

MUNSTER  
WOMEN'S



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## THE MUNSTER WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The Cork Women's Place Group decided it was about time that women, from the many different women's groups in Munster, got together and had a conference. We want to explore issues of the women's movement in a Munster context and initiate better contact between us women. The group discussed what topics we would like to talk about and wrote to the various groups. We got a very enthusiastic response to the idea of the conference and lots of suggestions for workshops. From this a number were chosen to be suggested at the weekend. Though the Women's Place Group were organising the conference we wanted all the women there to take responsibility for it. This is what happened when a large and varied number of groups arrived for the weekend. The structure was open and flexible, those present agreeing on the workshop topic and how this would be discussed. We were very pleased that all the groups contributed openly and personally at the weekend, which made it a Munster Women's Conference..

The issues discussed were:

1. Function of a Women's Group
2. Broadening the base of Women's Groups
- 3..The Women's Movement in Munster..

Here are the reports from the workshops which are a summary of notes taken at the weekend (sometimes indecipherable, as women got more enthusiastic and forgot about writing out minutes!)

This workshop took place on Sat afternoon and was well attended by enthusiastic women who split into 3 workshops & the following is a summary of those workshops.

### FUNCTIONS OF A WOMEN'S GROUP

What is a women's group? What is a feminist women's group? These questions were raised in an attempt to define the function and aims of any women's group. It was felt that after these issues were presumed rather than identified in women's groups, thus highlighting the necessity for every woman in a group to state her needs and the reason why she is there, and then what she wants to do. Only, by clarifying these needs for the women members can any group clarify functions and aims. The difficulties that arose in many groups; frustrations over lack of direction; clashes of politics and personalities, could perhaps be more easily dealt with, if many underlying assumptions were explored rather than ignored..It was

suggested that when starting up a group, and at regular intervals, women should take time to assess what they want to get out of the group, and how to achieve this..Some groups set out long term policies and short term aims, which could be checked out so that you would know (what the hell you were doing it for when you're sticking stamps, writing letters, poster etc) what the hell you were sticking the poster up for in the first place!

The Lesbian Group identified three main aims, which most other groups shared one or all of:-

- a) Social Contact
- b) Consciousness raising
- c) Political Action

The problems for most groups seemed to arise in putting these aims into practice. The first one of these wasn't so much of a problem, especially when some groups admitted finishing up early regularly so that more pints could be downed with their women friends. The contentious issue of whether a group should be action or discussion based was a difficult one to resolve. Many women felt that to be politically active was an essential part of the group and feared endless discussion which might lead to no effective change..On the other hand the danger of action for its own sake and without any sense of purpose or direction for the women partaking in it, was felt could be avoided by some discussion of the need for action for the individual women..Who are we doing the action for? Why is it happening? The UCC

Women's group, who are a very active group, spoke about the difficulty of constantly organising events and not having time to discuss issues in the group. This can lead to a position where as women, rather than defining the issues affecting us in our individual lives, sometimes we get pushed into causes..Do we wait for our rights until after the socialist revolution? Can women's groups be all things for all women? How do you deal with the Castletown-bere issue of a meeting as making cakes and radical feminism? Whew!

The question was who is any women's group for; the women in it or other women..If its 'other' women, which women, and who are 'we' to tell 'them' what they need! It was felt that we must each identify our own responsibility to change everything.



....more

As a testimony to the fact that there are many things that need to be changed there were many different kinds of women's groups at the meeting and it was seen to be a positive thing that the groups were so different. We had service orientated groups (Cork, Limerick and Waterfor Rape Crisis Services, Cork Lesbian Line Collective); action orientated groups (UCC Women's Group, Cork Women's Place Group) and groups who started off dealing with personal issues (Castletownbere Gestalt psycho-drama, co-counselling). New and old, large and small, and very different groups shared many common problems in dealing with the function of a women's group. I feel here its all beginning to sound like we were crying on each others shoulders all the time, but the atmosphere was warm, open and positive.

The issues of structure, decision making and responsibility in groups were looked at. The ideal structure for some groups was a collective where decisions were made by consensus. But even within this structure certain power struggles were identified, where the more assertive and outspoken women tended to dominate in decision making. Issues of shyness, intimidation, lack of confidence sometimes lead to a situation where women are oppressing other women in the group. A few women in a group can dominate and do all the work. Ways to combat this were trying to ensure that every woman got a chance to speak at a meeting; and that women would take turns to do the work. Are there alternatives to a collective? A revolving chairperson was suggested, with different women taking turns at chairing the meeting and taking minutes. But what happens when the group is becoming ineffective and the work doesn't get done? Honest and open communication could help this. Are we too soft with each other? Often we tend to make excuses for one another, rather than sharing skills and techniques which will make sure that power is spread about. Women said that it is often difficult to express emotions in a group. How do we deal with emotions like anger in a women's group? Groups can only work if the group itself learns about itself and gives women a space to discuss the issues, emotions, frustrations that come up.

Should groups be open or closed? Some groups felt that for trust, openness and confidence to grow, it was necessary to have a group closed at times, so that the women could take the time to relate to each other. Suggestions were made that groups could have one in every 3 or 4



danger of sitting in small groups trying to decide what to do for other women; small, elite, middle-class groups, presuming what other women want and should have. Women spoke of the fear of stagnation in a group and the need for groups to be able to change, accounting for changes in the women in the group. A need for a cyclical sense of discussion and actions, was suggested to avoid this stagnation.





### Broadening The Base

Sunday morning was the morning after the women's social the night before and thus the numbers were reduced to those dedicated women who eventually managed to drag themselves out of bed, hangovers and all. This workshop was dealing with the issue of how to get more women involved. But before this could be dealt with, we asked why do we want to do it? Is it to get more women behind us? To get women thinking? How much should we be conscious of the image of a group and its effect on other women? We discussed the alienation that a lot of us felt from other women because of our feminism. While at the same time reiterating our responsibility to our own individual needs in a group. If a group decides that it wants more members, where do you go from there? Different groups used different ways of getting new members. For the Clonmel group it was mainly word of mouth and everyone would bring someone new. The Tralee women's group had initially advertised publicly, but after the summer those women who were interested contacted one another and a smaller more unified group emerged. The Cork women's place group usually got members from women talking to other women outside the group, rather than public advertising. Again, it depended on the type of group it was whether large numbers of women were needed or not. For Rape Crisis Centres it was essential to have a closed women's group. For other groups being open to new members was important for fresh ideas and a healthy sense of growth.

When new people come into an established group the problem of integration arises. We decided that it was a good idea to have a strategy for dealing with new members.

