit on display from April 2-27, 1996.

\*Closing discussion with Artist TBA.

For more information, Call Lyghtsome Gallery at (902) 863-8122.

# 4. LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH

## NEEDING TO BE LOVED AND ACCEPTED

The most basic experience a young person needs is to know that she or he is accepted and loved. The more unconditional that love and acceptance are, the better chance one has of establishing a healthy sense of identity. This experience is simply unavailable to l/g/b teens who fear how others will react to them. As a result, they hide who they are.

Studies are now showing us that many youth who attempt suicide do so because of matters related to sexual orientation. In the Toronto Board of Education, 80-90% of the students who utilize services for l/g/b teens have seriously contemplated or tried suicide. Tony Gambini, at the Toronto Board, has said that the main problem l/g/b students have is *not* that they hate themselves. Their real problem is having to deal with the pain of living in a world that hates them so much.

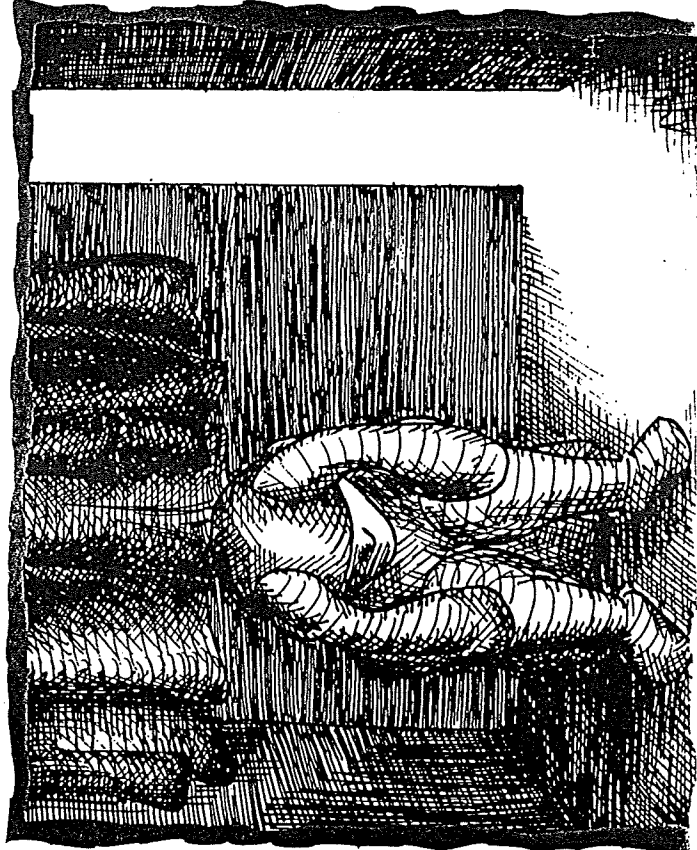
What these teens need is the abiding love of their families and friends in order to integrate their sexual orientation into a healthy sense of self. Knowing of God's unconditional love assures them of their intrinsic worth and provides them with the strength to choose wholesome, honest and mutually satisfying relationships, rather than self-destruction.

When Mary Griffith's gay son Bobby killed himself at age 20, she tried to understand what he had gone through. She recalls that she kept telling him that he was a sinner and he could change. The family searched for a 'cure' for him. When he didn't change, they thought he wasn't praying hard enough. Bobby's death changed Mary. Now she knows that "He was the kind of person God wanted him to be. Bobby was an equal, lovable, valuable part of God's creation. That's all he needed to know and he would be here today. He was never told that."

Recent studies estimate that perhaps fully one-third of all completed teen suicides are associated with questions of sexual orientation and that young homosexuals of both sexes are two to six times more likely to attempt suicide than are (young) heterosexuals."

— B. Jaye Miller, Jan. 1989 in *Homophobia*, ed. Warren J. Blumenfeld  
"The increased risk of suicide facing these (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) youth is linked to growing up in a society that teaches them to hide and to hate themselves."

— Paul Gibson, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Task Force on Youth Suicide, Jan. 1989



We cannot save, be saved, but we can stand  
Before each presence with gentle heart and hand;  
Here in this place, in this time without belief,  
Keep the channels open to each other's grief;  
Never accept a death or life as strange  
To its essence, but at each second be aware  
How God is moving always through each flower  
From birth to death in a multiple gesture  
Of abnegation; and when the petals fall  
Say it is beautiful and good, say it is well.

