

(S)hell in Nigeria: blood for oil in Ogoniland

On November 10, 1995, Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight other social activists were executed by the Nigerian military dictatorship as a means to silence them and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni Peoples (MoSOP), of which they were active members. Saro-Wiwa was the leading spokesperson for the 500,000 Ogoni people whose land is located at the oil-rich Niger River Delta of Nigeria.

MoSOP had been adamantly protesting the destruction of the Ogoni environment due to oil exploration and production, most of which has been done by Royal Dutch Shell Oil. "Since 1958, Shell Oil's massive operation, now 14% of its global production, has destroyed the Delta's fragile ecosystem. Gas pipelines and ever-burning flares have destroyed farmland, flora, and fauna. They have poisoned the air and water, sickening the people and killing the fish."

Dr. Owens Wiwa — brother of Kenule Saro-Wiwa — has observed a "high incidence of asthma, cancer, bronchitis...and also some bizarre skin diseases and a high level of miscarriages, which is quite different from other areas in Nigeria which are not producing oil."

As a result of the struggles of the Ogoni people, as well as Saro-Wiwa and MoSOP's activism against Shell within Nigeria and abroad, the military dictatorship unleashed a brutal campaign of terror and violence against Ogoniland. Nigeria is currently the world's fourth-largest oil producer and receives 80% of its national revenue and 95% of its export earnings from the sale of oil. Also, Shell produces up to one million barrels a day, representing 50% of Nigeria's total oil production. As such, the connection between the Nigerian "government" and Shell is not so difficult to ascertain. The military relies on oil revenues to keep its power base and since Shell is a major producer of that oil, it is in the best interest of the military to silence any and all internal opposition to Shell's activities within the Delta.

While the repression within Ogoniland has been carried out by the military, it has been done so with Shell as a willing accomplice. Since 1993, eight Ogoni villages have been destroyed and over 1,800 people have been murdered by people travelling in Shell oil company boats and using sophisticated weapons. As a secret Nigerian military memo stated: "Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence." Shell must be held accountable for these atrocities which have been carried out in Nigeria.

This, however, is not the first time that Shell has been involved in dubious connections with state and military repression. During the years of apartheid rule in South Africa, Shell, against international opinion, continued to "do business" with the regime, fuelling it and its racist policy of apartheid, as it continues to fuel Nigeria's military campaign against the Ogoni people today.

Here in Canada, it is up to us to call for an oil embargo on all Nige-

"It's time for the international community to accept that the situation in Nigeria is no different - only slightly worse — than the situation in apartheid South Africa.

There's only a difference in colour and we want governments in Canada to really pronounce Nigeria a pariah state — on the same status that apartheid South Africa was." — *Wole Soyinka, Nigerian author, poet, and playwright; Nobel Prize Winner*



Ogoni

by Kenule Saro-Wiwa

Ogoni is the land the people Ogoni

The Ogoni have trees dying in our ancestral homeland streams polluting weeping fuel into murky rivers.

It is the poisoned air cursing the loveless lungs of dying children.

Ogoni is the dream Breaking the rope and chain around the drooping neck of a Shell shocked land

rian crude — 12% of Canada's oil comes from Nigeria. This will pave the way not only for the cessation of violence in Ogoniland, but also for the creation of a grassroots democratization process in Nigeria. Steps that can be taken towards this end are to exercise your consumer

power and boycott Shell, as well as Irving Oil (Canada's largest importer of Nigerian oil, with a total estimated at \$400 million) and Imperial Oil (Esso/Exxon, total estimated \$100 million). In addition, write to the Canadian government and demand a boycott on Nigerian oil, and write to the above three oil companies outlining why you are boycotting their products. Only through our sustained pressure can we seek to rectify the wrongs and injustices inflicted upon humanity and the environment and begin to create a more just world. A luta continua!

For more information and how to get involved, contact:

David Ast c/o the economic justice collective, Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG), room 304 (the closet of the revolution) Dalhousie SUB - 494 6662

Colette Poirier c/o the Committee of Concern for Nigeria - 454 9207

Information from the following sources:

Abbott, Elizabeth (1995) "How Should Canada Protest Against Nigerian Executions?" *Sanctions: Canadian Human Rights Foundation Newsletter*, Fall.

Wiwa, Dr. Owens (1995) "Testimonial Transcript." Steering Committee Member of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MoSOP). Paper prepared by Greenpeace.

Nigeria Action Network (1996) Paper Prepared for McGill QPIRG. "Human Rights Crisis in Nigeria." *Speaking About Rights*, 10(1), (1995).



by Elin Raymond

The women's movement has a long history of criticizing mainstream psychiatry and psychotherapy for its androcentric (and also racist and classist) approach. Women have found that the oppression and misogyny they face in society has carried over into the mental health structure. Specifically, approaches to mental health have tended to medicalize and pathologize socially created problems facing women, while also reinforcing sex roles to serve the interests of patriarchy. Since the 1970's, a more complete framework called Feminist therapy has responded to these criticisms and more successfully addressed women's issues in medicine.

