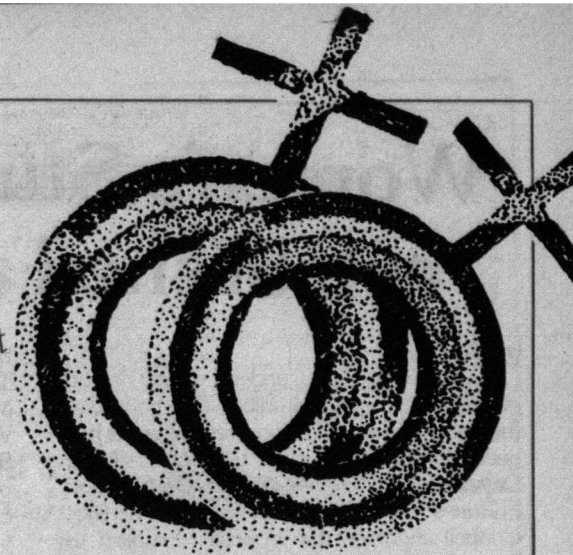


March 10, 1987

# Everyday Rebellion

The Gateway women's equality supplement



"Bread and Roses" march down Whyte Avenue last Saturday to celebrate International Women's Day.

photo Sheryl Ackerman

## Study shows we all encourage pornography

by Tina Cristini

We all share in the responsibility of encouraging aggressive attitudes towards women, according to American psychologist and researcher, Dr. Neil Malamuth.

For fifteen years Professor Malamuth, present chairman of the Communication Studies Program at UCLA, has conducted research on the causes of violence against women in relation to mass media and "pornography". He shared his findings with the public attending Grant MacEwan Community College's conference on "Family Violence: An Integrated Response" on Thursday, March 5.

Dr. Malamuth originally set out to scientifically test the "cultural feminist" model of the imitation effects of the media (ie. to prove whether or not what we see and hear affects our behaviour, especially anti-social behaviour such as aggression against women).

Using multiple methods of research and multiple samples, his research team concluded that greater exposure to violent media messages, whether sexually explicit or non-sexually explicit, will invariably lead to a greater tolerance and acceptance of aggression against women. On the other hand, sexually explicit but completely non-violent material in which power is seen to be shared equally between the sexes usually produce positive results.

Dr. Malamuth emphasized that "issues of family violence, rape, discrimination against women, and media messages about violence all share some common elements and cannot be looked at as independent issues." He gave the following example: "Some people will think that family violence is really terrible, but at the same

time they may tell a lot of sexist jokes and may see nothing wrong with 'slasher' films that show a lot of violence against women in an eroticized way."

Even though in the last couple of years Dr. Malamuth has noticed a decline in blatant displays of violence against women in both the printed and electronic media due to public protest, he views the subtle influences in society as pervasive and much more pernicious. For example, a jury member at a rape trial will be influenced by his/her beliefs in the rape myths as depicted in the media (ie. that rape victims provoke the assault, that they really enjoy the rape, or that there really isn't any physical damage).

Peer influence is also very instrumental in spreading the myth that violence against women leads to positive consequences. For instance, "the way Man "A" reacts in a locker-room conversation when Man "B" boasts about a date rape the night before, will either encourage Man "B" to continue that behaviour or make him feel that he did something wrong."

Thus, the social climate together with media messages create an environment which condones and tolerates violence against women. We are all guilty of perpetuating the myths and anti-social attitudes if we do not stand up for the dignity and rights of all human beings.

"Research shows that these issues of hostility towards women, sexual aggression, family violence and so on, are very interrelated and cannot be dealt with in isolation, but in the larger context." Dr. Malamuth concludes, "We must realize how we, as a culture, may support and actually encourage certain kinds of anti-social acts on the part of those individuals who may be

more inclined to behave violently, because we have created the stage within which violence is accepted. We must take a much more active role in encouraging positive behaviour through the media and peer relations."

Anyone interested in the details of Dr. Malamuth's research data may request to view the video tape of his lecture recorded by the "Positive Action Against Pornography" organization which sponsored his visit. Phone 486-3409.

## Women must strive to change decision policies

by Linda Atchison

The women's movement must seek to change the structure of today's politics and attitudes towards technology, according to Dr. Ursula Franklin, professor of Metallurgy and Materials Science at the U of T.

Franklin spoke on the future of the women's movement to a crowd of about 80 people in the Humanities Building Thursday night.

She stressed the need to challenge the structure of the political system itself, pointing out that when the decision-makers are pressured they often make concessions only in terms of specifics.

"While we welcome advances in specifics, the really difficult thing is to change the structure of decision making."

Franklin believes women need to ask politicians what it takes to change the present system. By asking these questions she notes that women have invited "backlash and regrouping" by those in power — a positive step as it mobilizes them to change.

Political questions should be framed within a social context, according to Franklin, and guided by the paradigm that all people matter

equally.

She feels politicians too often focus on the 'hows' of political questions and ignore the 'whys'. "Why, for example, build a space station, when there are a lot of other burning needs to consider?" she asked.

In terms of framing questions Franklin continued, "Let's not discuss what risks or benefits but whose risks or benefits."

In her emphasis on people-centered politics she warned that technology is becoming more highly valued than people.

"It is easier to get a bank loan to buy equipment than to hire people," she said. She added the taxation system generously favours machines over people.

Franklin sees the future of the women's movement as promising. "One of the reasons I am not pessimistic about the future of the movement is that one of the greatest tasks — that of raising important questions — has already been done."

The lecture was the last in a series sponsored by the Advisory Committee on Women's Studies, WISEST, and the Academic Women's Association.