from "A Hard Death"  
May Sarton



# Lesbian-Feminist Theory

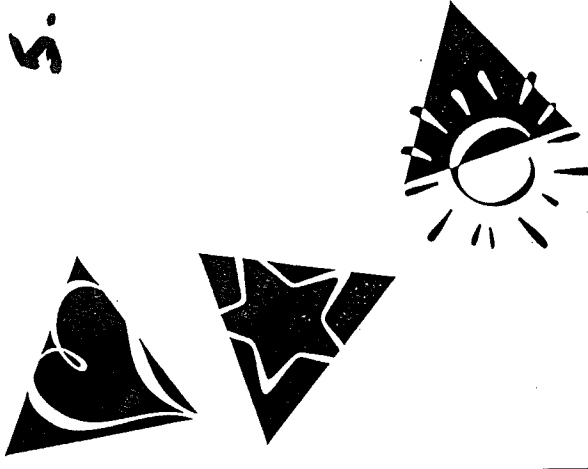
CHARLOTTE BUNCH A *lesbian* is a woman whose sexual/affective preference is for women, and who has thereby rejected the female role on some level, but she may or may not embrace a lesbian-feminist political analysis. A *Woman-Identified-Woman* is a feminist who adopts a lesbian-feminist ideology and enacts that understanding in her life, whether she is a lesbian sexually or not. All lesbians are not woman-identified; all feminists are not woman-identified; but a clearer understanding of lesbian feminism should enable more of both to unite around this common identification.

As more lesbians recognized the political significance of lesbianism, we began to see that heterosexism functions in every institution that feminists have shown to be oppressive to women: the work place, schools, the family, the media, organized religion, etc. All of society's institutions are based on the assumption that every woman either is or wants to be bonded to a man both economically and emotionally and they depend on the idea that heterosexuality is both the only natural and the superior form of human sexuality. These assumptions the ideology of heterosexism—help to maintain the institutional oppression of all women and of those men who openly deviate from the heterosexist masculine norm.

The family and women's oppression within it are obviously based on heterosexism, as are forms of discrimination against single women or any who live outside the nuclear family. Less obvious, but equally important, discrimination against women in the work place is also supported by the ideology of heterosexism. Women are defined and exploited as secondary or marginal workers on the assumption that work is not our primary vocation: even if we work outside of the home all of our lives, we are assumed to be primarily committed to family and to have another (major) breadwinner (male) supporting us. This assumption has been proved false repeatedly, not only for lesbians but also for many others, especially Third World and lower-class women. Nevertheless, the myth prevails—the ideology of heterosexism linked with the institution of the nuclear family continues to justify job discrimination and the refusal to regard work as a serious goal for women.

One could similarly describe how heterosexist attitudes permeate all the other institutions of our society. Perhaps most important is how heterosexism has been used to deny women's strength, to tie her self-concept and survival to men. According to society, if you are not with a man, you are not fully a woman; whether celibate or lesbian, you are seen as "queer." If you are independent and aggressive about your life, you are called a "dyke," regardless of sexual preference. Such labels have been used to terrify women—to keep straight women in their place and to keep lesbians in the closet.

Labels are not just name-calling. Behind each label is the implicit threat of social, economic, or physical reprisal—the denial of life-supporting systems or even life itself if you step too far out of line. Thus, the most pervasive and insidious thing that keeps heterosexist domination going is the control over granting or denying women heterosexual privileges: social and family acceptance, economic security, male legitimacy, legal and physical protection. The degree to which you receive these benefits depends on race, sex, and class, and on how much you play by the patriarchy's rules. Through heterosexual privilege, a woman is given a stake in behaving properly (or, in the case of a lesbian, of pretending to behave properly) and thus in maintaining the system that perpetuates her own oppression. Women, no matter what their sexual/orientation or personal ties to men, must realize that our ultimate survival is more connected to that of all women than to one man. Heterosexual privileges are not lasting benefits or power but small, short-term bribes in return for giving up lasting self-discovery and collective power.



## DO YOU NEED TREATMENT?

Gay people get asked some pretty strange questions. Often this is because their interrogators have a narrow, strictly heterosexual view of what is 'normal'. NI turns the tables and asks heterosexual people some strange questions too ...

**1** What do you think is the cause of your heterosexuality?

**2** When did you first realize you might be heterosexual?

**3** Have you told your parents? What do they think of it?

**4** Are there others like you in your family?

**5** Would you say that you had an inadequate mother or father figure?

**6** Don't you think your heterosexuality might be a phase you are going through?

**7** Are you afraid of members of your own sex?

**8** Isn't it possible that what you need is a good gay lover?

**9** What do you actually do in bed?

**10** You put *what where?*

**11** But how can people of the opposite sex really please each other when there are such vast emotional and biological differences between them?

**12** Although society gives considerable support to the institution of marriage the divorce

rate is spiralling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?

**13** Is it because heterosexuals are so promiscuous?

**14** There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Have you considered aversion therapy?

**15** Why do you feel compelled to seduce others into your sexual activities?

**16** Why do you insist on making such a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just keep quiet about it?

**17** More than 90 per cent of child molesters are thought to be

heterosexuals. Would you feel comfortable about entrusting your children's education to heterosexual teachers?

**18** Why do people like you emphasize the heterosexual qualities of famous people such as film stars? Is it because you need to validate your own condition?

