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Winter 1-1-1997

## Maine NOW Times (Winter 1997)

National Organization for Women - Maine Chapter Staff

*National Organization for Women - Maine Chapter*

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## Women in Legislative Leadership Finally - 50%!

Women are in control of the Maine Legislature for the first time. On swearing in day for the 118th Maine Legislature, Elizabeth H. Mitchell was sworn in as the first female speaker of the Maine House of Representatives. And Senator Chellie Pingree became Majority Leader of the Senate. Representative Carol Kontos became House Majority Leader. To boot, new Senate Assistant Majority Leader Anne Rand and new Senate Minority leader Jane Amero altogether account for five of the ten members of legislative leadership. That is half of what is known as the Legislative Council.

Maine has a tradition of electing more women to it's legislature than other states. Despite our gains in leadership positions women still comprise only about a third of legislative seats.

This year women will have more power than they ever have had in the Maine Legislature. Everything from routine business to major policy settings will change. Leaders have staff, offices to run, and the authority to frame the legislative agenda. It's great knowing feminist and women leaders will make decisions with women and families in mind. This has the potential to make historic change.

More important than electing women to leadership, these new leaders will work toward more progressive ideals and goals. This should give women greater access to leadership and much needed access to the legislative process. Also, this is an opportunity to shape policy from a feminist perspective. With important legislation on the horizon dealing with issues like block grants, wages for workers, and access to reproductive freedom, progressive women leaders are needed now more than ever.

Once the legislature was sworn in, they made history by electing Dale McCormick as State Treasurer and Gail Chase as State Auditor. The Legislature has never elected women to a constitutional office before.

Joining these exciting new leaders, at the Statehouse will be newly elected Maine NOW PAC endorsed candidates that we hope will become stars in Augusta. Thank you to all the candidates and incumbent legislators who worked so hard this fall and we wish you well in this exciting time.

*-Rachel Lowe, Maine NOW State Coordinator*

Your legislator is only a phone call away! They need to hear from you - when they've worked hard for an issue you support your appreciation goes a long way, and when you disagree with them they need to know why. Many of the legislators we have worked with have told us how much of a difference this makes to them. If you **don't know who your legislators are**, you can call your town office or Rachel Lowe (737-2329). You can write to legislators, call them at home, or leave messages for them at the numbers below:

Governor: Statehouse Station 1, Augusta ME 04333.....(207) 287-3531  
House Representatives: Statehouse Station 2, Augusta ME 04333.....1-800-423-2900  
Senators: Statehouse Station 3, Augusta ME 04333.....1-800-423-6900

### New Women in Leadership

Speaker of the House - Elizabeth H. Mitchell (D)  
House Majority Leader - Carol Kontos (D)  
Senate Majority Leader - Chelli Pingree (D)  
Senate Assistant Majority Leader - Anne Rand (D)  
Senate Mionority Leader - Jane Amero (R)

### New Women Constitutional Officers

State Treasurer - Dale McCormick (D)  
Sate Auditor - Gail Chase (D)



**MAINE  
NOW  
TIMES  
WINTER 1997**

### Doing the Numbers

In the **Maine Senate** out of a total of 35 senators we have **thirteen women** - the most ever, and we have **six NOW members** - also the most ever. In the **House** from a total of 151 representatives there are **thirty-five women** and **eight NOW members**, but that's fewer women than we've had in a decade - bah humbug.

In the **U.S. Senate** we now have **two woman senators** - the only other state to have both Senators female is California, and there are now **nine women** out of one hundred senators. **Kudos to All!**

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed a new "welfare reform" bill passed by Congress ending the federal government's 60 year commitment to individuals and families living in poverty. AFDC, ASPIRE, Food Stamps, SSI for children and Medicaid will be affected. It falls \$13 billion short of having the funds necessary to put welfare families to work, and \$1.4 billion short of having the child care needed for welfare families alone. Clinton and Congressional friends plan to ask to reinstate more funds. They need to hear from us! Additionally, even though there are many harsh provisions in the new law, the State of Maine has been given much discretion in how the AFDC and ASPIRE programs run. We have the opportunity to improve these programs and help individuals and families move out of poverty.



**Maine NOW urges you to take ACTION--**  
to educate yourself and others,  
to voice your opinion to our elected officials and  
to the public via letters-to-the-editor, &  
to support those most affected to speak for themselves.



**Here are a few facts and a few ways we can have impact on how the new law is applied.**

#### **BLOCK GRANTS**

The AFDC, JOBS(ASPIRE), and Emergency Assistance programs were replaced with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) "block grants". In the past, every dollar spent by the state on these programs was matched by two dollars of federal money. There was no limit on the amount of money available to the states.

Under the new law, the matching system ends. The states get a "block grant" of a set amount of federal dollars which will not increase for 6 years. **What happens if Maine's economy goes further downhill and more people need help?**

#### **AFDC**

The two biggest changes that AFDC families face are a new focus on work and a five year lifetime limit on the federal block grant aid families can receive including non-cash assistance like job training. Maine may decide to exempt some people from the 5-year limit and/or choose to provide assistance with state dollars to all families that reach the limit and still need help. **What happens to people who participated in education and training programs but still cannot find living wage jobs?**

#### **WORK REQUIREMENT**

Under this requirement, "work" means: paid work; subsidized work (e.g. on the job training); workfare (working for your grant); participation in a work experience program or job search or job readiness program (for no more than 6 weeks). This requirement varies depending

on the number of parents in the family, the age of children and if a person is "job ready" (i.e. worked in the last year and has child care). If you are required to work and fail to do so without good cause (e.g. can't find child care for children 6 and under) your family's grant amount will be reduced. **What will be considered "good cause" -- transportation, clothing, behavioral problems with children...? Will a parent be asked to choose between work and supervising children over 6 years of age?**