We spoke of awkward times when a new woman had come to a meeting and no-one introduced themselves because everyone presumed she was with one of the others. No one took responsibility to welcome her or talk about the group. A suggestion was made that the group could break into couples for a few minutes and talk about how each felt about the group. This way the new women would find out information without being intimidated. Then each woman tell the group what her partner had said. Another idea put forward was that the group should take a few minutes at the beginning of a meeting so that everyone could say how they were feeling and what they wanted out of this particular meeting. We then proceeded to do this, all the



women there on the Sunday morning took that time to talk about what they wanted from the workshop. The round didn't take that long and led to a more relaxed atmosphere, where women at least knew each other's names and had a clearer idea why we were together. We spoke about the fact that a lot of women who wouldn't go to meetings might use a women's centre. How do you make a women's centre appeal to all women and still maintain a feminist perspective? Or do we want to do this? Do we want a women's centre as a focal point for feminist action and activity? A lot of women have spoken about being intimidated by the Cork women's place and were afraid to go inside the door because they wouldn't know anyone. How do you make women at ease so that they will venture inside the door. Someone suggested having one social afternoon or evening a week at a women's centre where new women could drop in for a chat and a cuppa. There they could meet women from the various different women's groups using the centre, on an individual basis, and get the information they want in an easy way. Seemed like a good idea. Other questions that came up at the workshops. Again,

1. Do groups need a closed period to relate, organise and work together?
2. What about women who come looking for something and leave not getting it?
3. How do you cope with women who expect to have things done for them by a women's group or women's centre?
4. Can worrying about new members be draining on the energy of a group?
5. Why are we in this women's group in the first place.





## The Women's Movement In Munster

By Sunday afternoon, the rest of the hang-over women arrived and we broke into 2 workshops to discuss what is the women's movement in Munster and where are we going. We began talking about women in unions and women in politics, which led on to a broader discussion of the patriarchal power structure that we are up against.

A woman in a trade union told us that an Equality Committee had been set up to push for positive discrimination for women in the union, in view of the fact that there, like in so many other unions, most of the positions of power were held by men. To effect necessary changes for women in unions it was felt that more women needed to make their presence felt. Yet in doing this one woman spoke of her experience of becoming a token woman, and her opinion was often patronisingly regarded as "shes just being awkward again". However the danger of an official being set up as a women's representative sometimes pushed all "women's issues" onto this woman, or pushed to the side altogether by this gesture of women's representation.

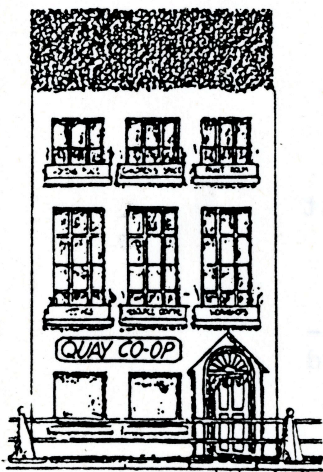
This lead on to a discussion of women in politics and how the existence of a Minister of State for Women's Affairs was often used by other politicians as showing that "women's issues" were being dealt with, and also that women's issues needn't be thought about any further, or, weren't important in other government departments. Some women felt that it was important that women work in politics to change the existing situation for women, for example, enacting legal changes necessary. Others felt perhaps personal change was more important.

Should we as women challenge the existing patriarchal power structure? And if we want to challenge it what is the best approach to take... One good suggestion was that if individual women got involved in the existing structure they should keep in contact with women's groups so that they could be decontaminated from patriarchal values. This would be one way of trying to prevent women from compromising too much when involved with men.

We spoke about issues that women had worked on recently. A number of women there said that their involvement in the anti-amendment campaign was the beginning of their politicisation as women. Many new women's groups were formed by women who had been working together on the anti-amendment campaign. However, some women felt that a lot of energy and time had been wasted working



on the campaign and they would perhaps be more reluctant in the future to do the same thing. The discussion went on to how some women felt that feminism had taken over their lives to an extent that we were carrying around a banner 24 hours a day. This led on to personal experiences of how women react to sexist jokes, remarks etc. made at work. Some women felt that they were isolated from other women in the work place because of the title "feminist" and found it very frustrating to have to defend their position constantly. We questioned the importance or the need to worry about changing the attitude of male co-workers. Sometimes, it's pointless wearing ourselves out trying to do this. Women felt that we must be fair to ourselves and occasionally cop out of this kind of struggle in the interests of our own individual survival and sanity. We shared what we felt to be our own personal development and change as a result of being involved in a women's movement, and rediscovering our own personal power. We talked about the idea of the personal being political and what that meant to us. Society is threatened by women getting close and continually attempts to isolate us from each other. The Munster weekend was an example of closeness and solidarity among women that must be continued.



**RESOURCE  
CENTRE**

**VEGETARIAN CAFE**  
MON - SAT 10.00 - 8.00.  
(Sun 12 - 5)

**RADICAL COMMUNITY  
BOOKSHOP**  
MON - SAT 11.00 - 6.00

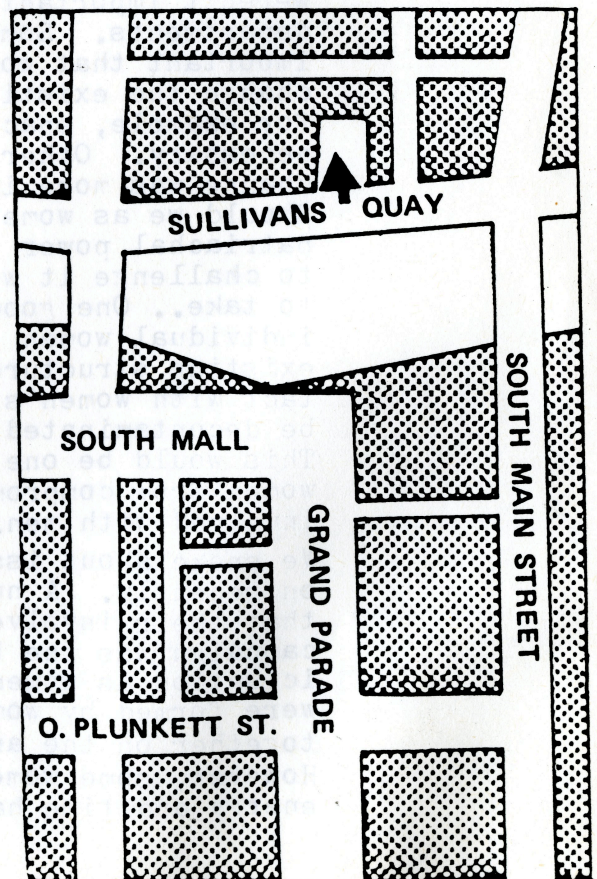
**THUR 7.00 - 9.00  
FOOD CO-OP**  
SAT 10.30 - 4.30

**WOMEN'S PLACE**

A WORKERS CO-OP  
**QUAY CO-OP**

**24 SULLIVANS QUAY  
CORK.**

Phone: 021 - 967660.





## TAI CHI

"Personal Growth" is a thing of today.. People are looking at all sorts of philosophies to bring about inner change or improvement. It is like a reaction to a world outside that seems to have gone beyond our control. We are looking to our inner selves, seeking to grow, to change, to be satisfied. Yet as we desperately hunger for this change, so also do we resist it. While we like to see the future through astrology, futurology we also like to hold onto things of the past. However, it is the motion of change that keeps us sustained. In our daily lives we learn through looking at our circumstances, when we need to change, job, diet, home ....

Taoism an eastern philosophy from which TAI CHI stems, shows us how to accept our part in the general flow and interdependence of the universe. It is a philosophy of polarities in balance, not one of embattled contradictions. Each person tries to create balance for themselves. We seek to have a centre and yet a free flow. So how do we make these ideas and concepts live and be of use to us?

