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Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

The Dickinson College

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Women's Resource Center Newsletter

Carlisle, Pa.

Vol. 2 No. 3

Liberation: Woman's Struggle? by Chuck Barone

There is a generally held view by men that women's liberation is a women's struggle, that it is something that women have to get together in order to realize their full potential as human beings. (For many men this means having the chance to become just like us). However, what women are trying to liberate themselves from is their common oppressor, men. This cannot happen without fundamental changes in the way we as men think about and treat women. We as men have to give up our oppressor patterns of thought and behavior which are deeply imbedded in each of us. Overcoming these sexist patterns is not just simply a matter of deciding not to be sexists by eliminating some of our more overt sexist patterns. To give up the oppressor patterns completely requires making fundamental changes in ourselves, changes in our very being as men.

The first step in this process for men is that we recognize that we did not have a choice about becoming the oppressors of women. We were told as children that this is the way we are and who was to say it was any different when this was indeed confirmed by what we saw in the adult world. Even if we as children thought there was something wrong with this we got no support in struggling against this form of oppression. We would have soon been overcome with feelings of powerlessness and submitted. We as men have been socialized into the role as oppressors of women in the same way that women have been socialized into the role of the oppressed. What it means to be a "man" in our society is as artificial as the role that females have been forced to play in our society. Both are rigid patterns and to say that men have to make no changes is to continue to buy into the sexist oppressor pattern.

We as men need to get together and support each other in overcoming these patterns. We need to think about what it means to be a "man" and how being a "man" oppresses women. We need to think about our cultural heritage as males and learn to take pride in being males. We need to think about and overcome the barriers between us as men that prevent us from reaching out to each other. Many women just have no energy for themselves after caring for and nurturing men and children. Men need to learn to nurture and care for themselves, children, and women, for a change. Women's liberation means men's liberation too. Both men and women are victims and denied the achievement of being truly human in the fullest sense. We need to discover our common humanity.

NOTABLE WOMEN IN AMERICAN HISTORY

MARGARET HIGGINS SANGER by Elizabeth Pincus

Margaret Higgins Sanger, the woman who coined the phrase "birth control", became a world-renowned figure during her lifetime because of her extremely successful effort in the American crusade for scientific contraception, family planning, and population control. Many of the issues we take for granted today in our daily conversations were first exposed by Mrs. Sanger, in an age when it was hardly proper for women to appear alone in public. Margaret Sanger's perseverance allowed her to succeed, making her an outstanding woman in American history.

Born in Corning, N.Y. in 1884, Margaret Higgins' first exposure to overpopulation was in her own family. Her mother, a devout Roman Catholic, had eleven children before dying of tuberculosis and this fact, definitely influenced Margaret's later thoughts concerning her own and society's medical ignorance.

After graduating from the local high school and Claverack College in Hudson, N.Y., Margaret attended nurses' training school. From there she moved to New York City and served in the slums of the East Side, where she was exposed to many cases of unwanted pregnancies. Her experiences with these slum mothers as well as her own marriage to William Sanger in 1902 and three consecutive pregnancies influenced her decision to join the Socialist party. Thus began Margaret Sanger's crusade for "birth control".

There were several different stages in Mrs. Sanger's crusade. Initially she was merely a participant - she attended rallies, and read everything she could on the subject of birth control practices. Subsequently, she became a leader. In 1913 she began publishing a monthly newspaper called The Woman Rebel, in which she urged limitation of the number of children per family. But her boldness in

expression was scorned by authorities, and, after only six issues of the newspaper, Margaret Sanger was arrested and indicted for distributing "obscene" literature through the mails. As a result, she fled to Europe where she could continue to study freely.

In 1916 Mrs. Sanger returned to the U.S., and began to present lectures across the nation. Along with an associate, she opened a birth control clinic in a New York slum area, which distributed contraceptive information and materials. Once again she was arrested, but this time under state law. When she emerged from jail in 1917, it was as if she were determined to make up for lost time. She intensified her activities and was surprisingly able, despite regular bouts with the authorities, to gather a large circle of support including some of the wealthy patrons of New York. Her Birth Control Review became the organ of her movement for twenty-three years. The state court decision liberalizing New York's anti-contraceptive statute encouraged her to change her tactics from direct action to political pressure, by which she was able to secure even more permissive state and Federal laws. By 1940, the American birth control movement was operating a thriving clinical program and enjoying support from many different sectors of society. During World War II, Margaret Sanger continued her work, even though she was in her eighties by this time. Her popularity continued to grow despite her opposition to U.S. involvement in the war, which was based on her theory that wars result from excessive national population growth.