#### **FOOD STAMPS**

The new law cuts \$27 million from the program over 6 years. Most food stamp households will not have a time limit for receiving food stamps but under the new law, persons between 18-50 could be limited to three months of food stamps in a three year period. Many exceptions will apply but the Congressional Budget Office estimates that in an average month, 1 million poor unemployed individuals who are willing to work and would take a workfare slot if available, will be denied food stamps. Maine can get a waiver from the fed's to drop the time limit during periods of high unemployment. **Let's make sure Maine asks for this waiver.**

There are other changes such as, disqualification from food stamps if you: 1) Voluntarily quit a job. **Will quitting due to sexual harassment on the job be**

**considered a "good cause"? 2) Voluntarily reduce your work hours below 30 per week. Will a crisis in the family be considered a "good cause"? Who makes these determinations?**

**In 1995, 96% of adult AFDC recipients were women.  
Over 50% of women receiving benefits left abusive relationships.**

## SSI FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The new law makes it tougher to meet the standards for deciding whether a child is disabled and can get SSI. Many will have their cases reviewed. Those most likely to lose benefits are those with multiple health problems, particularly those with behavioral problems.

## IMMIGRANTS

For legal immigrants who were in the U.S. before August 22, 1996, the new law gives states the choice to end Medicaid (except in emergencies) and AFDC any time after January 1, 1997.

For legal immigrants who came after August 22, 1996, the new law bars legal immigrants from receiving federally funded AFDC and Medicaid for 5 years.

Maine passed a law ending AFDC (and possibly Medicaid) for legal immigrants on April 1, 1997. **We can keep these benefits after April 1, 1997 with a 2/3rds vote of the Legislature. Will this apply to those who came after August 22, 1996?**

For their first 5 years in the U.S., refugees, asylees, and permanent resident who have worked for 10 years will still qualify for AFDC and Medicaid no matter what action is taken by the state. A few other exemptions are allowed.

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This report was written from excerpt from fact sheets created by the **Maine Equal Justice Project**. To get a copy of the fact sheets with more details and complete information on how the new federal welfare law will affect people living in poverty in Maine, **send a self-addressed envelope and \$1 to: Chris Rusnov, 11 Bolduc St., Winslow, ME 04901.**

## GET INVOLVED LOCALLY

Maine NOW is an active member in the **Coalition for Economic Justice**. CEJ is sponsoring **study circle groups on poverty** in six locations in Maine. CEJ is also sponsoring **educational/organizing meetings** in Ellsworth, Lewiston and Biddeford.

If you want to be active on economic justice issues or are interested in either of the group projects call **CEJ at 621-9815** or call **Chris Rusnov 873-0878**.

## Maine NOW Board to "Retreat"

January 17-18

All activists welcome

My friends in Wisconsin NOW call their annual overnight an "advance". Well, we still call ours a retreat - but it's a retreat only from the daily chores and interruptions to give us a little longer time than we ordinarily have to strengthen our connections with each other and reflect on where we've been and where we're going as an organization.

We're not terribly formal at our board meetings. And new activists are welcome. You don't have to have a PhD in feminism. We all learned and are learning as we go.

We could use people interested in working with any of our existing task forces or coalitions. We could use people with new ideas and energy to implement them.

Chris has a whole lot of jobs in Maine NOW. One of them is that she has been editing the Maine NOW Times for several years now. She would happily turn that job over to someone with fresh energy so she could concentrate more fully on her other tasks.

Over the years, concerts have been one of our better fundraisers. We've had Catie Curtis, Kate Clinton, talent from among the ranks of our members - and we've wanted to bring in some other great women performers but not had the time/energy. It would be really nice to have a small team of people who love that sort of thing who'd like to organize a concert or two each year - that would leave those of us who love the political and organizational stuff freer to tend to that arm of the organization. Does this tweak your imagination at all?

How about taking notes at board meetings? Or is keeping financial records up your alley?

There's no shortage of things to do, and we'd love to have you doing them with us.

This year's retreat will begin Friday evening (yes - we all have day jobs). We will probably be meeting at Chris' house in Winslow. And we'll wind up before supper on Saturday. If you have questions - or can't make the retreat but would like to come to another meeting, call Cynthia 778-9506. I'll hope to hear from you.

-Cynthia Phinney, Maine NOW Assist. State Coordinator

Political campaigns are expensive - that's no news, eh? But, candidates often give the campaign their financial all and wind up with debts when the rest of us are all done thinking about elections.

Jean Hay, National NOW PAC endorsed primary candidate for U.S. Senate is trying to retire her debt by selling a book she wrote called "Proud to be a Card-Carrying, Flag-Waving, Patriotic, American Liberal". Jean can be reached at 151 Court Street, Bangor ME 04401 or (207) 990-2701.

Check with your feminist candidate and see if s/he could use a little more help.

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## Check Out Chapter Activities

*Actions and activities at the chapter level are an integral part of Maine NOW. Many of our state activists started at the chapter level, and individual chapters can address the issues most pressing to the women in a local community.*

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### Greater Bangor NOW

GB's recent edition of *Feminist Voices* recalled many of our efforts and accomplishments in 1996. This included actions and education efforts around fat & body image, lesbian & gay pride, Bangor's model residential picketing ordinance, and the Clean Clothes Campaign kick-off in September.

GB also discussed the possibilities for a chapter with few and transient activists. In response, many community activists who are also NOW members have given much encouragement! Also, two women from the Peer Education Project at UM came to the last NOW meeting, as did Barbara and Joyce, to help rescue GB! NOW members have E-mailed, written, and sought me out at events to say, "Let's keep the chapter going!" Hooray!