We learn through our bodies. Change is motion. Tai Chi is motion. Moving from hard to soft, up and down, within and without. Too often people look to having one or two "peak" experiences and expect to wake up "changed" people. What we are looking for through Tai CHI is how to become "changing" people. How to flow through our lives accepting form and structure. When they appear inadequate or unjust we re-shape and carry on. The disciple of the form teaches us a quality of movement that is free. So Tai Chi's strength lies in the integration of form and freedom. A discipline need not necessarily be oppressive, but will recognise the constant human cry of "I want, I want", the looking to fill an emptiness, while also looking for security and sameness.





## Clonmel Women's Group

In early 1984 a small group of women came together to discuss setting up a women's group in Clonmel. At the initial weekly meetings there were up to 18 women present; we were then trying to decide who we were, what were we about; feminist or not, action or discussion?

These meetings were quite traumatic; after a few months we found ourselves back down to 7 or 8 regular committed people. We had by then come across a resource pack called 'Getting Started' and we decided to use this as a guide for the group in the early stages. The pack proved to be very useful to us and we are still working through some aspects of this.

We are now working as a group on two interdependent levels. Most of our energy at the moment is spent doing a petition/ survey on the forthcoming family planning bill. We are getting a tremendous response to this and hope to do a programme on local radio to publish our findings.

We are also interested in the area of adult education for women and have done some research on this with a view to doing something practical about the types of courses available. Two other projects in the pipeline are: a rape counselling service, in conjunction with another group in Clonmel and sex stereotyping in local school.

Our political activity depends on our ability to work well together. We are spending time/ energy getting to know ourselves and each other in a supportive and non-judgemental setting. We're setting aside a day to ourselves soon to review the year, who we are, and where we're going! There is a great deal of optimism in the group as we feel we're moving, growing, having plenty of fun! Any women in the area interested in the group can contact:

Marie Ahearne 052-23060

Ann Taylor 052-24254

Ann Warner 052-21457

Ilaven / Hilary 058-47218

### HOLD ON.

Hold on

For there must be something  
Be not afraid to ask .

Corrupt politics  
and crushed women  
are TODAY.

Choose a cause

Which one?

We are human and disagree.

There is injustice

Those who find

become solidified

in their own truth..

Oblivious to others,  
over time.

I am searching.

How many others

shovel their way

with forks ?

I. B..





Members of the West Cork Women's Group were invited by the Tralee Women's Group, to join a demonstration on Thursday 24 January. The demonstration, in Tralee, was to show support for Joanne Hayes and her family during their cross-examination at the Kerry Babies Tribunal. We felt that such a demonstration should be attended because the cross-examination had stretched the terms of reference of the Enquiry Tribunal, particularly in the case of Joanne and the other members of her family, during their cross-examination. The purpose of the examination used, was to humiliate, degrade and terrorize these women to breaking point. These questioning tactics not just the questions themselves, but the manner in which they were put, publicly used within the legal system, are the same tactics allegedly

used at Tralee Garda Station, to break the Hayes family into signing untrue statements. This persistent verbal harassment and attempt to confuse brainwash, we condemn as torture when reported to us as happening in various dictatorships and regimes throughout the world. Yet here it is in Ireland, publicly performed and publicly reported.

In using the legal procedure so obviously to destroy a woman's character in this blatantly sexual moralistic way, shows that the male bastion of power in the legal world has has automatically assumed the right to parade another person's sexuality for the purpose of discrediting and criminalizing that person. Most importantly, this "automatic right" is used against women, especially in rape and family court cases. The assumed male prerogative to protect the weaker sex



is inherent in our culture and is seen in our pre-dominately male institutions; religion, politics, law, the family or commune based on patriarchal right. Because the male right to protect is assumed to be TRUE, so is the male right to destroy the female, and this is the fundamental basis of the cross-examination questioning in Tralee. Joanne Hayes has courage, not normally admitted as a female attribute and that courage has to be destroyed, and within a male-dominated society what better way to destroy it than through a sexual attack, and in this case a legal sexual attack. We all decry wife-battering, rape, and pornography as insults to women, as we decry hypocrisy, the stimulation of virtue, in society. Those demonstrating in Tralee not just members of women's groups, but the local men and women; and those all over the country who have voiced their outrage at the explicit exposee of Joanne Hayes's private life, have seen through the hypocrisy of the legal system in this society. Hopefully, we shall be able, through this growing awareness of the male assumed rights over women, their bodies and emotions, to challenge the hypocrisy in other realms of power in society, and eventually achieve a society in which respect for people, regardless of sex, can be established as a basic and fundamental right for all. And in Tralee, this right has been ravaged. The W.C.W.G. (Clonakilty) is in the process of re-grouping. Anyone interested in joining please contact 023/46239 preferably after 4p.m.

Chris McKeown.



An incident at a recent Andy Irvine Gig in Cork!

Music, chatter, smoke....I wish I was back in West Clare, thinking of you and the times we had together.....

Male no. 1: There's a seat here if you'd like to sit down.

Myself: Grand, thanks.

Male no.2 : Good music isn't it?

Myself: Yeah, I haven't heard him for a long time.

Male no. 2: Where did you hear him before?

Myself: Oh, Lisdoonvarna, Carnsore, different places.

Male no. 3: Are you going to Stockton's Wing on Sunday?

Myself I don't know I'm not sure.

Male no. 2: This is a great song. Listen to it. I used to really like that group he played with before- Sweeney's Men.

Male no. 1: Are you here on your own?

Myself: Yeah!



Male no. 1: What's a good looking girl like you doin' on your own at a gig?

Myself: Oh fuck off-I'm quite intitled to be here on my own if I want to be.

Male no. 1: And drinking pints!

Myself: And why shouldn't I be drinking pints? After all, you are too

Male no. 1: But look at the size of me from them, and you're s thin! Where d'you put it all?

Myself

Male no. 2: You're not from Cork, are you?

Myself: No, Dublin.

Male no. 1: So what are you working at in Cork?

Myself: I'm not working.

Male no. 1: What? Coming down to Cork to sign on? Why don't you go back to Dublin and sign on there?

Myself: Why the fuck should I? Anyway I'm not signing on. I'm living on the "Unmarried Mother's" allowance.

Male no. 2: (Mouth hanging open) Whaaaat? And you're not ashamed of yourself? You're not ashamed of yourself?

Myself: No- why should I be?

Deafening silence- shocked faces- all three get up and leave.

Male no. 1: (walking past me to get out) And d'you know what you can do with yourself - you can fuck off with yourself.

All three leave... I sit there, shaking myself, wondering did this really happen? But it did.

## WATERFORD RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

Members of the Waterford Rape Crisis Group have been together for around a year and a half. the centre is relatively new, having opened on the 29th. of September 1984.

The main aims of members are not only to counsel rape victims, but to make the issue of rape a public matter in Waterford, enabling more women to see themselves as victims not collaborators of rape. The majority of our calls to date have been from victims of incest. This we intend to stress in our contact with the media, in order to encourage public awareness of incest as the silent crime.

