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MONTANA WOMEN'S RESOURCE



Women On Strike

Sixty Missoula city employees, members of the Public Employees Division of the Retail Clerks Union went on strike August 20.

Librarians, police court clerks, secretaries, dog catchers, and meter maids began picketing city buildings, protesting the city's failure to settle adequately the union's list of demands.

The major issue which sparked the strike was a wage increase. The union demanded a \$103-per-month across-the-board increase with health insurance coverage of \$50-per-month for each employee.

After a long, arduous, forty-day strike, both sides agreed to compromise, settling for a \$62-per-month wage increase with a \$45-per-month health insurance plan.

Of the 60 striking employees, only six were men. On the whole, the strike was a women's strike, focusing on women's issues.

The public employees faced many of the problems which plague working women everywhere--substandard wages.

Many of the striking women earned as little as \$4992 yearly, falling below the federal poverty level of \$5500.

For example, one woman, an account's clerk in the city treasurer's office, took home \$341 a month on which she supported three dependants after paying \$200 for rent.

However, Missoula's mayor, Robert Brown, insisted that the union's demand be placed in proper perspective.

He commented to a Missoulian that

"A lot of these people are married and their husbands are working too," Brown said.

After denying that marital status should affect pay scales, Brown continued, "The fact remains that many of the women are not in such dire financial straits, because their husbands are also working."

Striking women were forced to confront an attitude which places the needs of working women at the bottom of the priorities agenda and considers women's earnings merely "supplementary incomes."

Money, however, was not the only concern of the striking workers.

"The strike is not only for wages," one library employee explained. "It is also for the principle of the thing. We have very responsible jobs and we deserve to get paid for what we do."

The striking women said city clerical workers keep city offices functioning. They said they were not mindless automatons, performing unskilled "busy work."

Women and the Law Conference

Rape, images of women in casebooks, a new women's correctional system and prostitution were some of the areas of focus at the Western Regional Conference on Women and the Law held in Spokane, Wash., October 11 and 12. Several members of the University of Montana Law School Women's Caucus attended the conference which was sponsored by the Gonzaga School of Law Women's Law Caucus.

Although the legal profession is opening somewhat to women, women lawyers and law students are still very much a minority throughout the country. Participants said it is easy for a woman in all areas of practice to feel she is struggling all alone to prove that women are good attorneys. For this reason, a conference of this sort is especially important for women in law to offer support to each other and to provide strong role models for law students and those thinking about making a career in law.

The conference began with a performance of "Give Em an Inch", consisting of a selection of quotes on women and equality, by the Co-Respondents, a readers theatre group from Seattle.

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Women discuss homosexuality

Homosexuality in America is rapidly becoming an open, proud, personal statement of direction and fulfillment. In response to the growing questions and honest reflections about the validity of same-sex relationships, four women panelists presented an open discussion about lesbian women and sex-role directions.

Panelists discussed experiences and feelings encountered by lesbians. Questions asked of the panel indicated an interest in knowing if stereotypes such as Butch-femme for example, truly exist, how one begins to recognize if she is woman-oriented and how lesbians find fulfillment and strength in close, intimate relationships with other women.

One of the panelists, Linda, discussed her experience of discovering her gayness at an early age. She found that at the age of 13, she did not experience the same attractions toward boys as most of the other girls experienced. She, instead, was attracted to women. Her anxiety about her feelings led her to try and research what she was feeling. At that time the only available literature and attitudes she encountered were negative. Her feelings were described by authorities as "sick, bad and perverse." She knew she was none of those things, but it caused her to become afraid and to repress her natural affections. It has taken her

several years of difficult groping for a positive identity, but she now accepts herself as a fully functioning and able person in the face of a hostile, non-accepting society.

Mary and Janet were unaware of their potential for loving other women until adulthood.

Both said they have naturally gravitated toward relationships with other women.

They said the removal of expectations within a male-female framework allows them much greater freedom to explore the fullness of their womanhood.

They are representative of a large number of women who find after years of following a heterosexual existence that they are not being allowed to develop fully in the context of a male-female relationship.