Amanda and Bethanie, Joyce & I all participated in our November 15 **Take Back The Night**. There were many other GB NOW members at TBTN too, as well as Chris Rusnov from Winslow and Cindy McGinn from Portland! This TBTN was organized in coalition with the University College Women's Resource Center, Rape Response Services, Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine, Penobscot County Maine Won't Discriminate, and Bangor CUREs [Communities United for Reproductive Safety]. Many thanks to Yvonne Mazerolle for working with me, and to all the others for their support!

Joyce and I represented GB at the Maine NOW 25th Anniversary march and rally on October 26. I was one of 50-60 folks who collected signatures for Bangor's Clean Clothes Campaign — efforts to get sweatshop clothes out of Bangor — on election day, and I am excited to be part of such a vital and thoughtful projects as we move into '97!

NOW did a lot of Get Out The Vote work election week, and election day, and much of our feminist work paid off! In the Bangor area, we were sorry to lose NOW member Hugh Morrison from the House, and hope he will run again. On the up side, we reelected NOW member Jane Saxl, elected [by 7 votes!!] NOW member Tina Baker, as well as electing NOW member Mary Cathcart from Orono to the Maine Senate. We also very happily dumped rightwinger Lisa Lumbr from the House. Statewide, of 21 NOW members who ran for the Maine House and Senate, 14 won! Six NOW members in the Senate is an all time high!

For January 22, 1997, GB NOW is already planning a *Roe v Wade* day event, and I'm working with the P&J Center on our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day events on January 20. We will also help P&J with A.C.T. II [Active Community Training around economic justice issues] in February, and the H.O.P.E. Festival [Help Organize Peace Earthwide], April 19th.

I will continue to represent NOW in the CUREs Project in '97. We recently attended CUREs Community Day and signed the "Respects and Protects" pledge, with a \$25 donation. On May 6, GB NOW will do another action for International NO Diet Day. And throughout '97, I will work on the Clean Clothes Campaign. Actions and coalition efforts will be high priorities!

Our treasury is a bit low, but our lists are updated, and our hopes are high for an outstanding 1997! If you're in the neighborhood, be sure to stop by!

- submitted by chapter coordinator JoAnne Dauphinee

### Brunswick Area NOW

Brunswick Area NOW is pleased to welcome two new activists to our crew. We met on November 18th, and also several members planned to go as a group to the Kennebec Valley NOW meeting on Welfare Reform (see KV NOW Report and related article on page 2 for details).

The chapter is planning a poster contest for area schools in April with the theme "Women's Work". We are all concerned about self-esteem and self-image in young girls and women. Details of the poster contest will be worked out at meetings in December and January. The plan is to have the posters displayed in libraries for the community to see.

Several Brunswick NOW members marched in the Maine NOW Get-Out-the-Vote Street Action and Rally in Augusta on October 26, carrying a banner that said "We're busy women - We vote - It counts" and costumed as busy women - including Judy Lloyd as an unmistakable "soccer mom". Chapter Coordinator Sandra Holland and her husband prepared the brunch for all rally attendees.

The chapter will be holding a small New Year's Party January 13 to have a chance to socialize instead of activate!

- submitted by Chapter Coordinator Sandra Holland

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### Activists Welcome at All Levels!

Find phone numbers for Chapter Coordinators, Task Force Chairs, and State Officers on page 11.

New members and friends are always welcome at chapter meetings.

## **Farmington NOW**

Farmington NOW is well into it's year with new Chapter Coordinator Aimée DesRoches.

The 1996 Windows on Women Calendar featuring girls and women of Franklin County was released at a reception in October at the Homestead Bakery in Farmington. This is the second year that Femnet (the Feminist Network of Western Maine) and Farmington NOW have collaborated on this project. The goal is to highlight the lives and achievements of area women and, eventually, to raise some money to assist young mothers completing their education. To obtain calendars call Letty Pryor at (207) 778-9506.

A daylong Diversity Training sponsored by Farmington NOW was held at Aimée's home in November and was attended by a few chapter members and several AWAP (Abused women's Advocacy Project) volunteers. Facilitated by Loung Ung and Aimée, the day consisted of large and small group discussions and exchanges about the visible and invisible differences between us, experiences standing up for others and having others stand up for us against discrimination, as well as a presentation and practice of different models of ways to handle situations of blatant prejudice.

The annual Chocolate Event fundraiser will be held January 26. February will be a meeting to share our own writings as women, and in March we will be viewing and discussing the video *Leona's Sister Gerri*, a film about the incidents and attitudes surrounding the life and death of Gerri Santorro, the woman in the now famous photo of a victim of illegal abortion who died on a hotel room floor.

And, as for the last five years, it was Farmington NOW members and friends who labeled and sorted this newsletter for mailing to you.

- submitted by chapter activist Cynthia Phinney

## **Kennebec Valley NOW**

Kennebec Valley NOW had a meeting December 10, with guest speaker, Chris Hastedt, from Maine Equal Justice Project, to discuss the new Welfare Law and what it means to us here in Maine. We had 10 attendees and we heard that even though the federal law may have some severe parts, it does appear that there are several different ways to get around them through the state system if we are able to get those issues worked. That outlook may sound like things might be alright here in Maine but those avenues must still be worked and it is up to us to keep an eye on things and keep our legislators working toward what we want and need to have done.

Our next meeting will be January 21st and we hope to show your video as well as continue the discussion on the new welfare law. We are also waiting to receive some information on a possible national action on Valentines Day surrounding same sex marriages.

