

CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GROUPS

THE FEMINIST
PERSPECTIVE

by: Susan Satterthwaite
& Joann Leake

This week The Feminist Perspective focuses in on the efforts of consciousness-raising groups, whose primary function is to inform the public on issues and progress relevant to the cause of equality for women and for men. In the anthology Liberation Now! Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement there are two criterion for a consciousness-raising group:

- 1) there have to be at least two women or men to form it, and:
- 2) one must be willing to bare one's feelings within the group.

Essentially, one must learn and in turn educate the other, being all the while open to the feelings opinions and experiences of persons within the same realm of interest.

Organizations such as the Status of Women, Canada and N.O.W. (National Organization for Women)

attempt to work within the framework of society to challenge archaic, stereotypic assumptions and to further the position of women in society. These organizations are composed of individuals who challenge ongoing conditions, i.e. marriage laws that by their nature, reduce women to the status of chattel, and provide a support network for women who encounter discriminatory practices in their own day-to-day living.

The Status of Women Canada, according to their publication of March 1978, was established in 1971 and created as an independent body in April 1976, as a responsibility of a Minister of Cabinet. This federal organization is dedicated to obtaining equal opportunities for women along with men in all aspects of Canadian society. It is designed to ensure that this objective is realized in the policies and programs of all federal departments. Status of Women Canada acts as a liason between the government and

various other organizations; specifically the Canadian Human Rights Commission deals with issues of specific concern to women, e.g. discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status and equal pay. There is also a related political organ whose duty is to co-ordinate the activities of various women's groups seeking to improve the position of women in society. For further information, interested individuals may write in care of: Status Of Women Canada, Ottawa, Ont. KIA 1C3

The feminist movement in the United States began its revival in the mid 1960's. It took only a very short time for women to begin moving for equality throughout Western countries (and even a few non-western countries). The National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), the American counterpart of Status of Women Canada, is the older of the two branches of the feminist movement in the U.S. The other feminist movement consists of small groups of more radical feminists which grew out of the youth/student and civil rights movements of the 1960's. Their basic concern was then and is now, individual, rather than institutional change.

NOW was formed in 1966 resulting from presidential and state commissions conducted on the status of women which had occurred in the early 60's. The American movement was begun in order to protest the fact that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was not enforcing the sex discrimination prohibition provision in employment. The overall purpose of NOW is to "bring women into full participation in the mainstream of society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partner-

ship with men".

Other organizations, such as the Women's Equity Action League, the National Women's Political Caucus, and Federally Employed Women have joined forces with NOW to fight for equal rights for women in the legislature in education and in the area of economics and employment. These are their major concerns, but in addition, they are interested in the issues of abortion and the image of women portrayed by the mass media.

From 1972 to 1974 NOW was quite successful in helping to push through a number of laws created to improve the status of women in the U.S.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which will be discussed in a later article, is supported by NOW. Congress approved it in 1972 and this was quite a breakthrough for the women's movement. However, as of this date, women are still fighting for its ratification, since only about 30 states have notified it. A two-thirds ratification is necessary for it to become effective. Other breakthroughs for the feminist movement (and for all women across the nation) include increasing admissions to different professions and programs which were formerly limited to men, elections to public office (the governor of my home state of Connecticut being Gov. Ella T. Grasso) and new women's studies courses in schools and universities all across the U.S. (Colbier's Encyc.)

In conclusion, to first recognize that there exists a social ill and then to establish such national organizations to remedy the ill is a step forward in our social and cultural development. By working to effect change from within the system indicates not a displeasure with the entire system, but merely a dissatisfaction with the undesirable by-products it creates.



Gentleman Jim Disco

Monday - Student Night

Tuesday - Rock Night

SPECIAL PRICES BOTH NIGHTS

Saturday 4 to 7 Gong Show

ACTS WELCOME - CASH PRIZES AWARDED

HAPPY HOUR DAILY 11 - 8

STEAK HOUSE

FULLY LICENSED - MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

Char-broiled steaks and burgers

K-MART PLAZA

Ph. 2-3073
2-3075

NEW CONCEPT

The following four pages of the SUN are a new idea conceived by Student Services and approved by the Student Union Executive. The subject material deals with the grads at UPEI from a particular high school. Extra copies of this week's paper are being distributed at the high school in question in hopes of attracting students there to UPEI and of enhancing the image of the University, the Student Union, and the student newspaper.

John Cairns
1980 SUN Editor