

Washington Area Women's Center  
1736 R Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

232-5145.....232-7533

June, 1973

NEWSLETTER

A General Assembly meeting was held on Thursday, May 10, 1973, at 7:30 p.m. There were 16 people present, 10 of whom stated that they were also here for a Coordinating Council meeting to follow. A discussion was held about the purpose of the G.A. meetings and the poor attendance at same, as well as the possibility of changing the format of making decisions at the Women's Center.

The suggestion was made that G.A. monthly meetings be abolished, and that there would be only 2 G.A. meetings per year. Also, anyone with an important issue may call a G.A. meeting at any other time during the year if she wants to. Also, the 5 G.A. representatives would no longer be in existence. In their place, 5 people will be chosen by lots during the C.C. meetings, but only those representatives of a project group and the 5 people chosen by lot at any particular meeting will be able to vote. These suggestions were discussed thoroughly and finally voted into existence.

In plain language, this means that YOU can vote only by attending Coordinating Council meetings every other Thursday night at 7:30, and being one of the 5 people chosen by lot; or by volunteering or being elected to represent a project group to which you belong, and attending C.C. meetings. It's YOUR Women's Center --- help make it the way you'd like it. Come to meetings!

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"I HATE TO HOUSEKEEP"

I know that Peg Bracken has already written a book with the above title, but I also know that the title would get your attention!! Now that you're reading this, here's the rap:

The Women's Center is a place where all of us can meet, have a good time, learn something. It should be a CLEAN place, a NEAT place, a pleasant place. Unfortunately it is not all of these. You see, most of us think that we have done enough housekeeping in our lifetimes and therefore we do not empty our ashtrays, put away our soda bottles and coffee cups, (cont.)



and wipe up our messes. You may think that I am not talking about you; you are wrong. Each of you who has ever set foot into the Women's Center is guilty of being sloppy at least once. You know it in your "heart", and I know it because I (or someone else) has had to go behind you and clean up your mess!

This newsletter should not have to lay a guilt trip on anyone, but everyone is complaining about how dirty the Center is and no one is doing any cleaning up or putting away. Come on, people! We simply cannot afford to pay a person to housekeep, but if you don't help keep the Center neat and clean we are going to have to find some money somewhere. Aside from the fact that this would be a financial disaster for us, some of us also feel that it is demeaning and degrading to pay a person to clean up after ourselves when we are supposed to be grown people, adult women demanding our rights. I assert myself: what right do you have to keep messing up NY Women's Center? I don't like housecleaning any better than you do, maybe less. Still, I clean up after myself and I expect you to do so after yourself. What kind of a big deal is it anyway??

Marilyn Esterson

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The WOMEN'S CENTER NEEDS WOMEN TO STAFF THE PHONES, particularly between 4 and 6:00 p.m. Call the Women's Center if you can volunteer regularly or at any particular time. Call the Women's Center at 232-5145.

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The LIBRARY IS STILL UNOPENED BECAUSE CAROLINE NEEDS PEOPLE to help her sort things and file things and type cards for cross-index. We have lots of books, magazines, and periodicals of all types. We can even use more. But, the library will not be open for reading, browsing, or borrowing until several people lend Caroline a hand. Please? Contact Caroline at home, 667-4830, at WC 488-5027.

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DAY CARE COOPERATIVE IS IN OPERATION at 1604 19th St. NW. We need volunteers and toys. There is some room for 3 & 4 year olds left. The Center operated from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday. Call Kim, 387-5971 or 232-5145 and ask for Laurie.

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WOMEN INTERESTED IN A TWO DAY COURSE in learning about tape recorders, microphones, editing and disk jockey skills for the purposes of politicizing women call Chris Murphey at 387-6068.

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Alderson Busing

The Alderson Women's Busing Program may soon be a regular free service taking relatives and friends to visit women imprisoned in Alderson's Federal Penitentiary for Women. The idea was suggested at a workshop on "Women in Prison" held as part of the Women's Fest series jointly sponsored by the Community Bookshop and the Women's Center. The D.C. Prisoner's Solidarity Committee which arranged the workshop picked up on the suggestion and is now working on making it a reality.