While our main area of publicity has been Waterford, we have also had calls from Clommel, Carrick and Wexford, and as a result of this written to all local newspapers in the South - East in order to advertise.

Our service is a weekend one at present. We hope to expand to week-days eventually. When we are not available we have a twenty-four hour telephone answering machine. Our telephone number is 051 73362. We are available on each Friday from 8pm. to 10pm. On Saturday's from 10am. to 12pm. and from 2pm. to 4pm. and 7pm. to 9pm. Please ring if you want to talk to us. We will be only too glad to hear from you.

## HOME SWEET HOME

A neighbour of mine keeps homing-pigeons. They are such beautiful creatures; intelligent graceful and are enviably skilled in the air. With all these positive attributes one would think that these birds live a really idyllic lifestyle - not so.

Try and imagine the scope the sky offers these birds-all those horizons to be explored, newer and more favourable climates to bask in all that space grace and freedom - wasted.



These birds must comply to the limitations imposed on them by their greedy ignorant and discriminating "task-master".

Everyday these birds are set free and for thirty minutes or so they experience

a fraction of the immense scope the sky offers them.

They are limited to the same area of sky, the same perches and then when their exercising time has expired the owner returns them to the same dark, confined and crowded loft.

What I am trying to say is that these creatures don't have the human intelligence or knowledge of English to be able to PROTEST against the cruel limitations imposed on them. Can you imagine if these limitations were lifted and these creatures began to realize their skills and the unimaginable scope which waits for them to manipulate for themselves?

"The more I live-  
the more

I learn. The more I learn the more I realize the less I know.

Each step I take-

Each page I turn-

Each mile I travel

only means the more

I have to go. What's

wrong with wanting

more? If you can

fly- THEN SOAR!

With all there is-

WHY SETTLE FOR JUST

A PIECE OF SKY?"

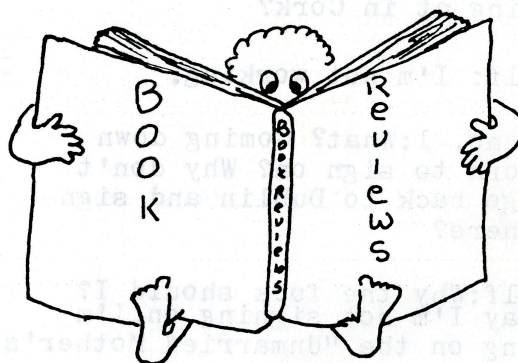
Life is too short to suppress ourselves or allow others to limit our personal developments. Ireland is up to it's eyeballs in bird-droppings (metaphorically speaking of course). THE ONLY WAY to wade our way

out of this foul predicament is to develop a skilled and united work force

There is no time for imposing limitations on each other's skills nor is there time to wallow in stereotyping and silly role-playing

So I ask you let's get trained, shed our dictated self-images roll our sleeves up and get started put those blue-prints into production.

Maybe someone out there has an idea for metaphorical bird-dropping remover and who knows re-cycling could be the next step!



## Book Reviews

The Cork Quay Co-op's Women's Library and Information Centre, which opened in November, now has 60 members and over 250 books. Thus far, the library's collection consists mostly of novels, although it also has books on a variety of feminist issues, sexuality, marriage, children, and health. Here are some short reviews on a few of the library's more recent acquisitions:



Vida by Marge Piercy

Marge Piercy, author of Women on the Edge of Time, has once again written a gripping novel. Although the book is rather long (450 pages) I found it difficult to put down. The story centers around Vida Asch, a former radical during the Vietnam War who now lives "underground" to flee from the FBI. While the reader follows Vida around the country from one safehouse to another, Vida recounts her story of the heady days of radicalism during the 60s, to the splintering of the movement in the 70s. Vida is not always a likeable character, especially to a feminist reader. Yet her story is disturbing and fascinating.

Iris by Janine Veto is also a very disturbing book, largely because the book contains so much violence. Iris, a very beautiful woman with mystical powers, moves to Hawaii. After her fiancée is drowned and Iris is raped, she meets Dr. Dee Hartman, a psychiatrist. Gradually the two women fall in love. Their blissful affair is interrupted by a murder and Iris is forced to flee to Greece. There she strengthens her mystical powers and rediscovers her unlikeable brother-in-law. After he Attempts to murder Iris, she and Dee weave an intricate web of revenge in which to catch and destroy him.

Iris is full of anger, especially anger against men who commit violence against women. The women in this book rediscover their ancient, mystical strength and use this strength for revenge. Iris is an innovative thriller and love story that is definitely worth reading.

Choices by Nancy Toder is a totally different type of lesbian love story. Jenny and Sandy, two American college students, fall in love during their first year of university. The affair continues until they graduate. Despite the passion and love the two women share, Jenny continually denies that she is a lesbian. She may love Sandy, but she certainly isn't "one of them!" After graduation they part.

Years later the two women meet at a conference, Jenny now married and Sandy now deeply involved with another woman named Shelley. Sandy's insistent arguments make Jenny reassess her marriage and her sexuality in the light of her love for Sandy.

Although Choices is not especially well written and its attempts at humour not terribly successful, the positive relationship between Sandy and Shelley makes Choices well worth reading.

Winter's Edge by Valerie Miner presents a different sort of relationship between two women: that of a long and close friendship between two older women. Margaret and Chrissie are two older work-



ing class women living in a rundown district of San Francisco. Their friendship is almost torn apart during a bitter local election because of Chrissie's involvement and Margaret's passivity. Events surrounding the election force them to re-assess their importance to one another. Winter's Edge is an Excellent book and deals with women who are all too often ignored in feminist novels.

Give Me Your Good Ear by Maureen Brady is an engaging story of Francie Kelly who, one night after being put in bed, sees her mother stab her drunk father in self defence. Francie never sneaks with her mother until years later. But after she ends a difficult relationship, she begins to rethink her past, especially her father's death. She decides that she can no longer bear to be the passive witness of this violent event.

Give Me Your Good Ear is a story of personal growth and an attempt to overcome the passivity that results from a traumatic childhood event.

The Best of Nell by Nell McCafferty is a wonderful, funny, and biting collection of some of Nell McCafferty's best news articles from the past few years. Her articles on Ann Lovett and the Amendment are especially good.

These books are all available in the Women's Library. All women are welcome to become members for £2 waged and £1 unwaged.

## THE CORK WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP

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The Cork Women's Health Group meets every Thursday at 8:00pm in the Quay Co-Op 24 Sullivan's Quay. We are a group of women who are interested in all aspects of Women's health. While we are an action based group, our main interest at present is to become a self help group. We have discussions on various topics such as women's reproductive system, women and drugs, and many other issues that effect women's health. We hope by doing this that our own awareness of our health needs, and that of other women's is increased. We welcome any women interested in such a group.

