

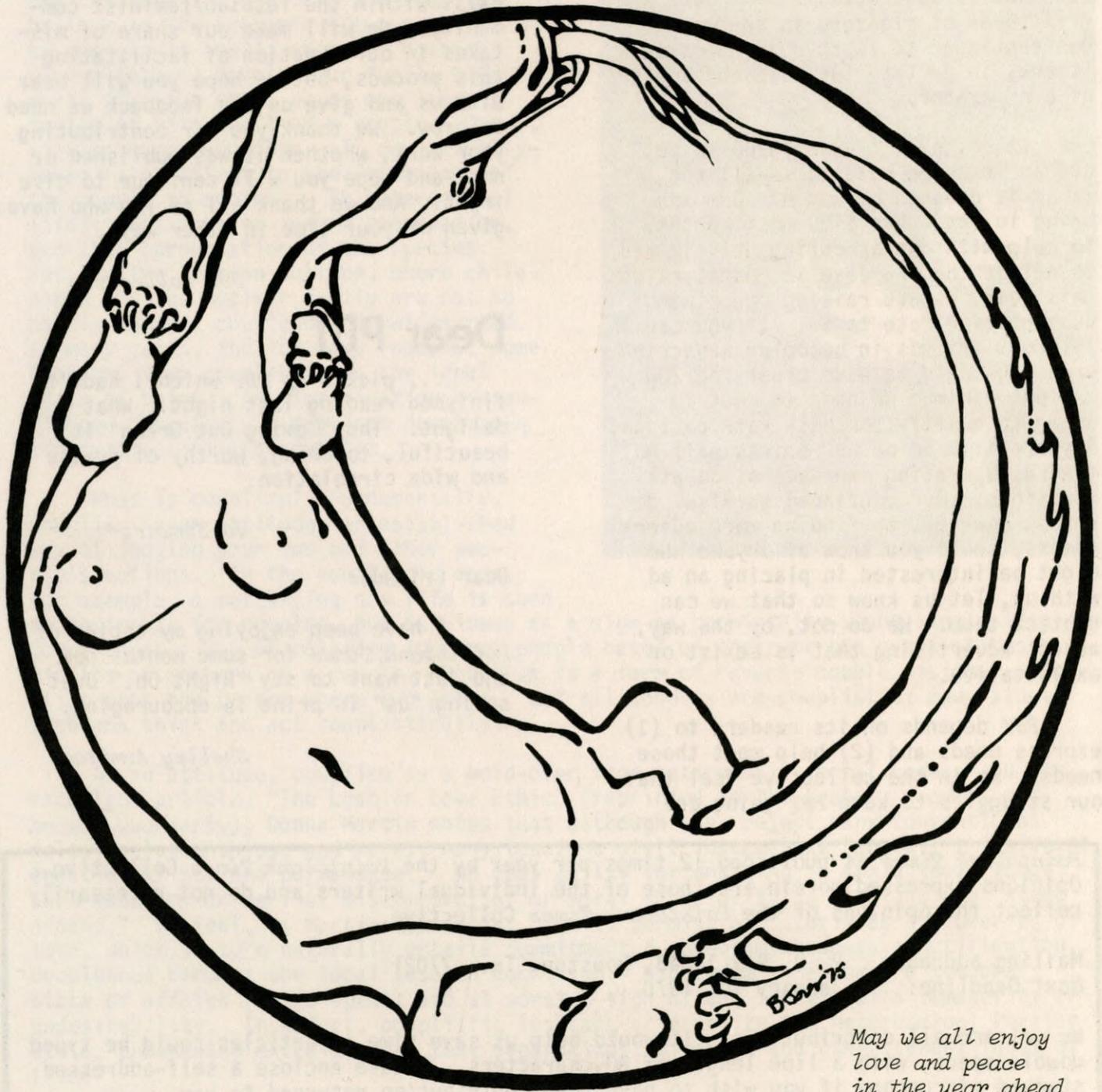


# pointblank times

a lesbian/feminist publication houston, texas

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50¢



*May we all enjoy  
love and peace  
in the year ahead  
as we continue  
to give birth  
to ourselves.*

*PBT Collective*

## Editorial

While we deeply appreciate the support our advertisers have shown for *PBT*, we have not yet found enough businesses willing to advertise with us to pay the cost of printing every month. We have considered going to a cheaper but less attractive format but have found that alternative unacceptable. We take a great deal of pleasure in the way *PBT* has continued to improve in appearance (thanks in part to the help and advice of our printer).