**19** Penetrative sex is most common among heterosexual couples. Aren't you worried about the risk of getting AIDS?

**20** If everybody were heterosexual like you what would happen to the world's population? Don't you think it is rather unreasonable and irresponsible of you to insist on sleeping with people of the opposite sex?

NEW INTERNATIONALIST / NOVEMBER 1981

### PUBLIC READINGS AND FORUM

WRITING THROUGH RACE/RACE THROUGH WRITING

- AFRICAN WRITERS AT ST. F.X. UNIVERSITY.
- FORUM OF CANADIAN AFRICAN WRITING PUBLISHED.

#### PUBLIC READINGS:

- Writer George Elliott; Clarke, Nova Scotia.
- Daney Lafertiere.
- Olive Senior.

\* Dr. Agnes Calliste will moderate Forum.

MARCH 8 & 9, AT NICHOLSON HALL, ST. F. X. UNIVERSITY.  
FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: Maureen V. Mognagh, at 867-3849.

NOTE: MYTHS ABOUT LESBIANS.



## Scenes From The Margin: Lesbians and Healthcare in Nova Scotia

by Jeanette Auger

These three short scenes show how lesbians have been abused and discriminated against by the healthcare system in Nova Scotia. They are true stories. Of course, they are not isolated incidents. I know many more situations—older lesbians living in chronic care institutions who are afraid to let their caregivers know about their sexual orientation, in case they are ostracized or made fun of; lesbians of Colour who fear both racial and sexual discrimination; lesbians who are chronically ill but afraid to 'come out' in case their partners suffer humiliation and discrimination from caregivers, funeral directors and neighbours.

### Scene One: My Experience

My partner, Dian had back surgery for a herniated disk about three years ago. Since then she has had recurring bouts of severe and debilitating back pain. On one particularly severe attack she had to be taken to a hospital in Halifax. I followed the ambulance in our car. On arrival the ambulance attendants suggested that I check her in and provide the necessary information.

After producing Dian's healthcare, hospital and health insurance cards, the receptionist asked who I was. I gave her my name. Then she asked,

"Relationship?"

"Partner," I said.

"What is your relationship to the patient?"

"Partner."

"Oh, I'll just put down

friend," she said.

"No," I retorted, "I'm more than that."

"Friend is what I'll put on the form," she insisted.

Had I not been so worried about Dian, where she was since the ambulance attendants took her inside, whether they would be able to ease her pain, and a million other concerns, I would have been more assertive with the receptionist. As it was I didn't want to 'rock the boat', just in case my persistence had an effect on the kind of care Dian would receive.

After I had completed all of the necessary forms I asked the receptionist if I could borrow a phone book to call my neighbours to let her know we were at the hospital.

"The public phone is outside," she said. "This is for family use."

"I am family," I replied.

At this point I saw a woman I know from the lesbian community. She seemed to be working in the admittance area. I thought, Thank goodness, someone who will understand my worries and fears, someone who might comfort me. But when my "sister" brought over the phone book she did not speak to me. I felt hurt but thought perhaps she is not "out" at work. Still, she didn't have to be "out" to provide comfort. I was furious.

After I phoned the neighbour, I asked where I could find Dian.

"You can't just go up there (where the patients and physicians are). Only family is allowed to go with the patients," maintained the receptionist.

I ignored her and went up the hallway anyway. I wanted

to find Dian and know what they were doing to her.

"Are you family?" asked the nurse in the waiting area.

"Yes."

I found Dian lying on a cot in a room full of other patients waiting. A young heterosexual couple came in. The husband had hurt his back too. The wife told me that she was very worried. They had only been married three months. The attending physician came over to tell her "not to worry, that they would take good care of him for her." How I wished for some of that heterosexual privilege!

A nurse came to tell me that Dian was going for an X-Ray. The doctor would see her afterwards. She told me that I had to wait outside at the end of the hallway in the "non-family" area. After the examination the doctor would see me.

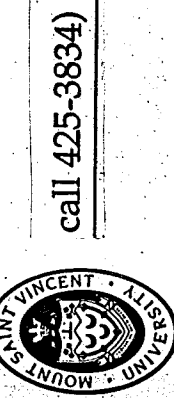
I waited for over an hour. In the meantime, the young married woman came outside to buy a coke from the vending machine. We chatted for a while, then the doctor and two nurses came out to tell her that her husband was okay. No one came to update me on Dian's condition.

After an hour-and-a-half wait, I had enough. I walked through the "family area" to the room where I had last seen Dian and decided to stay. When the doctor finally arrived, I made it clear that I was in Dian's life, that I was her primary caregiver and that "No! I would not return to the outer waiting area" I decided there and then not be left in the margin. I was staying right there in the "family" room where I belong.

30

HEALTHSHARING FALL/WINTER, 1992

## Women,



call 425-3834)

## The Environment and Breast Cancer: Issues and Prevention

March 15 & 16, 1996

Mount Saint Vincent University      A Public Lecture and  
All-Day Workshop

PUBLIC LECTURE

Friday, March 15, 1996, 7:30 p.m.