In Europe also, the birth control movement continued to gain support. Soon after the war, Dr. Gregory Pincus, a world authority on mammalian reproduction, began studies on the role of steroid hormones. Along with Dr. M.C. Chang and Dr. John Rock, Dr. Pincus developed the "pill", tested it, and released it for public use in 1960. Margaret Sanger obviously supported the pill's development, as it represented a major breakthrough in her crusade for birth control. At the time of her death in 1966, Margaret Sanger's influence had been felt the world over. Her accomplishments were many, the most significant one being the fact that she had helped begin a movement which is now deemed essential for the world's survival.*

*Most of the information for this article was drawn from Charles Alexander's entry on Margaret Sanger in The McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Biography vol. 9 p.390-391, 1973, N.Y.; and Emily Taft Douglas' biography Margaret Sanger, Pioneer of the Future, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Comment:

"Off the Pill??"

by Debbie Cohen

"I feel free to enjoy sex although now I worry about the dangers of the Pill instead of worrying about pregnancy. I have tried a few other methods but was terrified of becoming pregnant. I also feel extreme anger that I should be completely responsible for birth control and risk all the dangers." (An excerpt from "THE HITE REPORT").

The frustrated cry of the woman interviewed by Shere Hite, author of the best-selling "Hite Report", calls for a major redefinition of the lives and medical needs of women everywhere. The women of Dickinson College, who supposedly need not be concerned about the Pill, (as we are of "safe" medical age) must indeed examine the issues all the same. That is, do I take the Pill even if I am under the age of 30???????

The Pill. It all started in 1951 when family planning crusader Margaret Sanger, frustrated by the population movement's failure to abort India's growth rate, offered the late Dr. Gregory Pincus a seed grant of \$2500.00 to develop a birth control pill. Pincus teamed up with Dr. John Rock, a Catholic prominent in Planned Parenthood, and the two continued their research for G.D. Searle.

Though the Pill is widely acclaimed as the most effective and easiest to use of all birth control methods, two-thirds of women questioned in a Newsweek poll said their doctors hand't said anything to them about serious long-term effects of the Pill.

Unfortunately, the decision about whether to start or continue using the Pill is too often made irrationally, without a real understanding of the risks involved

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Susan Soutner.... Editor
Staff

Gail Borjeson Judy Mae Kowitz
Debbie Cohen Ellen Palzer
Avaery Leslie Elizabeth Pincus

and how they differ for different women. In fact, in the wake of publicity about hazards, it is not unusual for many thousands of women to suddenly drop the Pill before adopting an alternative contraceptive, thus exposing themselves to the far greater hazards of pregnancy." (Jane Brody, from "Personal Health", Nov. 2, 1977 New York Times).

Though the Pill can still be said to be fairly safe for many young women, "the trick is to determine for which women the Pill is potentially hazardous and to adopt certain precautions to assure continuing safety for those who use it." (Jane Brody). We must remember that the Pill is a drug, and every drug has unwanted side effects. Certainly, other methods are available which can let us feel as safe as we might with the Pill, and which are not difficult to use.

I suggest that women under 30 ought to take a look at the possibility that the Pill might not be the best method of birth control after all. One argument points out that as the Pill was produced by a "profit-oriented, male medical complex," much suspicion must be given to this drug. Some feminists assert that females using this form of birth control are no more than "guinea pigs", a testing ground for possible side-effects of the Pill. What these women further suggest, and which I strongly applaud, is developing some methods of male birth control, whereby the responsibility may become something other than only for the female. This presents many problems, however, when we realize that a male-dominated medical profession might be slow in developing methods of male birth control, such as a "male" pill.

In any case, if you do choose the Pill, talk to your doctor first. Think about other methods, and realize that our bodies may be in danger.

CONCERNING THE HEALTH CENTER....I am sorry to read such an unfair (and obviously uninformed) picture of the gynecological facilities here in Carlisle. I have had personal experience with these facilities through the gynecological referral service, and they are more than adequate. To use the referral service, one need not see a counselor; simply call the Health Center and request an appointment. I was referred to an excellent gynecologist and he would compare with any in my hometown (a large metropolitan area). In regard to going home, this is sometimes impractical, as immediate treatment is necessary. If a woman is seeking birth control, she could go home

if there was some objection or opposition by a Carlisle gynecologist. But other medical problems should not wait. In regard to a clinic, it is impractical for a school of our size, especially when there are some fine gynecologists in the area. Contraceptive counseling could be dealt with by a school counselor or local physician. I am very happy with my experience with the gynecological referral service, and area gynecologists should not be unfairly judged simply because they practice in Carlisle.....Name Withheld.