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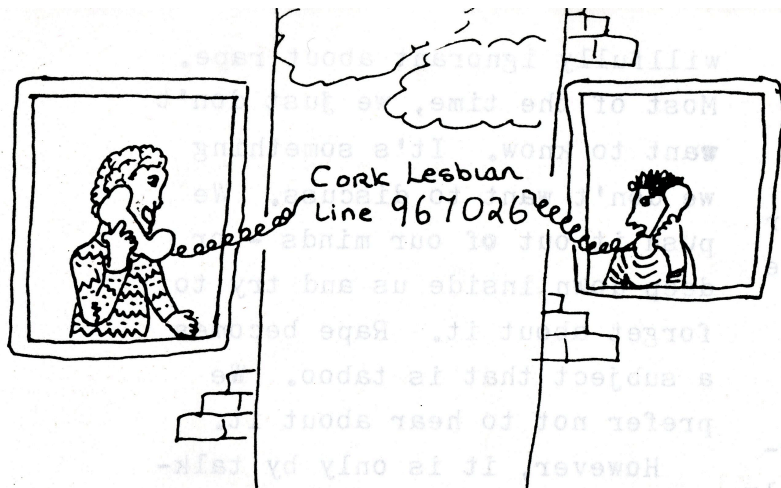
## THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION, COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY

Due to the stresses and strains of modern day living many of us may need advice and guidance to help us cope adequately with problems that arise at different times in our lives; for example, relationship difficulties, pressure at work, bereavement, unemployment, etc. Some of us may face the possibility of breakdown unless there is someone to help us in a constructive and understanding way.

The counsellors at the Centre can provide this help in a confidential and professional capacity, to individuals, couples, families and groups. The counsellors believe firmly in the concepts of education and prevention. The Centre provides educational courses for groups of people to help them gain information and insight and to help them increase their personal and social skills.

For those interested in these groups and for more information on the Centre, please contact us at 2, Bridge View, Sunday's Well Rd., Cork. Phone 941910 between 9.30-5.00.





## CORK LESBIAN LINE

During the summer months the Cork Lesbian group was contacted by many women making various enquires. In response some members of the group formed a collective to work specifically on the development of a lesbian line.

It is hoped to provide a confidential service for women making their first contact with other lesbians, offering them support, as well as giving information on organised events in the Munster region. We do not aim to offer advice or counselling to callers.

All six members of the Collective are lesbian and feminist. The very existence of lesbian line is seen as a political act. As well as providing a contact service, we aim to make lesbianism more visible in this society and are committed to challenging heterosexism and exploding some of the myths surrounding the "taboo" subject.

We are pleased with the reaction to the line so far and are about to launch a "sticker" campaign to advertise the service more widely. As the slogan says, "LESBIANS ARE EVERYWHERE". We hope our service will help to increase our visibility.

The Lesbian Line shares a phone number with a comparable service for Gay men, but otherwise operates separately.

CORK LESBIAN LINE operates every Thursday from 8.00 to 10.00p.m.  
Phone. (021) 967026

## UCC WOMEN'S GROUP

Revived in October 1984, the UCC Women's Group has gone from strength to strength. We have an active membership of twenty-five women which is a considerable increase kfer previous years - it has itself dkubled the last six months and is continuing to grow.

Many of the women have braved derision and ridicule from their male (and female) colleagues to attend twice weekly meetings, one of which is devoted to business and organisation, the kther to discussion and workshops.

This year the group has been particularly active including in our activities public meetings, protests, pickets and leafletting. Our often very public activities have forced many college students to acknowledge the existence of the Women's Group and that there is a definite need for such a group. Unfortunately raising awareness in UCC is an uphill struggle but progress is being made even if it is slow and inspite of a vicious physical attack on members of the group at one of our meetings by several male students and inspite of mktions tabled at the college Philosophical Society demanding the disbanding of the group. Such intimidation and harassment is not unexpected in UCC and only

makes us more resolute.

In this academic establishment sexism is entrenched to such a degree and reinforced by a lot of College regulations (or lack of them) that education is by necessity a large part of the work of the UCC Women's Group. The ideals of equality are only paid lipservice so our attempts at ridding college of sexism and all its evils are directed at (i) the Academic establishment and (ii) our fellow students who as supposedly educated members of society are woefully ignorant and complacent as regards women's issues.

Much of our time this year has been spent on establishing the group as a visible and outspoken entity. Hopefully next year and in the future, once this has been achieved we may progress towards directly challenging the inequalities of the sexes as they manifest in UCC and society as a whole.



Of all the crimes we hear or read about, I think there is none that frightens us, as women, as much as rape.. When we read about cases in the paper or hear that someone was raped, we immediately identify with the raped woman, because we know that in other circumstances that woman might have been us. As women, we are all vulnerable; it could happen to any of us at any time. No one is immune: age, marital status, economic security, environment make little difference. And it is this knowledge and fear that we, as women, carry around inside us all the time.

Not that we are consciously afraid all the time. But we automatically take precautions in our attempt to avoid rape. We don't walk down dark streets at night. We lock our car doors while driving through the city. We latch and double lock our doors at home. We know not to let in strangers at any time. We are suspicious of strangers. We warn our daughters of the dangers of talking to strange men, of hitch-hiking, of going home from discos with strange men, etc. etc. All these precautions have become second nature to us. We deeply and intensely fear rape. And yet at the same time, we are

willfully ignorant about rape. Most of the time, we just don't want to know. It's something we don't want to discuss. We push it out of our minds - or deep down inside us and try to forget about it. Rape becomes a subject that is taboo. We prefer not to hear about it.

However, it is only by talking about our feelings and fears that we can begin to dispel them. And it is only by confronting both our own and society's attitudes towards rape, in particular, that we can free ourselves from some of the myths that surround rape. Rape will not go away by pretending it doesn't exist. We know that it does, and we need information to help us to understand the reality of rape.

We would like to begin by trying to dispel some of those myths.

1. Rape is the result of a sudden overwhelming sexual urge: In fact, rape is not a sexual act and is seldom done for sexual gratification. Rape is an act of violence that uses sex as a weapon. Our own statistics show that in 66% of cases reported to the Rape Crisis Service, violence was used. And because we know that most rapes are carefully planned in advance by the attacker, we can do away with the second part of that myth



That says rape is a result of a sudden overwhelming sexual urge..

2. "The woman was asking for it by her dress or behaviour." This is a particularly insidious myth for it transfers much of the blame for the attack away from the attacker and onto the victim.. It reinforces the notion that a woman should blame herself if she is raped. Women who have been raped might blame their behaviour, their manner, their dress- all in an attempt to answer the question "Why me?" And sometimes fail to report the rape because they feel that their own actions will somehow be seen to justify the attack.

This attitude is brought home to many a rape victim who does report the case and ends up in court as a witness for the State. She will then find herself in the witness box and forced to undergo long and often painful cross-examination as the defense counsel try to show that she was "asking for it". That she consented to her own rape. It will be said that she might have said "no", but that the defendant really thought she meant "yes".. In any other setting this

would seem utterly ridiculous: If the man had asked her for money and had been refused and then had taken the money, it would be quite clear to everybody that she had been robbed. And that when she said "no" she meant "no." But in a rape case, the women must prove that she did not consent.

We believe it is a most important principle that women have the right to say no to full sexual intercourse at any stage. And that men should ask not presume or try to guess what she means. The seduction scenario is an insult to women by presuming that women are really out to "get" men and that men "can't help themselves." The problem is that we are bombarded by these images all the time, especially on TV programmes like Dallas, Dynasty, etc. These shows often present the man as the unwitting "victim" of the scheming woman and we find ourselves sometimes sympathising with them as a result.