ALL-DAY WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 16, 1996, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Myth: An invented story or belief which has no basis in fact and is used to explain phenomena; it reflects the attitudes and values held and passed on by the majority of people in a culture.

All of us who grow up in this culture absorb myths about lesbians; they give us a stereotypical image of what lesbians look like, how lesbians live, what jobs lesbians hold, what lesbians think and feel, how and with whom lesbians make love, etc. We learn that any woman who even partially fits this stereotype must be a lesbian, and conversely that in order to be a lesbian you must fit this stereotype. We learn that lesbian behaviour is shameful and that lesbians are to be ridiculed and despised. These myths depict lesbians as "different", "other" or "not women". It is obvious that unacceptable female behaviour constitutes lesbian behaviour. It is harder to realize that with these myths we are also being taught what constitutes **acceptable** female behaviour.

1 The first group of myths has to do with male/female roles:

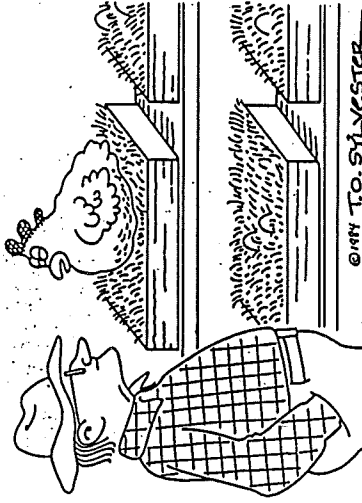
**Lesbians are not real women** This myth is the primary one. It is the underlying myth about lesbians. It is the basis for many of the other myths. What is it really saying? Obviously lesbians are biologically female, but are not seen as "real" women. A "real" woman must therefore be both biologically female and be fulfilling the traditional female role.

**Lesbians want to be men** If lesbians are not "real" women they must want to be men. After all, what else is there?

**Lesbians are male egos trapped in a female body; lesbians are victims of a confused sexual identity.** Who is confused? Lesbians are women who love women.

**Lesbians hate children; lesbians are afraid of childbirth.** Since all "real" women love, nurture and want children and since lesbians are not "real" women, lesbians must hate children ...

**Lesbians wear male clothing** What is male clothing? It is sturdy, warm, and comfortable. Female clothing, on the other hand, is usually expensive and flimsy. It is designed to decorate



OWN TO SYLVESTER

"I hope you don't expect any eggs from me. I'm a lesbian."

Lesbianism is easy. Women always understand each other. Lesbians have wonderful sex lives. Lesbians all support each other and no one is ever alone and unloved. Lesbians are all so strong and so free and so brave and so wonderful.

There are some myths about lesbianism which at first glance seem positive.

These myths are just as untrue as the rest. Loving women is many things but not, on the whole, easy. We do not always understand each other. As women we have all been taught to hate ourselves. Our rights to define our own self-image, our personal power, our sexuality, have been taken from us. For some of us the reality of living as lesbians has involved much pain. Part of the pain is because we believed that loving women would be just marvelous and what do we do when the sex is not wonderful and the perfect relationship turns horrible and the women in our lives are confused and anguished? We can be clear and brave and strong and unafraid and loving. Many of us are learning and growing and feeling positive about ourselves in ways we would never have believed possible. But we are changing through time and work and commitment. It did not—and does not—happen automatically upon falling in love with a woman or naming ourselves lesbian. Rita Mae Brown says it well: *None of this is easy. Becoming a lesbian does not make you instantly pure, perpetually happy and decidedly revolutionary.*

## XVII from "Twenty-One Love Poems"

Adrienne Rich

No one's fated or doomed to love anyone.  
The accidents happen, we're not heroines,  
they happen in our lives like car crashes,  
books that change us, neighborhoods  
we move into and come to love.

*Tristan und Isolde* is scarcely the story,  
women at least should know the difference  
between love and death. No poison cup,  
no penance. Merely a notion that the tape-recorder  
should have caught some ghost of us: that tape-recorder  
not merely played but should have listened to us,  
and could instruct those after us:

this we were, this is how we tried to love,  
and these are the forces they had ranged against us,  
and these are the forces we had ranged within us,  
within us and against us, against us and within us.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION!

SOMERS HALL, ST. F.X. CAMPUS, FRIDAY, MARCH 8th, 1996, AT 7:30pm.

SPONSORED by the AWRC. FOR MORE INFO CALL: 863-6221.

# NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

Well folks, all the "Number of contacts per month" records have been broken at the Centre. Just when we think it can't possibly get busier... it does! This is a little difficult to deal with sometimes, but hey, this is what we wanted - women using the women's centre - and they are for a variety of reasons. By all accounts we are able to be helpful in most situations. The one area where we face the biggest obstacle is poverty. When women call and say they need money for something and they can't find it anywhere, we are often stumped. If anyone is interested in developing a community response to this problem, call Lucille - she has some good ideas and is looking for kindred spirits.