-submitted by Chapter Coordinator Don Craig

## **Greater Portland NOW**

Greater Portland NOW met on the third of December and elected a new slate of leaders. Serving as co-coordinators of the chapter will be Kim Simmons 871-9786 and Evangeline (Van) Berry. The new treasurer will be Karen Jackins.

Everyone at the meeting was quite pleased that the Portland chapter will continue. Yay! The new leaders will be meeting with outgoing leaders Lucinda McGinn, Barbara Hester, and Jennifer Halm-Perazone this month (December) to work on the transition and to finalize plans for a meeting of the general membership in January (to be held as usual on the fourth Tuesday of the month).

- submitted by outgoing Chapter Coordinator Lucinda McGinn

## **Other Stuff to Do**

In addition to chapter activities listed above there's plenty of other stuff going on in upcoming months. Chapters will be adding meetings and activities as the new year gets rolling.

This month there area also **Martin Luther King Day** activities planned in several cities around the state. Two we know of are Portland and Bangor.

In Bangor, the Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine will host an event from 3-7 on Sunday the 19th. At 3 will be "The Legacy of Martin Luther King" with James Varner (NAACP), Susan Davies (Bangor Theological Seminary) and Adonis Ferreira (U/M Multicultural Program). At 5PM there will be a Peace and Freedom Sing-along with local musicians and singers, followed at 5:45 by a potluck supper - bring food to share. For more info call the center at 942-9343.

Portland NAACP will again host it's Martin Luther King Day Breakfast at the Holiday Inn by the Bay at 8AM. They say tickets for the breakfast must be paid for and picked up by the 10th and are \$10 for adults. If it's too late for that, you can still try the Gospel Extravaganza the evening of the 19th, at 6PM. Featuring Green Memorial A.M.E. Zion, Williams Temple Church of God in Christ, Full Circle, Unitarian Universalist Church of Saco/Biddeford and others, tickets are \$5 or \$20 for a family of 4-6. For more info call the NAACP at 828-6934.

Three teaching and women's organizations at USM are sponsoring a series of "High Tea and Uncommon Conversations". February 12 at 2:30-4 will be "The Soil in My Blood: Nationality Race and Identity" with Nancy Gish and April Newman. For more info call 780-4955.



## Bangor's Clean Clothes Campaign

### A Power to the People Project!

*Working to free Bangor markets from clothing manufactured under sweatshop conditions.*

On Labor Day, we officially kicked off the Bangor's Clean Clothes Campaign on the steps of City Hall. More than 50 people gathered for the ceremony as U.S. Representative John Baldacci was the first to sign a Clean Clothes petition.

"We" are PICA [Peace through Interamerican Community Action], Maine NOW & Greater Bangor NOW, Maine AFL-CIO, and NAACP. We, the Coordinating Committee activists, include Bjorn, Nancy, Francois, Marquita, KC, Dennis, Consie, JoAnne and others. We are thinking about different "levels" and ways for individuals and organizations and businesses to get on board.

A full compliment of local media was at the kick-off to capture the event, as Dennis Chinoy of PICA explained how Bangor area activists have committed to some longterm efforts to end the sweatshop clothes gathering on Bangor shelves. In fact, media coverage has been extensive and positive so far. Also speaking at the kick-off were Charlie O'Leary for the AFL, Jim Varner for NAACP, and JoAnne Dauphinee for NOW.

Our petitions will be collected until next spring when we will present them to the City Council in hopes they will join our efforts by passing a resolution. The resolution would state that any item of clothing produced in violation of internationally established codes of corporate conduct regarding wages, health & safety, forced or child labor, and freedom of association, should not be offered for sale in Bangor. PICA organizer, Bjorn Skorpen-Claeson, organized about 60 folks to collect signatures on election day, and we have about 3000 already!

Rep. Baldacci used the kick-off to express his support for the Clay bill in the U.S. House. It would extend legal responsibility for U.S. labor law violations from namebrand manufacturers to suppliers to whom they contract their work.

Since the kick-off and in addition to the election day success, the Clean Clothes Campaign has marched at the NOW 25th Celebration, had several speaking engagements, begun selective outreach to local businesses, and continued to meet frequently to brainstorm our future.

The Coordinating Committee has put together a slide show/ roadshow about the Clean Clothes Campaign for showing in schools, or at organization, club, or civic meetings. We are currently showing it, and training people to show it. If you know of a group who might like

to see the slide presentation, let us know! I recently saw a one hour version of the slide show and follow up discussion, and thought it was excellent.

In addition we occasionally have "Orientation Meetings". These are more for people who want to become activists in the Campaign, to review what is done, who we are, what keeps us involved, and where we hope we are headed.

This Campaign reveals how our lives as women, as workers, as citizens of the world, are linked in a global economy where corporate greed has reached an all-time high. Maria, a Nicaraguan sweatshop worker, recently met with some workers at the Hathaway shirt plant in Waterville, Maine. As workers talked, they came to understand that Maria and other sweatshop workers are not the reason jobs are "going south". Sweatshop workers are trying to organize for a living wage, better health & safety conditions, and so on. The money "saved" by going south is going to corporate executives and stock holders.

Worker solidarity across borders must catch up to corporate mobility, so that no matter where they move, workers — especially those most exploited in the U.S. as well as globally, women and children — will be standing up for their rights. Currently, sweatshop organizers are immediately abused and/or fired. But, with an effort to keep information flowing, the worst corporate abuses can be made public and turned against the companies. United we can change the world, literally!

