

# Destination: Zimbabwe

By TOM McNEILL

During an anti-prostitution campaign in 1983, Zimbabwe police detained several thousand women in temporary prison camps. Those who could not prove they were either married or employed were placed in a "resettlement camp".

Incidents such as this illustrate that independence for Zimbabwe hasn't meant independence for women in the African state, says Juanita Montalvo, who will be visiting Zimbabwe this summer on a WUSC-sponsored seminar.

Women played an important military role in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. During the war, soldiers were badly needed and the groups opposing the white-minority regime involved many women in their fight. Not only were women fighting alongside men, but some were leading the ranks.

By 1980, their influence had reached the point that leaders of the governing party repeatedly emphasized their commitment to improving the position of women in the newly-independent nation.

But as the situation in Zimbabwe stabilized, women were urged to forego the gains they had made during the war and return to their traditional roles.

Even Teurai Ropa Nhongo,



Dalhousie student Juanita Montalvo will attend a seminar in Zimbabwe this summer to study women in development. Photo by Sean Forbes.

minister of women's affairs and a former military commander, said in a speech:

"Women should help their husbands by getting involved in self-help projects which generate extra income for the family rather than spending most of their time basking in the sun or drinking

beer."

Dr Goonam Naidoo, a feminist and political activist living in Zimbabwe said in an interview in *Moto* magazine, "I detest the secondary role women assume in African societies."

Women have adopted key roles in parts of the country's government, including the Ministry of

Community Development and Women's Affairs, which organizes extensive educational programs for women. There has also been a large increase in the number of non-partisan women's groups and cooperatives catering

advisor from Dalhousie were chosen to participate in the World University Service of Canada-sponsored seminar to Zimbabwe this summer along with 26 other students and two other faculty advisors from across the country. Dalhousie law stu-

"A country will not go forward as long as the women are left behind."

to different segments of society.

But the government's improvements in the status of women are concentrated almost entirely within the traditionally female sectors of the economy where most of the country's women remain.

Montalvo is hoping to meet with many of these women's groups as part of her study of the changes in women's status since independence in Zimbabwe.

Four students and one faculty

dents Scott Sterns and Mary O'Brien, economics student Shawn Houlihan, and Dr Tim Shaw, director of Dalhousie's African Studies Program, will accompany Montalvo on the trip.

The annual program, which picks a different developing country each year, is aimed at increasing international understanding in Canada and the developing world.

Participants must raise 40 per cent of the seminar's costs — \$2,400 each — from local groups and individuals. They are expected to study an aspect of development which relates to their studies in Canada. On their return, they will be presenting slideshows and seminars to many of the groups that support their program.

WUSC also sponsors other development education programs, including the WUSC student refugee program, a Zimbabwe education assistance program, and the WUSC Caravan (profits of which go to the student refugee fund).

Other development organizations such as the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, and Canadian University Service Overseas are giving a high priority to the role of women in development and helping women's groups in developing countries.

More than six of the participants on the WUSC seminar program will be studying women in development.

According to Montalvo, there has been a strong focus on the subject in the last 15 years as more people have realized that women are a vital, but previously ignored, part of development. She says women are "in the forefront of development throughout the world."

Her determination to change the existing structure echoes what Dr. Goonam said in *Moto* magazine: "A country will not go forward as long as the women lag behind."

## Same old story for women profs

By KATHY O'BRIEN

Universities are still hiring women mainly to fill positions in "traditional" female faculties, such as nursing and education, says the chair of the Status of Women committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

"On the surface, it looks as if universities have been hiring more women," said Jane Gordon, a sociology professor at Mount Saint Vincent University. "But they are probably hiring fewer women in mainstream faculties."

In most Nova Scotia universities, the percentage of faculty positions filled by women runs between 14 to 30 per cent. At Mount Saint Vincent, where 85 per cent of students are women, the figure is 6 per cent. But at the Technical University of Nova Scotia, the figure drops to just two per cent.

Paula Chegwiddden, a sociology professor at Acadia University in Wolfville, said only four per cent of Acadia's science professors are female. Chegwiddden said more women are needed in technical and scientific areas to "provide role models for women. Not having women in the sciences may discourage women going into the sciences."

Gordon is concerned that the number of female faculty at Mount Saint Vincent has

declined from 100 per cent 20 years ago to 60 per cent today.

"There are more and more women being turned out of graduate programs," but not all are being hired as professors, she said.

Gordon said universities seem "to value men's credentials more highly than women's." She said many women often take time off after finishing graduate school, and this may hinder their chances for academic employment.

Gordon suggests that universities "are reluctant to hire older women," preferring to hire "someone fresh out of graduate school who goes directly into the system."

"There is no conscious decision not to hire women," says Chegwiddden. "But people like to hire people like themselves," she said, noting hiring committees are often made up of men.

Although Acadia has had an affirmative action policy for two years, Chegwiddden said it's just "a motherhood statement." There's no way to enforce the hiring of women, she said.

Dalhousie philosophy professor Sue Sherwin said Dal's "very weak" affirmative action policy states that a woman is to be hired only if there is no better qualified male. Sherwin thinks universities should hire well-qualified women even if a male candidate is

perceived to have higher qualifications.

What people consider to be "qualified" is "very subjective", said Sherwin. "A department head may prefer a person because she or he fits into the style of the department. That works against women because departments are usually male dominated."

If hiring committees relied solely on grades and publications, the system would be fairer to women, said Sherwin.

Sherwin also noted that most women professors at Dalhousie are in the junior ranks, and very few head departments. "There are 13 female full professors compared to 237 male full professors, and there is only one woman in senior administration," she said.

Gordon said these figures are similar for most universities across Canada.

"The only way to change these statistics is to hire more women," said Sherwin. But because many universities are suffering budget restraints, it is unlikely women faculty will be hired in great numbers in the near future.

Women faculty also earn less than their male colleagues. On average, women professors make 12 per cent less than men. Gordon says salary disparity "is attributed not to gender, but to the initial salary the professor negotiates with administration."