

PORK ROAST

250 FEMINIST CARTOONS

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Avis Lang Rosenberg

PORK ROAST est une exposition et un livre de bandes dessinées sur l'humour et la satire féminines.

PORK ROASTS: 250 Feminist Cartoons, an exhibition, funded by the Canada Council, held in April and May of 1981 at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery and later shown at Ring House Gallery, University of Alberta in Edmonton; the Art Gallery at Mount Saint Vincent University of Halifax; and Powerhouse Gallery of Montreal, Quebec.

The catalogue is an 80 page comic book with a cover by Vancouver artist Colette French; a four page French cartoon introduction by Quebec artist Mira Falardeau and reproductions of one-quarter of the work from the exhibit. It costs \$2.50 (plus 75¢ postage and handling) and can be ordered from the UBC Fine Arts Gallery, Main Library, 1956 Main Hall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Y3.

Lately, the question I'm asked most is, 'How did you find all these feminist cartoons?' The answer is that I just went looking . . . so many

exist, it wasn't difficult finding them.

For this project, it seemed to make the most sense (in terms of efficiency, range, abundance, graphic punch and conceptual bite) to look for cartoons in recent feminist matter, produced by, for and about people who want to cut Patriarchy off at the pass — plus comic books and anthologies by women, a few women's magazines, and some of the illustrated publications of the Left.

In these contexts, the cartoonists don't have to fight about how to get 'OUR viewpoint into one of THEIR magazines,' as Betty Swords, a professional American cartoonist since 1955, says.

Realizations like hers that, 'I too, had done the dumb bride jokes (Do you like the steak? I boiled it myself) and 'Women don't make the jokes because they are the joke,' give a clear picture of why an alternative press exists. So, that is primarily where I looked.

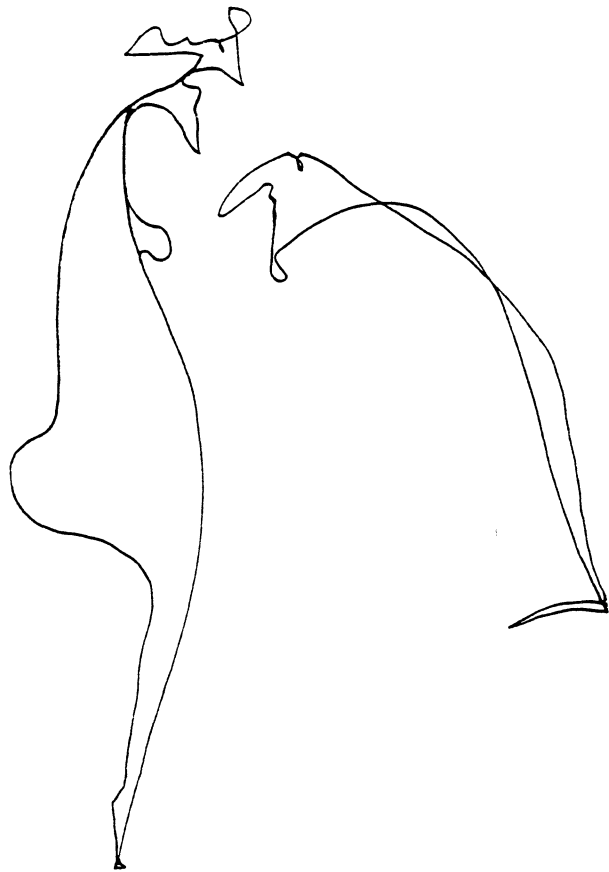
The result of my explorations was a huge pile of work on every topic from salary differentials to fellatio, from which I made a collection of cartoons. This is not an unassailable

or methodical survey of them. The figure '250' reflects the limit of the gallery budget and wall space, and my time contacting holders of copyright and communication problems.

The actual selection was a far less objective matter; others would have chosen differently. I wanted to be as flexible as possible, rather than proceeding as an 'enforcer among us,' as Andrea Dworkin has put it.

What does it mean to call a cartoon feminist? There are at least two pieces of writing that answer this question better than I could. They are hilarious, fierce and true. They are: 'Why We Aren't Laughing Anymore' by Naomi Weisstein in the November 1973 issue of *Ms.* magazine and the 'Dear Gloria' letter by Mary Kay Blakely that opens *Pulling Our Own Strings*.