Efforts similar to, or parallel to the Clean Clothes Campaign are springing up in other places. Some involve boycotts of Disney, Van Heusen, or Guess. One is aimed specifically at stopping the "Christmas firings" in El Salvador, where corporations fire or lay off lots of employees just in time to avoid having to pay them the higher holiday wages. Bangor's Campaign may link, at least by information sharing, with many of these other efforts.

If you have ideas or information the Clean Clothes Campaign should know about, or if you just want to know how to help, please call JoAnne 989-3306, or Bjorn at the PICA office 947-4203.

I must especially thank PICA activists - Bjorn, Dennis, and Nancy - for encouraging me to steal liberally (or literally) from articles they wrote for *PICANTE*, a PICA publication.

-JoAnne Dauphinee

**Be Informed - Read Garment Labels - Let merchants and manufacturers know you care.**

*see related articles on pages 7, 8 & 9*

## Sweatshops - Bad Guys to Avoid

With budget cuts leaving only 800 Department of Labor investigators to police 110 million workers, many industries are being asked to self-monitor their contract shops to be sure sweatshop conditions do not exist. Under these practices, several companies who were in fact using sweatshops to produce their goods were listed on the DOL "trendsetter list" of supposed good guys. Don't be fooled by this list. Instead, look for union labels and try to avoid really BAD guys. Here are some manufacturers found by the DOL between October 1995 and June of 1996 to owe thousands of dollars in back wages to employees:

BeBop - Paris Blues - Little Laura - California Connection - Byer California - Fritz of California - Jonathan Martin LKoral Industries - Jerry Leigh - David Brooks - Depeche Mode - Alison Tracy, Inc. - Copy Cats - Clothes Works

And a July 1996 raid of illegal homework sites found workers sewing for these manufacturers:

XOXO - Rampage - Carol Little - Parallel - Francine Browner - Judy Knapp- Bebe

*this information excerpted from "Sweatshop Watch" - see pages 6, 8 and 9 for more information and related articles*

## The Feminist Times and Women's Issues

According to the political pundits who analyze the exit poll data, in 1996 women's vote carried the day. Had women not voted 54 to 37 percent for Bill Clinton, the presidential race would have been too close to call.

The most important question now is, when will women elect a woman president?

This is not the question that political pundits have asked, however. Their question is, what are the issues women are most concerned about that determines how they vote? For the next four years we will be inundated with studies and opinions about the women's vote and "women's issues". The pundits will try to explain to us what women care about and what women think so that potential candidates can address "women's issues". Already their polls have told them that women see a greater role for government addressing health care, Social Security, reproductive rights, economic and employment disparities, education and social programs.

Despite what these pundits would have us believe, most women are concerned about more than what are called "women's issues". We know that "all issues are ultimately women's issues". Today women are on the front lines in the battle to preserve the right of citizens against the powerful force of corporations and capitalism. In an era when the Supreme Court has ruled that corporations and money have a constitutional guarantee of free speech, this is an important battle.

So when will women elect a woman president, and how can a woman who wants to be a candidate for president in the future prepare herself?

There will be a lot of maneuvering for position in both parties over the next four years. Rumor has it that Rep. Pat Schroeder is considering a run for president in 2000. Although she is capable, knowledgeable and a skilled politician she will need a massive public relations campaign to push others aside.

Beyond 2000, women who will be candidates in the future will need to have knowledge of economics, international commerce and labor, world history and international law, technological and environmental issues, foreign and domestic security issues and military

strategy. To understand the forces shaping life in the 21st century we need to know how macroeconomics affects microeconomics. How does the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) effect factories, the family farm, fishing and forestry? We need to ask how government policies maintain or defeat our deeply held values of preserving and protecting individuals — not just in themselves, but in their families and communities. How can we act in both the smallest unit of society, the family, and the largest unit, international relationships, to achieve an equitable distribution of food, labor and income? Is continual, slow growth — a cornerstone of economic theory — a realistic goal or is there a point at which the Earth's resources are no longer renewable? Is there a point at which growth is no longer the best option? With the death of communism and the end of the cold war, religion has become the fuel for violent conflicts around the world. At the same time, the dominant ideology seems to be capitalism. What will be the effect on the U.S. (immigration, importing and exporting, our collective conscience and sense of responsibility) if we don't seek solutions and balance in these areas? Women need to know the questions facing us in the next century so we can find real answers. This is a big task, and it is important that women want to do it. Women live in this imperfect world and we need to take responsibility for solving the problems that exist. Or they may not be solved.

This is the goal behind the news and issues covered in the Feminist Times. Women must be well and completely informed to be prepared for the leadership role that is needed — the depth of knowledge to create a vision and the courage to pursue it.

The Feminist Times is not about what is; it is about what is to be.

*-Jan Anderson is the editor of the Feminist Times, a statewide journal of feminist thought. reach her at JDAnders@acadia.net or (207) 338-1429 or 185 High Street, Belfast, Maine 04915*





# SWEATSHOP WATCH

Volume Two, Number One

Fall, 1996

## OVERSEAS SWEATSHOPS: MADE IN THE USA

**A**s consumers, we are becoming increasingly aware that many of the clothes we buy are produced under sweatshop conditions around the world. Images of children laboring under long hours and abusive conditions in countries like Honduras tarnish the appeal of fashionable clothing made for labels like Kathie Lee Gifford's. In the United States, garment workers, the majority of whom are immigrant women, toil long hours for sub-minimum wages.

American interests create and propagate sweatshops both in the United States and abroad. Since the inception of the garment industry, U.S. retailers and manufacturers have scoured the United States and the globe for the cheapest and most malleable labor in order to squeeze out the most profit for themselves.