It costs just under \$200 to put out an issue in materials--all the labor is donated by women. Our ads bring in less than \$100 most months. To help with our operating deficit and to offset the increase in postal rates this year, we are raising our minimum subscription rate to \$5. If you can interest friends in becoming subscribers, you could help us break the 200 mailout minimum we need to meet in order to qualify for bulk rate postage. Any profit made on *PBT*-shirts will go towards operating expenses as do all donations. Our continued survival depends, however, on finding more advertisers, so if you know of anyone who might be interested in placing an ad with us, let us know so that we can contact them. We do not, by the way, accept advertising that is sexist or exploitative.

*PBT* depends on its readers to (1) express needs and (2) help meet those needs. We in the collective feel that our struggles to keep *PBT* going are

worthwhile if the lesbian/feminist community makes use of the *PBT* as a vehicle to explore, share and communicate. To survive we need more than financial support: we need for you to be involved in and identify with *PBT* and make it your publication. With more contributions from our readers we could do more justice to the range of ideas and feelings that exist within the lesbian/feminist community. We will make our share of mistakes in our function of facilitating this process, but we hope you will bear with us and give us the feedback we need to grow. We thank you for contributing your work, whether it was published or not, and hope you will continue to give input. And we thank all of you who have given of your time in other ways.

*PBT Collective*

## Dear PBT

... picked up *PBT* which I hadn't finished reading last night. What a delight! The "Coming Out Green" is beautiful, touching, worthy of praise and wide circulation.

*Jo Stewart*

Dear Friends:

I have been enjoying my copies of *Pointblank Times* for some months now and just want to say "Right On." Just seeing "us" in print is encouraging.

*Shelley Armitage*

*Pointblank Times* is published 12 times per year by the *Pointblank Times* Collective. Opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Pointblank Times* Collective.

Mailing address: P. O. Box 14643, Houston, Tx. 77021.  
Next Deadline: January 10, 1976

We welcome all contributions. It would help us save time if articles could be typed double space, with a line length of 80 characters. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped microscope if you wish to have your contribution returned to you.

Staff: Alison McKinney/Amanda/Barbara Cigainero/Ellen/Jo/Phyllis/Pokey Anderson/  
Susan/Vicki Glasgow

# The Tie That Binds: Couplism and the Single Lesbian

Ever since the time of Adam and Eve, the world has been a place primarily for couples only. Through its institutions and customs, society conditions us to believe in the economic ("two can live as cheaply as one"), social ("double your pleasure, double your fun"), and moral ("ye two shall be as one") superiority of being part of a couple. Dates, singles bars, weddings--all our sexually-based rites attest to the importance of the couple in society. In heterosexual lifestyles, couples insure procreation, and thus perpetuation of the species. Yet, in the lesbian culture, where childbirth and the nuclear family are not so highly valued, couplehood is widespread. In many cases, and for many reasons, some lesbians view couplehood as the ideal state of being. As glorification of couplehood increases, a mystique develops--the mystique called couplism.

What is couplism? Fundamentally, couplism is an attitude, an established way of judging your own and other people's actions. In the couplistic code, for example, a satisfying sex life is seen as desirable for couples, but is viewed as a sign of promiscuity among single lesbians. Couplism is a way of relating to other people based on their or one's own status as singles or members or a couple. Couplism is a form of reverse double vision: a couplist sees one person where two exist. Not all couples are couplistic; many single lesbians think and act couplistically.