Alderson is one of two federal prisons for women in the whole country. Women serving terms for non-federal offences are usually imprisoned in local or state institutions. It is only because of Washington's special federal status that when the Women's Detention Center on North Capitol Street was recognized as terribly overcrowded a few months ago, women were shipped out to Alderson. Now approximately fifty women, mostly poor and mostly black, are incarcerated in the prison. They are a seven hour drive away from their children, relatives, and friends.

There is no public transportation to the town of Alderson. Greyhound has three buses a day going to Lewisburg, 20 miles away. The trip can last between 12 and 13 hours roundtrip (depending whether you travel all night or most of the day) and costs \$22. per person. Picture that with a small child accompanying you! There is one small hotel in the rural town of Alderson. Odds are then that once women are sent to Alderson from the District, they will not be seeing their children or relatives more than once during their time. It is hard to term this anything but exile.

The current plans for the busing program call for the first trip to be made June 9. It will consist of two vans able to accommodate about 15 adults and children. Free housing has been found at a camp in Pipestem, an hour away from the prison. Already there are more people who want to go than the vans can hold. We hope soon to have a bus to use. We are hoping to operate from money we can get by means other than asking the visitors themselves to pay. For this first trip costs should not exceed \$75 to \$85 for gas and food for everyone. These are the Alderson Women's Busing Program's needs as we see them:

\*\* ideas on where to get a bus or vans -- we've been trying churches and individuals but it's very possible you have some contacts we haven't thought of, so please let us know any leads you think of

(cont.)

\*\* money for vehicle rentals and gas  
\*\* food or money for food  
\*\* help, ideas, enthusiasm

If you have any contacts or ideas or any funds to pass on, or you want to work on the project, please get in touch with us... Call Lucy or Paddy at 733-7079 weekday evenings or Sat.

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RADIO FREE WOMEN is on WGTB, 90.1 FM, at 2:30 p.m. Mondays and 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays. If you listen, you know that there have been three, one-hour shows on class and how it operates within the women's movement. Karen Kollias, Bev Fischer, and Dolores Bargowski, with the help of Rita Mae Brown, are the women that have been on the tapes.

The shows are being aired so that women can hear the issues being discussed in depth and put into a political perspective. Hopefully, our listeners can apply what they hear on the tapes to their own actions and to the actions of groups they might be involved in. Recognizing and dealing with differences among women can be a very positive step towards facing reality.

The movement as a whole needs to develop tools so that the masses of women will support the basic political changes we envision. In order to do this, the women's movement cannot be a "state of mind". We need to move in more realistic and radical ways.

The last show on class ("Visions of the Future") is to be aired the week of May 28. Please tune in to hear a more extensive treatment of these issues. If you weren't able to hear the shows, and would like to purchase tapes, write to the Women's Center c/o Radio Free Women, 1736 R St. N.W., Wn., D.C. 20009. Please mail your responses to the tapes also, we would be glad for the feedback.

(A complete list of available tapes can also be requested at the same address)

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WANT SOME GOOD FEMINIST ENTERTAINMENT, A PLACE TO RELAX AND MEET OTHER WOMEN? Then stop by Sophie's Parlor at 8:30 pm on Friday or Saturday. For the last month a collage of activities including music, dramatic readings and poetry has been set up. To give you an idea of the various talents represented, the following women have been and will continue to be entertaining at Sophie's:

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FORUM

FORUM is intended to provide a means of airing different issues relating to the Women's Center and to feminism in the open. It is written entirely by readers of the Newsletter and the opinions presented should not be considered those of the Women's Center nor those of the Newsletter staff, but those of the individuals who wrote them. The Newsletter collective is currently discussing its editorial policy and the most effective way of presenting this feature, and suggestions from Newsletter readers are welcome.

For the present, new articles should be submitted to the Newsletter by the 1st of the month. They will then be posted in the Women's Center for two weeks, so that differing opinions or related articles can be submitted for the same issue. Responses to appear in the same issue must be received by the 15th. Responses submitted later than the 15th will be continued in later issues.

