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REFRACTING VOICES: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES FROM REFRACTORY GIRL

Refractory Girl, Australia's oldest running feminist journal, started in 1972, a year when social change seemed possible. It was a year of optimism about possibilities for women's power. *Refracting Voices* is both a book and a double issue of the journal celebrating 20 years of publishing. In the 43 issues that span that time, *Refractory Girl* has offered readers a mixed bag of material which both led and reflected the debates of feminism through reviews, articles, news, poems and graphics.

The first section tells the stories of *Refractory Girl's* beginning, and provides a window on the debates and issues of the early seventies, when the Australian Women's Liberation Movement was defining its multiple roles, and how these developed. The overlapping but differing views also offer a history of Women's Studies, of feminist historiography and of the movement itself.

The second section looks at some of the journal's "sins of omission" and some of the areas of dissent and differences. While *Refractory Girl* has published an eclectic range of material, there have been relative "silences" around Aboriginal women, migrant and Third World women, sexuality and disability. This section has articles on two sensitive issues.

The third section covers a range of policy areas including child care, domestic violence, education and employment. The fourth section focuses on women's representation in media and the arts. The final section looks to the future of feminism via a letter to the next generation. Articles were written by Anne Summers, Eva Cox, Jill Matthews, Sue Sheridan, Pat O'Shane and many others.

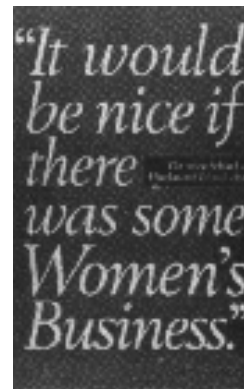
(New South Wales: Refractory Girl Feminist Journal, 1993. 221pp. ISBN 0-9588455-3-0)

"IT WOULD BE NICE IF THERE WAS SOME WOMEN'S BUSINESS": THE STORY BEHIND THE HINDMARSH ISLAND AFFAIR, by Chris Kenny

In 1994 opponents of the Hindmarsh Island bridge in South Australia were facing defeat. Then an anthropologist told Aborigines who had enlisted in the campaign: "It would be nice if there was some women's business." Soon after, the cult of Women's Business was created by a small group of people, including a few members of the local Ngarrindjeri tribe. All of Australia believed them—except for many other Ngarrindjeri women.

This is the story of those women

and their struggle to tell the truth in the face of hostility from the government, the churches, the media, and even some anthropologists. The extraordinary narrative reveals for the first time how Australian institutions that were relied on to uphold truth and tolerance sought to denigrate and dismiss a group of Aboriginal women whistle blowers. It is an important



story for anyone interested in the manipulation of Aboriginal culture for political ends, and for anyone who believes that reconciliation, in the words of Ngarrindjeri woman Beryl Kropinyeri, "starts with the truth."

(Australia: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1996. 252p. ISBN 1-875989-10-2)

THE WAY WE CIVILISE: ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS—THE UNTOLD STORY, by Rosalind Kidd

This book is an offshoot of the author's doctoral thesis entitled "Regulating Bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840-1988" completed in 1994. Based on an unprecedented investigation into

the files of Queensland's Aboriginal department, the book covers over a century of the Australian government's policies and handling of the so-called "Aboriginal problem" in that state.

Kidd's research has unearthed evidence of systematic abuse of Aboriginal rights, from the 19th century colonization of the area, well into the



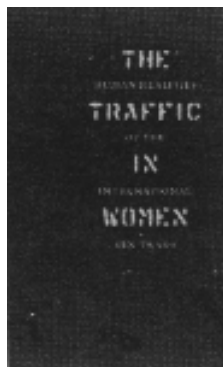
present century. Her examination of colonial files, memoirs and memoranda stands in stark contrast to the school-textbook version of Australian history in that it portrays Aboriginal people not as "savages" and "heathens," but as human beings with a knowable and known past.

The Way We Civilise translates into popular form Rosalind Kidd's 700-page (with 2,000 footnotes) thesis. She hopes to reach a wider audience to open up new perspectives for people's understanding of race relations.

(Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1997. 389pp. ISBN 0-7022-2961-X)

THE TRAFFIC IN WOMEN: HUMAN REALITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEX TRADE, by Siriporn Skrobaneck, Nattaya Boonpakdi and Chutima Janthakeero

A serious violation of human rights, the trafficking of women generates huge profits for those involved in it. This book explores the nature, extent and reasons for the global traffic in women. Based on research by the Foundation for Women in Thailand, it argues that trafficked women can only be understood via a number of different perspectives: as migrant workers, as prostitutes and as women



in a male-dominated society.

Poverty alone does not give a full explanation for migration and traffic in women. While this book does not seek to deny the reality of violent exploitation, it avoids simply depicting women as powerless victims of patriarchal society. Trafficking is seen not as an isolated action, but as a process whereby women, subject to force and deception, are coerced into a position in which they believe they have no choice. Containing case studies of trafficked women, it explores the nature and extent of the problem and shows how such traffic is an aspect of vast transnational migrations and thus a global issue.

The book also demonstrates how traffic in women, as a form of slavery, violates international legislation protecting human rights. However, it shows how women themselves can be empowered to end this traffic and ends with detailed recommendations for change.

(UK: Zed Books Ltd., 1997. 124pp. ISBN 1-85649-528-0)



PROSTITUTION: WOMEN, SOCIETY, STATE AND LAW, edited by Salma Ali, Mominul Islam, Sudhangshu Sekhar

Roy, Muhammed Shahriar Haque

This book is the result of a fact-finding mission conducted by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association. It looks at prostitution in Bangladesh, how brothels operate and how women get into this profession. The Association interviewed around 500 prostitutes, mostly minors aged 10-15. The book tells the harrowing stories of how they were tricked and forced into prostitution, and what the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association has been doing to help them regain their dignity and self-esteem. (Bangladesh: Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association). 69p.)



WHEN WE ARE ALL STRONG TOGETHER: UNDERSTANDING GENDER DISCRIMINATION, BUILDING GENDER JUSTICE, by Jennifer Butler and Melissa Gillis

When We Are All Strong Together is a study and action guide on women's issues, providing in-depth analysis in everyday language. Designed for use in workshop or classroom settings with small and large groups of youth and/or youth, the resource addresses a diversity of issues including: the Fourth World Conference on Women, women's human rights, violence against women, women and the media, women's health, girls and women and economics.

Each section of this resource includes background information that can be photocopied and distributed to participants before the study session, providing a grounding for the group's discussions. The guide also has a resource list of both materials and organisations that can provide

additional information and a study guide for advocacy strategies. Additional resource materials that can be handed out to participants for reference and reflection are also found in this volume.

With this resource, women and men, girls and boys can begin to understand gender discrimination and to build gender justice.

(Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 1997. 156pp.)



HEALTH MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN LOWER INCOME COUNTRIES: AN ANALYSIS OF SYSTEM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND UTILIZATION IN GHANA AND NEPAL, by Bruce B. Campbell

Poor management decisions in health care development can result in considerable waste of human, technical and financial resources. There is an assumption that improved health and management information systems (HMIS) lead to improved decision-making and therefore more effective use of scarce health resources.

This study explores the above assumption by evaluating the use of routinely generated health statistics by various agencies and individuals at various levels in policy, planning, resource allocation, monitoring of coverage and supervision of integrated health service delivery. Based on the findings, the strengths as well as the limitations of health information are defined.

Seven steps in program design, implementation and evaluation are reviewed in detailed case studies from Ghana and Nepal, providing a pragmatic perspective on the process of

HMIS reform.

This book gives the most comprehensive picture of HMIS reform in developing countries available in print. The lessons learned from the case studies are presented so that they can be applied in similar contexts. For those interested or involved in health sector reform, management development or information systems, it provides an invaluable source.

(Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1997. 219pp. ISBN 90-6832-113-7)



HIV PREVENTION AND AIDS CARE IN AFRICA: A DISTRICT-LEVEL APPROACH, edited by Japeth Ng'weshemi, Ties Boerma, John Bennet and Dick Schapink

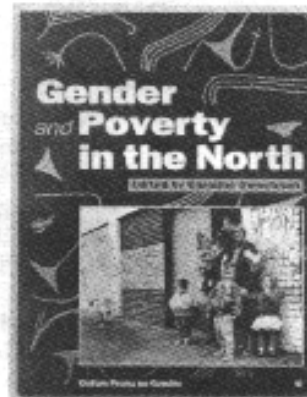
With the decentralisation of African national health systems, district systems have become the administrative basis for health interventions. This source book covers a range of activities to meet their two major challenges: reducing HIV transmission and coping with the consequences of AIDS. The many components of a comprehensive district AIDS program are presented: planning, monitoring and evaluation, the situation analysis (including a thorough gender-based analysis), epidemiological and social science methods and monitoring and evaluation at district level.

