

Women Meet In Mexico

by C. Neilsen

This summer saw the opening of the United Nations conference for International Women's Year held in Mexico from June 10 - July 2. The conference was attended by delegates from more than 130 countries as well as representatives from national liberation groups. Also in attendance were non-governmental agencies who were given facilities to hold a parallel conference known as the Tribune.

The Tribune was supposed to

allow "ordinary" women a chance to discuss the purposes and goals of the conference. Dominated by so-called "feminists" however, the Tribune was used to promote the idea that women's problems can be solved without a fundamental change in the economic and political structure. New York's Lieutenant Governor said, "If we can move beyond the point of being mouth-pieces for our countries' political points of view and start discussing the problems of women that face us

as women, then maybe we can salvage this thing." (Time June 30, 1975) American feminists immediately made an issue of the fact that some of the delegates to the conference were wives of political leaders, (according to Time, "about a dozen" out of 100 countries which sent delegates). Another issue they brought up was the fact that a man was elected president of the conference.

In the Main conference, the United States stated that they were violently opposed to any "politicization of the conference" and that the problems of women were political (Peking Review No. 27 July 4, 1975). Both the official and unofficial delegations from the United States showed themselves throughout the conference to be opposed not to "politicization" as such but opposed to any politicization which did not go along with their line that the problems of women are unconnected to the problems of other sections of people.

Coline Campbell, MP for South-west Western Nova, expressed the same view when she complained that the conference was used as a forum for furthering unrelated political ends during the last few days, with Chilean, Panamanian, and Zionist issues unrelated to Women's Year being raised and diverting the time of the delegates. She reported that Canada abstained from voting on the "Declaration of Mexico", which contained a number of unacceptable political overtones.

The Declaration of Mexico was the official outcome of the International Women's Year conference and was supported by the majority of the nations attending. It said, "women as well as men together

should eliminate colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, foreign occupation and domination, Zionism, apartheid, racial discrimination, the acquisition of land by force, and the recognition of such acquisition since such practices inflict incalculable suffering on women, men and children." The Declaration was passed 89-2 with 19 abstentions. The United States and Israel were the only ones voting no.

Meanwhile at the Tribune, Betty Friedan, well known American feminist was advocating a position of support for disarmament, prostitution, lesbian rights and the peaceful road to the solution of problems.

Li Suwen of the delegation from the People's Republic of China said in her presentation that, "the emancipation of women is a common cause of the entire people. Its success requires the joint effort and struggle of the entire people." At the same time, women's emancipation is of interest primarily to women themselves and must be won through their own struggle. She said, "women make up half the population and no great social change can be completed without their participation."

The delegates of the Third World warmly welcomed her statements. They expressed their understanding of the fact that women can only be liberated in the course of wiping out exploitative world relations such as racism, apartheid, imperialism, and colonialism by drafting the Declaration of Mexico which won overwhelming support from the delegations present at the conference. The International Women's Year conference marks a step forward in the advance of women and people along the road to freedom from all exploitation.

People Power

By Shelley Wilcox

The Volunteer Bureau can be thought of as a Manpower for volunteers. It places people with about one hundred and forty agencies in the Halifax - Dartmouth area. The main thrust is recruitment, as volunteers are desperately needed by most agencies. It also encourages agencies to plan and implement comprehensive volunteer programs that include both initial and in-service training. Another function is to promote the recognition of the impact of volunteer work on the community through Volunteer Week and on an ongoing basis.

Who volunteers? everybody - students, High School and University, professionals, labourers, clerks, the retired and senior citizens. The disabled, sororities and fraternities, social service clubs, church groups, the Scouts and Guides volunteer in groups.

What do they do? They work with and for children, seniors, the handicapped, the underprivileged

and the arts doing counselling, arts and crafts, clerical work, canvassing, carpentry, transportation and much, much more.

Why do people volunteer? They do it to be involved in their community. They do it to help. They find it adds a new dimension to their own lives and they learn new skills that may possibly be related to employment.

How does the Bureau get new volunteers? There is a main office in Halifax and a branch office in Dartmouth. Publicity goes out to all the media, advertising the need for volunteers, and those who are interested phone and make an appointment for an interview. Once the interview is completed, the appropriate agency is contacted and the new volunteer is placed. After a period of time, a follow-up call is made to see if everyone is satisfied with the arrangement. So far this year over 500 people have been placed.

Anyone interested in becoming a Community Volunteer can call the Bureau at 422-2048.

SHERMAN HINES

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