Since this is the first time FORUM has been printed, the following articles appear without responses. We hope to have received your differing or supporting opinions by the 18th of June (an extended deadline due to the lateness of this month's publication) for the July issue.

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FCC: PERSONAL VS. POLITICAL

I received my newsletter today, and one of the first things that caught my attention was the quote, "The Feminist Counseling Collective isn't political enough; they're into personal solutions." It has prompted me to write this letter.

I have not been active in the Women's Center since it moved into the house, but I was a member of the Feminist Counseling Collective in the formative stages, and, therefore, retain a great deal of interest in the activities of the Center and a great deal of affection for the Feminist Counseling Collective and the things it is trying to do.

I do not know how the Collective is moving now, re: political versus non-political leanings, but I do remember the original aims of the collective and why it was formed. I feel that it is very necessary for the Center, and the Movement in general, to have concern for the personal lives of women as removed from the politics of the Movement. Many political movements have fallen into the trap of treating members of that movement as political bodies to be used to do certain chores, spout certain ideologies, and increase the body count for the movement. The Women's Movement must remain a movement that cares for its people. We must care for each other and support each other as human beings, separate from political aims. Women have always been treated as things: wives, mothers, lovers, etc., never as people. And after all, that is what we want isn't it? To be treated as people? So the Center must not forget that many women have lives outside the Movement that do not directly involve the Center, and that problems in that part of their lives are important and sometimes require assistance in solving.

The Feminist Counseling Collective is a very necessary organization in the maintenance of the human aspect of the Movement. A woman needs to feel that she can talk out her problems and get feedback from sympathizing women without getting politically involved in the movement. There must be the feeling that she will be treated as a separate and unique individual by the members of the collective and not as another body and voice to increase the political power of the Movement. When

women realize that they will be treated humanely and sincerely by members of the Movement, and that this treatment is based on sisterly concern and feeling and not because the Movement wants something in return, then women will begin to realize that from other women they can receive the support that they have lacked. Then --political power comes. The Movement will gain support and power when women realize that they will be treated humanely whether or not they are politically oriented. The Center must have a sincere concern for ALL WOMEN, regardless of their political leanings. Sisterhood does not exclude those who are not politically motivated, but includes all women. The Center has to remain a place where women can find sincerity and caring.

So, please, allow the Counseling Collective to take care of women as people, to take care of their personal problems. I sincerely believe that it will keep the Center a humane place, not just a political office.

By: Vicki Joan Smith

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LEADERSHIP, CLASS, POWER AND OTHER HEAVY THINGS:

COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS OF SEVEN WOMEN

Once upon a time there existed a movement for and by women where change and growth were promoted by confrontation, challenge, introspection and sharing. Women learned how oppressive men and society were and reached out to each other to achieve an independence unique to them. They stopped aiming their anger at each other and laid bare the ruthless tactics of men which were used to divide and keep women in their place. The use of power, (emotional, economical and physical) was scorned, and efforts were made to find alternatives in order to be out of such shackles. There were leaders among us who exhorted and pushed for women to understand and become strong and free. The ideas were good, their energy unlimited and their charisma attracted and carried many women along.

What begins as an idea becomes a child to the originators. It is difficult to let other people share the awful burden of raising that child or idea to maturity. Women hide behind a smokescreen of not having enough time or energy to support and train other women to participate. Instead of sharing, the leaders begin to emphasize their separation through a hierarchy of political consciousness. The band of acceptable politics became more restricted: all women, lesbian women, lesbian separatist women, and finally separatist-lower class women. You have to have the right credentials to be "in" -- all else is politically naive or just plain wrong. What was once an alternative of either being lesbian and/or separatist becomes an obligation.

Analysis once used to define the power of men can be applied to certain women who intimidate and rule with words and physical power. If a woman deviates from the chosen political thought of the day, a guilt trip is applied to get her back into line. There is no room for any woman who is not exactly like them and no room for change and growth. There is only room for obedient followers who negate their own right to articulate feelings and needs. The day of talking is gone, having been replaced by shouting and physical fighting, which only attempts to silence dissent.