Feminist therapy reflects female values and female ways of relating. It uses a psychology that is not based on the male model of "human development" which stresses the importance of separation from mother, family, friends, mentors, and places value on autonomy and ambition. Women failing to meet standards created by a male culture are mislabelled as deficient and inferior. Women become "irrational," "overemotional," and "unstable" when compared to the superior, "rational" male subject.

Conversely, feminist psychology follows a relational model for female development, where the self is organized and developed within the context of relationships. It is not necessary for separation to take place in order for autonomy and creativity to be developed; rather, this can happen within a focus of connectedness and relationships.

Feminist psychology also encompasses an analysis of the effects of patriarchy. All women live in the midst of violence or the threat of violence. Women's responses to sexual abuse, rape, harassment, discrimination, or battery can take many forms, such as eating disorders, depression, and "personality disorders." It would seem that these are valid coping mechanisms, yet mainstream medicine — as it ignores the context of patriarchy — does not adequately address these issues. Other issues important and specific to women, such as anger expression or self-nurturing, can only be fully explored within this framework that values women's experiences and understands the damage of traditional gender roles. It does not ignore the impact that cultural norms, expectations, and political structures have upon women's lives. Instead, transformation is seen to be fundamen-

tally necessary at the social, political, as well as personal level. Therapists support social change, rather than conformity to the dominant paradigm which harms women. The goal of feminist therapy is to empower women while also recognizing and affirming their experiences of discrimination and resistance.

Tragically, traditional psychiatry and psychotherapy continues to pathologize women and, in effect, blame the victim. This has its roots in Darwinian science and late Victorian psychiatry. Nervous disorders such as "hysteria" and "neurasthenia" were thought to be the result of sexual frustration, rather than women's lack of control, autonomy, mobility, or intellectual opportunity. It was purported that women who defied their "natural" role of obedient housewife and mother would have a mental breakdown and then pass this instability to their female children. Clearly, psychiatry was a form of social control — punishing wayward wives and reinforcing the existing social relations. This is not irrelevant to our present experience.

Psychiatry still has a considerable sex bias in diagnosis and treatment. In 1988, Statistics Canada documented that 63.7% of those with "mental disorders"

were women. Women also receive a greater proportion of higher risk treatments: for example, women receive electroshock therapy 2-3 times more than men, while black and elderly women receive the highest proportion of these treatments.

For women, it is essential that counselling and healing can be offered without oppression. Feminist therapy is unique in its affirmation and validation of the female experience in both health and illness. In the process of understanding sexism, it is also possible to appreciate multiple forms of oppression facing marginalized groups such as lesbians, natives, and black women. Feminist therapy recognizes and therefore can also offer a framework for working with diversity.

Without adopting a feminist perspective, medicine will remain fundamentally patriarchal and continue to devalue, pathologize, and misunderstand women. For example, women's relationship with eating is sequestered by the medical field, which prefers to label only extreme cases, such as anorexia, rather than addressing the social problem affecting all women. This must be changed to offer a psychology and therapy that values all women and actively challenges social mistreatment.

the trail to

Social Justice

These articles address the issue of unequal power relationships. It is hoped that these pieces will illustrate how the actions of a few can negatively — and sometimes fatally — effect the lives of many, many others. Also offered here is assistance to those interested in lessening their contribution to future inequalities. Can society stop justifying inequalities and do a better job at eliminating them? If so, it starts with offering a voice to those previously silenced...



While many societies, committees, and organizations have recently undergone elections to determine their respective executives for the upcoming year, I wonder how many have given any thought to the way they will be conducting their meetings in the following year. For many societies, the process of decision making has already been determined by past practices or funding conditionalities. There are, however, many organizations that have been able to alter their procedures towards a non-hierarchical, consensus basis of operation. While this may seem like a "flaky" thing to do, I can offer a couple of good reasons why any organization may want to try it out.