As an attitude, couplism is a hold-over from heterosexist moral codes. In her excellent article, "The Lesbian Love Ethic" (reprinted in *The Lesbian Reader*, c/o *Amazon Quarterly*), Donna Martin notes that although they reject many conventional roles, relationships, and mores, many lesbians still internalize "society's insistent equation of sex and permanence." We feel guilty for engaging in sex without long-term monogamy or we feel disapproval of or moral superiority to lesbians who "sleep around." We feel, as Martin says, that "sex is permissible...only as a flowering of love, which in turn naturally entails commitment." Monogamy assumes sanctification, couplehood becomes the ideal lesbian condition. Singledom is at best a temporary state of affairs (so to speak) and at worst a sign of the individual's immaturity or undesirability. In effect, couplistic lesbians internalize the heterosexual Puritan ethic, condemning extra-marital sex, separations, divorce, and other sexual facts of life.

The folly of couplistic thinking becomes even more apparent in light of actual living situations. Couplism espouses stability; the real world brings change; couplism endorses total monogamy, real people seldom achieve it; couplism promises eter-



nal togetherness, the real world imposes separations. By believing in the couplistic ideal rather than acknowledging the practical, lesbians devise a strange, binding moral code for themselves and others. Once "committed to a morality of their own devising and thus even more dedicated to prove its rightness," two women may endure boredom, hostility, and pain rather than, by breaking up, violate the rules of couplism.

As an influence on interactions with others, couplism can be a frustrating and destructive phenomenon. If women in a couple are couplistic, they let their friends know it by a variety of subtle means. Under couplistic rules, one woman seldom appears in public without her partner/spouse/lover. If she does, she becomes fair game for cries of "Where's \_\_\_\_\_ (your lover)?" The questioners play along with couplists, asking pointed questions, making comments, and otherwise defining what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior for couples. Another unwritten law of couplism is that previous emotional or sexual relationships should be ignored, or at least not referred to in conversation. If you and another woman were lovers for several years, it's considered indelicate of you (or anyone else) to allude to your relationship if your ex-lover is now involved with someone else. Accidentally pairing the wrong two names in a couple is a blunder we've all made in conversation; one reason it's so embarrassing is that couplism deplores the existence of ex-lovers. Friends of couplists quickly learn that they should be "friends of the family", maintaining a careful, impartial relationship with both members of the couple. The unfortunate result is that few people ever get to know the individuals in the couple; they become acquainted with the couple as a unit, but seldom get close enough to discover an individual's unique characteristics. Think of a couple you know: can you list three interests each of them has that the other doesn't share? If they--and/or you--are couplists, you probably can't do that. You as a friend perceive the barriers to closeness, and they may feel that they are categorized, labelled, and related to on a very restricted level.

To attack couplism is to take an unpopular stance, to criticize behavior that is so prevalent that almost everyone is guilty of it. Since constructive criticism should suggest alternatives, I would like to propose some C-R for couplists. First, watch your language. True couplists seldom say "I", but always say "we", and they assume that "you" means the "two of you". Do you use the names of both women in a couple interchangeably, even when you mean to refer to an individual? Do you say "Mary-and-Sara" when you mean "Mary"? It may be convenient, but it's also oppressive. Second, watch yourself in action. Do you automatically inquire after a missing member of a couple before greeting the one who appears? Do you hesitate to call or visit a friend because of the reaction you assume her lover will have to your action? Your insecurity may have its origins in the couplistic prohibition against separate friends.

Unfortunately for the anti-couplists, couplism is an omnipresent, deeply-rooted pattern of thought and action. Despite the fact that few relationships are everlasting and that couples may disintegrate, the myth of fidelity forever still flourishes, bringing with it disillusionment and frustration. Couplism creates so many unrealistic standards, so many barriers to deep friendship, and so many problems of adjustment when couples break up, that it's amazing that so many otherwise enlightened lesbians accept it. Part of the appeal of couplism is that it is related to the concepts of monogamy and couplehood, two cherished notions with which we are unwilling to part. Thus, an important step for us to take in fighting couplism is realizing that couplehood and couplism are not synonymous. To eradicate couplism from our speech and actions can only improve a healthy couple relationship, liberate the single lesbian, and promote greater harmony among women, regardless of lifestyle.

*Amanda*

## Austin News

Members of Austin's gay community picketed in front of the *American Statesman* building in an effort to change their ad policy. The four hour demonstration resulted in stalemate when the classified ad manager and the publisher still refused to change their ad policy. The paper will not print any ads with the words "gay", "homosexual" or "lesbian" in them.