We spend time and energy to learn self defense to protect ourselves from a raping society, only to use it against each other. We spend time and energy on personal angers because no space is allowed to clear the air or to resolve issues, personal or political. It's frustrating as hell to watch the energy

tired of hearing all the guilt-tripping and demands for proof of commitment around the women's movement. From the discouragement of projects half-taken and meetings discontinued we seem to feel betrayed, slighted, and unwilling to take the risk of trying again without promises of everlasting commitment almost like marriage. Yes, we need to be committed and we need to discuss our commitment in order to develop trust, but sometimes this discussion takes on destructive forms which only divide and alienate.

Is the most committed woman the one who goes to the most meetings? Or the one who sacrifices most from her "personal" life, giving her life to the movement? Is that like giving your life to Christ? Or to a man? Or to anyone or anything in the world besides yourself? Most feminists are through with self-denial martyr trips. They have begun reclaiming their own lives and won't relinquish them for anything, including "ideals of commitment held up by the women's movement.

And what if they would? What happens to women who deny they have a personal life? Women who are not getting any sense of self from anything outside the movement are bound to have their egos too wrapped up with what they're doing inside the movement. Any disagreement with their ideas must threaten their entire being and they react to shut it up. Instead of being able to say, "I want" or "I need," they have to say "The movement needs," or "It is politically correct to do such-and-such." In every imagined slight or personal disagreement, it becomes easy for them to see a political principle, declare themselves judge, jury, and executioner, and avenge "wrongs" with self-righteous wrath and destructive blind fury.

Also going around the movement is the idea that leaders should be supported and trusted simply because they are leaders. Because they have skills in organizing or political analysis they should be followed with no questions taken seriously regarding their direction or methods. (Any criticism of this idea gains one the reputation of being "anti-leadership" and of not having sufficient trust in oneself to be able to put trust in others.) Some leaders also expect to be supported financially, so that they can use their important skills full-time for the movement instead of spending time earning a living. This philosophy neglects two important facts: 1) that most women in the women's movement, with the exception of those who have made it as professionals, have similarly small financial resources -- they are able to do office work, waitressing, hustling, etc.; and 2) all women either have some worthwhile skill(s) or have the potential to develop some. It is assumed that leadership skills are the most important and leaders should therefore be supported by women who must develop and use their own skills with what little time and energy they can scrape together for themselves. No one talks about leaders supporting other women. The pigs in Animal Farm stop harvesting crops with the other animals in order to devote themselves more fully to planning and thinking, to which they are "better suited." So begins a hierarchy of power and importance.

By: Alice Aldrich, Anne Hatfield, Evelyn Idler,

Gerri Traina, LN Gardel, Lynda Weston, and Terri Carta

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For the future it will probably be necessary for us to define "leader." Will we use the old model with the attendant hierarchy and terrorism at its worst and resentment and unspoken anger at its best? Or will we formulate new ideas as to who are our leaders? Women who write songs, stories, poems and articles who furnish inspiration could be called leaders. Women who use their organizing ability to outline tasks that need to be done and have experience in ways to get them done could be leaders. Women who serve as resource people to teach other women their skills and knowledge could be leaders. It seems clear that we have other choices than to mimic the male leader role.

Work could be accomplished by small teams with rotating leaders to insure sharing of skills. And for any large scale type of leadership, we can practice

drain out of us. It is senseless to let a few women divide the movement for there are too many women who care.

By: Alice Aldrich, Anne Hatfield, Evelyn Idler,

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Women are still afraid to fight the real enemy, the men and the system that are our real oppressors. Thousands of layers of mystification still separate us from our own collective power. As a group we are confused, unsteady, groping and weak. As a class, our backs are not yet up against the wall. We have not felt the depths of despair and rage that make violence and fighting the only way to reclaim our human dignity. The rage, however, seeps out. As we become more aware, it becomes harder to hold back our violent urge to push out as far as we have been pushed in. The violence sometimes erupts in clashes among ourselves. Sisters fight sisters, displacing the anger that we are still too afraid to show to the real enemy.