Potential interventions are covered in detail. Interventions aimed at changing sexual behavior—at community level, with youth, and in high-transmission areas such as truck stops and fishing villages—are seen as essential to reducing HIV transmission. Other topics are health education materials, training for

health workers and medical care-related transmission.

Prevention and control of other sexually transmitted diseases is an important intervention in itself. STDs are a leading public health problem, and STD control can provide a dramatic reduction in HIV transmission. This book presents a practical, well thought-out approach to dealing with these problems at district level. It is intended for a broad audience, including field staff, such as district health management team members and NGO project staff and academics, all of whom can choose among the chapters to find those of particular interest.

(Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1997. 400pp. ISBN 90-6832-108-0)



GENDER AND POVERTY IN THE NORTH, edited by Caroline Sweetman

International development policy-makers and practitioners are becoming increasingly involved in debates with governments and NGOs in the industrialised countries of the North, focusing on appropriate methods of understanding and tackling Northern poverty. The articles in this collection examine the globalization of poverty and unemployment as it relates to gender identity.

Interesting articles focus on the youth, the elderly and the homeless. Among these, Ros David and Yvonne Craig discuss the use of participatory learning methods developed in the South, in an urban context in the UK; Sara Chamberlain challenges the myth of the adequacies of state welfare provision in the United States; Tessa Swithinbank discusses street

newspapers as a strategy for addressing the problems faced by women and men living on the streets in the UK, Eastern Europe, and South Africa; and Ruth Pearson and Erika Watson examine a microfinance project for women in the east of England.

(UK and Ireland: Oxfam, 1997. 72pp. ISBN 0-85598-393-0)

CHALLENGES FACING THE ARAB HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, edited and introduced by Bahey El Din Hassan

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) presents the first book that studies and analyses the human rights movements in the Arab world in a collective volume. Written by some of the most outstanding human rights activists from six countries (Morocco, Tunis, Sudan, Egypt, Syria and Palestine), the articles demonstrate the similarities and differences among the different human rights organisations.

This book comes at a time when the Arab organisations are struggling to gain legal legitimacy and establish cultural legitimacy in the face of the dominant political culture which facilitates the sacrifice of democratic and human rights values. It also comes in the face of the dominant ultraorthodox Islamic traditional jurisprudence whose advocates portray human rights defenders as being against Islam.

(Egypt: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. 206pp.)

GENDER, POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DEFORESTATION: A MALAYSIAN CASE STUDY, by Noleen Heyzer

This monograph documents the impact of the top-down developmental planning on women and communities.

Macrolevel forestry policies have had differing microlevel impacts on various communities in Sarawak. Common to all is a change in livelihood as a result of a loss of entitlements to land, forests and water resources. The social and economic consequences of this form of development have been the creation of



new patterns of wealth and poverty. Environmental degradation has serious consequences for the livelihood of indigenous people who rely on natural resources for food and shelter.

In this context of environmental degradation and loss of community control over resources, women are particularly affected. Women have experienced greater difficulty in performing reproductive tasks when: resources such as fuel, food or water supply are unavailable or contaminated, women have to work longer hours and face a decline in health as a result. This study of gender, population and environment in Sarawak outlines the inter-relationship between environment, population and development and women's reproductive and productive choices.

(Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Centre and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1996. 97pp. ISBN 967-9928-55-1)

GENDER AND WOMEN'S HEALTH: INFORMATION PACKAGE SERIES 2, BY ASIAN PACIFIC RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN (ARROW)

In response to the World Conferences on Women held in Cairo and Beijing and requests from policy-makers, health service providers and women's health advocates, the Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) has put together this information package on Gender and Women's Health. It aims to provide practical and conceptual materials clarifying what gender perspective and gender analysis are in relation to women's health.