They also said they feel strongly about placing their prime energies into supporting and encouraging women to find their own directions.

Barbara said she found the entire process of defining people in sexual terms destructive. She said she was opposed to sex-role stereotyping in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. The pattern of dominance and submission can exist in both homosexual and heterosexual relationships, she added. What she said she sought in a relationship was equality, regardless of the sex of her partner.

However, she added that more freedom to attempt egalitarian ways of relating to each other exists in homosexual relationships because the patriarchal paradigm of male dominance and female submission is removed.

She said she viewed sexuality as evolving from a relationship with a person regardless of whether that person was male or female.

The panel reached out with the hope that women of every sexual persuasion would feel there were others who shared their views and perspectives.

Out of the approximately 40 people who attended, several voiced interest in discussing and discovering alternatives in relationships at a future time.

Arrangements were made to continue to have gatherings with the understanding that each would be open to any interested women.

If you are questioning your roles and feel you could expand your interaction with other women, please contact the WRC: 243-4153.



A drug described as a "cure" for herpes proenitalis, a currently incurable venereal disease, in a recent issue of The Mis-soulion was assessed as "hopeful but not a panacea" by Mary Beth Baker, University of Montana microbiologist.

She said the drug when used in a cream form was more soluble and better able to penetrate the infected areas, but that a group of Utah researchers had administered the drug in pill form and it had had no effect on herpes proenitalis.

Herpes proenitalis, a venereal disease caused by herpes simplex type II virus, is being diagnosed with increasing frequency.

In fact, in some studies herpes proenitalis has been diagnosed up to five times more frequently than syphilis and gonorrhea combined, Baker said.

There are two types of herpes viruses: herpes simplex type I, which causes cold sores, fever blisters and other eye and skin infections, and herpes simplex type II, which can cause painful genital lesions, infant deaths and is strongly implicated as being involved in cervical and prostate cancer.

While knowledge of genital herpetic infections has been recorded for a couple of centuries, their venereal mode of transfer (including oral-genital sex) was not well accepted until researchers in the 1960s demonstrated that

Herpes, Little Known Venereal Disease

herpes virus isolated from the genitals differed biologically and antigenically from those on the lips and face.

Symptoms of herpes II infections are lesions that look like water blisters or a small pimple which can appear from 2 to 14 days after being infected. The lesions appear on a woman's external genitalia, vagina or cervix and on a male's penile shaft.

In a primary infection, after the lesions appear they break, drain and heal within 10 to 14 days. While healing, the lesions may itch.

For the majority of people who contract herpes II the primary infection runs its course and they have no further symptoms. The virus, however, does not disappear but remains as a "silent infection" in the cells, Baker said.

"Such 'silent infections' can be either persistent infections in which infectious virus is continually released even in the absence of symptoms or latent infections in which the viral genome remains in the cell but no infectious virus can be isolated except during overt attacks of the disease," she said.

Subtle changes in the body's environment such as those brought on by stress, hormonal changes during pregnancy, menstruation or while taking birth control pills, allergic reactions, taking aspirin and antihistamines

and, in some cases, even sexual intercourse can be enough to trigger recurrent attacks, Baker said.

For those who do not suffer recurrent attacks, herpes II consequences may seem minor when compared to those of gonorrhea and syphilis, but Baker said all persons infected with herpes II must face certain facts:

Herpes II virus has been identified as a probable cause of cervical and prostate cancer. In one study of women who had had a history of herpes II, the chances of contracting cervical cancer was 40 per cent higher than for women who have never had herpes. Therefore, women who have had herpes proenitalis should have Pap tests three to four times a year for the rest of their lives, she said.

Adding strength to the argument that herpes II causes cancer is a recent study in which the virus demonstrated an "oncogenic capacity" or an ability to change normal cells into malignant cells in tissue culture systems, Baker said. In addition, certain proteins of the viral DNA was incorporated into the DNA of malignant cells in cells taken from patients with cervical cancer, she added.