The demonstration was covered in Austin by the *Daily Texan*. The lengthy article reported several chants used by the pickets as well as comments by on-lookers and employees of the *American Statesman*. "Hetero is no bettero" and "2, 4, 6, 8. We don't overpopulate," the pickets chanted. "If it wasn't for normal people, the queers wouldn't be here," a classified ad worker was reported to have said. The publisher of the paper was quoted as saying, "What is this world coming to when queers can be out in the open like that?"

A. K. Campbell, a member of the Austin Lesbian Association, said, "We are not going to give up. If this doesn't work, then we'll have to use other measures."

## Pennsylvania News

The Pittsburgh chapters of the New American Movement and the National Organization for Women organized a demonstration on November 12 which was endorsed by 17 other local organizations. One hundred and twenty-five demonstrators protested Pennsylvania Senate Bill 196 which would prohibit all people who engage in "deviate sexual intercourse" from working with juveniles, the mentally ill or with prisoners. Deviate sexual intercourse is defined as oral or anal sex between unmarried people.

Governor Shapp has vetoed the bill, but there is a good chance that the state legislature will override his veto unless opponents of the bill successfully bring pressure to bear on their representatives.

## NYC News

An organization in New York City has launched an effort to deal with the everyday cat-calls and insults that women must deal with any time they venture out in public. Campaign Against Street Harassment is distributing forms for women to send to the employers of men who engage in this adolescent behavior. The form advises the employer of a boycott organized against the goods and services of business enterprises whose employees annoy women passersby. The notice states that, "This behavior is not complimentary to me or to any other woman; it is, in fact, contemptuous and insulting. I hope that you feel as seriously as I do about this, and that I will hear from you with some assurance that your employee, at least, will respect my privacy on the street."

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# How to Get the Most Out of Your Balls

"Show me a woman who knows how to manipulate balls, and I'll show you a woman who can't *be* manipulated by them," a well-known feminist said recently. Her sentiments would certainly seem to be supported in looking around us. Some of the most independent women I know are the same women who are frequently found leaning against a pool table, hunched over a pinball machine, waiting for a pop fly at third base, dribbling down a basketball court, or delivering a backhand lob to their opponent's forecourt. With this correlation is introduced the first in a series of articles on "How to Get the Most Out of Your Balls," in the hope that the ball-handling skill of our readers will be enhanced.

## Part 1:

### PINBALL



THE GUNCHER

Pinball is not exactly an ancient art, since it only attained its heyday during the Great American Depression of about 45 years ago. Nor was pinball ever acclaimed "The Sport of Kings." If anything, it would be more aptly termed "The Sport of Paupers," because it was the out-of-work downtrodden masses of the 1930's who made pinball into a lasting craze. The reason is very simple. Where else could a person with all day on his/her hands get so much amusement, win five million anything (in this case, points), and enjoy a feeling of control over destiny, all for only a penny?

The pinball machines of the 1970's are no different. True, they cost a quarter, or 12½¢ a game, instead of a penny; you only get five balls instead of seven; and very few machines accumulate point totals in the millions (tens and hundreds of thousands are about as high as you can get). But the flashing lights, whirling colors and loud bells are still there, as is the same basic challenge--pitting *your* flesh and bone against *their* steel and glass.

Pinballers fall into essentially two categories: the novice, or straight player, and the guncher, or addicted player. The novice is easily recognizable because she never touches any parts of the machine other than the coin slot, the plunger, and the flippers (which are often seen to work in unison, rather than as needed). The novice also uses a characteristic posture--relaxed. This is because the novice is still in the pre-addiction phase, and would just as soon have another beer as win another free game.

The guncher, or addicted player, on the other hand, assumes a quite different posture when positioned behind a plunger. Her muscles tense, her teeth clench, and little beads of sweat pop out on her forehead. But it's only when she begins to gunch that you can be certain she's a veteran pinballer, and not just a novice with malaria. "Gunch" is the term applied to the slight rocking or pushing of the pinball machine, with the purpose of deflecting the course of the ball. Some manufacturers of pinball machines purposely attach the machine's legs to the cabinet rather loosely, so as to permit pinballers to gunch with a slightly reduced risk of tilting. "TILT" is the word that flashes in morbid colors on the score panel whenever an over-enthusiastic guncher jars the machine to the extent that the motion triggers a sensing device inside. The word "TILT" is unfortunately accompanied by the machine's going completely dead until the ball in play at the time of tilting clears, and the next ball appears before the plunger.

