

Pandora lifts Women's Cover

By LOIS CORBETT

When I saw the photograph of two women piling pulp on the front cover of *Pandora*, a new magazine published here in Halifax, I thought hell, doesn't that look familiar.

My family's home is wood-heated and every fall my sisters and I had to help our father cut the fuel needed to heat our home for another fierce New Brunswick winter.

Wood cutting is hard, cold and sometimes muddy work. Complaining didn't make the load lighter. But in the winter we were happier warm than cold.

The women on *Pandora's* cover are happy and hard working, and while it is the latter than makes them sisters with all women, both characteristics make me identify with their plaid shirts and blue jeans. Women are everywhere, doing everything, this cover says, and you better believe it.

Pandora on the inside is much the same. As an alternative to the malestream media this 28 page newspaper celebrates all that women do and revels in all that is female. There are articles about birthing and childrearing, haying and fishing, loving and laughing. It includes photos of women who work in television, in darkrooms, in peace and in law. It has happy articles, written by women about their experiences. It has angry articles, written by women about their experiences.

Pandora is an exercise in true journalism. It admits that writers, as all people, are shaped by their experiences and their attitudes. It displays its biases immediately for all to examine.

Malestream media doesn't do that. Newspapers, periodicals and book publishers operate on criteria that are established by men, not by women, and their priorities clearly are not women's. Their profit depends on their ability to keep advertisers happy and their stories depend on that large circulation that makes those money-men excited. Commitment to any cause but the big buck is unlikely, and commitment to a feminist cause is unheard of in malestream media.

But *Pandora's* commitment is evident. Betty Ann Lloyd, the magazine's co-ordinating editor, says the purpose of the paper is to provide a women's



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"We wanted something that was really different, something that covered everything from a radical feminist's point of view to those held by women who probably wouldn't identify as feminists," says Betty Ann.

Betty Ann doesn't call *Pandora* a feminist publication because she doesn't want to frighten women away. But she never denies the newspaper's

feminism either.

Betty Ann works at King's College in Halifax as a technical assistant, and she smiles when she thinks about her students' reactions to *Pandora*.

"They say it isn't real journalism, that is, it isn't reporting, facts without interpretation. But if that is what journalism really is, it doesn't make any sense. It's a cop-out not to say what you really think," says Betty Ann.

Betty Ann says it's a joke to believe that people who work for the *Globe and Mail* are objective. "Every bit of their background comes through in what they write and what the paper prints, so we get a white, middle class, male perspective. And it's called journalism."

Because *Pandora's* perspective is different, the malestream media thinks it's abnormal. Abnormal, because it doesn't conform to the norm that male media has established.

"Even the way news is written, that C.P. style is a male norm," says Betty Ann. "It is disengagement, distancing, dispassionate. That's not women's way of writing, thinking or reading, but in our society every way has to be a man's way," she says.

Activists challenging the status quo have to expect skepticism, but *Pandora* women don't let it get too close. The new publication more than makes up for any criticism it may receive.

Women's stories have not always been told. Our contribution to the work force, to literature, to art and to other aspects of our culture and society have been overlooked, as if non-existent. But women have always been here, and *Pandora* wants to start changing the story-telling.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman went to the Nairobi and she wonders, in *Pandora*, if the male reporters who work for the *Globe and Mail* attended the same "End of the Decade" conference on women's issues as she did. "They covered . . . the words of the wives and daughters of powerful men and expected verbal bullets between warring state regimes," she writes, "they could not acknowledge the patriarchal forms and games which dominated the official conference."

Redefining the peace movement so it addresses the fundamental questions of racism, immigration, education and sexism is a concern of black women, says Karen Hudson. "Before peace can be attained, a re-orientation of society must occur," she says.

Pandora also unites women on strike with other working women. Carmel Maloney, a representative of the Canadian Air Line Employees Association says flight attendants' jobs are being eroded by conflicting government policies.