Another problem with herpes proenitalis is the danger it presents to an unborn child. Although Baker said no one knows how many infants are exposed to herpes II virus, of those who were and were

diagnosed as having the infection, 70 per cent contracted herpes encephalitis and died at birth, while the other 30 per cent were severely neurologically damaged, she said.

Therefore, if a woman is shedding virus near delivery time, and in a study Baker did at a Missoula hospital of 128 pregnant women who had had "no symptoms or history" of herpes 10 per cent were shedding, the woman and her doctor must decide whether having the infant by Caesarean section to avoid infection would be a better choice, Baker said. Baker, therefore, also suggested that herpes screening be part of a woman's prenatal care.

Herpes II may be the cause for the deaths of some "nonresponsive infants," Baker said. A "serendipitous" discovery made recently at a Missoula hospital supports this contention, she added.

A healthy appearing infant was becoming increasingly listless and losing ground, so the doctor gave the infant a complete blood transfusion with fresh, whole blood. This probably saved the infant's life as herpes II virus was isolated from the infant's blood lymphocytes, Baker said.

The blood donor for the infant having herpes II in its blood had a "strong cell-mediated response" or lymphocytes, which would not have been alive if the infant had not been given fresh, whole blood, she said.

This relates closely to the difficulty in treating herpes. Because it is a virus and viruses live parasitically inside cells, it is difficult to kill the virus without killing the normal cells as well.

The body has two immune defense systems, both of

which are necessary in controlling herpes virus infections, Baker said. First is the antibody, or humoral, response in which certain lymphocytes, called B-lymphocytes, produce specific anti-herpes antibodies that can neutralize extracellular virus, she said. Second, are the T-lymphocytes which give rise to a cell-mediated response, she said. These cells are specifically activated and then produce substances known as lymphokins which act in a non-specific manner to, among other things, destroy virus-infected cells and prevent the virus from spreading to adjacent non-infected cells.

Therefore, UM researchers are experimenting with giving BCG (tuberculin bacilli) shots which provide a "specific" immunity for T.B. and a "nonspecific" stimulus for immunity to other diseases, herpes included, Baker said.

BCG treatment has been successful in controlling recurrent herpes II in 85 per cent of the cases, Baker said.

The theory is that those who suffer from recurrent attacks usually have an ineffective cell-mediated response and BCG is a "powerful nonspecific stimulus" of the body's cell-mediated response, she said.

Other treatments for herpes genitalis have included painting the lesions with dyes and exposing the area to incandescent light, Baker said.

The treatment has been effective in preventing 50 per cent of the recurrences, but the dye treatment is questionable as it may enhance the "oncogenic" potential of the virus, Baker said.

Cortico-steroids which inhibit the body's own immunity system should not be used, she said. In

one recorded case, some medical students used cortico-steroids after they had self-diagnosed herpes II. Their own immunity systems were inhibited and they died.

A California doctor was also treating herpes II with birth control pills (also known to inhibit the body's own immunity system) because he thought herpes was associated with the "heat of ovulation," Baker said.

Therefore the serious characteristics of herpes are that the body has no lasting immunity for it, a person can be infected and reinfected. The virus, like other viruses of the herpes group, chicken pox and mononucleosis, for example, can remain latent in the body and manifest itself during periods of stress. And there is the possibility of asymptomatic carriers.

Another problem is the difficulty in diagnosing herpes II, Baker said.

Currently, the only sure way is to take a culture.

This is done by breaking a lesion and swabbing some of the fluid which is put in a transport medium. The problem is that, unless the doctor has access to a laboratory to analyze the culture, the virus may die while being transported, resulting in a negative test when the person has herpes, she said. Baker has been suggesting that the culture be frozen when it is mailed some distance to improve diagnosis.

CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED

We would like to receive articles, graphics, poems, news items from our readers. We are especially interested in hearing about what is going on in other areas in the state.

MY MOTHER'S GRANDDAUGHTER

What is this
my daughter
You want to
go to college
should girls do this?

Well, now
my daughter
you have become
yourself
should girls do this?



Why is this
my daughter
You want to
go many places
alone
should girls do this?