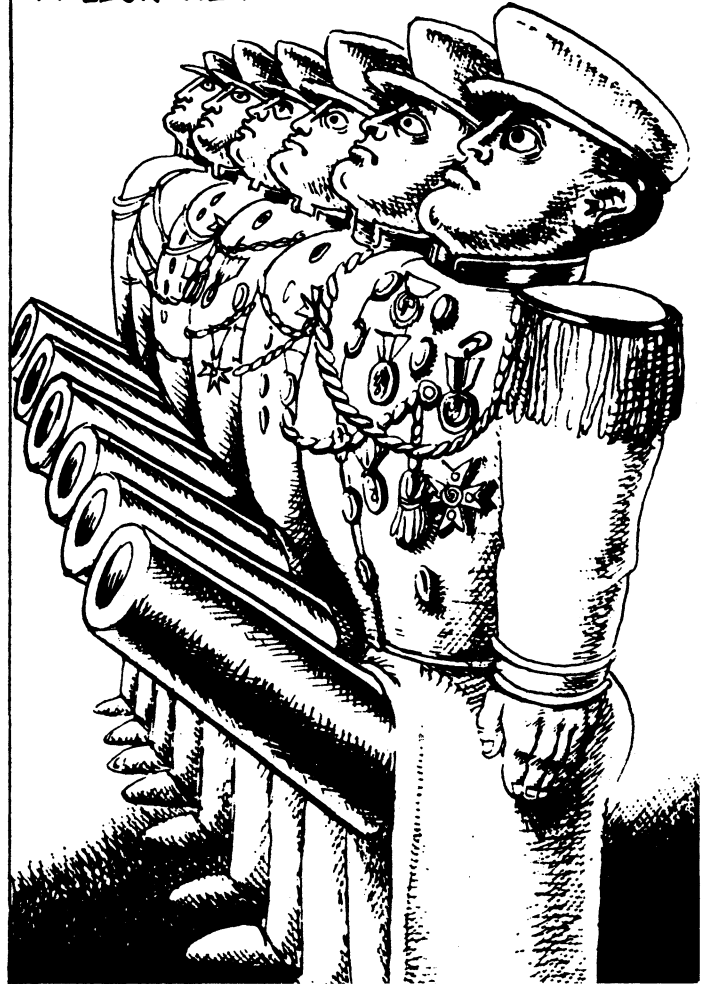
So, with Blakely's comment that, 'There's nothing like a good, pedantic send-off on your way into a book of humor,' — let me offer a one-sentence answer. Calling a cartoon 'feminist' means that it begins from an understanding of women's circumstances as women; that the situation depicted is largely shaped by the gender of the characters; that