Consensus-based procedures seek to eliminate the power structure that can cause an organization to be dominated by the interests of those at the top of the hierarchy. By operating on a consensus basis, the group is relying on a different set of assumptions about the way people interact. Many believe that given the opportunity, people will want to find solutions that satisfy everyone in the decision-making process. This differs from most organizations — such as the DSU — which use "Robert's Rules" or similar forums for decision making. Procedures like those set out in Robert's Rules assume that, firstly, people are inherently confrontational; and, secondly, that a clear delineation will occur between those that are for a resolution and those that are not. In everyday discussions, most people are able to see the validity of particular claims; however, Robert's Rules sets up a situation

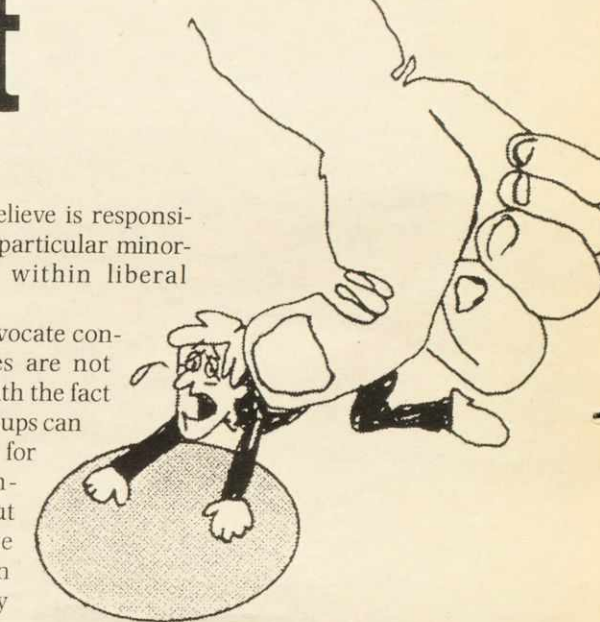
Consensus vs. Robert

by Toby Moorsom

in which people are likely to respond to differing opinions with conflict. This occurs because any alternate opinions inherently threaten the interests of the proposed resolution rather than complement it. In every case that is dealt with via Robert's Rules, up to one half of the decision-making body can be left with their concerns totally unaddressed.

If the decision-making body is composed of a group that is divided by differences of interest or opinion, then it is possible within the Robert's Rules process that a part of the group will continually end up having their interests go unobserved. It is this concept, often called the "tyranny of the major-

ity," that some believe is responsible for the angst particular minority groups feel within liberal democracies. People who advocate consensus procedures are not only concerned with the fact that particular groups can feel unaccounted for in the decision-making process, but they also believe that every person has an equally valuable contribution to make. According to the proponents, the best possible outcomes are more likely to be arrived at if everyone's ideas are welcome in the process of decision making. As a result, groups that use consensus procedures tend to maintain



Sometimes questions can put pressure on a speaker and make her or him feel "on the spot."

a supportive atmosphere in which members can concentrate on their agenda — which is the reason most groups exist in the first place.

Questions and answers about consensus decision-making

by Wayne Groszko



(1) What is consensus decision-making? A process where a group of people make a decision, with everyone in the group agreeing to the final decision.

(2) Do you vote? No.

(3) Then how do you decide things?

For each decision, there is a discussion in which everyone present has an equal opportunity to speak. The decision is often modified during this time to incorporate the various concerns of different people. When everyone agrees to the decision, it is passed.

(4) Doesn't that take a long time?

Sometimes it does, if the issue is a very difficult one. On the other hand, some decisions are easy and obvious to everyone, so the group would save time.

It's also a learning process, and people learn that it is in their own best interest to act in a cooperative way, since they can't count on "out-voting" everyone else's concerns. Also, with experience, people get better at making consensus decisions.

I have experienced other, more confrontational, systems like Robert's Rules, and have seen a lot of time wasted because of the complexity and inflexibility of those systems. For example, in Robert's Rules, people end up debating a 'motion to amend an amendment to the resolution,' by which point there are frequent calls for clarification — "What exactly are we voting on, anyway?"

(5) Why would a group choose to make decisions by consensus?

Consensus has several advantages. First, since people cannot be outvoted, the concerns of a minority in the group cannot simply be

ignored. Also, since the system of rules is simple and easy to understand, people can feel they are equal participants in the process. By contrast, systems with complicated rules have the effect of excluding people and making them feel inferior if they have not mastered all the finer points of "the game."

Most importantly, it's fun. It feels satisfying to sit down and discuss something reasonably with other people and come up with a decision that everyone can agree with.

I didn't truly realize how good the consensus system is until I had the dubious privilege of participating in some meetings conducted by Robert's Rules. "Satisfying" would be the furthest word from describing those meetings, unless you are someone who thrives on hostility. I spent most of the time trying to figure out when I was allowed to speak, how I could ask a simple question within "the Rules," and which "amendment to the amendment" we were voting on. Instead of working together to come to a decision, people were divided into those who were trying to ram through their own personal agenda, and those who were trying to avoid being ignored and outvoted. This unnecessary, artificial conflict caused people to be nasty to one another over trivialities.

After that experience, it was really nice to go back to a positive way of making decisions.

Many groups of various types and sizes have adopted consensus as their model of decision making. If you are involved with a group or organization, you might want to give it a try.

There are several books on this subject, including "Building Consensus in Groups", by Sam Kaner. (ISBN 1-55092-255-6)