

WOMEN IN LABOUR FORCE THE FEMININE PERSPECTIVE

SHIRLEY CARR: WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE "ARE WE AWARE OF OUR ASSETS?"
Lecture #3

by Susan Satterthwaite and Joann Leake

On March 12, 1980, Shirley Carr, the executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress, spoke on women in the labour force; she asked, are we aware of our assets? According to Ms. Carr, equality does not just mean equal pay for equal work, but that a job is there and women should be able to apply and be hired for it on the basis of what they know and can do, and not on the basis of how pretty they are. Nor should they be rejected because they are women. Practices of a discriminatory nature exist in society for both men and women. For example, men are treated in the labour force as if they all have no children, whereas women are treated as if they all have children. This shows a marked lack of consideration for familial responsibilities on the part of both. No one ever thinks that men might want to stay home with the children. Women on the other hand, are always expected to stay home with them.

Presently, it is illegal to discriminate between the sexes on the basis of equal pay for equal work. However, the discrimination still goes on, due to the variations used in defining each particular job. The same job is defined one way for the men performing it and another way for the women, so that the women will end up being paid less for work of equal value, but with a different name. Ms. Carr believes that the only solution in combating inequalities such as these is for individuals, especially women, to form a strong union. The assets of women are their power and influence, and they can use these assets to affect changes in the inferior way society treats them. The unions are pushing for: equal pay for work of equal value; day care; and affirmative action, but still society at large (business and government in particular) have not done anything to bring about changes along these lines for women. The unions have also pushed for maternity leave for women

(until recently, a woman was generally laid off permanently or fired when it was learned that she was pregnant) and have gotten it, although it is, at this time, without pay.

Women are often told that they should not be working as they are taking jobs away from men. As Ms. Carr states, if we withdrew all the women workers in this country, the country would collapse. Every hand is needed to keep this country going. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with being a homemaker. Being a homemaker is a noble job, and no one should condemn it. However, women and men must realize that there is more to life than just homemaking. There is something else "out there" for them and they have every right to take the opportunity to do it, be it a job, a career, a hobby or just taking time for yourself. Change, in order to work, must be for both sides. Change is good for women and men together and together is how we must work in order to bring rightful equality to our society.

It has often been said to us that we are imagining many of the incidents of discrimination and the inferior attitudes toward women of which we write. It has been said that women haven't had it better, that feminists are making up all the inequality stuff, that we are picking at trivial points (like using titles of Mrs. & Miss, or women being paid 50¢ less an hour than men for the exact same work), that there may be a little inequality, but nothing to make such a fuss over, that there is no discrimination, or that "it doesn't matter if there is any, because it's never affected me". We would like to give you just a sampling of the common attitudes toward women and the kind of image women have today, as well as some of the abuses they suffer because of it. We hope this will give you some food for thought in the future:

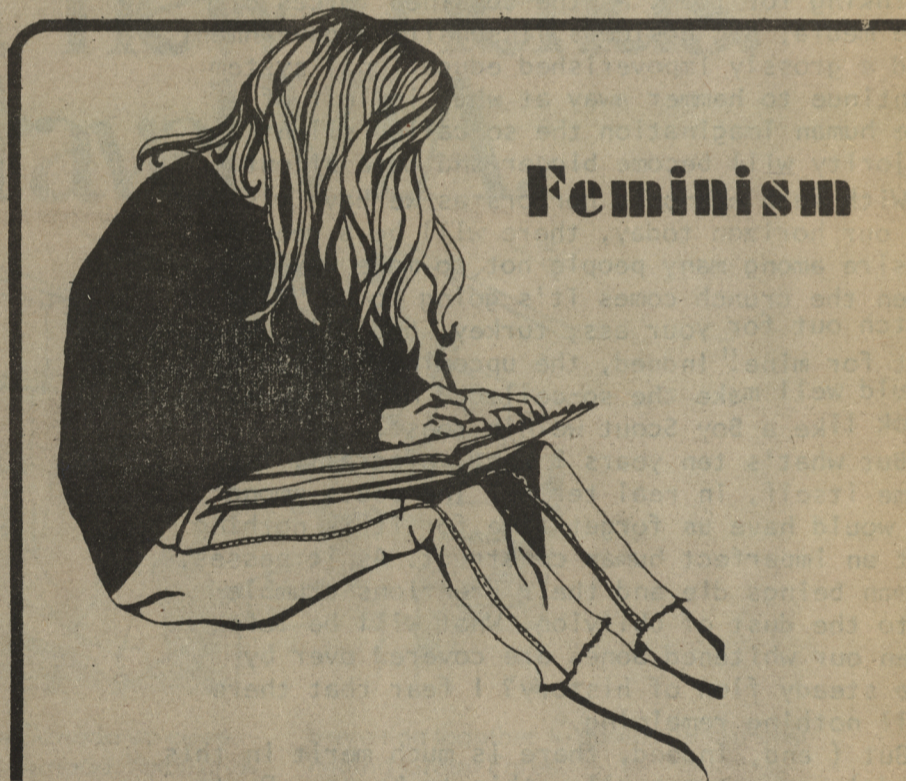
- a woman's fundamental status is that of her husband's wife, the mother of his children.
- a woman's greatest asset is her beauty.
- women's talk is all chatter.

- women are the last hired and first fired.
- women are paid less than men for work of equal value.
- intelligent women are emasculating.
- most women are not unionized and therefore have no protection against exploitation in employment.
- it's a woman's duty to make herself attractive.
- women who stay home to keep house and care for children are called "non-working mothers".
- working women are unfeminine.
- most of the poor elderly are women.
- women should be struck regularly, like gongs.
- women are degraded and devalued through pornography.
- all women do is cook

and clean and sit around all day.

- housework isn't considered work.
- women are only interested in trapping some man.
- the sole duty of a woman is to make a man content and happy throughout his life.
- a marriage license is more attractive to women than a university degree.
- women are blamed, put on trial and treated as criminals when they are raped.
- women like to be raped.

The list is virtually endless. Is this what we want as women? Is this how women should be considered? Should women allow this kind of image of them to exist? We think not!! On this note, we'd like to close this year's FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE...






Hearts and Flowers

FLORIST

CORSAGES AND FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 A.M. - 10 P.M. MONDAY - SATURDAY

Charlottetown Mall
892-0727