In fact, the garment industry is one of the most globalized industries in the world. On a recent trip to the petite department of the Macy's in San Francisco, our Sweatshop Watch investigator found Liz Claiborne clothing with labels indicating they were made in Thailand, the Philippines, Brazil, Costa Rica, South Korea, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Yugoslavia, and Turkey - just some of the 40 countries around the world in which Liz Claiborne products are made. Complex computers coordinate the global production, keeping track of styles, sizes, colors and stages of productions throughout the world.

Such global production began in the 1960's as U.S. manufacturers first went to Japan, then to Hong Kong, and then to Taiwan and South Korea. Whereas the average wage of U.S. garment workers was \$3.79 per hour in 1975, it was only \$.75 in Hong Kong, \$.29 in Taiwan, and \$.22 in Korea. By 1988, though, wages for Hong Kong workers rose to 30% of U.S. wages; Taiwanese, 27%; and Koreans, 21%. Wages of Hong Kong factory workers rose to \$786 per month, higher than the monthly wages earned by a minimum wage worker in the United States. To find cheaper labor, many U.S. firms shifted garment production to less developed countries of Asia - China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

U.S. transnationals own none of the overseas manufacturing facilities and have no long term commitment to any country or supplier. The relationship is order-by-order. Not tied down by capital investments and with no responsibility to the workers, U.S. firms can shift their productions from one country to another without much disruption of their global operations.

The disruptions and devastations on the local economies and communities, including the United States, though, are immense. In the United States, over 400,000 jobs have been lost since 1973. The loss of U.S. jobs is not due to foreign competition. Rather, U.S. apparel manufacturers compete with each other, and sometimes with themselves - producing the same products both domestically for local markets and abroad for import into the U.S. market.

The impact of this transnational movement of capital is even more pronounced in the less developed countries where U.S. companies relocate. Child labor, geographic dislocation, and sexual abuse are all aspects of the social upheaval connected with the arrival of U.S. transnationals. For example, in Bangladesh, 7% to 10%, or 100,000 garment workers are children between the ages of 10 and 14 who assemble clothing for U.S. consumers. When the workers reach the age of 25, they are laid off. In China's Special Economic Zones (SEZ), created for the production of goods for exports, 80% of the SEZ workers are women; most are between the ages of 16 and 25. After age 25, the women must return to their province of origin. While in the SEZ, workers live in crowded dormitories provided by the employers and, in some cases, are not allowed out of the dormitories except to work. In Sri Lanka, most of the 135,000 women employed in the garment industry are between the ages of 18 and 25. Typically from far off villages, they live in boarding houses near the factory, sharing one room with 10 to 12 others. Many of these boarding houses lack

### Average Hourly Wages for Garment Workers

#### 1991

U.S. ....	\$6.50
Puerto Rico .....	\$4.85
U.S. Virgin Islands .....	\$4.50
Bahamas .....	\$2.50
Costa Rica .....	\$1.09
Mexico .....	\$0.88
Honduras .....	\$0.60
Haiti .....	\$0.58
El Salvador .....	\$0.49
Guatemala .....	\$0.45

#### 1995

Hong Kong .....	\$3.63
Malaysia .....	\$0.49
Philippines .....	\$0.48
Thailand .....	\$0.38-0.46
Sri Lanka .....	\$0.13
China (SEZ) .....	\$0.12-0.15
Vietnam .....	\$0.12

ventilation, electricity, running water, and adequate toilet facilities. In El Salvador and Guatemala, young women suffer sexual harassment as well as forced consumption of contraceptive pills. In all these countries, the girls and women work six or seven day weeks, ten to fifteen hours a day at wages so low many are malnourished.

The human suffering continues when U.S. companies shift work from one country to the next. Left behind are unemployed women workers, most of whom have no skills or training in other fields. In the 1970's for instance, garment jobs were abundant in Hong Kong. When wages began rising, U.S. manufactures moved from Hong Kong to the developing countries of Southeast Asia. A Hong Kong garment worker who worked ten years in garment factories can not find skilled or unskilled work because she, like numerous other women, is considered too old at thirty to be employable. When minimum wages in Thailand began to rise higher than those of Vietnam and China, production was moved to the lower wage countries. For twenty years. Thai women had labored in garment factories. When the industry move, most were over forty and faced layoffs with no skills to obtain new jobs.

As the trend toward economic globalization continues, Sweatshop Watch faces many challenges in working to ensure that, regardless of where they are made, clothes are made under conditions that respect human rights. In compiling a list of good and bad labels,

Sweatshop Watch must take into account the geographic diversity of production for any label considered. For instance, Liz Claiborne, while using union shops in the United States, produces in countries where the right to organize is not protected and minimum labor standards are not recognized. The Gap and Gitano are also companies who produce in numerous countries where exploitation of garment workers is common. As a consumer, you can make a difference by writing to manufacturers and asking them to guarantee that their products are not made with child labor, that the workers who sew their clothes are not sexually harassed, the workers are paid a livable wage and work reasonable hours, and that the right to organize is recognized. To begin with, you can direct these and other questions to:

Liz Claiborne, Inc.  
1441 Broadway  
New York, NY 10018

Don Fisher, CEO  
The Gap  
1 Harrison Street  
San Francisco, CA 94015

*For a more complete exploration of the global context of garment work and strategies to combat exploitation on the global assemblyline, see*

*"(Dis)assembling Rights of Women Workers Along the Global Assemblyline: Human Rights and the Garment Industry" by Laura Ho, Catherine Powell, and Leti Volpp in Volume 31 of the Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review (1996).*

## FACES BEHIND THE LABELS

### A Traveling Exhibit of Images of Garment Workers

In July 1996, Sweatshop Watch opened its traveling "Faces Behind the Labels" photo exhibit in San Francisco. In the 40 images which are part of the exhibit, photographers

Robert Gumpert and David Bacon capture garment workers at work, at home and on the picket line. The exhibit is dedicated to garment workers who stand up for themselves to improve their working and

living conditions. The exhibit traveled to Los Angeles in September 1996 and in January 1998, the exhibit will travel to Washington, D.C.'s American Labor Museum. To bring the photo exhibit to your city, event or conference, call us at (415) 391-1655.