The reality for women who have been raped is far different from the fairy tales shown on TV. And the most important thing for us, is to make women aware that rape is never their own fault. That they are not guilty.



3. "Rapists are always strangers in dark alleys."

In 62% of all cases that came to our attention, the attacker was known to the woman; he was either an acquaintance or friend.

4. "Only young attractive girls are raped." This is clearly untrue. Statistics again tell us that women of all ages are victims of rape. Also, the idea that a woman must be "attractive" - whatever that might mean - is clearly another example of the kind of misinformation that the media likes to present. Interviews with convicted rapists confirm that the so-called attractiveness of the woman is not in most cases an important factor in the attack.

5. "Rape is an act committed by someone who is mentally ill." It is clearly much more comforting for us to believe that only a perverted, sick man could ever do such a thing. But in a number of studies both in the USA and Britain, psychologists have shown that convicted rapists were in fact no more psychologically disturbed than any other "violence-prone" offenders of such other crimes as robbery, assault, etc. This is a very hard myth to let go of; we don't want to think that many men around us might be capable of rape. But if we instead look at the whole area of violence in our community - the battering of women and children in families, the violent robberies carried out on the streets,

the high incidence of harassment on the street and at work - we must see rape in a much broader environment and one that is extremely violent.

6. "Women make false accusations of rape." The only country where official figures on the number of falsely reported rapes is available is the US, where according to police statistics approx. 2% of reported rapes are false. Despite this tiny percentage of falsely reported rapes, there is a repressive tendency to focus attention on false reporting by doctors, police and others to justify the highly suspicious attitude that is adopted towards women who claim to have been raped. The result is further suffering and humiliation for the woman who has reported the crime. Instead of meeting sympathetic police doctors and gardai, she might be met with highly suspicious officials who doubt her story.

7. "If you're going to be raped, lie back and enjoy it." This myth is a particular example of ignorant thinking which totally distorts the actual rape experience which is horrifying and brutal. The act of rape completely removes a woman's will power and the resulting psychological trauma and emotional distress is acute.

The point of this exercise is to focus on the reality of rape for women and to try to understand why these myths have been perpetuated in the first place. Some of the questions we might ask ourselves are:

Why does society view rape the way it does?  
Why do so many women who



# CORK RAPE CRISIS SERVICE

**Counsellors on call**

LEGAL AND MEDICAL  
INFORMATION  
AVAILABLE



**968086**

**24 hour Answering Service**

have been raped feel guilty  
and ashamed?  
Why don't more women report  
the crime to the guards?  
- it is estimated that only  
1 in 10 rapes is reported.  
Why is rape in marriage not  
a reportable crime?  
What is the true incidence  
of incest in this country?  
Why don't rape cases get  
priority listing in court?  
Why are there often no women  
jurors found in a rape case?  
Is there a connection  
between pornography and  
rape?  
Can we prevent rape? And  
How?

BELLA DONNA,

You swallowed my labaris, sucking my erogenous ear.  
I kissed the lenght of your scar ,  
not wishing to know why  
from sternum to mound ,  
you were wounded, so.  
In stupored slumber you lay ,  
I watched,  
wondering about you.  
Covering your body at dawn,  
so no one else could see.  
For a week you woke me ,  
giving a day purpose .  
But, on that  
Bizzare night  
I left abruptly.  
sensing my passion peaked ,  
and your unfailing interest in Chivas.  
Swirilling your tongue with mine  
"Its only for fun Babe"

Crazy woman so full so free,  
Move on.

I shall remember.

Bella Donna.

I. B.



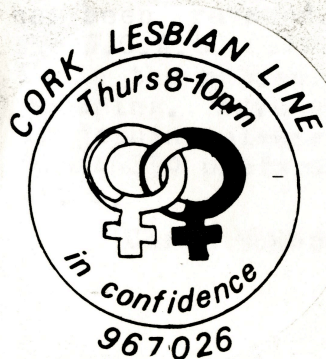
## SELF-HELP GROUP WATERFORD

As our group is very new I will give a short history leading up to our formation (this could easily stretch to a large book).

About two years ago fifteen to twenty women began to meet for informal consciousness raising in a room adjoining a pub. After the first year there remained a steady group of eight. After much discussion concerning our direction we agreed to split. One group strongly favoured activity and some joined a group to form a family planning clinic. Six of us are now in the self-help group and with three others aim to work entirely on ourselves.

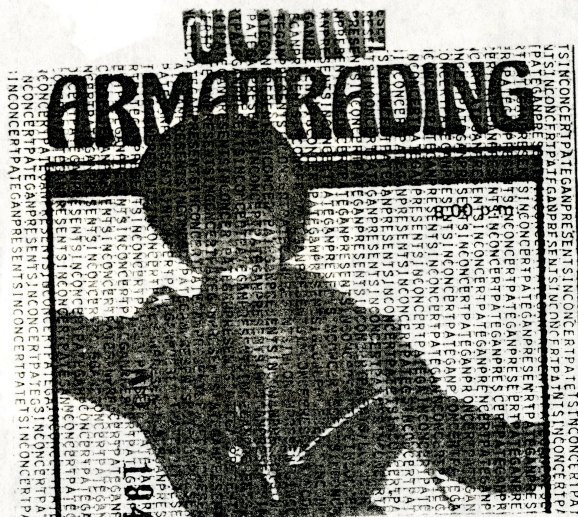
We have had only two meetings in a local youth centre (we fantasize about a women's place). All of us have done an assertiveness course, most have followed with a sexuality course and some are doing Co- counselling training. We hope once established to open the group to other women or to help others form a similar support group.

There are some different women's groups in Waterford and we will organize a day's get together soon. THANK YOU for your well organised Munster Conference. Hopefully next-time more of us can come.



OR WRITE

PO Box 97  
Cork



In February a number of women from the Cork Women's Place Group went to Dublin to hear Joan Armatrading. Here is Mag's review of the concert and Joan's new album, Secret Secrets:

In Dublin Joan Armatrading showed her command and brilliance of music. She began with "Can you feel how close we are" a captivating love song. Secret Secrets, her latest album, was the keynote of the evening. This album is similar to the "Key" as regards its fiery dance music - the slower songs as passionate as those on "Track Record".

At the concert "Show Some Emotion" brought the audience to a hush while the chorus of "Willow" was sung to her. A woman who can certainly play guitar was seen in "Tall in the Saddle" - a goodie from the past. Two hours of Joan Armatrading touching chords in us all shows what a sophisticated operator this woman continues to be. "One Night" on Secrets is a great number as is "Friends not lovers". "Love By You" can't but make one feel in a maze; the rapport of her voice with piano, accompanied by who else but Joe Jackson. "Strange" is a song we can almost feel her crying. For the most part I really enjoyed this album with the exception of "Temptation," which I don't like, and "Talking to the Wall," which I found boring.