My pride swells
and
sings songs of sunshine
of you
in my soul.
Nancy

New Programs At Resource Center

SELF HELP WORKSHOPS DURING NOVEMBER TO ASSIST WOMEN IN DEALING WITH BASIC BIKE MAINTENANCE, CARPENTRY AND AUTO MECHANIC. WORKSHOPS PARTICIPANTS ARE REQUESTED TO BRING ANY RELATED TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT THEY MAY HAVE. WOMEN WILL ASSIST EACH OTHER AND SHARE SKILLS.

BROWN BAG SERIES.....WOMEN AT WORK.

ALSO SEXUALITY WORKSHOPS. PANEL DISCUSSIONS IN THE DORMS ABOUT VENEREAL DISEASE, BIRTH CONTROL, RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY AND SEXUAL ATTITUDES IN GENERAL.

Strike cont.

By demanding higher salaries, the striking women said they were also striving for higher status and to have employers acknowledge the intelligence, skill and training required for the jobs they do.

They also said they were attempting to combat the "dumb secretary" stereotype which views jobs traditionally held by women as low status, petty and requiring little intelligence.

During the weeks the women walked the picket lines, they were compelled to deal with city officials' failure to acknowledge the seriousness of their actions.

A blatant example was Mayor Brown's remark about the picket lines which formed in front of his house on the 31st day of the strike.

"It's very humorous," Brown said. "I didn't realize it was that important. I'm not excited about it."

Brown's comment exemplified the apparent attitudes of city officials--that no urgent problem existed, because the strikers were merely unhappy secretaries whose serious actions were laughable.

The Retail Clerks' strike has served to emphasize the problems which working women in Missoula --and everywhere--must constantly face--substandard pay, trivialization of important work, discrimination based on marital status, and failure to be taken seriously by employers.

Hopefully, women will band together and support each other's efforts to improve working conditions for all women.

Conf. Cont.

The next day Sybil Landau spoke on the images of women in American case books. Landau, a professor at Cardozo School of Law in New York City, focused on cases of rape and judges' decisions, involving the myths that rapists have uncontrollable sexual desires, are urged on by women who have consented to the sexual act once (no matter with whom) or don't fight back hard enough. Unfortunately, these cases are relatively recent—from the 1950s and 1960s, and the new rape legislation has helped only slightly nationwide, as many states still require testimony by a witness other than the victim herself for conviction. Landau read cases of brutal rapes for which the woman was still blamed for provoking the attack. All were reminded that there is still much work to be done in the legal as well as societal areas of eliminating rape.

The rest of the conference consisted of a series of workshops. Workshop leaders, who donated their services, came from the Rocky Mountain and West Coast states.

A panel on "Alternative Practices" featured women and minority women in the

law. Particularly interesting for the Montana women was a slide show of old women's prisons, new men's facilities in Idaho, and the new Purdy Treatment Center for women in Washington. Hopefully Montana may someday have a women's facility similar to the one in Washington.

Another workshop featured Margo St. James, founder of COYOTE, the prostitutes' union, who dispelled myths about prostitution (e.g. that prostitutes are dope addicts and are the major source of VD), and explained how much time and money police departments

put into arresting prostitutes, her arguments for legalization of the profession.

Cissy Farenthold, national president of the National Women's Political Caucus, Texas politician, and keynote speaker at an evening banquet, urged women to realize the presence of the caste system in America and to overcome it by giving support to all women. She also urged women to unite in order to effect public policy-making and foreign affairs.

Next year's conference on women in the law will be held at Denver University in Denver, Colorado.



Women are learning that they have a right to express themselves freely and to request that others recognize their rights and feelings. And to aid women in developing more assertive behavior, the Women's Resource Center is sponsoring assertiveness training sessions.

Assertiveness Training aids women in developing a positive self-image and in feeling confident about what they say.

During the session, emphasis is placed on

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

role-playing, group dynamics of support and reinforcement necessary to learn new behaviors and to experience positive change.

Women's interest in Assertiveness training is escalating. It is anticipated that sessions will also be conducted Winter and Spring Quarters. If you are interested in joining one of the future sessions, please contact the Women's Resource Center: 243-4153. Wel Smith

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