### GOES UNION

Cynthia Steffe watched picket lines go up around her contract shops in the heart of New York's garment district. Garment workers and their union, UNITE (Union of

Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees), struck at summer's peak, on a Wednesday when the work was all in the contract shops. Steffe, one of the season's hot young designers, needed to make a decision, either to sign a union contract and fill her orders, or risk losing everything by not delivering her sportswear goods on time. With workers in the contract shops refusing to sew for her and truckers refusing to cross the picket line, it took Steffe only three days to decide. Steffe's \$20 million a year business, headquartered on Seventh Avenue, is now keeping hundreds of UNITE members working, and providing them with decent wages and union benefits such as health care and

pension benefits. As workers learned firsthand, organizing into the union and getting a contract is the best protection against sweatshops.

*This article was excerpted from the September/October 1996 issue of UNITE!*

The material on these two pages was excerpted entirely and with permission from the **Sweatshop Watch** newsletter of the Asian Law Caucus, to accompany the article on page 6 about the Bangor Clean Clothes Project.

For more information about **Sweatshop Watch** or the **Asian Law Caucus**, contact them at **720 Market Street, Fifth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102 (415) 391-1655**



## Thanks to all



Elections are over and we did quite well. I've had a chance to breath and get a few things around the house ready for winter. Now I can take a moment to thank all of you for pitching in to make the **Oct 26 Maine NOW Anniversary celebration and Get-Out-the-Vote action** a great success. So many people graciously, and amazingly, found the time to help.

Thanks to **Rachel Lowe**, my right hand woman, for always being there to bounce ideas off, for putting up with my tirades when I'd start to loose it and saying the right things to bring me back...and for all her phone calls to get people to the event and being brave enough to mc the rally and, and, .....

Thanks to **Cynthia Phinney** for spitting out all those labels and lists in a timely fashion and for coordinating the peacekeepers to keep us all in step. And to all the peacekeepers sporting those orange vests so no one would run us over at the intersections.

Thanks to **Beth Edmonds, Judy Lloyd, Penny Hilton and Joanne D'Arcangelo** who pitched in to get the media's attention...your ideas, press releases, and phone calls made all the difference. Several print media and television stations attended - Channel 7, Bangor coverage was the best.

**JoAnne Dauphinee** pulled together the Maine NOW herstory presentation and kept it down to a somewhat reasonable amount of time - quite a task. Thanks JoAnne and to all your bards for presenting it.

Thanks to **Dale McCormick** for firing up the crowd for the final get-out-the-vote push before election day. And to Representatives **Elizabeth Watson, Libby Mitchell, & Bev Daggett** for hosting our celebration in the Capitol.

Thanks to **Sandra Holland** for the extremely yummy and healthy food, for keeping well within our budget, and doing it all without knowing exact numbers. It was all great!

Did you see the big banner "We Who Believe in Freedom - VOTE!?" That was courtesy of **Claire Prontnicki's** skillful hands. Thanks Claire! And thanks to **Mary Beth Paquette** for bringing all the wood to mount our signs, and for bringing her two sweet kids.

Thanks to the **chapter coordinators, Maine NOW leaders, and other volunteers** who made phone calls, sent notices, put up posters, donated to the Silent Auction, and got members and friends to attend. And to **Don Craig** for coordinating the Silent Auction!

Thanks to **everyone who showed up early to set-up and stayed late to clean-up.** This part probably went

smoother than anything I've done before thanks to all you thinking and acting people. You're great!

It was great having the following **organizations** march and spread the word. Together, we make a difference! Maine Women's Lobby & for putting it in your newsletter! Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine Bangor Clean Clothes Campaign hoola-hoops & all! Maine Centers for Women, Work & Community Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance Planned Parenthood of Northern New England Colby Women's Group Bowdoin Women's Group Maine Children's Alliance Maine Choice Coalition CUREs Project Maine AFL-CIO

Thanks to all the **individual members and friends** who marched with us and celebrated with us, who brought your children and your partners, who made signs and carried ours, who chanted and who sang. Muchas gracias!

Thanks to the **candidates** who took time out of their arduous campaign schedules to march in the action or who sent representatives: **Joe Brennan, Rep. Elizabeth Watson, Scott Cowger, Carl Pease, Rep. Sharon Treat, Jeannie Hamrin, John Portela, and Dale McGee...**and all of you candidates who couldn't make it because you too knew where you needed to be.

A special thanks to all the **women who agreed to be part of our media calendar** highlighting the issues important to women. Unfortunately, no one took them up on the offer to be interviewed but their names are on file for future reference, so you may just get a call some day from the media...or someone reading this letter.

Beth Edmonds, women candidates; Lois Galgay Reckitt, violence against women; Ellie Goldberg, children, youth & families; Ruth Lockhart, abortion rights; Nancy Oden, stopping environmental poisoning; Ellen Golden, women business owners; JoAnne Dauphinee, Maine NOW herstory; Donna Carr, D.O., women in medicine; June Thorton-Marsh, eliminating racism/celebrating diversity; Jill Duson, women in the corporate setting; Dale McCormick, universal health care; Annie Lunt, child support enforcement; Madeleine Freeman, elderly women; Betsy Smith, ending gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender discrimination; Mary Anne Turowski, women in the labor movement; Laura Fortman, Women's Vote Project '96; Wendy Rose, women's economic self-sufficiency; Judy Guay, new federal welfare law; Penny Plourde, women with disabilities; Sharon Barker, higher education; Cynthia Sanborn, non-traditional occupations; Chris Hastedt, welfare block grants; Marti Mac Intyre, sexual assault; Susan Mansfield, reproductive health care; and Eileen Monahan, financial empowerment.

