

The rest is political

"The only thing that is male and female is genitals"

"If we're to believe the image presented on Canadian daytime TV, the average Canadian woman is overweight and needs exercise. She's interested in cooking, hairstyles and children. She's not too bright and finds diversion in games — minded by host camp counsellors (all male). She's generally a hollow shell living through romantic illusions and taboo love relationships."
— Joan McLelland, TV reporter

By SHELLI HUNTER

Maryon Kantaroff is an electric presence in any crowd. Her political comments generate discussion and her blatant attacks on the status quo promote question.

Kantaroff is a feminist. She is also a sensitive artist — a sculptor of extensive study and world renown expressing her identity through her work.

Three years ago, Kantaroff returned to Canada after post-graduate studies in England, and was appalled at the lack of rapport among Canadian women.

"Women were so cut off from each other," she recalled. "The whole culture was and is based on that polarization between men and women."

The rampant sexism of Canadian men she encountered and the realization that she belonged to a caste system was fundamental to her early involvement in the woman's movement.

"I was competing with the world I knew — a world of male domination. I was frightened of men and in my fear I competed quietly but gave in openly. I now see men as victims of their indoctrination."

"It becomes part of our culture to think the way men think. Our society is male. Our attitudes are male. If men think of women as snivelling idiots then we think of them as snivelling idiots."

Speaking at the weekend Ontario Conference on Women at the University of Toronto, Kantaroff told 100 people that "it is crucial for women to recognize their experiences within them as women."

Kantaroff expressed articulate views on human emotions and values that traditionally have a different definition when applied to women:

ANGER: "Most women do not know how to express anger and are afraid of it. Every little girl knows she's a little girl and when that is based on being feminine women cannot deal with anger."

A woman in the audience concurred with Kantaroff's views and added; "When women get angry no one says they are angry, — they're hysterical."

INTUITION: "Intuition is a higher form of sub-conscious logic. It's more highly developed in women because they have been deprived of aggression as an animal protection. **AGGRESSION:** "The male's aggressive sex role is killing him. Aggression is a necessary part of survival but its only necessary when you are frightened."

"Aggression has been made into a natural thing for men. But behind that aggression is fear. We now know that there is no biological difference in the male sex that makes him aggressive. It's been taught to him."

FEAR: "Women are afraid of the women's movement. It's an in-thing and it makes them feel inadequate. A housewife no longer gets the social approval she did before."

SEX ROLES: "Is it the right of one human being to enslave another on the basis of genital construction. The only thing that is male and female is genitals. Beyond that everything is political."



Registration for the Ontario Women's Conference took place under this painting in Victoria College at U of T last weekend. The women talked about sex role

stereotyping women as a sleeping princess awakened by cupid and a knight in armour.

Women's conference a dud

By MARILYN SMITH

With gripes to air and a determination to do so, 200 women attended a conference on women at the University of Toronto last weekend. In the space of eight seminars, the women delegates discussed their sex in relation to the arts, politics, sports, health education, academics, daycare and professions.

The discussion was sometimes lively, sometimes flat. And at the end of Saturday night's entertainment of films, songs and video tape by women for women, the delegates filed out and went home.

That was all. None remained behind to expand and expound on the issues and debates raised earlier in the day. In spite of its sure-fire formula — 200 women united by a recognition of their common oppression — the conference was a dud.

"There was too much make-up and too many expensive clothes," said one delegate trying to explain the curious lack of vigour that usually fires such gatherings.

On the second day of the conference, less than half of the delegates returned to ratify some of the proposals made in the workshops. They endorsed a call for repeal of the abortion laws; demanded women's studies at all levels of education; deplored sexist scholarships like the Rhodes that won't accept women applicants; stated a catch-up quota must be implemented until women academics and students match the number of men; and supported 24-hour government-run daycare.

Financially, the conference succeeded. The Ontario Federation of Students nominally supported it with \$48, and Victoria College council donated \$500. These donations and the \$2 delegate fee covered all expenses. Children were looked after as a matter of course in a makeshift daycare centre. Such arrangements are standard wherever women are expected to gather.

Resource people of varied talents led the workshops. Women artists talked about their work and their problems of acceptance by the public and their colleagues. Women health workers talked about women and their bodies and the liberating qualities of the pill and abortion. Women athletes and former Olympic competitors talked of the still existing masculine or tomboy label assigned to women athletes or the fit female body. Women in academics and the professions described the advances made and outlined the lengths to go. And participants in a politics seminar talked about the power of politics and its potential as a liberating force.

Yet somehow, somewhere, the conference came off flat; stale. Some viewed it as a reflection of the middle-class program. The workshops, with themes of professional and academic discrimination, related to middle-class women. The health education seminar dealt almost exclusively with abortion — with no mention of how available contraceptives were for working class women. Nor were the high prices of abortions discussed along with the question of abortion for whom at what price.

Topics of academic discrimination or the abuse of women professionals never got around to the issue of getting working-class women into academics in the first place. As wage determines who will go to university, so does it doubly determine which women will get to university.

Socialist women circulated a manifesto; "In order to eliminate the oppression of women it will be necessary to eliminate that society which feeds on the oppression of

women, as well as blacks, Indians, and youth. That is, a revolution to overthrow the capitalist system is a necessary pre-requisite to the liberation (of women)."

They met with other women in the political workshop; "It isn't necessary to cause a tremendous upheaval to accomplish some of the necessary things," said Fiona Nelson, school trustee in Ward 5.

"The whole Marxian analysis of women's place in society was conceived by a man," said Aline Gregory, feminist independent candidate in the last federal election.

The women all agreed that for their fight, politics was the power — but the politics was the departure point. They agreed on certain issues; the tactics were the stumbling block. For the middle-class participants, liberation meant readily available daycare and abortions; equal access to professional and professoriate ranks. For socialist and working-class women, liberation meant total reorganization in the laws, institutions and ideology of the society. This is the only route for these women to achieve their liberation — and that of their men and children in the bargain.

When the women's movement first began, background and politics didn't seem to matter: it was enough to be a woman. But since that first surge, women have come past that basic need. They have the security and confidence to seek their goals.

The kind of political action taken becomes the issue. In that important recognition, the conference did not fail; it allowed women to recognize the limits of a narrow frame of reference — womanhood. Such dissent can only come in the security that the mind is at last changing from its long-time habits molded by what society thinks a woman should be.

Arts no threat to femininity

Women often go into the arts because it presents the least threat to their "femininity."

A woman's creativeness and involvement with the arts is seen as something she does outside her real mainstream — the home.

This was the main consensus at a seminar, Women in the Arts, offered at the Ontario Conference on Women at the University of Toronto on the weekend.

Among the main participants were June Callwood, journalist; Joan McLelland TV reporter; Maryon Kantaroff, sculptor; and Margaret Penman, English professor at U. of T.

The highlight of the seminar was McLelland's expose' on Television Land.

"Most newsrooms are male dominated and very similar to a college locker room," she commented.

"A story gets on air according to its news value — what males think is newsworthy." McLelland cited the example of the woman's caucus in Vancouver who surrounded Trudeau demanding abortion on demand. The story was put on TV not because of its social implications but because Trudeau still had charisma then.



Sculptor Maryon Kantaroff told a seminar on women in the arts that "men view creative women as a threat to them".