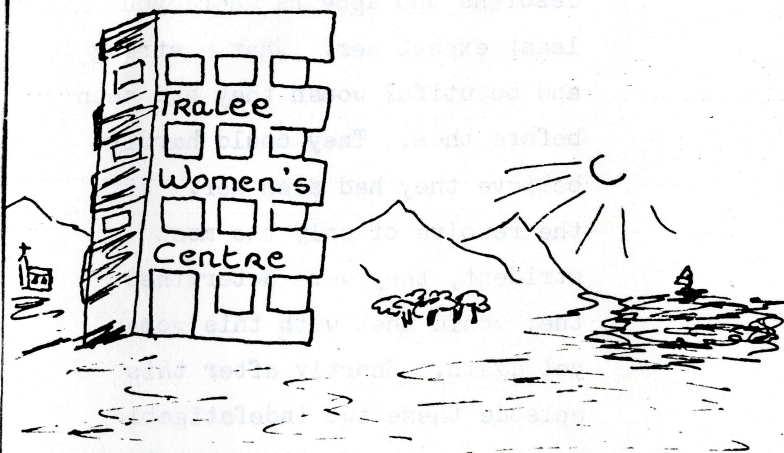
So as the song goes  
"Let's keep this exclusive  
Aspect for two  
It's a secret secret  
For me and You."



## Tralee Women's Group

The meeting of various groups for the Munster Women's Conference was of great interest to me. Having been involved in setting up a women's group in Tralee and having experienced problems and disagreements in setting up same, it was encouraging to talk to other groups with similar problems and being able to share ideas on how to solve them. It was great to talk to women directly rather than sending letters to them, and being able to have very positive discussions with them. I feel there is a great need for support and encouragement between women's groups and this newsletter is the first step in that direction. I am looking forward to similar meetings in the future.

Rosaleen Egan.



A few of us decided to start a women's group here, around April '84. We advertised in local papers and put up posters around the town. We were amazed to find 30 or more women turning up at our weekly meetings. We were not clear about what we were at, at the start, but we just had the feeling that it was important that we get together. The one thing on which we all agreed was the need for a women's centre in Tralee. At our meetings we discussed various issues affecting women's lives. Varying and sometimes conflicting opinions were expressed on these. There were different ideas within the group about what exactly we were and what we wanted to do. As we did not tease this

out at the start, our aims seemed pretty vague. We were perhaps a bit too wary of our image at the beginning also and did not want to scare people away. Women's Group! (Wah!) Feminists! (Help!).

We had a break for a few weeks during the summer and began meeting again sometime after the FESTIVAL (everything in Tralee happens before or after The FESTIVAL "Rose of Tralee"). A smaller but more together group began to emerge though we still have things to sort out. We have got to know to know each other better. We also see the group as having two functions - one to be there for us the women in the group, as a support and contact, the other, to do something for other women and to campaign on issues that affect us all.

The Women's Centre which is finally coming together will hopefully combine the two functions. We have just started renting premises, consisting of four rooms on the third floor over the Stella Restaurant right in the centre of Tralee. It is not ideal, being so high up, but it's great to be getting started. We have a lot of work to do on it yet. We will start as a meeting place open to women and small children a few half days a week and longer once we get off the ground. We hope women in Tralee will come in for a chat and a cup of tea and become involved in other activities if they wish. We are in the process of setting up an information/advice service as well. We are compiling information on groups, organisations, agencies etc. which could be of interest or assistance to women. Anyone who has anything which we could use please send it on - especially posters and leaflets!

One of the issues we discussed at our meetings was Contraception. Dissatisfaction was expressed by most women we spoke to about the situation in Kerry at present. We decided to do a survey to determine the exact state of affairs as regards availability. We sent a questionnaire to all the chemists in Tralee and all the doctors in Kerry but as yet the response has not been good. We held a public meeting in October at which women (a nurse and an administration) from the Limerick Family Planning Clinic spoke. Everyone who attended (except two very anti-contraception people) felt there was a need for a Family Planning Clinic in Tralee. At a follow up meeting it was felt that we could provide the service



ourselves and we have been investigating this possibility. We feel that what we would like to do is set up a women's health Centre which would incorporate Family Planning but also involve itself in other areas affecting women's lives - eg. depression, menopause, cervical smear and breast examination, nutrition, alternative medicine and so forth.

While we feel women are intitled to information on the advantages and disadvantages of all methods (as none is perfect and some carry risks) so that we can make a genuinely informed choice. We therefore intend to make this information available and to have a Women's Health Clinic operating in the Women's Centre in the near future.

Once the initial work is done then Tralee Women's Centre will open incorporating a meeting place, information/advice service and Women's Health Clinic! After that we hope to include a library, a second hand shop and a little coffee bar. We also hope to run courses on topics of interest to women. Such optimism? - but we'll do it yet!!

In common with all groups Finance is our biggest headache. We have raised money through flag day, disco and jumble sales and this will have to continue, even though it is a terrible drain on our energies. We are applying all over the place for donations but no doubt we are not the only ones!

Marguerite Egan  
Rosaleen Egan.

MONTESORI SCHOOL

SUNDAY'S WELL

Children 2-7 yrs

Mon.-Fri. 9.30am-12.30pm

Full Day Tuesday

ART CLASS TUES. & FRI. 3-5pm

APPLY: M. KENNY (021) 43192

## A LESBIAN IN CORK?!!

Cork is the kind of place where lesbians seem to come out of the wood-work. Once when two of the more defiant of our number, were out spraying the walls of the city with our logo suddenly there appeared to them a big strong dyke. Lo and behold, but she brandished before them the lesbian symbol tattooed on the back of her hand. Who was this unknown woman? Where did she come from? And more importantly where did she go? Was she the goddess of lesbians who appears where you least expect her? What a strong and beautiful woman they had seen before them. They could hardly believe they had seen her. With the resolve of only the most strident, they were determined they would meet with this woman yet again. Shortly after this episode these two indefatigable lesbians began forming what they thought to be the first lesbian group in Cork. (There is no beginning nor end.) With the proviso that it be open to all women the group got under way. Five, six, maybe seven women attended. They were a mixed assembly. There were those that had known they were lesbians for a long time and those that were attempting the first steps of discovering their sexuality. And others still who did not consider themselves lesbian but wished to discuss their sexuality in an open and uninhibiting atmosphere. How were we to begin?