"While verbally committed to increasing employment opportunities," says Carmel, "the federal government introduces and promotes such policies as 'transportation deregulation', which threatens established full time employment."

Rose Johnson is a doctor trying to work inside a profession that often abuses the female body and its own power privilege. "A woman came to me and told me how her doctor kept her on nerve pills because of menopause. My immediate response was to say that was outrageous. She, of course, already knew that in her heart, but she had no validation for it," says Rose.

Rose questions her role as a doctor and a feminist. "I am in a position of struggling within that system to create the kind of world I want," says Rose.

Pandora includes articles, all written by women, about housing in Halifax, women fishers, the CIA-backed war against Nicaragua and women in video, as well as abortion, lesbianism and daycare. Betty Ann says women had no problem finding things to write about, but the editorial collective had a difficult time squeezing the submissions into the available space.

"We had originally planned on putting out 20 pages," says Betty Ann, "but we had more than enough for the 28. After that we knew we had to stop."

Women's stories need to be told, and women need to hear from others who share their experience. *Pandora*, much like its namesake, the wonderful goddess who allowed people understanding and knowledge by lifting the cover from the box of all things; good and evil, hunger and fullness, poverty and wealth, shares the experience of all shapes, sizes and colors of women.

But women don't have forever. Our past has almost been lost in men's history and our future will soon come under an influence men dictate. *Pandora's* women have lifted the lid, barely in time, and its women will remember and be remembered.

Pandora is available at Red Herring bookstore (Argyle/Blowers), from the Pandora Publishing Association, (5533 Black Street, Halifax, N.S., B3K 1P7), and at the Dal bookstore.

Curing Patriarchal Medicine with Art

By BONNIE BOBRYK

Modern medicine and gynecology are often viewed as being in the 'best interests' of women. Some women, like Barbara Louder, have a different view.

Walking into the didactic exhibition *Caring, Curing, Women and Medicine* at Eye Level Gallery, the viewer is confronted with wooden

sculptural objects, cartoons, photographs, and text. The artist, Barbara Louder, has combined these media to create a series of works questioning various aspects of modern medicine. Some of the issues she raises are the circulation of dangerous contraceptives, involuntary sterilization, operating without informed consent, and exposure to environmental hazards

causing still-births, deformities, and miscarriages.

Barbara Louder's analysis came from both personal experience with medicine and extensive research.

"My thoughts on women and medicine began to come together as I read about the history of women, health care, midwives and witches," she said. "I started to remember my own experience — my coming to terms with feelings of alienation and asking, where did this come from? I wanted to link this to political analysis."

After reading the illustrated descriptions of various IUDs and surgical tools and then viewing the large, carved representations of them it becomes clearer where women's alienation from gynecology may have originated. These objects resemble nothing so much as archaic instru-

ments of torture. Initially they are attractive because of their sculptural, polished appearance, but after going through the exhibition, they invoke feelings of disturbance.

"I was already making wooden, carved fetish-like objects when a friend brought over a contraceptive device," said Barbara Louder. "I wanted to relate carved representations of contraceptives to sculpture and art objects. I'm trying to use recognition of art objects — that is, certain codes having to do with our appreciation of art." As a result, the objects in the exhibit are deliberately made to have a finished, hand-crafted quality. "They have to do something other than provide visual pleasure to the viewer," she says. "Consequently, they become paradoxical in relation to the actual objects."

Oversized cartoons with two nurse and doctor characters accompany many of the works. The nurse explains concepts and questions the doctor. In a piece about operating without informed consent the nurse questions the doctor on the large number of operations he has performed on women and whether they were all necessary. Below the cartoon is a narrative by the artist of her own similar experience and a photograph of the hospital where she had her operation. Alongside is a long-handled carved object with curved, forklike tines at one end, based on a skin retractor, a medical instrument used during surgery. "There is a metaphorical incongruity about this nurse speaking forthrightly about her views," said Louder. "She is an audacious character — continued on page 11"