There are three basic styles of gunching (all can be successful, if attempted with grace):

#### 1. The Push

This involves coaxing the ball by nudging the front of the machine, either with a knee, a hip, or the full breadth of one's abdomen, depending on one's height. For pinballers under four feet tall, we recommend either the use of a chest protector, a stool, or the second form of gunching.

#### 2. The Bang

A bang consists of a slap delivered to either side of the pinball machine. A slap on the right-hand side will divert the ball to the right; a slap on the left-hand side will cause the ball to veer to the left. Speed and precision are essential in banging, because this technique requires the removal of one hand from its respective flipper. Until this hand is back in position, you are handicapped with only one operating flipper.

#### 3. The Body Weave

This is not a true gunch, since it does not involve bodily contact with the machine. The body weave is based on a feeling of identity between the pinball player and the pinball itself. The Body Weaver knows the meaning of obstacles in life, and what it feels like to be bumped aside, just when you think you've made it. She assumes that if she can empathize with the ball in this way, then the ball should be able to empathize with her. As a result, when she wants the ball to swerve to the left, she herself swerves to the left; when she wants it to drop in a particular hole, she herself drops into a semi-crouching position; and so on. The effectiveness of the Body Weave as a gunching technique is at present somewhat controversial.

But whether you push, body weave, bang or even gunch at all, there's no doubt you'll get your money's worth out of pinball. More than just a cheap source of relaxation, pinball could almost be called therapeutic. On those days when nothing goes right, when you're really feeling low, what better way to release your frustration than by taking on the challenge of "that goddamn machine." If you lose, well, at least your efforts will have been loudly heralded by lights and bells. And if you should win a free game, and save a quarter, it just goes to show you've got some control over your life after all.

*Vicki*

We make tents of the bed  
and  
like children  
take turns being  
center pole.

*Shelley Armitage*

## Custody Case: Lesbian vs Kidnapper

Legal action can finally be taken in the case of Ginny Martell of Austin. Ginny's older daughter, Tanya, was forcibly abducted by her ex-husband, Jack, over a year ago. Due to the uncooperative attitude of members of the legal system, it has taken this long to ascertain that Jack does not have, as he claims to have, custody of the child in the state to which he took her. He can be charged with kidnapping, a federal felony.

The Travis County Attorney's Office is considering filing such charges. In addition, a feminist lawyer in the city where Jack resides has filed a writ of habeas corpus on Ginny's behalf; when this comes to court, the ex-husband will have to return Tanya to her legal guardian or be found in contempt of court. Whichever strategy is the first to produce results, Jack has threatened to retaliate by reopening the child custody case that Ginny won at the time of their divorce. The courts of one state or another will decide which is the greater crime: kidnapping or being a parent with an unconventional lifestyle.

Once custody has been awarded, evidence of gross neglect or child

abuse is usually required to convince the court to revoke it. The only thing that can be used against Ginny is her lesbianism, and she intends to fight the case as a lesbian feminist who is a fit parent. Her winning would establish a precedent in favor of all gay, single and other unconventional parents and their children.

Individuals or organizations interested in receiving more information about the case or in making financial contributions to help cover legal and possible travel expenses can contact:

The Ginny Martell Custody Fund  
c/o Bobby J. Nelson  
501 West 12  
Austin, Texas 78701

(Ms. Nelson is Ginny's attorney.)

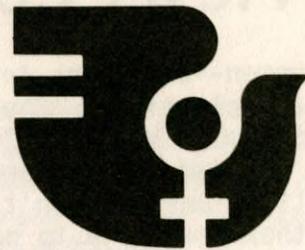
Note: Ginny is looking for contacts (lesbians) in Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida. Write the above address if you can give her any addresses or phone numbers--she'll need the support during her case there.

