

## action for housewives' liberation needed

How many men who are strident anti-Women's Liberation would consider the position of a housewife? A housewife has a twenty-four hour job, seven-days a week, with no pay. Just to mention a few of the qualifications she is expected to bring to the job: the ability to cook, sew, clean, tend children, feed a husband's ego (without having her own bolstered), drive a car, pick out the activities that would make her daughters into little ladies and her sons into he-men, submit to her husband's sexual desires as a matter of duty, nurse sick people back to health (in spite of the fact that she herself might be sick at the time).

A housewife not only is expected to know how to carry out thousands of tasks, she must be proficient in them as well. After washing five loads of clothes (not all homes come equipped with automatic labour-saving devices), having a hassle with the friendly neighbourhood product surveyor (sic) who feels every woman should be able to answer questions on vaginal spray whether she uses the stuff or not, fixing snacks for non-stop children who don't know that you're just supposed to eat at mealtimes, preparing goodies for the Preschool Assoc. Bake Sale, the housewife must be calm, cheerful, neat, sexy, and sympathetic to the needs of her big strong man when he comes home all tired out from an eight-hour day that included an hour off for lunch and two coffee breaks.

I have been a member of some women's lib groups in Edmonton for some time, but have stopped going to their meetings because I felt that they were really getting very little done to better the lot of most women in our society. As a housewife, I feel that I could only support a Women's Lib group that has a program which:

- (1) supports the equality of men and women before the law.
- (2) places abortion between a woman and her doctor in the same category as any other medical procedure, covered by a health care program.
- (3) makes birth control information available to all women in society.
- (4) supports twenty-four hour, co-operative day-care centres.
- (5) promotes equal pay for equal work, with non-discriminatory hiring procedures.
- (6) destroys the myth that women are fluffy, dumb sex objects (for example, by banning exploitative advertising).
- (7) ends the child-rearing that channels boys into aggressive, domineering, men, and girls into submissive, reticent women.
- (8) sees to it that women are written into history.

Most importantly, if Women's Lib groups are to be of any use to me and my massiters, they will have to become more than discussion groups, and proceed to take action

by CYNTHIA GERELUK

# societal myths restrict women's involvement in sports

with which deliveries are made. Further, female athletes are less likely to be plagued with back troubles that often develop after pregnancy.

The third, and most publicized myth revolves around the assumption that women in sport are not feminine.

The myth of the "muscle-bound Amazon" is unjustified. Sport does not masculinize women. Excessive muscular development is not a direct result of participation in athletics. Rather, sport serves to improve muscle tone and enhance physical performance. Well-planned weight-training and athletic participation produces well-proportioned bodies. Few gymnasts are fat.

Such myths are a product of our culture and society. Masculine and feminine images have been developed and cemented throughout the ages. Although participation in sport by women is becoming increasingly more accepted, socialization processes lead us to think of females as passive, submissive and aesthetically rather than physically oriented. Girls are subtly taught that they cannot participate in sport and still retain their socially defined femininity.

Parents are often permissive about their daughter's participation in sport though they may frown upon it. The

Ever-increasing attention is being focused on the changing roles of women. Every avenue is being explored from within and without, in an attempt to discover the part women play. Sport is no exception. The role of women in sport and the attitudes toward women participating in sport is becoming an expanding field of research.

Much of the research concerned with women's role in the sporting world is relatively abstract and out of reach of the general public. While reference is made to the performance of outstanding women athletes, the attitudes of the general public and of other athletes towards women in sport have not been widely researched.

As a result, the general public is often misinformed and various misconceptions arise which come to be taken as fact.

There are three main myths that have surrounded female participation in sport. The first myth has been that participation in sport should be avoided during menstruation.

Research articles have, however, indicated that any decline in physical performance is perhaps more psychological than physical.

The second myth is that muscles developed in sport can cause complications later, during pregnancy.

Exactly the opposite is true; involvement in sport can increase the ease

pressure to play feminine roles is strongest during the periods between puberty and marriage. Girls must resolve the conflict between being an athlete and being a lady.

Conversely, boys are frequently forced to take active interest in sport and define themselves in terms of athletic ability. Successful competition presupposes aggressiveness, high achievement motivation, physical strength and even an acceptable level of hostility. All these characteristics are generally associated with masculinity. Successful women athletes are often assumed to be in possession of one or more of these characteristics. "It is a short leap from associating sports activities with male characteristics to equating sports with maleness." (Abigail Hoffman).

Within the framework of the U of A campus, a small scale study was undertaken by three undergraduate physical education students. The primary purpose of the study was "to determine...current attitudes towards physical activity...for women at a university level of education."

The study was based on a questionnaire distributed to both male and female students in the faculties of education, science and physical education. Due to the small sampling of students the results were not indicative of any general attitudes except those from which they were obtained. However, several of the major hypotheses of the study were supported, at least in part.

A slight difference in attitudes displayed towards women's participation in sport was found between men and women on campus. Men tended to see women as more aesthetically oriented than do women themselves.

Regardless of sex, those who themselves participated in sport tended to be more liberal in viewing women participants in sport than those who remained inactive. Furthermore, participants tend to view more liberally women's participation in those sports not exclusively regarded as feminine and appropriate for the "weaker sex". Although aesthetic sports are still viewed as most appropriate for female participation, steps are being made into those areas once considered the domain of the male. Where such inroads are being made, female competitors are often being met with either acceptance or hostility, or a mixture of both.

Much of the difficulty regarding women's participation in sport is a result of the structure of society. Our particular society has evolved a system in which women are the keepers of the house and men are keepers of women. The resulting concept of femininity for a long time has not allowed socially acceptable successful participation in competitive sport. Although many standards in sport are male and many sports are still considered primarily male territory, changes are evident in society's attitude toward female participation.

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