The Service for Sexual Assault Survivors is running smoothly. With the help of some donors, we were able to purchase two cell phones, and a new group of volunteers is being trained and will soon join the original contingent.

Our annual meeting between MP Francis LeBlanc and women's groups in the Cape Breton Highlands-Canso constituency took place in February. Participants were Leeside Transition House in Port Hawkesbury, Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), The Adolescent Health Project, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Kids First, and Mr. LeBlanc and AWA and AWRC.

Stephanie Langley of Leeside House made a passionate plea on behalf of women and children living in poverty. Her comments were supported by Brenda Silver of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and AWRC staff. Mr. LeBlanc acknowledged the increasing stresses on Canadians.

Peggy Mahon and Debbie Anderson spoke of their struggles in managing the Kids First project and dealing with federal funding cuts just at the time when the project is trying to establish itself.

Susan May of CCLOW spoke of her group's work on barriers rural women face in accessing

post secondary education and CCLOW's on-going reductions in funding.

Janette Fecteau represented the AWA and spoke of AWA's work and our current concern with the federal government not yet honouring its commitment to include sexual orientation in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms so that gays, lesbians and bisexual people can enjoy the same protection of human rights as do heterosexual people. She reinforced the statements about increasing poverty, the Canada Health and Social Transfer, and sexual violence.

Lucille and Katherine represented the Centre and spoke about the issue of defence attorneys having access to women's private counselling records during sexual assault trials. (Please contact the Centre if you can help lobby the federal Minister of Justice.) Mr. LeBlanc said he would speak to the Minister about this. We reiterated our need for adequate federal funding to women's centres.

Another issue discussed was reforms to Unemployment Insurance, and our concerns about women not qualifying for the new "EI", and funded training and educational programs. Mr. LeBlanc is interested in meeting with stakeholders on this issue. Call the Centre if you want to participate.

Our African Heritage Month events were all well-received. We learned about the herstory of Black women and their families. Participants were challenged to consider the reality of racism and ways they could make a difference.

We have been trying in small ways to make the Centre more lesbian friendly. We have new books and helpful material such as: "The Pride Guide" and an article called "Read This Before coming Out To Your Parents".

Katherine Reed.



# We need you to join in the action

## Phase I — Actions for individuals and local groups

### 1. Fax Key MPs

We have enclosed a list of priority MPs with a particular interest in social issues. We need them to receive as many faxes as possible between March 1st and April 1st. You can be most effective by...

- consulting the list to see the priority MPs for your region;
- faxing the enclosed sample letter to all of your region's MPs within the month of March;
- committing to find one other person who will do the same.

### 2. Visit your MP

These same MPs should be visited with the same message at least once during this period. You can participate by...

- going to visit your MP in a small group (it's often useful to have a delegation that is representative of the community — ie. a middle aged person, a youth, and a senior etc.);
- explaining the impact of the CHST and talking about the Alternative Federal Budget with the MP (the CCPA has sent a copy to each Liberal MP);
- contacting another group in your community and encouraging them to do the same, or doing it together.

## Phase II — Actions to take with others in your community

This material is being circulated to other groups in your community including labour councils, churches, anti-poverty and social justice groups. We are planning for a period of regional actions in the last week of the campaign, during the time of the national fast in Ottawa, March 25-April 1, 1996.

### 1. Solidarity Fast

We are not expecting individuals or groups to fast for the last week of March, however we would like people to show solidarity with the fasting in Ottawa. This can be done by...

- sending a message of solidarity supporting the

- fasting of Jean Swanson (NAPO) and Guy Caron (CFS) between March 25 and April 1. These can be sent to the ACN at fax (613) 233-1458;
- sending a copy of your message as a letter to the editor for your local paper and/or your local MP.

- (If you are interested in fasting, please call ACN at (613) 233-1764.)