*Nina Wouk*

# Lesbian Views

In celebration of International Women's Year (IWY), a conference on Women in Public Life was co-sponsored by the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the LBJ Library, November 9-11, 1975 in Austin, Texas. Its purpose was a sweeping look at the current status of women and in the words of Liz Carpenter, conference coordinator, "to give women in Texas the 'courage' to be and show more." Approximately 1300 women attended the conference which was begun on Sunday night with a theater party moderated by Gloria Steinem. Steinem's participation was picketed by an Austin Group concerned with the politics of the conference. In their words, "We protest this conference because it does not represent the women's movement and because we disagree with how these women use power and with the goals they want that power to achieve." The intent of the conference as they saw it was "to advocate the perpetuation of the very power structure which continues to oppress women."

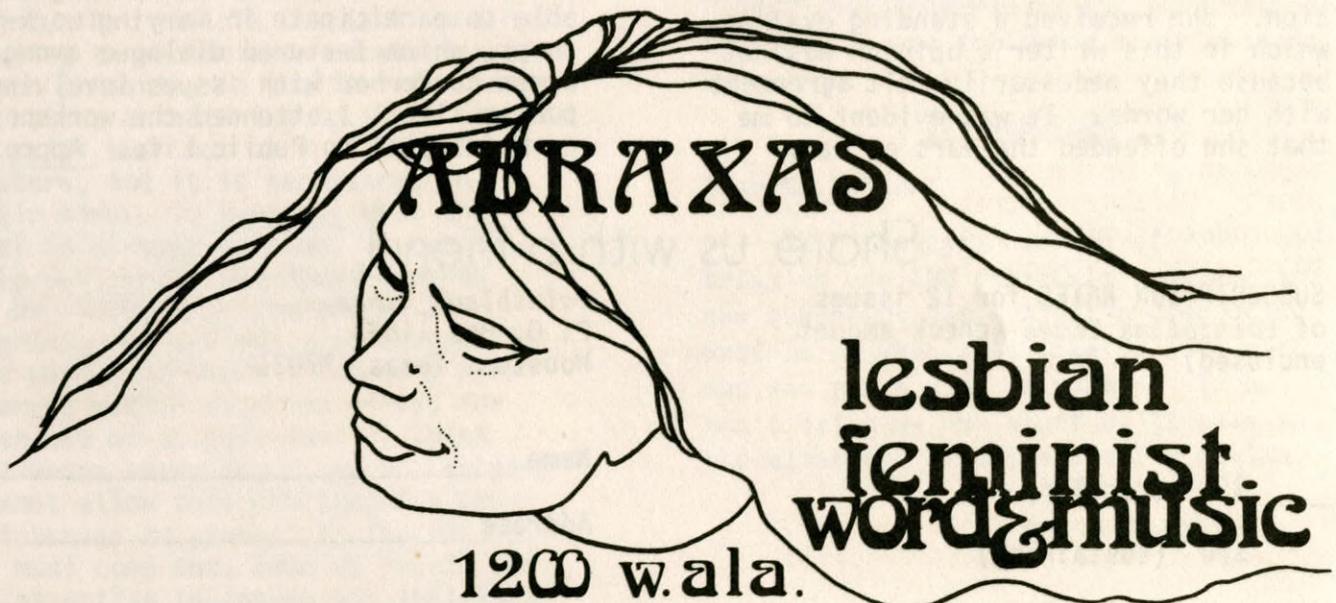
The opening session on Monday was begun by Ms. Carpenter addressing the group with "So here we are." She then introduced Dr. Lorene Rodgers, President, University of Texas. Again the protest group appeared, entering to the tune they sang, "We ain't satisfied yet."



After announcing their alternative workshop to the conference participants, they left peacefully singing, "...a little bit longer.. though I know it's been too long, for 27 years we have been fighting, for 27 years we have been strong."