Sarah Jackson © 77

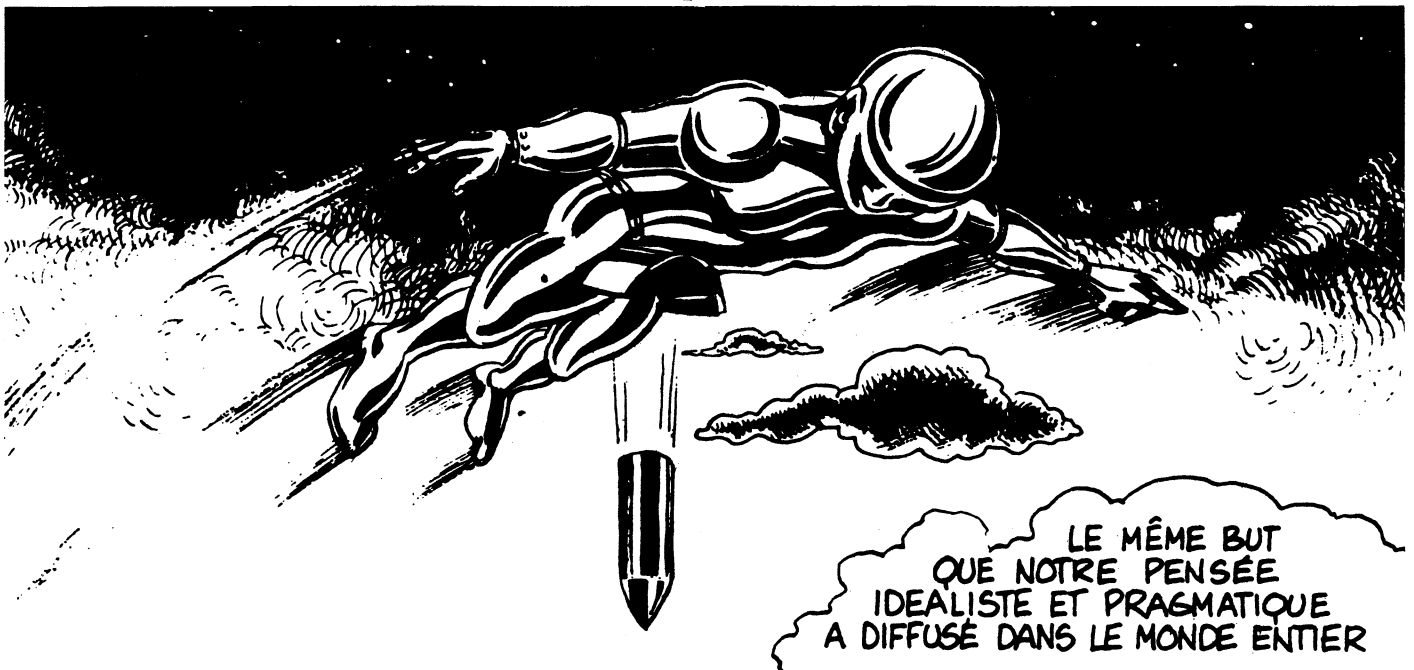
Tif Luvy

ON A DONNÉ AUX MASSES INFORMES
LA CIVILISATION, LE SAVOIR ET UN BUT
À LEUR VIE.



2

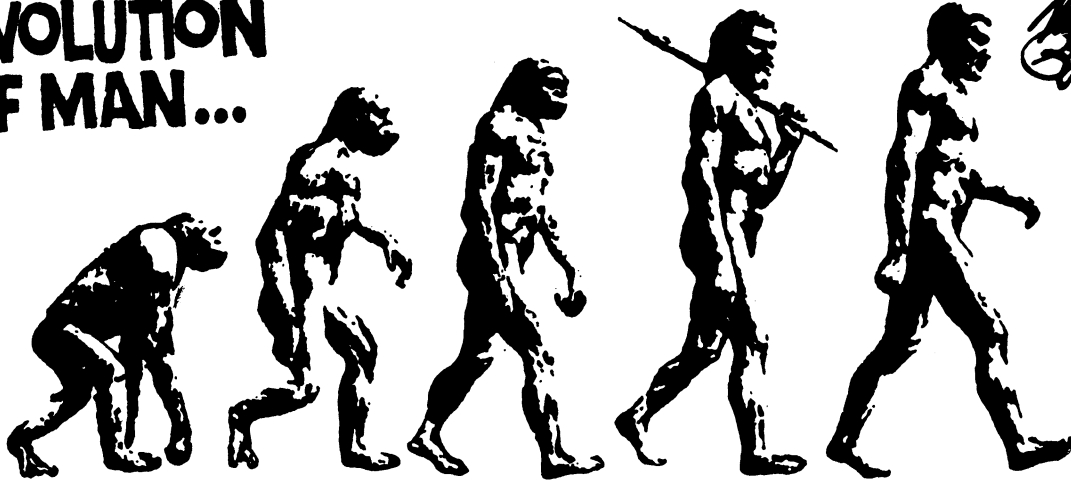
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LE MÊME BUT
QUE NOTRE PENSÉE
IDEALISTE ET PRAGMATIQUE
A DIFFUSÉ DANS LE MONDE ENTIER

4

EVOLUTION OF MAN...



© 1980 DAYTON DAILY NEWS

Mike Peters, DAYTON DAILY NEWS, 1980. (USA)

and woman.



5

6

BODY POLITICS

G. BYRD



I was so naive.



I built my world around him.



Then he left.



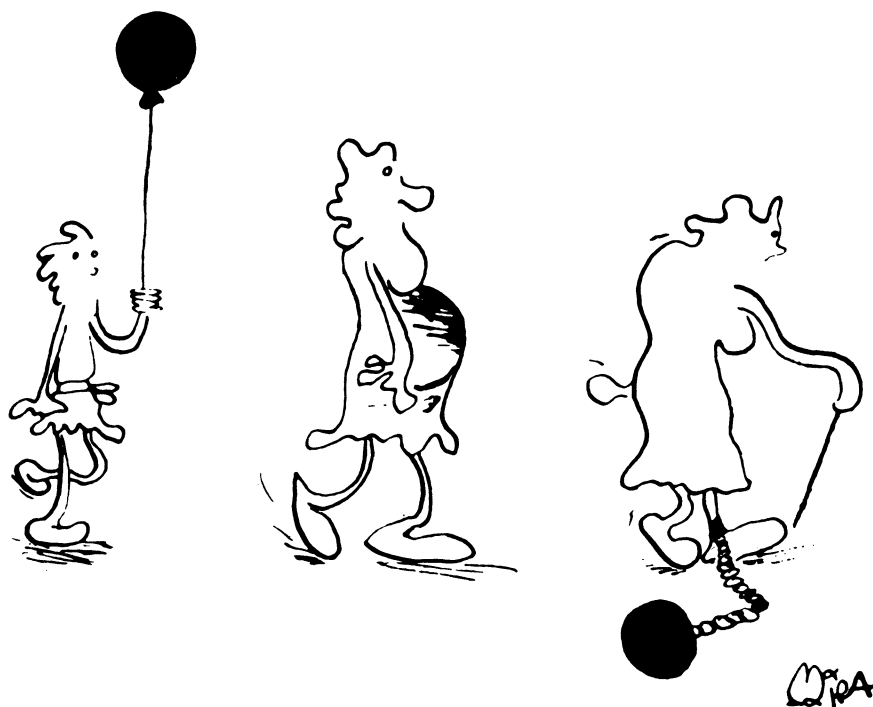
I was stuck with his world minus him.