The package contains three parts contained in separate booklets. Part 1, "Linking Gender and Women's Health Conceptually," consists of key articles that provide broad frameworks for a gender analysis of women's health. In a gender framework, all the dimensions of women's lives—economic/productive, social/reproductive, personal and political—are the basis within which specific health issues are analysed. The articles deal with health issues that go beyond



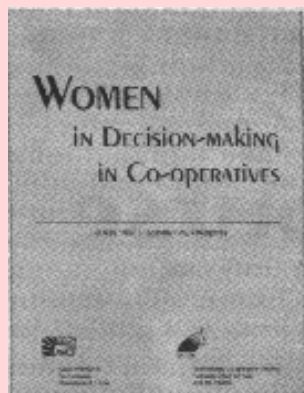
maternal morbidity/mortality, to include nutrition, childbearing and contraception, abortion, reproductive health, STDs including HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, occupational health, communicable and noncommunicable diseases, mental health, violence against women and substance abuse.

Part 2, "Ideas for Action," discusses and provides ideas on priority areas and issues in women's health that need attention; followed by some useful suggestions on how to incorporate a gender perspective into related programs within the context of developing countries, including Asia and the Pacific.

The last booklet, "Annotated Bibliography," consists of 37 abstracts of selected articles written by feminists, social scientists, health professionals and progressive mainstream organisations in the area of gender and women's health.

The Information Package will be useful for groups and individuals including policy-makers, program managers, health service providers, trainers, researchers and women health advocates working in the area of health, population and family planning, who wish to deepen their

the serious and important issue of women's underrepresentation in the leadership positions and decision-making processes in co-operatives. The proceedings of the conference are contained in this 182-page report.



Held in Tagaytay City, Philippines from 7 to 9 May 1997, the conference was attended by 85 participants from 11 countries. They represented 69 national and primary level co-operatives, five NGOs, a social development training institute, and CIDA-Philippines.

Four major topics were tackled: 1) State of Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making in Society and in Co-operatives: Global, Regional and Local Perspectives, 2) A Comparative Analysis of Women's and Men's Styles of Leading, 3) Why Women are Not in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives: Women's and Men's Perspectives, and 4) Practical Actions on How to Increase the Number and Participation of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives. The Report contains all the papers that were presented, as well as the open forum after each presentation, the workshop proceedings and the syntheses.

The conference also drafted "A Declaration and Platform of Action for the Enhancement of Women's Participation in Leadership

and Decision-Making in Co-operatives," published as a separate document from the proceedings. (Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1997. 182pp. ISBN 971-91623-2-5)



A DECLARATION AND PLATFORM OF ACTION FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING IN CO-OPERATIVES, by Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

These are two important products of the conference referred to above. The Declaration and the Platform propose concrete steps toward increasing the number and level of participation of women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives. They can serve as a guide for co-operative organisations at all levels, governments, NGOs, women's organisations and grassroots organisations.

(Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1997. 80pp.)

understanding of the links between gender and women's health as a framework for action.

(Kuala Lumpur: Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, 1997. ISSN 1394-4444)

THE FABULOUS FIFTIES WHEN LIFE REALLY BEGINS: INTERVIEWS WITH AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN THEIR FIFTIES by Jan Bowen

For many women, the fifties is a landmark decade—a time when the demands of others give way to a search for personal happiness and fulfillment. It can be a time for reassessment and analysis—of looking forward and back—when inner growth and outward achievement are possible to an extent undreamed of in earlier years. At fifty, there's time to ask, "Who am I?" "What do I want?"

In *The Fabulous Fifties* nine Australian women from a variety of backgrounds reflect on the myths and realities of turning fifty. Along with their contemporaries, these women have seen more change in their lifetime than any previous generation. They grew up in an era when the traditional role of wife and mother was hardly questioned. As young adults, they were at the cutting edge of the feminist revolution. Now they are redefining the parameters of age.

The women come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, but whatever their story and personal circumstances, some things are common to all them. There was no one who did not express a sense of liberation, of glowing self-confidence, of an awareness, often only recently realized, that they could achieve more than they had ever imagined. They have a sense of energy and vitality and competency greater than at any previous stage in their lives.

These are the inspiring stories of Quentin Bryce, Anne Ferguson, Sara Henderson, Nene King, Helen Leonard, Eve Mahlab, Wendy McCarthy, Jeannette McHugh and Kendra Sundquist. (Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1995.

143 pp. ISBN 0-207-18653-7)



Sandra Torrijos