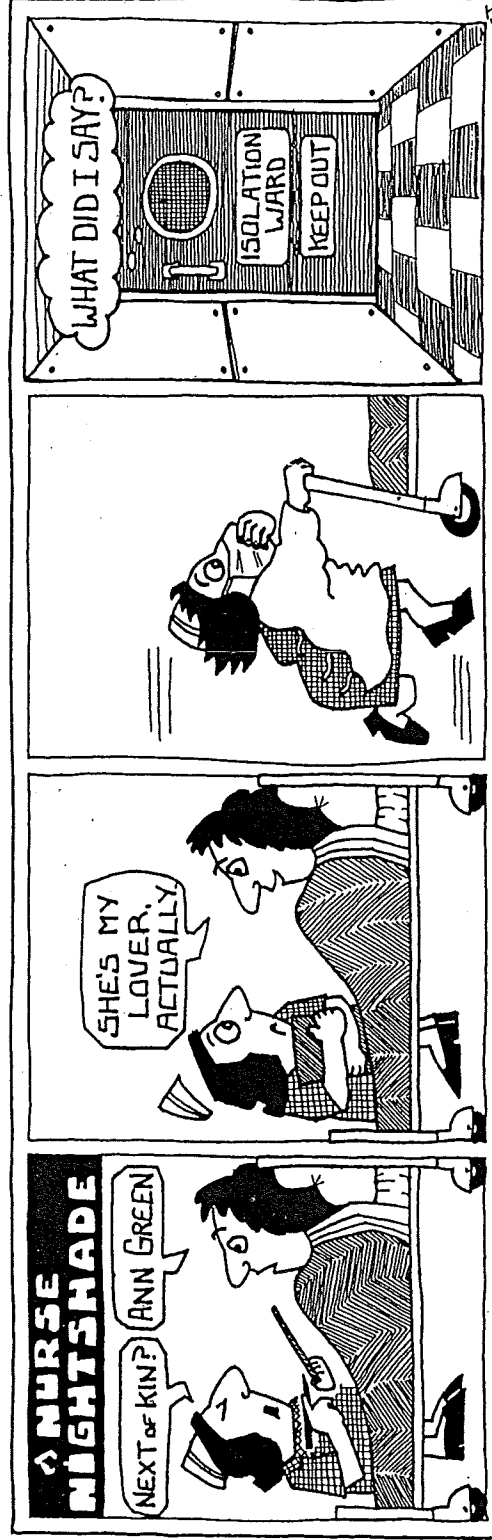
### 2. Local Action against the CHST

- Since the CHST will have a dramatic impact on the actions of provincial and local governments, we're asking people to focus on the fight for National Standards, National Programs in already planned local actions against social program cuts. Other actions can and are being planned directly with this campaign.

### Action ideas include:

- Plan a fast-in! With others from your community, visit your MPs office between the week of March 25th and April 1st. Let your MP know that you intend to stay for the day (or longer) and that you are fasting in solidarity for 24 hours with Jean Swanson and others in Ottawa.
- Make them explain it! Invite your local MP to a public meeting and ask him/her to explain the CHST-how it works, who it will affect, what the safeguards are, why they do not support national standards.
- Demonstrate — somebody has to! Plan a rally for National Standards and National Programs outside the office of your local MP. Rallies and small demonstrations, coupled with street theatre, are a good way to raise the profile of this issue in communities.

**Please contact the ACN at Tel. (613) 233-1764 to tell them about the local actions you are planning. They will compile a national directory of actions. They can also answer questions about the campaign.**



Fight for social rights

# National Programs National Standards

March 1st - April 1st 1996

## A campaign for social justice...

It is no accident that across this country we are seeing a new level of social and economic hardship. This is the end result of destroying national standards in social programs, and starving these programs of funding.

This is what the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), which comes into affect on April 1st, 1996, is all about. It's about a drastic \$7 billion reduction to health, post-secondary education and welfare.

## The end of national social programs?

On April 1st the government intends to lump funding for social services, postsecondary education and health care into the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST).

The CHST will drastically reduce spending on social programs. On top of the billions cut over the last decade another \$7 billion will be cut over the next three years.

The federal government says the CHST is a bold new reform of social programs that will save money and provide better services for Canadians.

In reality, the CHST will only download the job of cutting to the provinces and eliminate national standards. Welfare, education, and healthcare will have to compete province-by-province for a share of a much smaller budget pie.

The federal government won't be able to enforce national standards. The provinces will have "flexibility" to implement workfare, more user fees, and privatization.

The government says we have to reduce spending. That we have been "living beyond our means." That cutting spending is the only way to deal with the debt and deficit.

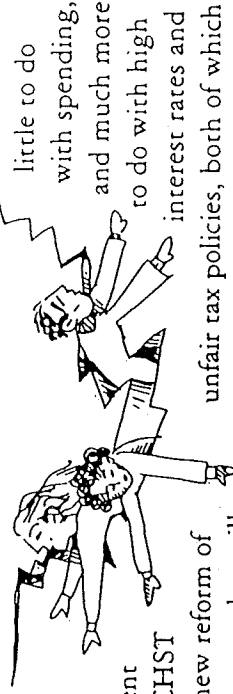
In effect, we are being asked to blame the poor -- women, children, the unemployed, immigrants, and people of colour -- for our debt problem.

The fact is, the deficit and

debt have little to do with spending, and much more to do with high interest rates and unfair tax policies, both of which benefit the wealthy and corporations.

Why should our social programs be sacrificed because of a problem they had little role creating? Social programs need to be fixed. But cutting back on funding and firing thousands of people who work in these important areas won't fix them.

If these policies are allowed to continue, we won't recognize this country in ten years. Families and communities are being slowly torn apart for the benefit of the wealthy few.



## Choose the Alternatives.

By making choices that benefit people and corporations that are already wealthy instead of choices for to help the rest of us the Liberal economic strategy is putting social programs like medicare, thousands of jobs, and our country at risk.

