

RAP GROUPS - POWER IN SISTERHOOD !

RAP groups are:

--small groups (5-10) of women meeting regularly

--share experience of being a woman, explore the values we hold

--breaking down the barriers between us--the competitiveness, seeing each other as the stereotypes we have been given i.e. bitches, broads, dykes, ad nauseum

--developing solidarity, trust, sisterhood among individuals and a bond with all women

--realizing the commonness of our oppression and that there are no individual solutions for it--only collective action for a collective solution

--creating alternatives of life style, direction, and identity to those given to us by this society

--examining sexual roles--female/male differences

--exploring relationships between women and women / women and men

--raising consciousness not only of the oppressiveness of

1. EVERY female/male relationship
2. the vision and identity that a woman is given of herself and her sisters
3. the connection between the position of women/Indians/blacks and the Patriarchal profit motive system

But also raises our consciousness of the power that we can wield through sisterhood. The unleashing of creative energy that has been parasitically used by the dominant male since time began.

One of the premises of RAP groups is that the personal is political and the recognition of this through the process of a rap group. Each woman must first come to realize the shit that has been laid on her as a woman and through sharing her personal experience her consciousness includes the oppression of every woman. Respecting each other, sharing our anger, we struggle together to destroy the shit and to build/create our own strength, images, identity, love, families, culture, revolution...

A RAP group is not:

--A Social Gathering--It's hard and painful work coming to recognize personal oppression or realizing the sexist attitudes we carry against ourselves and other women or becoming aware that it may be

necessary to choose between ones own dignity as an adult and a male that is loved

or seeing the security of a heterosexual identity giving way to love and sharing with women and facing the dual weight of both women's and gay oppression

--A Therapy Group--Most of us are not sick. Women are fucked over not fucked up and the two are not necessarily the same. We need to change the objective conditions of our oppression: therapy is adjusting to the shitty alternatives we are given in this society.

--A Bitch Session--We don't complain about our oppression, we get good and angry about what's being done to us. We don't let off a lot of steam in the group and go back and take the same shit. A person unable to deal with reality would not be able to function in a rap group. A person who was not searching for ways of changing an unsatisfactory, humiliating, crippling life style/social system would not be able to handle a rap group.

RAP groups mean changing / struggling / growing--finding out that our fears, anger, strength, frustration, self-negations, imagination, intelligence

are not exceptional--but are common to all women. Just as our "problems" are not individual ones neither are the solutions. This is a very general outline of consciousness-raising groups but though they have a definite form and content--each group varies with the individuals that make it up. Each of us is a part of the creative process. If you are interested in being in a rap group, talking about Women's Liberation or reading literature on it--phone us at 439-0875 or the house address is 11028 85th Avenue

By Jean and Maureen

Farm women active in group work

Women of Unifarm is a semi-autonomous organization within the structure of Unifarm, which is an organization of Alberta farmers and their associations. While Unifarm is concerned largely with the economic position of the family farm the fields of education, health and the social welfare of the rural community have been entrusted to the women's section. Many farm women participate actively in both Unifarm and Women of Unifarm. The women's section has been organized for over fifty years, and has played no small part in the changing life of rural Alberta.

The aims and objectives of Women of Unifarm are:

1. To work as farm women, co-operating with farm men, to attain the objectives of Unifarm.
2. To obtain improved educational, health and social services for the farm family, and the total rural community.
3. To promote a continuing education program for farm women.
4. to develop leadership and citizenship by supporting Goldeye Lake Centre, youth seminars, 4-H activities and other rural youth programs.
5. To strive for international peace:
 - a. Through study approach to governments
 - b. Through affiliation with the Associated Country Women of the World
6. To work with other organizations to attain common objectives.

Because for many years the farm women had studied and been concerned about the economic and social status of the family, had made presentations to governments, and had conducted a Family Living Program, and because one of our officials was appointed a



Commissioner, we feel that we were instrumental in assisting the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

The Board of Women of Unifarm decided to adopt the Status Report as an educational study for 1971, and hoped to involve not only Women of Unifarm but all interested people. With some assistance from the Alberta Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Secretary of State, and the Alberta

Women's Institute, a core of resource personnel was trained.

Twenty-eight meetings were held at rural centres in all areas of the province. The meetings were for the purpose of introducing the report, and to encourage discussion as to the far reaching effects on family life, if any or all of the 1967 recommendations were implemented into law.

As a result of these meetings an on-going study project has evolved. The winter of 1971-72 will see individual and group study on the Status Report--with some action arising from the study.

We understand that we are the only organization in Canada that has made a co-ordinated effort to familiarize women with the recommendations of the Status Report.

The Women of Unifarm project for 1972 will be a "Stop Pollution" project, and we are hopeful of a forceful study and action program.

It is impossible in a brief report to detail all our projects over the past years, but a few are certainly worthy of mention. The movement for Municipal Hospitals, Rural Health Units and Travelling Clinics was spear-headed by farm women. The first school book rental plan was initiated by a farm women's local in a little rural school just north of Edmonton, and has grown to be province wide, under the auspices of the Department of Education. The abolition of estate tax between husband and wife was a project of many year's standing, -- as were Regional Rural Libraries and grants. Equality of educational opportunities for rural youth has always been a prime concern, and will continue to be a working commitment of Women of Unifarm.

Everywoman -- a practical action group

Even as women's liberation groups go, Everywoman may never set any attendance records. The night fourteen people showed up in one member's basement suite isn't likely to repeat itself soon.

Nevertheless, the group isn't complaining. Its bi-monthly meetings usually rally five or six regulars -- enough for an exchange of ideas on plans and current issues -- and there seems to be no lack of interest on the part of acquaintances, female or male.

Everywoman first came together last September as a group of five women seeking to achieve the almost traditional women's goals of abortion reform, equal pay for equal work, other legal reform and extended day-care facilities.

Yet these women were intent on avoiding the self-defeating "pitfalls" --

political labelling, ideological disagreements, disorganization -- which they felt had isolated other such groups from large numbers of women, and clouded important issues.

The group has there fore focused more on action, particularly abortion and legal reform, than on questions of philosophy. Discussion of Everywoman's purpose and methods of attack still take place, but manage not to dominate meetings.

Last November members circulated petitions in support of federal private members' bills which would repeal the laws restricting doctors from performing abortions. Some supported the November 20th MP-letter registration at the post office; others marched to the legislature that afternoon and presented a brief to a provincial government representative.

After MLA Catherin Chichak

(Edmonton Norwood) attended Everywoman to answer questions about the then new government's policy towards women, she invited members to submit their names to her for possible inclusion on government commissions. Several have done so. CUT

In December, Everywoman took over the dying Abortion Referral Service. Members are now equipped to advise women (or men) of the procedures for and cost of procuring legal abortions in Canada and elsewhere. Birth control information is also available.

So far, names and numbers of several group members have been advertised in the Gateway and Georgia Straight. Sibylline House and AID (formerly the Welfare Information Service) have also referred women to the service.

Recently Everywoman endorsed a brief

submitted to the provincial government by law student Jean McBean-Worton. It recommended certain changes to provisions for women in the premier's proposed Bill of Rights.

Member interests and expertise will determine Everywoman's future projects. At present, some are considering the possibilities of research into the problems of local women.

Meanwhile, meetings continue the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Anyone interested in attending the next one -- Wednesday, February 2 -- is invited to contact Terri Jackson at 466 - 5305, Betsy Ewener at 433 - 0744, or Mary Gareau at 465 - 3569.

by Betsy Ewener