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OUR NEW ADDRESS

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L'éditorial

Jeanne Maranda

L'argent et les femmes! Quelle contradiction! Deux notions qui n'ont jamais fait bon ménage. Qui n'a pas entendu au restaurant une femme dire, au moment de l'addition: 'Je ne sais pas compter'. Ailleurs elle dira: 'C'est mon mari qui s'occupe de tout, je n'ai pas la bosse des chiffres.' La majorité des femmes annoncent à la cantonnade: 'Moi, tout ce que je sais faire avec l'argent, c'est le dépenser.'

Il aura fallu un changement dans l'ordre social, une inflation qui a obligé les femmes à travailler à l'extérieur, les divorces et les veuvages qui démembrement les familles et ont catapulté les mères dans le rôle de parent unique pour les réveiller. La dure réalité a secoué l'apathie des femmes et du même coup elles ont vu qu'elles étaient aussi douées que les hommes pour la gestion. Sinon plus! Devenues à la fois gagne-pain et gestionnaires au foyer, elles ont vite apprivoisé la négociation d'emprunts, l'achat de propriété, le placement de leurs économies.

Et voici que les rapports femmes-argent sont devenues amicaux. Une sensation de liberté a envahi les femmes. L'argent les a rendues autonomes! Finis les quémandages pour la nourriture de la semaine, les discussions autour des achats personnels, les vacances. Elles partagent les responsabilités, elles parlent d'égal à égal!

L'autonomie financière: fonctionner sans s'accrocher aux basques de quiconque, n'est-ce pas là une clé à la reconnaissance et à l'affirmation de soi?

'L'argent est la source de tous les maux' a-t-on dit, mais si à la fin c'était l'argent qui allait donner aux femmes le sens de leur dignité, leur faciliter la route vers l'égalité en leur ouvrant le monde?

Il nous faut repenser notre conception de l'argent, balayer les tabous: l'argent n'est pas dégradant. Tentons plutôt de nous en approprier le plus possible, de le faire fructifier, d'en faire des réserves surtout. C'est à nous de faire pâlir ce spectre, par trop voyant de nos jours: la femme âgée, seule et pauvre, ce sort qui nous guette si on ne réagit pas.

Notre salut est à ce prix!

Editorial

Doris Anderson

Women pay a fearful price for the fact that they bear the future citizens of the nation. This is true, not only in third-world countries where a woman may work sixteen hours a day, carrying water, tending crops and raising the family while her husband is away at a job, but here in Canada where the price of stepping out of the work force and having children cuts many women off from job opportunities, promotions, equality in pay and adequate pension plans.

The popular image of North American women is of pampered con-

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spicuous consumers, lolling around drinking coffee and treating their husbands as money machines as the men work themselves into early heart attacks. The rare big divorce settlement when a wealthy man wants out of a marriage gets front-page treatment.

But only one in four women in Canada today is a full-time homemaker. Three out of four women work outside of the home most of their lives. They work to help their families, often to raise the family income above the poverty level. Many of them work as sole-support parents and wage earners. In addition to their 'jobs,' they go home and make dinners, wash clothes, shop, clean, look after children and do all the usual things they have been conditioned, since birth, to regard as their 'real' job. But that job brings in no pay and no pension.

The myth that someone will look after them dies hard with women in spite of the grim evidence to the contrary. Young girls still do not prepare for a lifelong career because they expect some man will turn up to whisk them off Harlequin-romance style into a never-never land of blissful secure happiness. Often married women work all of their lives in the belief that someone — their husbands or the government — will look after them in their old age.

But the grim facts are that homemakers are not enrolled in the Canada Pension Plan and only half of the men who work have pension plans. Half of those plans have no survivor benefits. Less than a third of women who work outside of the home are enrolled in pension plans.

Statistics tell the real story. Out of 100 Canadian women, 94 will marry. Only 26 women will live with their husbands until they die. Fifteen will divorce (and this statistic is rising). Fifty-three will be widowed. A total of 68 will end their lives alone. Three out of four women who are alone over the age of 65 live below the poverty level. According to a recent report from the National Council of Welfare, there are 1,219,000 women in Canada living in poverty today. By the year 2,000 there will be two-million women living in poverty, if we do nothing to change our society.

Women, particularly young women, should realize that they are going to be responsible for themselves for a good part of their lives. Yet we are still being barred from the better jobs and squeezed out of the labour force in tough economic times, underpaid for the same work, with the rationalization that women are 'secondary' workers, biding their time until they begin — or return to — the real job of homemaking.

In a logical society, then, one that gives so much worshipful lip service to the role of mother and homemaker, one would expect many more financial underpinnings for the family. If the government put its money where its rhetoric is, we would have meaningful family allowances; homemakers would be able to enrol in the Canada Pension Plan; and, above all, there would be a much more rigorous pursuit of child support. (In Canada five years after a divorce, child support is in arrears in 75 per cent of the cases.)

But, of course, we are not a logical society. Women are not protected either by private or public pensions. The state is reluctant and delinquent in exacting child support from errant spouses.

Currently, because we are in an economic recession, women are being told that the economy cannot afford to improve their lot — bring in affirmative action, improve family allowances, spend money on daycare, transition houses and so on.

But if we were absolutely logical, a very good case could be made for giving women the better jobs and the better pay since they not only live longer, but they carry a double load of responsibility.

In fact women lose out both ways. We are not paid or protected for the contribution we make as mothers of the future citizens and workers of the country. And we are tolerated and ghettoized in the work place because we carry the responsibility of two jobs.