Budget plans are about making choices. And it's never too late to choose different policies -- alternatives that work for people and the economy.

The alternative to the slash-and-burn philosophy is to put people back to work, lower interest rates, and fix the tax system. We need to find the money to reinvest in strong social programs.

The Alternative Federal Budget identified almost \$2 billion in tax changes that could be the first step in making the tax system more fair.

The increase in revenue could then be targeted directly to National Social Investment Funds for programs like healthcare, education and social services, and the long-promised national child care program.

For more information about the budget plan, the Alternative Federal Budget, or what you can do to fight for policies that build communities, call Action Canada Network at (613) 233-1764.



ACTION CANADA NETWORK  
UNITED CANADIANS

## PHILOSOPHY

The Antigonish Women's Association operates from a feminist perspective. This means that we are committed to women's values, goals, and ways of knowing. We strive for a dynamical structure that changes as the issues change and as the voices of the women themselves change. We celebrate the diversity among women and are committed to offering information about issues and options in a balanced manner so that all women, regardless of their point of view, are able to trust that the Association is an organization that supports women. The Board of Directors for the Association is a working group committed to the ideal of consensus in decision making; the consensus of the collection of women's voices among us. There is active encouragement for all women to feel free to develop, and to voice their own point of view. There is a lateral structure within the Board of Directors, and the Board encourages participation and input regarding decisions from the membership at all times.

### 1995-96 BOARD MEMBERS LIST

Debbie Anderson  
Sarah avMaat  
Nadine Boudreau  
Sr. Fleurette Braun  
Janette Fecteau  
Nancy Forrestell  
Catherine Gascon  
Olga Gladkikh  
May Goring  
Shiela Grant  
Susan Jewkes  
Oona Landry  
Martha McGinn  
Charlie Rogers  
Brenda Silver  
Judy Donovan Whitty

### THE NASHA MURPHY MEMORIAL BURSARY FUND

Dear

This Bursary Fund has been established to honour the memory of Nasha Murphy. Nasha was a woman who touched many people very deeply. She was especially supportive of women and worked diligently to promote equality in many ways. She was particularly supportive of mature women returning to further their education. Nasha herself returned to St. Francis Xavier University and graduated with a Diploma in Adult Education in 1990. At the time of her death she was working on her Bachelor of Arts at St. F.X.U.

It is with these thoughts in mind that a committee of friends, family and colleagues have come together to raise the money needed to make this bursary a reality. We are asking for a generous donation to meet the \$10,000 needed so that a bursary can be awarded annually to a mature woman entering or returning to St. Francis Xavier University.

PLEASE SEND YOUR DONATION TODAY  
TO

St. Francis Xavier University  
Development Office  
P.O. Box 5000  
Antigonish, Nova Scotia  
Canada B2G 2W5

\$50.\_\_\_\_ \$75.\_\_\_\_ \$100.\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_

A tax receipt will be issued for donations over \$5.00.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



Your generous support of the Nasha Murphy Memorial Bursary Fund will assist in keeping her memory alive as well as her enthusiasm and commitment. Thank you

## THE ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE FRIDAY BROWN BAG LUNCHES IN MARCH

Fridays from 12:10 to 12:50  
Suite 204, Kirk Bldg., Main St.

