

Or have you?

N.D.N.

MARCH 8, 1978

You've come a long way baby

As we go marching, marching in the beauty of the day, a million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts grey and touched with all radiance that a sudden sun discloses. For the people hear us singing,
Bread and Roses! Bread and Roses!

Few women today will remember that song or when it was first sung.

But back on this same day, in 1908, women garment workers marched in the streets of New York's Lower East Side to demand the right to vote and an end to sweatshop conditions.

On that March 8, women sang Bread and Roses for the first time. And today, its melody will be heard around the world again.

Today is International Women's Day, a day to commemorate the struggles of working women, inside and out of the home, for better working and living conditions.

Historically, it is a day of protest, and not festivity, against "the oppressive condition of women's lives."

In an interview Tuesday, Bonnie Baker, member of the board of directors for the Nelson Women's Centre said the theme for International Women's Day this year is Women and Work.

One of the things needed to be eliminated Baker said is the myth that women have come a long way.

"Even such basic rights as equal pay for equal work are not yet recognized," she said.

And she carries figures to bear out her accusations.

In 1974, women in Ontario alone lost three billion dollars annually in potential wage and salary income due to male-female inequalities, quoted one source.

Another said women typically earn 50-60 per cent of male earnings.

Many men however, continue to guffaw at any mention of discrimination against women.

Given obvious statistics which prove conclusively women have yet to achieve a state of equality in our much touted illustrious democratic system, a surprising number of men utter comments which would drive any downtrodden secretary or successful executive into a rage.

A quick polling of male staffers in this office drew the following:

"If women would quit whining about their plight and do something about it, they'd be much better off," OR "a woman is just like anyone else in business, if she's good she gets promoted, if not, she doesn't. It's got nothing to do with whether you're male or female."

And then of course there's the jokers who say all women should get back to the kitchen where they belong, barefoot and pregnant, or even one man who suggested the "women's movement" should harness all their energy and swim across the ocean so they would have much better bodies to look at.

If those comments are indicative of the shape of things, Baker is indeed right in saying women do have a long way to go yet.

The expression, women's movement, brings to many minds images of overweight, unfeminine, loud aggressive females, running around carrying placards and burning brassieres.

Well, according to Baker, nothing could be farther from the truth.

"The women's movement is every women, not a group that meets twice weekly or carries cards," said Baker who added that International Women's Day is a time for all women to reiterate to government and all people, the demands and needs of women."

What do women want?

"Things like universal daycare, legal protection against violent acts against women and children, equal pay and upgrading of pay levels for traditional women's jobs," explained Baker.

All across Canada and the world today, women will be demonstrating, protesting, marching and singing to draw light to these demands.

The B.C. Federation of Women in Vancouver has organized a "parade of recognition" through city streets there. Universities in Calgary and Edmonton will be the grounds for day long seminars and cultural events.

Here is Nelson, the women's centre at 307 Vernon St. will have an open house from noon onward. At 7:30 p.m. they will show a film called Union Maids, which depicts the life of working women. There will be an information booth set up at the Jam Factory Restaurant and a television show filmed specially will be shown on Community Video.

Friday evening, two active feminists from Victoria will supply a night of music and poetry at the Vallican Whole, with a party to follow.

Yet these events are a far cry from the 90,000 workers who poured out of Russian factories in 1917, demanding bread or the 8,000 factory workers who demonstrated on March 8, 1977 in Spain to demand equal pay, contraception, abortion and amnesty.

But they are an indication that women, whether housewives or doctors are still reaching for that hard to define, sometimes distant thing called equality.

Nelson assault

MARCH 9, 1978 N.D.N.

Assault and rape in Nelson? That sort of thing doesn't happen here. Unfortunately this is what most residents believe, giving women a false sense of security so they walk streets alone at night and relax at home with unlocked doors. For the month of January, 1978, the following statistics have been recorded with the Nelson Police Dept.:

Rapes-nil, indecent assault on females-two, indecent assault on males-two, other sexual offences-one, other assaults (including domestic)-44.

The Women's Centre reports there were two rapes in 1977. There have probably been more incidents but women might be either too frightened or ashamed to come forward (conservative estimates state that only one in ten cases of rape are reported).

We urge women to be aware and take precautions to prevent these crimes. The Women's Centre has resource material and self-defense classes available by pre-arrangement. We would further suggest the Daily News do some thorough investigative reporting on this matter and perhaps help reduce criminal assault by increasing public awareness.

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