Building Women's Links

When I began working here, I spent the first few months - with no pay - just trying to keep the Women's Library open. This is a full-time job for one person, although at the moment all four of us contribute some of our time to the library.

When I began my scheme in October, I devoted a great deal of time to (1) building up a workforce within the Women's Place which could undertake many areas of work that had been neglected. (2) To building up an Independent Committee of interested women who would look after the long-term interests of the Women's Place, without being tied to the limitations of S.E.S. These efforts have begun to pay off, as both groups are functioning very well.

The four workers have seen a tremendous increase in our eggiciency since we attended the N.S.S.B Management Course. As a direct result of the course, we have improved the content and quality of meetings, record keeping procedures and follow-up. We have been able to organise work areas more efficiently and set priorities; we have re-organised the space to make it easier to use in several different ways at once; we have done a time/efficiency study of our work habits which has resulted in some worthwhile recommendations for change.

The most important area of my own work has been that of a) inspiration/ having ideas and b) filling in the gaps/assisting with the work of others. In terms of inspiration one of my greatest concerns is to make the Women's Place part of a greater network of women working for change not only in Cork or even Ireland, but Internationally. Networking by Women's Place workers is now beginning to branch off in so many directions that it is almost impossible to list them all.

CORK AREA: within Cork, links between the Women's Place and Lesbian Line, Defend the Clinics and the Rape Crisis Centre are historic and ongoing. More recently, we worked together with C.N.D. and Churchfield Women's Action Group to reate a series of International Women's Day Events. We have been developing a joint library project with the Council for the Blind, and have been in contact to work out some preliminary ideas with the Unemployed Centre, the I.S.P.C.C. and Parish Sisters who work with women in Mayfield and Blackrock. The recent Women & Spirituality workshop provided an ideal forum for creating links.

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IRELAND AS A WHOLE: A particularly strong link exists between the Women of Cork and Belfast. Since the Women's Weekend May 1987 there have been a total of five group visits in one direction or the other. This exchange was partially facilitated by a grant from Co-operation North originally applied for by Nikki when she was still working here. More recently firm contacts have been building with women in Galway and Derry and to a certain extent Dublin.

The Women's Weekend itself cannot be underestimated as a networking event par excellence. Attracting about one hundred and twenty visitors in 1988, its fame is spreading. Each year new links are made and old one strengthened.

Also, the Lesbian Lines of Ireland, with great encouragement and hard graft on the part of the Cork Line and our Lesbian Liason Worker, Ger, in particular, are creating a very strong network of information exchange, and have also applied successfully for a Co-operation North grant to fund a series of train ing workshops and meetings.

By joining the Council for the Status of Women, we have also put ourselves into a different type of network - a broad spectrum of Women's Groups around the country are represented at meetings and we are hoping to be able to make excellent use of this opportunity. Two events of national status are of note here. The first ia a NATIONAL WOMEN & POVERTY TRIBUNAL to be held in Dublin in October. We expect to link up with this event in so e way, as well as studying the issue from a Cork perspective together with other groups in Cork. The second a series of HEALTH & CANCER AWARENESS EVENTS being planned for April or May 1989, in which we will also take part.

INTERNATIONALLY: We regularly receive newsletters and information on events from many countries. We will now be able to exchange information by sending out our own newsletter. Also, increasing numbers of women from England and the Continent make a concerted effort to visit the Women's Place and participate in our activities where possible.

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