

Women's movement : for which women?

by Samantha Brennan

The lesbian is the woman who united the personal and the political in the struggle to free ourselves from the oppressive institution (p. 276 in the *Lesbian Nation* by Jill Johnston).

Like the conservative times in which we live, today's women's movement is growing increasingly pragmatic. Ingoing the needs of minorities within the movement, mainstream feminism is concentrating its energies on "basic" issues.

Well, rah rah for jobs and day-care. While we're at it, why not thank men for giving us the vote.

Daycare is fine if you plan on having children and equal pay is just hunky-dory if you can find a job. Many lesbians can't do either.

Concerned only for their own best interests (i.e., how to succeed in the system), many women regard the presence of lesbian feminists as "political suicide".

Betty Freidan, author of the *Feminine Mystique* and champion of the women's movement, went so far as to publicly denounce lesbians in the movement as CIA infiltrators.

This brand of feminist passes off sexual choice as a personal issue—letting freedom of choice and the American way rule again.

But it's not personal when you can't get a job teaching for fear you'll corrupt Canada's innocent youth. It's a political issue when the RCMP or the armed forces rejects your application when they hear that you occasionally visit the only gay/lesbian bar in town.

For the radical (not pragmatic) feminists, the personal is political and the political is personal.

The January, 1984 issue of the feminist newspaper *off our backs* reported on a conference on women in sport held in the United States.

At this conference, dubbed "A

Blueprint for the Future of Women's Sports", the issue of homophobia in women's sport was, perhaps inevitably, discussed.

Some of the delegates felt that it was time to bring the issue into the open and say, "yes, there are gay women involved in sport." Others felt that the issue should not be addressed, and better still, ignored.

Gay women in sport who want to stand up and be counted are being told that it is not the appropriate time to do so. Just as some women involved in the feminist movement are wary of admitting that lesbian women are part of that movement, for fear of being identified as a group of lesbians, so women in sport would, and perhaps justifiably given the current social climate, prefer not to admit to the presence of lesbian women in sport.

A similar discussion occurred at the December conference of

Canadian University Press (CUP), the cooperative of fifty-three student newspapers of which the *Gazette* is a member.

Of the sixty or so women delegates attending the conference (there were 140 delegates in total) maybe six were living openly as lesbians. Yet comments about the national conference from both men and women referred to the hoardes of radical-lesbian-feminist-anarchists who dominated the plenary and stifled freedom of speech. It was as if the entire women's caucus had run nude through the halls, singing and chanting and held orgies in the women-only resource/relaxation room. What a thought.

One woman felt so enraged by the presence of a lesbian couple holding hands in the women's room that she wrote in the daily conference newsletter that she felt alienated by the lesbian-feminists. Meanwhile men and

women kissed and held hands at the nightly CUP mixed parties. Who's alienating who?

Late at night, in the quiet of their rooms, other women complained about lesbians in the women's movement. If there are lesbians identified with the women's movement, people may think all feminists are lesbians. Or so the disaster in *Logic 100* goes. Paranoia strikes and again we seek not to offend at the price of selling out our sisters.

If what you're saying is that you're afraid people may think you're a lesbian (horror of horrors) if you say you're a feminist, it's time to look at who's really homophobic. Stop looking to them—the silent crowd of judgemental observers and look at yourself. Let's take this discussion one step closer to home. Let's get personal.

What are you afraid of?



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in the Caribbean and central America is extensive and long-standing:

- in the 1930s Canadian troops and U.S. Marines intervened in El Salvador to prop up a pro-U.S. dictatorship and suppress a popular revolutionary movement against this regime

- 12 maritime patrol aircraft used by the current Salvadorean dictatorship against the popular movement and imported from Brazil in 1979 have engines produced by Pratt & Whitney Canada, a U.S. multinational subsidiary in Montreal. The engines went through Brazil to circumvent an official Canadian prohibition against exporting armaments to combatants and conflict zones

- the anti-Sandinist "contras" forces attacking Nicaragua from Honduras are not only financed through the American CIA but are reported to use Canadian-made ammunition

- as part of a programme begun in 1980, the Canadian Coast Guard College in Sydney last August graduated 58 students selected from 13 Caribbean states for paramilitary training in coast guard and marine police work. Last February, Trudeau told leaders of 16 Commonwealth Caribbean countries that Canada will further expand this and other such "military assistance and cooperation" programmes

- under a \$25,000 contract with the Department of National Defence, the Centre for Conflict Studies at the University of New Brunswick is preparing a formal study of "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency Movements in Central America." The contract was awarded in February 1982. The Centre is headed by Brig.-Gen. Maurice Tugwell. Tugwell is a specialist in airborne warfare, terrorism and counter-insurgency in northern Ireland, Malaya, Palestine and other regions in which he served in the British Armed Forces. He is the founding head of the CCS. This Centre was established at UNB in 1979, is linked to the CIA and also connected to NATO

through an "institutional grant" received for 1982-83. It is also conducting a study of the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to go to war

- the naval exercise for which the Canadian destroyer squadron departed Halifax Monday is the latest of an ongoing series in which Canadian troops have participated annually in the Caribbean region with U.S. troops since 1965.