Following Dr. Rodgers was Elizabeth Reid, retired assistant to the Prime Minister of Australia, who probably was the most dynamic and realistic speaker at the Mexico City IWY Conference this past summer. Again she spoke words characteristic of a staunch feminist. She spoke strongly to us about "backlash"--"So after Mexico City--What?" Her answer: "If you know your history, nothing." She spoke of the "need for women to participate in decision-making processes at all levels--where decisions are being made which are affecting our lives, affecting the

*continued on page 10*



## Views Cont.

lives of women--decisions in which we are not participating." She went on to point out more bluntly, "that I don't see the demand for more women in those institutions--we don't want just women in there, we have to have feminists in there. If we're talking about changing a world, if we're talking about changing American society, then we're talking about having devoted feminists in there." She talked with pride of her experiences and her struggles in the political institution. She talked of "fucking and how you'll be expected to do it. And if you don't, the backlash will be quite dramatic--because if you don't fuck the press, you won't get good press, and if you don't fuck your cabinet ministers and their advisors, they won't listen to you, and I'm sorry about the language, but I have lived through it. I didn't." She closed telling us "we are going through a period of total backlash. The changes we are fighting for are not just changes in the world out there." But as she said several times in her address, "They are changes within each one of us, for each one of us puts down at least one woman every day."

Certainly Ms. Reid captured the power of feminism and how it should be existing if we are to eliminate oppression. She received a standing ovation which in this writer's opinion was not because they necessarily felt agreement with her words. It was evident to me that she offended the ears of many

women presently in public life--indeed the non-feminists. Perhaps this is the very reason our oppression as women and as lesbians still exists.

An alternative workshop on Socialism and Feminism was held that first day in which a limited number of conference participants were involved. There was also a workshop on Lesbianism and Feminism. Many heated ideas were heard when the basic dialogue was exchanged. This event, planned by conference dissenters, probably was one of the few places that open, honest, gut-feelings were aired. Real hurting and painful expressions were shown; tears of those feelings were witnessed; the range of emotion was present.

Also that afternoon Barbara Jordan, Congresswoman from Texas, spoke. She highlighted the American Woman and the need for legislative action to co-exist with her changes.

Following the afternoon panel, evening activity featured the protestors' pre-Anti-Gala Event, "The Real Rocky Horror Show," a protest of Rockefeller's appearance at the conference, by a theater troupe in Austin. The conference participants attended the "Texas Gala" and the later arrival of Nelson Rockefeller and his address that evening.

The next day those attending were able to participate in varying workshops, which featured dialogue among women concerned with issues involving public life. I attended the workshop on Lifestyles in Public Life. Approx-

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imately fifty persons attended and it was, to my knowledge, the only forum which dealt openly with the oppression of Lesbians. We rapped for nearly two hours on varying lifestyles of women. The bulk of it dealt with the feelings and experiences of both visible and nonvisible Lesbians and how we deal daily in the arena of society amid vast amounts of public disdain.

In conclusion, I want to make mention of my concern as a participant in the Public Life Conference. Prior to the conference, I spoke with Liz Carpenter, conference coordinator, and Sarah Weddington, member of the Texas House of Representatives, about the exclusion of an open Lesbian from the conference. My point was that perhaps the conference effort should have included Rep. Elaine Noble of Massachusetts, who announced, campaigned and now serves as an open Lesbian. Was she in fact considered? The answer given was, "No, not very," meaning, I suppose, no, not a very serious consideration. Since, I have checked with Rep. Noble and have verified that she was never invited and indeed knew nothing of the conference until a friend called her two weeks prior to the conference (the friend having assumed Rep. Noble was attending) to ask her if they could make traveling arrangements together to attend the Austin conference. I imagine one could conclude many things from these statements. The fact remains, that visible Lesbians were not invited to participate because most women presently in public life find us rather threatening to their status. We still must not be in "vogue," sisters, and it is necessary, in their minds, to keep out what they feel is already outside. I can't help but recall the dynamic words of Ms. Reid, "The changes we are fighting for are not just changes in the world out there. But they are changes within each one of us, for each one of us puts down at least one woman every day." We as Lesbians cannot allow this non-feminist consciousness to prevail in the future. We must come out, come up front, and be assertive to insure our inclusion as women.

*Kathy Deitsch*



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PBT Collective

# WHIRLYWORDS

Find all the words in the list below in the diagram. Words may read from left to right, backward, up or down, or on the diagonal. When you locate a word in the diagram, circle it and check it off the word list. Letters may be used more than once.

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t n i o p w e i v l u s m a k o  
i m o n t h l y j c o i c d y k  
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