Lots of folks to thank - hope I didn't miss anyone. Keep up the good work but be sure and take the time to take care of yourself. Enjoy the new year!

*Chris Rusnov, event coordinator*

# NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN



Maine's Leading Feminist Grassroots Organization  
Phone Number: 797-8508



Maine State Coordinator - Rachel Lowe 737-2329  
Assistant State Coordinator - Cynthia Phinney 778-9506  
Scribe - Joyce Blakney 825-3962  
Treasurer - Annie Lunt 883-1195

## Task Force/Coalition Contacts

Affirmative Action Task Force - Renee Berry-Huffman 772-3368  
Computer Wizards - JoAnne Dauphinee 989-3306  
Consumers For Affordable Health Care-VACANCY  
Dirigo Alliance - Beth Edmonds 865-3869  
Lesbian Rights Task Force - Janet May 862-5907  
Maine Choice Coalition - Sandra Holland 729-4663  
Maine NOW Phone Coordinator - Chris Rusnov 873-0878  
Maine NOW PAC Treasurer - JoAnne Dauphinee 989-3306  
Maine NOW Times - Chris Rusnov 873-0878  
Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition - VACANCY  
Coalition for Economic Justice - Chris Rusnov 873-0878  
Maine HIV Advisory Committee - Rachel Lowe 737-2329

## NORTHEAST REGIONAL NOW BOARD MEMBERS

Ruth Young, Bronx, NY  
Marsha Pappas, Albany, NY  
Judy Murphy, Manchester Center, VT  
Gerry Miller, 7320 Aqueduct Ave. #13, Bronx, NY 10468 212-367-2435  
Lois Reckitt, 38 Mrytle Ave., South Portland, ME 04106 799-8744  
Ellen Zucker, Boston NOW, 971 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215 617-782-1056

## GREATER BANGOR NOW

87 Sunset Strip, Brewer, ME 04412  
Coordinator - JoAnne Dauphinee 989-3306  
Meets second Monday of each month

## GREATER FARMINGTON NOW

P.O. Box 375, Farmington, ME 04938  
Coordinator - Aimee DesRoches 778-6107

## KENNEBEC VALLEY NOW

P.O. Box 503, Augusta, ME 04330  
Contact-Don Craig 582-1686  
Call for meeting schedule.

## BRUNSWICK AREA NOW

P.O. Box 133, Brunswick, ME 04011  
Coordinator - Sandra Holland 729-4663  
Call for monthly meeting schedule.

## GREATER PORTLAND NOW

P.O. Box 4012, Portland, ME 04101  
Co-coordinator - Kim Simmons 871-9786  
Call for meeting schedule.

## E-MAIL FEMINISTS:

Cynthia Phinney cphin@aol.com

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Our vision is to empower women to take feminist action to make feminist social change. Our top five priorities are:** ERA, economic justice, eliminating racism, lesbian rights, and reproductive freedom. **JOIN US!**

**MAINE NOW, P.O. BOX 4012, Portland, ME 04101. Make check payable to MAINE NOW.**

NAME (Please PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ to help us analyze our organization's diversity.

CHAPTER (see above) \_\_\_\_\_ If there isn't a chapter near you, leave this space blank and we will enroll you as an at-large member.

Dues rate includes membership at the national, state & local level.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ dues enclosed. \$35 Regular Dues. A sliding scale of \$20 - 34 is available, if you need it.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ additional contribution enclosed. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Political Action Committee contribution. Payable to Maine NOW PAC.

☐ PLEASE CHECK HERE IF YOU DO NOT WANT MAINE NOW TO SHARE YOUR NAME WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. (see Maine NOW policy below)

☐ Please check here if you do not want National NOW to share your name with other groups.

**NAME SHARING POLICY:** Maine NOW shares our member list for coalition work, in which we are active (see list above). We also occasionally, on a case-by-case basis, will share the list with progressive groups who are advertising events or sharing information.

## Maine NOW Elects Officers

At the Maine NOW Annual meeting, held in conjunction with the October 26 Street Action and Rally in Augusta, Maine NOW members elected Rachel Lowe as State Coordinator. Rachel had been finishing out the term of Merrie Allen who left the position to attend to family matters a year ago. Re-elected were Cynthia Phinney as Assistant State Coordinator, Annie Lunt as Treasurer, and Joyce Blakney as Scribe.

*Thank you to the many busy people who committed their time and resources in the recent Maine and US legislative elections to help with campaigns, to run for office, and to hold down the fort for family members who were busy with campaigns.. We all make a difference, and it takes all of us. Thanks again.*

## Roe v. Wade Anniversary - January 22

Actions to can take to keep choice safe and legal

- ☐ Write a letter to the editor.
- ☐ Contact your elected officials about your views (see page 1 inside).
- ☐ Make a donation to an organization working for reproductive freedom - like Maine NOW or the SAFE Fund.
- ☐ Get a friend to join your favorite choice organization.
- ☐ Go to the Bangor NOW Roe v. Wade day action (989-3306).
- ☐ Invent your own Zap action for the day.
- ☐ Talk about your views with a friend, co-worker, or family member who might think differently.



MAINE NOW  
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