



continued from p. 12

He continued to harass me the whole year — he used to call me up at home and ask me out for dinner all the time. I didn't have the know-how to tell him to stop it, or take action against him.

JP: I never said I wasn't a feminist but I never said I was one either because I wasn't familiar with the term. My mother, although she'll never admit it, is a very strong feminist: in Jewish families the mother has a strong role. I always had certain values inculcated in me — always stand up for your rights, don't let anyone push you around.

When I was thirteen I organized a protest against sex-segregated gym classes. According to Ottawa's standards I was obnoxious because I openly disagreed with my teachers and the teachers didn't like anyone to talk out, especially a little girl who was fat and bright — things a little girl shouldn't be.

When I came to university my mother put me in the



Women's Studies course and I thought "What is this stupid women's studies course?" It turned out to be the best class I've taken.

While at first many women experience relief to find something that speaks to our needs, we soon discover that the feminist movement has its shortcomings. It is so overwhelmingly complex that it sometimes seems we can never come to a full understanding, or even agreement, on some major issues.

FM: When I first went to the Women's Centre it was an intimidating experience. All of a sudden I had to confront the negative parts of feminism. I used to think women could do anything — I didn't have an understanding of racism or sexuality.

I have problems with the collective process because I wonder if such a diverse group of women can agree on so many different issues.

MC: Calling myself a feminist is something I still have problems with because it is an extremely white and middle class movement.

Racism is something I have had to do a lot of work on. It was harder to work through than sexism was. I had to come to terms with the fact that my culture is racist, my family is racist, and I had to work on my own racism.

JP: One thing I've found stifling at the Women's Centre is that I had to conform to a certain belief system, a certain dress style; and I sometimes find that suffocating.

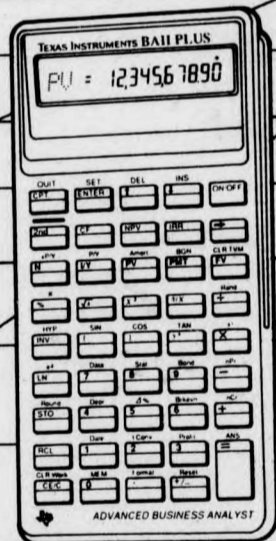
Becoming involved in the women's movement is often fraught with frustration. Because feminist thought is so diverse and covers such a broad range of issues, and because we are in an academic environment where theory and writing abound, it becomes clear that 'feminism' has many meanings.

FM: A real source of frustration is that when you are new to feminism, you find out about a theory and then you find that it is no longer valid because it's racist, because it doesn't include a particular group of women's experiences. You never know what to hang on to. There is no bible in feminism.

FM: You expect sisterhood and then you find out that there is so much diversity and so much debate that you wonder if sisterhood is possible... I have never gotten into so many debates and disagreements in my life as I have in the Women's Centre. But that's a great thing.

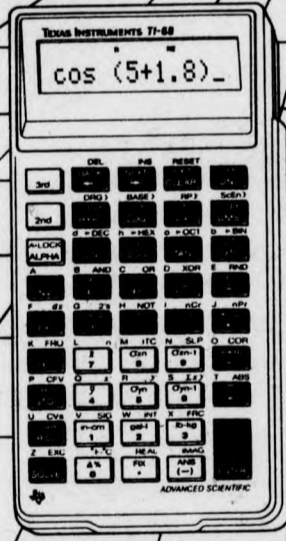


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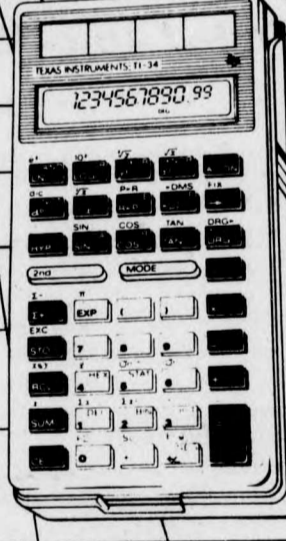


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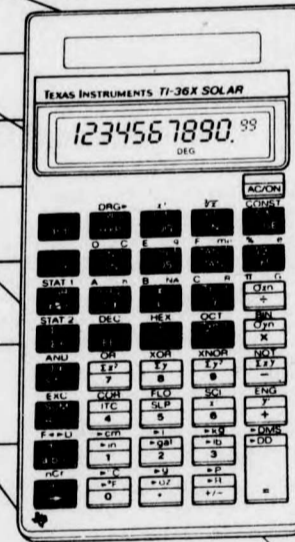


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