By: Alice Aldrich, Anne Hatfield, Evelyn Idler,

Gerri Traina, LN Gardel, Lynda Weston, and Terri Carta

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Now class divides us. The only way to be in, is persistence and points. Five points for a fight. Ten points if you ate Spam five days a week. Minus three points if your father had a job during the war or the depression. Minus six points if your father ~~now~~ has money. Plus six points if you've been gay for seven years and not from the movement. To really be in, your life had to include accidents which led you to be gay, lower-class, separatist. Why are we dividing? Is our only worth in being better than thou, more feminist, more gay, more classless, more aware, more separatist?

Is the only way to formulate a political analysis and strategy to separate from all? Must a woman who has a child be forbidden participation because gay separatist leaders don't want to deal with children (how strong they are to have had the accident of no children, money for an abortion, people to take their kids for them...) Must a woman who is middle class who needs, for psychological or other reasons, a full-time professional job, be worthless to formulate politics with leaders because her personal needs don't fit those of the leaders?

Why divide? It has never worked before. Are there no common goals, are there no more women who love the potential of women and are willing to share strength and skills and knowledge?

Why do I care what people who call themselves leaders say? Because guilt tripping and accusations and "I'm better than you" affect me. I'm strong and I'm proud and yet it's not hard to make me feel guilty that I'm not stronger, wiser, less into me, less into politics, more into me, more into politics. There are psychological tricks that have been traditionally used by men on women, by older on younger, by richer on poorer. I find it pretty disgusting when women do it to women.

I learn best by trust, not fear. I learned too much through fear from parents, teachers, older kids, the richer, the powerful. I want to continue to experience with women a different bond: one of trust, sharing, caring, understanding and trying to understand out differences because I want to. I don't need to be, or feel better, than anyone, and I resent those that step on me to do that.

By: Alice Aldrich, Anne Hatfield, Evelyn Idler,

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taking responsibility and holding those in positions of power accountable for their actions. Instead of griping that things aren't being done properly, we can exercise as much power as is feasable to insure that the large scale leadership carries out the wishes of those who gave them power.

By: Alice Aldrich, Anne Hatfield, Evelyn Idler,  
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In the struggle to develop more defined politics the women's movement only seems to define more narrowly those who are considered legitimate enough to formulate politics. As more and more women are cast off and labeled invalid, the voices of the few remaining who think themselves to be the true, serious feminists rise ever louder and more strident.

Two years ago the line went that only lesbians were valid, truly "woman-identified women." Straight women were "male-identified" and even worse, traitors to the cause of women. Gradually that particular version of "More Feminist Than Thou" began to lose its appeal, largely because so many of the straight women dropped out of the game they were predestined to lose, or else in their own good time they too became disenchanted with men and somewhat warily joined the winning team. Now a similar game called class background is going on in which any number of things, from attitudes to taste in clothes, music and dancing to certain individuals, are scorned because they have been labeled "middle class."

No one questions that class background and lesbianism are important issues that divide women and prevent communication. (That's what makes them such effective guilt trips.) But race and age and motherhood and current job status and position are also important issues. Why don't we hear these being dealt with so heavily? In some cases, their importance is not even admitted. Perhaps it is because some of the loudest voices in the women's movement come from lesbians and lower class women and it is easiest for anyone, including leaders, to deal only with the oppressions which put them in a self-righteous position, which justify them, and which enhance their position.

When many of us separated from men, we learned a particular way of dealing with oppressors that was effective in that case. We reversed women's traditional position of always taking the blame. We said it was the oppressors who were wrong and we were justified in separating from them. It made us feel strong and independent. But now we're trying to build a women's movement; we're trying to work together with women who have more privileges than us and women who have less privileges. We're trying to stop using those privileges and having power over each other, and together start taking power from those few white, upper class males who have it.

If we believe in a women's movement, we must believe in women. And if we believe in women, then we must believe in their ability to change and work together. We can't afford to deny the totality of a woman because she does some things we think are wrong or even which oppress us. We must discuss those things in no uncertain terms, but we can't say a woman is for shit or try to shut her up because she's straight or because her father had a certain kind of job, or even because we don't like her type of leadership. We must learn not to be threatened by our differences, so we can work them out. The tactic of separation is simply ineffective now. It is a waste of our energy and, more important, it keeps us down.

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