So, I held a garage sale.



© G. B.



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some basic women's truths are exposed; that male-female norms are thrown up for grabs; that women get a noticeably better deal than usual — or the raw deal we so often get is made very clear.

You don't have to be a card-carrying female to produce a feminist cartoon. Nor does a cartoon done by a woman guarantee it speaks fairly on our behalf, or speaks of us at all.

Few characterizations of well-to-do women, for example, dismiss their human worth more thoroughly than Helen Hokinson's idiotic, oblivious and parasitic 'ladies' who waddled through the *New Yorker* during the 30's and 40's. Their utterances by the way, were often devised by James Reid Parker.

About an eighth of the cartoons in this exhibit are by men. It is just not the case that only men are keeping the Phallocracy alive and well. Canada and England have each contributed about a fifth of the cartoons; slightly more than two-fifths are from the U.S. and the remainder include works from Germany, France, Italy, New Zealand and India. The arbitrary and random distribution should be seen as an

indication of how much more there must be, and how much has been left out.

The show ranges from the drawbacks of breast-feeding to a revised scenario for Rapunzel's long hair; from bitter to wry; from witty to offensive. A series of categories provides a bit of order: Life in the Phallocracy, Motherhood and Homework, Workout in the Work World, Picturing the Situation, Body/Beauty/Womanhood, Coupling (In Bed or Thereabouts), Changing the Script — and as a post-script, We're Not Perfect Yet.

I received a letter from a Canadian cartoonist who said:

'I do very much want to be in a feminist cartoon show. I don't want to be in a show entitled 'Pork Roasts' . . . I've been trying to decide whether it's more important to support a woman's show or to protest sexist feminism which the title represents. I know you must have thought about it but really, I think the title isn't funny or 'politically correct' for feminists in 1981. It suggests 'men are all pigs' which may have been a necessary philosophy in the beginning but now is too limiting . . . '

She has misconstrued the title. What is being roasted in this show is not men although one cartoon by Chocolate Waters gets close — with the question, 'If they can put one man on the moon, why can't they put them all there?'

What is being roasted are the habits, expectations, demands and beliefs born of presumptions of male dominance, male privilege and male power. Certainly there is revenge, hate and fury in some of the cartoons; to omit that dimension would be a falsification. But taken as a whole, the exhibit puts the skewer through societal values, postures and institutions, not individuals. It is a critique of patriarchal patterns, rather than an accusation of men.

Some years have passed since November 1977 when *Ms.*

magazine ran a cartoon cover by Marie Severin showing a male 'expert' asking a woman if she realizes that the women's movement has no sense of humour, to which she answers, 'No . . . but hum a few bars and I'll fake it.'

Nine to Five is playing in the Theatres. *Pulling Our Own Strings* is available in a lot of bookstores now. Allan Fotheringham began his column in the February 23, 1981 *Maclean's* by saying: 'If you really wish to know the state of the House of Commons in relation to the real world, MP Pat Carney is the only mother west of the Lakehead.'

The Patriarchy is getting to be almost as good a target as women have been in the past. A few hundred feminist cartoons may seem like a banquet, but it's only the *hors d'oeuvres*.

Cartoons:

- 1 *Pork Roasts*, Rosenberg (B.C.)
- 2 *Tit Envy*, Jackson (Nova Scotia)
- 3 *Male*, Capuana (Italy)
- 4 same as above
- 5 *Evolution of Man*, Peters (U.S.A.)
- 6 *Garage Sale*, Byrd
- 7 *Three Ages of Woman, from Balloon to Ball and Chain*, Falardeau (Quebec)

Cartoons reproduced from 'Port Roasts'