

# Main business isn't the women's business

by Erin Goodman

Dorothy E. Smith wrote the book on Marxist-Feminism. The audience she addressed in the MacMechan auditorium at the Killam Library on International Women's Day, March 8th, must have read it. And loved it.

Smith, a renowned academic now working at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, was warmly received by the 200 women and men who turned out to hear her thoughts on Feminism and Public Policy: The Problem of the Main Business. She began her lecture by explaining its title.

"In a capitalist society, the work that people do goes towards the accumulation of capital," Smith observes, "rather

than feeding directly into subsistence and reproduction." In other words, the Main Business is Big Business, and the Main Problem is the bureaucracy which perpetuates it. The Main Question is, how does this relate to feminism?

Dorothy Smith provides the answer. The women's movement, she says, has been defined by the state, by public policy. And by working within the framework of the state, "the very gains that we've made within the women's movement have created certain problems. We have had to engage on the terrain of the state and work as professionals in an attempt to achieve the kinds of changes in the lives of women that we want to see."

The Main Danger of buying into capitalism, according to Smith, is its effect on the role of childbearing in our society. "There's a very distinct relationship between producing the food, and producing the food that feeds the women who bear the children," she explains. "Capitalism breaks the integration of production and reproduction,

creating a completely new relations which in which childbearing is up for grabs."

As women lose control of their rights as producers and reproducers in society, some try to regain their control through the bureaucratic process. And this, says Smith, is where women lose sight of the larger objectives of the movement. She uses the example of transition houses, which first emerged at a grassroots level within the women's movement to provide shelter for women coming from abusive situations. "The transition house process became integrated into the system, become a social ser-

vice organization," explains Smith. "The government wanted to restrict political linkages between transition house workers." As a result, the bureaucratic process was imposed through the establishment of boards of directors, to oversee and restrict the use of the institutions.

Although Smith doesn't underestimate the value of feminist lawyers and policy-makers working for change within the structure, she believes women will eventually have to break the structure of the state to emancipate themselves. As more women start working within the

structure, Smith sees the need to "reconcile academic and professional women with the grassroots movement, to structure a new Main Business, one structured for women's needs."

And while Smith won't give details on the impending revolution ("just don't ask me 'how'"), she does advocate a more global approach to feminism. By "opening up the women's movement by recognizing the problem of racism within the movement," and "looking at women from the point of view of developing the nation as a whole", Dorothy Smith believes we can pull it off.

## Allright then, who is doing it ?

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP) — Eighty-five per cent of male University of Prince Edward Island students polled recently say they've been sexually harassed.

That compares to eighty-nine per cent of the women surveyed who say they've experienced some form of sexual harassment at the university.

Two UPEI psychologists are digging through the mountains of data compiled after a 36-question survey was sent to nine per cent — or 210 — of the university's student population. The questionnaire, mailed out in the winter of 1986, was patterned after a similar study at the University of Rhode Island.

"Parts of it were quite surpris-

ing," said Dr. Beth Percival. "Especially the very high reporting by men. A lot of (surveys) look only at the women students. That's the prototypic case people think about, the female student and male professor."

Results indicated the majority of students did not consider sexually explicit language or jokes in class to be sexual harassment.

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The University Bookstore will be closed for inventory on **Wednesday, March 30** and **Thursday, March 31**. The store will also be closed on Good Friday, April 1, but will be open for business as usual on Easter Monday, April 4.

### Visible racial/cultural workshop

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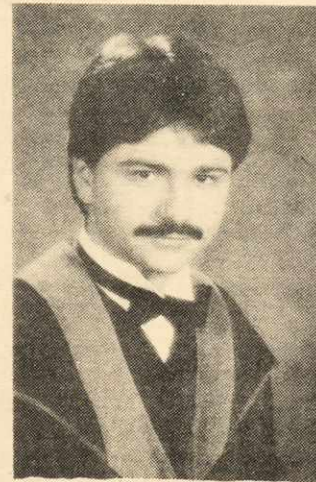
lier of goods or services to the federal government.)

Thomas said the university must have a clear policy, a senior position "preferably a vice-president" to oversee the policy, and a reviewing body composed of bargaining units, senior officials, NSHRC reps, student union reps, administration, and faculty. Thomas also attacked the "unnecessary fear" that "affirmative action doesn't work". She said the problem came from the

quota system imposed in the United States, which led to the famous Bakke case where a white man sued and won for reverse discrimination after he was not accepted at a university. Thomas said the Nova Scotia system is based instead on "goals and timetables".

Thomas said she was glad to see the idea of universities' affirmative action getting more support after the federal Post-Secondary forum held in Saskatoon last fall. "The NSHRC has been saying it since 1972," said Thomas.

## Graduation Portraits



by

*J. Harris*

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