I was disappointed that the diaphragm was not mentioned as a viable means of birth control. Up until the development of the Pill, it was the most popular method of contraception. And now with the adverse side effects of the Pill, its popularity is returning. Many women cannot use the Pill, or do not want to interfere with their natural body chemistry. The diaphragm would be very practical for these sexually active women, and it is worth mentioning as a safe and effective means of birth control.....Amy Grodnick '79

What's New with the Women's Resource Center?

The Women's Resource Center has been busy with many new activities and projects we hope to see accomplished in the future. On Monday, Nov. 7, 1977, the Resource Center sponsored speaker Sadie John, the education director of the Credit Counseling Center of Southwestern Pa. Ms. John discussed economic issues pertaining to women such as budgeting, credit ratings, obtaining credit, and job opportunities in the business world. Concerning women in business, Ms. John commented that a woman economics major with an M.A. can practically demand her salary. Speakers on other topics can be arranged for if an interest is expressed by Dickinson women.

The Women's Resource Center plans to investigate into the possibility of arranging for a non-credit course in auto mechanics. We would like to know if there is an interest in this matter. The WRC is also looking for a location to establish the Resource Center. At present, a WRC committee is working to set up a mini-week series which would begin second semester. The mini-series involves three days of speakers and workshops on special topics. The WRC would like to see a series concerning a topic such as Health Problems or Changing Sex Roles established. More information on this will be available at a later date.

Women of Dickinson...focus your attention on the courses being offered on women this semester. English 222B; Images of Women in Literature, and History 313A; Women in History, are courses which pertain to women. Our meetings are held on Mondays at 5:00 p.m. HUB siderooms. The Women's Resource Center has many possibilities, but only if you are willing to get involved.

For your information.....

According to Dr. Theodore C. Bernstein, writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association, breast cancer will develop in one of every 14 women..."In advising women about their chances of getting breast cancer, a physician should not lean too heavily on the statistics of risk. One cannot make predictions about a person based on statistics. It is wise to advise every woman to pay close attention: Examine yourself each time you bathe and report to me without delay any irregularity you encounter."(Parade Magazine, November 6, 1977)...

A survey taken recently by a federal agency reveals that homemakers receive fewer statewide benefits than their husbands. The International Woman's Year Commission conducted the state-by-state survey which demonstrates inequality under those state laws which govern inheritance, divorce, property ownership, domestic violence, and adultery. This shows that American society still undervalues the efforts of housewives.(New York Times, October 31, 1977).....

"A brilliant political tactic is now available to help ratify the ERA. As we all know, the deadline for ratification is March 22, 1979. However, this seven-year time limit is mentioned only in the preamble to the ERA and has not been sent to the states for ratification. Therefore, Congress can extend the deadline by a majority vote on a procedural motion. Constitutional history and legal briefs prepared by major law schools confirm the legality of this step." Doneby Smith, a Dickinson graduate, is the Carlisle Area mail campaign coordinator for the extension of the ERA deadline. She will be speaking on the ERA on Thursday, December 1, in Biddle House. Be there at 7:00 to find out what you can do or learn.....

Trivial But True.....Otto Weininger, a young Austrian philosopher, wrote a book attempting to prove that women were incapable of genius and had virtually no mind at all. Otto later committed suicide after not being acclaimed a genius for writing the book.....

On the Other Hand, Suzy Mallery, President of Man Watchers, Inc., a society dedicated to the age-old art of man watching, says that "bottoms are tops now. More women are buttocks watchers than any other area.".....Watch the New York Times for its series articles on "Men and Women." In its second article, "Self-Fulfillment: Independence Vs. Intimacy," by Anna Quindlen,

marriage and "living together" lifestyles are discussed. The article reveals an increase in unmarried couples living together from 439,000 couples in 1960, to 957,000 in 1977..... The William Penn Museum in Harrisburg is sponsoring an art exhibit from January 7 to January 29, entitled "Women in the Arts,".....A fine opportunity to find out about some women artists.....