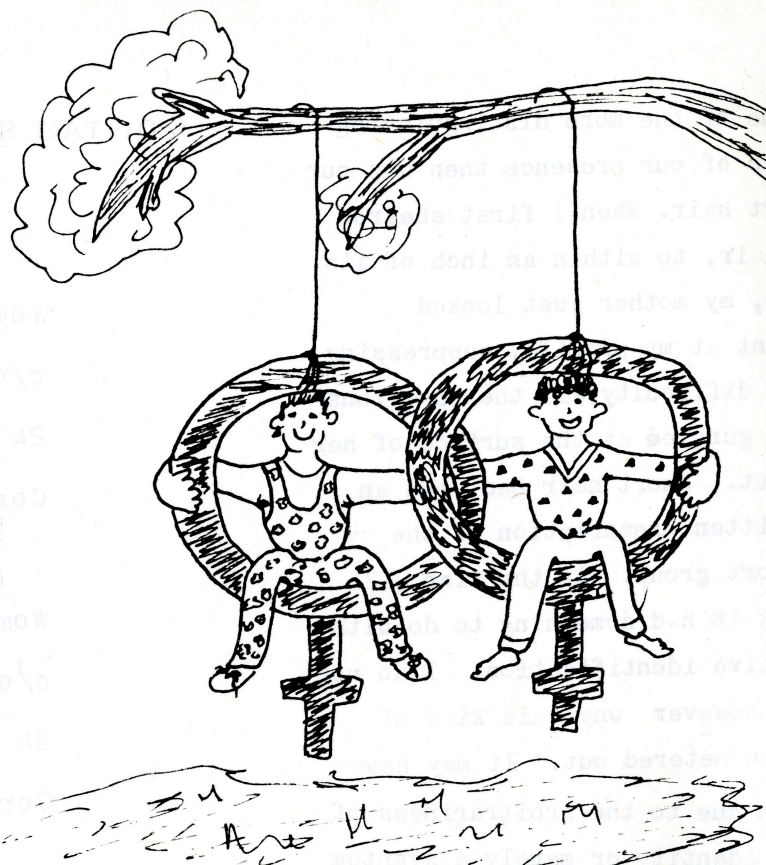


There were no lesbians in 'Cork-  
we the invisible phantoms of Irish  
society, materialised.

Sitting in a circle, we slowly  
began to talk. Despite our many  
differences there were some things  
that we had all experienced.

Extreme loneliness because we  
each felt that we were the only  
one who felt this way about women  
was one of the common experiences  
amongst us. Feelings that we now  
know are common to many women  
from all kinds of situations and  
backgrounds. What was released  
that night was not just the pent  
up frustration of years of silence  
but an excitement, that goes on  
creating new possibilities of  
release. At first we did not know  
how to say the things we wanted to  
express. The heterosexual norm  
is so pervasive that it almost  
crushed our own ability to express  
our existence. It is easy to  
succumb to the demands of those  
with whom we live. They are so  
intransigent in their belief that  
to be a lesbian is to be some-  
thing out of the norm it is  
difficult to realise that we  
are an intrinsic part of any  
number of people.

That night we began by telling  
each other of our gradual  
awareness of our attraction to  
women. There was much laughing  
at some of the ways we first  
felt the stirrings of our  
powerful sexuality. I  
remember one of us saying



how luxurious it felt to play the  
part of Elvis in a charade, to be  
kissed and hugged by the many adoring  
female fans. Then there was the  
woman who played Tarzan, the  
great hero of the more awe-  
struck little girl. With time  
conditioned embarrassment developed.  
Years of destructive self-  
incriminations followed. To talk  
with others in a positive and sup-  
portive environment meant that we  
could begin to emerge with a more  
positive self-identity. We didn't  
have to accept the role of  
"monster" that others had defined  
for us. We no longer asked ques-  
tions like- Was it innate?; or  
was it due to some horrific  
experience in our childhood?- we  
could just accept ourselves for  
what we are. A certain identification  
with each other began to form within  
the group. Some of which has its  
funny side too.



One of the more distinguishing marks of our presence then was our short hair. When I first sheared my hair, to within an inch of its life, my mother just looked askant at my profile, suppressing with difficulty, all the questions that gurgled at the surface of her throat. Short hair had been an unwritten prescription of the support group. At the time, I think it had something to do with positive identification. I do not know however why this kind of action petered out. It may have

been due to the arbitrariness of the identity or merely a symptom of our sense of our beleaguered state in society. These days, there are many more of us and the diversity of our appearance is an indication of the diversity of our needs. The lesbians in Cork support each other to a greater extent now because of a recognition of our differences.

The Thursday night group may number only ten, but hundreds have come in contact with each other through it. Today with a Lesbian Line in operation this number can only increase. The first meeting has had a multiplying affect. And as a means of dissolving the myth that there no lesbians in Ireland, or indeed in Cork or among your own coterie of friends, we can only say look again, we're everywhere.

Caitlin Ni Houlihain.

## CONTACTS

### CONTACTS

### CONTACTS

Womens Place Group

c/o Quay Co-op

24 Sullivans Quay

Cork

Womens Health Group

c/o Quay Co-op

24 sullivan's Quay

Cork

Lesbian-Line

P.O. Box 97

Brian Boru St.

Cork.

U.C.C. Womens Group

c/o Brigid Feeney

Students Union Office

College Road

Cork

Cork Rape Crisis Service

c/o P.O. Box 42

Brian Boru St.

Cork.

Cobh Womens Group

c/c Sheila Keaney

1 Kings Tce.

Cobh.



Tralee Womens Group  
Womens Centre  
over Stella's Restaurant  
High St.

Tralee  
Waterford Self-Help Group  
c/o Catherine Drez  
Ballyvellan  
Dunhill.

Skibbereen Womens Group  
Turggy  
55 St..Fachtnas Tce.  
Skibbereen  
Co. Cork

\*\*\* via Clonmel

## EVENTS

\*Mon 4th- Weds 13th March

Exhibition of Womens Art

Quay Co-op 24 Sullivans Quay

\*  
\*March 9th

3.00pm

Womens March

Connolly Hall

7 - 10pm

Meet for drinks !

Turners Bar Parliament St.

10 - late

Womens Social

Quay Co-op

\*March 10th

## Opening of Tralee Womens Centre

by Nell Mc Cafferty

COMING UP !

\*Book Party in Womens Place

\*Meeting of Womens groups with Council for the Status of Women.

(groups to be contacted in the near future)

# Womens FUN Weekend in Cork

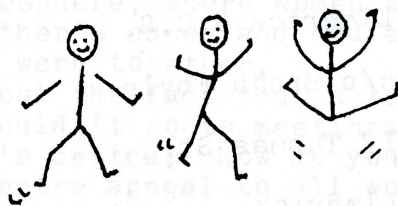
\*Reading and book signing by Nell Mc Cafferty in the Womens Library

Quay Co-op, Cork



# "a day in the Life of"

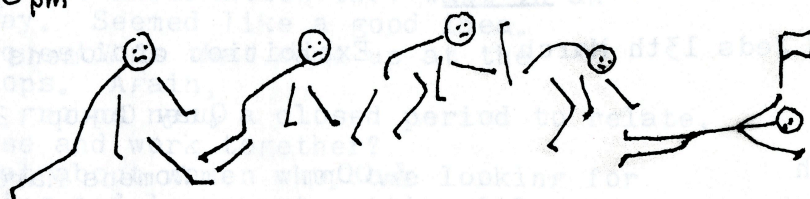
9.00am



2.00pm



5.00pm



9.00am



## "a year in the day of Co-ordinator"

" I was going to write an article, but as you can see  
I was too busy!!!!!!"

Mary Crilly..



Hope you enjoyed the newsletter. This edition was produced by Anto, Claire, Colette, Colleen, Deirdre, Fiona, Mary and Paula. We would like to thank: Adi, Nikki, Ide, the Quay Co-op Bookshop, the U.C.C. Womens group and all those who assisted us.

Watch out for Volume 2 to be produced by Tralee Womens Group - good luck sisters! Thats it for now..

PHEW !!!