The Canadian destroyers will conduct multi-faceted exercises with a U.S. aircraft carrier task force, including—for the first time—live surface-to-air missile tests. Such joint exercises aim at testing integrated capabilities within each navy. In recent years these exercises have been augmented by NATO warships from European countries. Similarly, the scope of these exercises has extended from the Atlantic into the Caribbean Sea itself.

These exercises are being conducted off U.S. naval bases in Puerto Rico, and include visits at the ports of other Caribbean countries to "show the flag."

The Halifax Committee quoted an Oct. 26, 1983 *Toronto Globe and Mail* article detailing the similarity between the invasion of Grenada and 1981 U.S. task force war games in the Caribbean: "The United States carried out a full dress rehearsal of this invasion at Vieques Island, the U.S. base off Puerto Rico" during an operation code named Ocean Venture 81 in which Grenada was code named "Amber". These events show these war "games" are the prelude to military intervention and invasion, as well as intimidation.

The current U.S. war games in Honduras, named "Big Pine Two," are the largest military manoeuvres ever staged in the Caribbean and Central American region. They began in October and are to last until April-June, and involve a total of 5,600 U.S. troops and 6,000 Honduran ground forces backed by 1919 U.S. warships carrying 16,000 military personnel.



Comment on grey seal hunt

by David Orton

Alan Billard, the executive director of the Eastern Fishermen's Federation (E.F.F.), was quoted in the *Chronicle Herald* of January 21, 1984 as saying that his organization is planning a major public campaign for a "cull", i.e. kill, of grey seals. Billard says Federal Fisheries Minister de Bané has given "personal support" to the proposed cull.

About two weeks prior to Billard's announcement, Gilles Theriault, executive secretary of the Maritime Fishermen's Union (M.F.U.), was quoted in the same newspaper (January 6, 1984) as saying that fishermen were concerned about growing numbers of grey seals. He did not want a public discussion about this because militant conservationists might be aroused: "We just don't think it's in anybody's interest right now to make a big public statement or show around the issue."

Federal Fisheries "Conservation and Protection" Branch already has a culling program. It began this program in 1967 to slaughter all accessible grey seal pups and breeding adults every December to January during the pupping season. This program is carried out at known grey seal colonies like at Camp Island (off Ecum Secum) and at the Basque Islands (off Pt. Michaud) in Eastern Cape Breton. "Controlled culls", as they are termed, have also been carried out in the Northumberland Strait, for example at Amet Island (off Tatamagouche Bay) and on the ice in St. Georges Bay. A document by the Canadian Atlantic Fisheries Scientific Advisory Committee, *Eastern Canadian Grey Seal Research Report and 1980 Stock Assessment*, put out in 1981, shows that

in a period from 1968 to 1981, using a bounty system (\$50 per adult and \$25 per one year old and under, jawbone submitted for payment), a controlled cull, and the shooting of samples for alleged scientific purposes, an official total of 17,613 grey seals were killed. In recent years, Federal Fisheries biologists have advocated stepping up the killing of grey seals, proposing that an additional 8,000 to 10,000 animals be killed each year over a two-year period.

While Billard and Theriault raised charges of the consumption of fish and destruction of fishing gear against the grey seal, Federal Fisheries has fingered the grey seal as a major host of the codworm, a tapered roundworm found in North Atlantic fish, particularly in cod. Large fishing companies have pressured Federal Fisheries to kill grey seals in the belief this will decrease their processing costs. The codworm poses no health risks to humans, but for aesthetic and packaging reasons, codworms are removed from fish in the plants. However, as well as grey seals, harbour seals, harp seals and harbour porpoises are also hosts for the codworm. (The codworm charge was used in the past as one of the reasons to drastically reduce the numbers of harbour seals, which like the grey seals are permanent residents of our region.) A document *Management of Grey Seals* (1981), put out by the same Advisory Committee previously referred to, was foolish enough to reveal the following: "It is an intractable scientific problem to prove that the increasing population of grey seals is the causative factor in the increase in incidence of cod-

worm and such proof cannot be expected in the foreseeable future."

The "indictment" against the grey seal is a variable one and depends on the audience. However, underlying the various charges—codworm host, consumption of inshore fish, damage to fishing gear or fish farms, increasing numbers—is an unwillingness to share what is supposed to be a common resource, the fishery, with marine mammals like seals. So the common denominator for the E.F.F., the M.F.U., Federal Fisheries and the fishing companies is capitalist greed.

For the ecologist Left in the Maritimes, it is the position of the M.F.U. on the sealing issue that is difficult to come to terms with. Rudolf Bahro, a prominent Marxist and activist in the Green movement in West Germany, points out in his book *Socialism and Survival* that trade unions (e.g., like the M.F.U.) and capitalist firms or employers' associations pursue the same goals externally for their particular industries. The common interest in the destruction of grey seals is an example of this. More generally, the call to further increase the killing of grey seals—with Sable Island as the probable killing ground—is a good illustration of anthropocentricism, that the fishery resource is only there to "benefit" humans, and if seals (or other marine mammals) interfere with this, they should be eliminated. If there is no large public protest, there will be a major escalation in the killing of grey seals in our region.