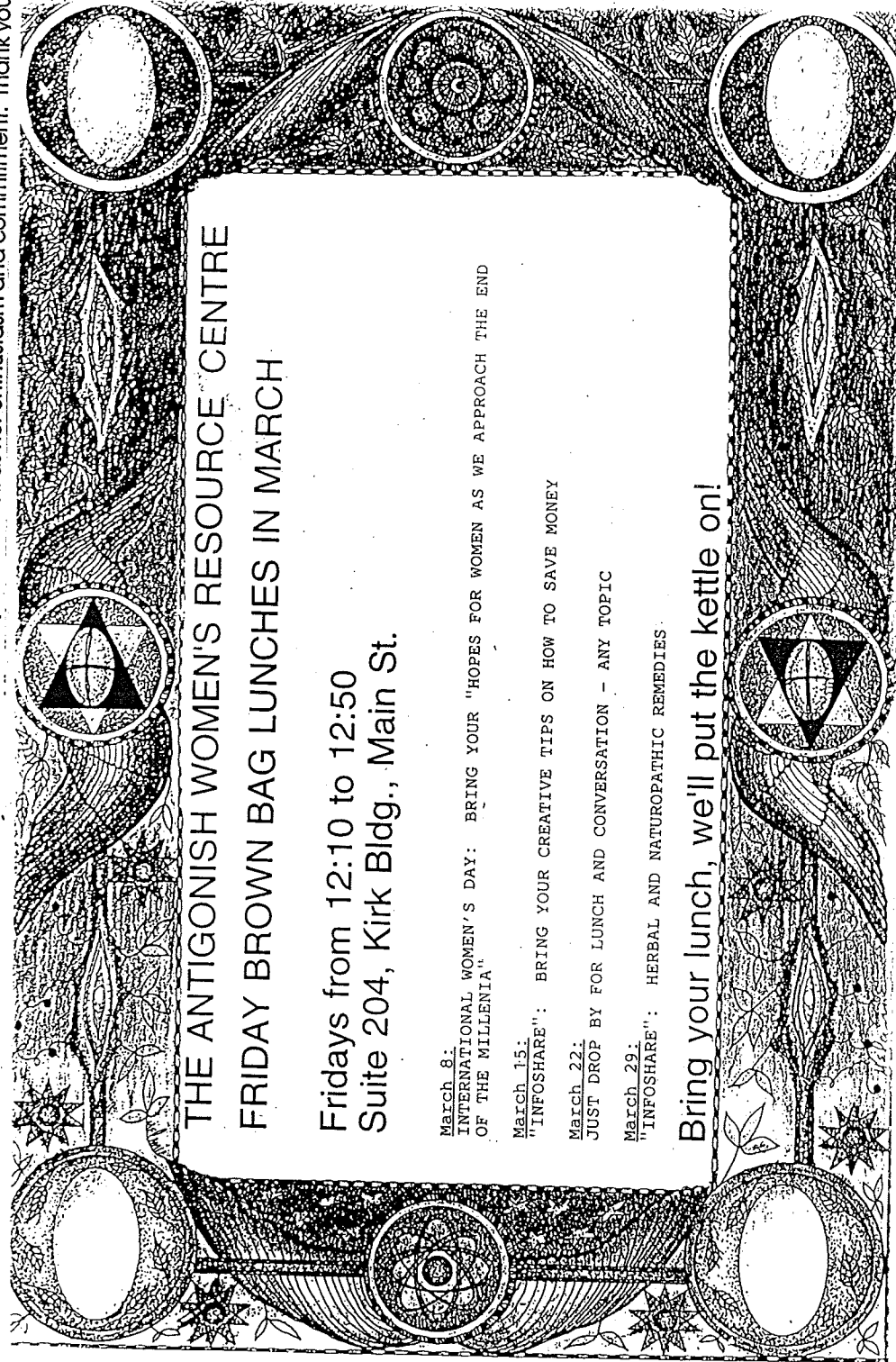
March 8:  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: BRING YOUR "HOPES FOR WOMEN AS WE APPROACH THE END OF THE MILLENNIA"

March 15:  
"INFOSHARE": BRING YOUR CREATIVE TIPS ON HOW TO SAVE MONEY

March 22:  
JUST DROP BY FOR LUNCH AND CONVERSATION - ANY TOPIC

March 29:  
"INFOSHARE": HERBAL AND NATUROPATHIC REMEDIES

Bring your lunch, we'll put the kettle on!



# WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- WOMEN & FINANCIAL PLANNING: A TWO PART WORKSHOP WITH LENNY P.D. MacDONALD.  
Thursday, March 21 & 28, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. at the AWRC.
- BURST THE BUDGET BALLOON BEAN BUFFET & CABARET.  
(For a Buck) \* Bring your best cheap casserole & recipe to beat the Economic Blues. Saturday, March 23, 6:30 pm., at St. James United Church. For more information contact Sarah.
- WORKSHOP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.  
Friday, March 29, 9:00 am. to 4:00 pm. at St. James United Church.  
\* pre-registration at 8:45 am.
- GROUND WORK: WOMEN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE.  
Saturday, April 13, and Sunday, April 14, at St. F. X. University.
- LESBIAN WOMEN: FACING HOMOPHOBIA.  
Thursday, April 18, 7:30 - 9:30 pm. at the AWRC.
- LIVING WILLS WORKSHOP: PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION.  
Wednesday, April 24, 7:00 - 9:30 pm. at the AWRC.
- PAN CANADIAN WOMEN'S MARCH.  
Tuesday, May 14, \* WATCH FOR DETAILS.
- "REMEDIAL VISIONING" : EARTH CONSCIOUS ART by PAIGE PRICHARDKENNEDY. April 2-27. See page 3 for more Info..
- WOMEN LIBERATING ECONOMICS.  
\* WATCH FOR DETAILS.

## HELP!

The provincial funding for the Women's Centre is up for it's annual review. As you know, money is in short supply everywhere, so it is more critical than ever that the Minister of Community Services receive letters of support letting him know how valuable the Centre is to the women of the Antigonish Area.

We are requesting additional funding this year for a "crisis support worker", who would focus on serving individual women who require peer counselling and advocacy. The demand for this very effective service has increased significantly in the past few months, with our usage statistics hitting record-breaking heights

Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts for the Minister and urge him to continue to funding the Centre and provide funding for a crisis support worker. You can influence the government's decision in this way. Please mail or drop a copy of your letter off to the Centre so we can copy it to the Minister of Finance and Bill Gillis, MLA.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.  
Katherine Reed

\* FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE  
REFER TO FACT SHEET  
INCLOSED.