



Women & Building

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3 OCT. 1980

FROM THE EDITOR OF VOL.1., No.3

It is pleasing to receive news from the four corners of the world, so as to create something in common. To begin with, I'd like to apologize for not having kept to the deadline of this newsletter, but work, to which I decided to give priority, forced the delay.

As coordinator of the WOMEN NETWORK I would like to recall how the International Assembly defined the term 'network':

"International Networks are means of linking together Grail participants from various countries who are involved in specific areas of life and action which have been identified as important dimensions of the Grail. Grail's purpose is to bring about exchange and to develop common policies and goals leading to collective action."

In the sequence of this statement a WOMEN'S NETWORK newsletter should be a space, where reflection and concrete actions on the problematic of women can be shared.

Therefore there should be a certain criterion in the articles that are sent to be published, because some articles I received would be better placed in a Grail International newsletter rather than in such a specific publication.

I would also like to remind that my appeal for a more rigorous criterion with regard to the articles submitted, rests in the conviction that, what we are doing and what we proposed for reflection can provide a challenge and a source of inspiration for the work in which we are involved.

In this way, this newsletter should lead to lateral communication between those who feel closer affinity.

Fátima Grácio, Portugal.

---:---:WHO ARE WE?:---:---

Farley, Janet. 5401 Woodcrest Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa. 19131 U.S.A.



Farrow, Pam. I'm fifty years old. I'm involved in some projects of Grail and professionally I work as secretary at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Groothuizen, Dó. Prisenracht 115, 1015/DP Amsterdam, Holland. Finished my teacher's course. Since 1929 connected with the Grail movement. In 1953 President of the Grail in the Netherlands. From 1961 - 1974 in Rome on the Staff of the Delegation of the Holy See to FAO - as Liaison for women's work. Assisted church workers in developing countries in explaining the material available to them through FAO know-how. After retirement in Amsterdam greatly involved in programs for women of denominational or non-denominational organizations.

van Kersbergen, Lydwine. Amstelveenseweg 116^I, 1075 XK Amsterdam, Holland. Inspired by Father van Ginneken, set up the Grail as a movement of women conscious of their task in the Church - the world. First in the Netherlands, then in Australia and in 1940 in the U.S.A. Continued interest in women's questions especially in feminist theology.

Kangye, Deminy. The Grail Masaka, Box 432, Masaka, Uganda

de Koning, Marijke. Rua do Cunha, 361 2^o Dto. 4200 Porto Portugal.

Leal, Ivone. Av. Infante Santo, 63 1^o Esc. 1300 Lisboa Portugal.

Larsen, Paula. Malderburchtstraat 564, 6535NW, Nijmegen, Holland. I am working as a psychologist/therapist mostly with adult women: religious, single, married, divorced.

Manorama, Ruth. 71 Tilak Najar, IV Block Jaya Nagar, Bangalore- 560011, India. I am working as a development educator in the Grail Mobile Training Unit - Bangalore Team, involving myself in the programmes of education and organization, and also training several groups (animation



NGO Forum
Copenhagen, 1980

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo
Fundação Cuidar o Futuro
Talk on "Equality in Political Power"
July 15, 1980

In "Women Building"
grail international women's Network Newsletter
n°3 - oct 1980



workers, women groups - church and communities -, students youth, in motivating them to become involved in the process of Social Transformation.

Makhanya, Thoko. 31 Chapel Street, Overport, 4001 Durban South Africa. I am working with young people and organizing groups of Catholic nurses' guild. I am making contact with people involved in some in-depth research on women issues. I am tutor in a college of Nursing.

^{Luisa}
Berta Valente, ~~Lurdes~~ Tavares, Irene, Lucy Matoso, Lurdes ^{PINTO} ~~Matoso~~. Our age-group is 29 - 40 and we have formed a reflection group on the way women see the world and vice-versa. The contact-person is Berta Valente- Rua Lopes de Oliveira, Lote D, Parede, Portugal.

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Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo was invited to talk on the panel about equality, to approach the theme 'equality in political power'. This talk took place during the WORLD CONFERENCE OF WOMEN, in the non-governmental organisations forum. It is a challenge to our reflection on a problematic that we, as women, sometimes try to solve in a non-creative way.

(for more information on this World Conference, see notice entitled IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES)

EQUALITY IN POLITICAL POWER

1. Equality. With what? What are the norms? With whom are we going to be equal? I don't take for granted that the norm is men, even in the exercise of political power. /

As women, if we have access to so-called political power, we have to change the very nature of that political power. We know what it has done, what it insists on doing and therefore the only real interest for women to get into the arena of political power is to bring about another type of concepts,



not only of how power is exercised, but also how you can inter-weave the different elements that make up the policy of a country, either interiorly or in its relations with other countries. /

2. This does mean a tremendous struggle and implies and demands uncommon attitudes, uncommon options and also a radical change of concepts. And we have to be ready to pay the price for it; I am banned by the government of my own country. /

Therefore any time that you attempt to change and to introduce something that is different - and not because it is different - but because you are a different being, you immediately become a threat to the establishment. You become a threat mainly, not so much because you behave according to this or that ideology but because what you say and what you do is to some extent unforeseeable. /

3. As women, we are dealing with reality. We are - even when men call us idealistic - extremely pragmatic and it is those pragmatic steps which take into account the wellbeing of people and the basic human needs that disrupt the superstructure where men get themselves involved in terms of political power. Where they like to imagine that everything goes for the best in the best of the worlds and when at the same time they get the acknowledgement of being up there on a platform, which appears to them as extremely rewarding. /

4. I would like to start from my own experience. When have I experienced equality?

Equality, the general term, equality with men as they are, I have experienced in what I call frontier-situations. In the exciting months of rupture, of radical change. There you could not make a distinction between men and women because we were all caught in the same drive. Nobody had stereotypes at that moment - not even about political behaviour. The whole country was going to be shaped in a new way. I was not only prime-minister last year but I was minister of social affairs in the first year after the revolution in my own country and at that time equality was something that you could experience at all moments, because the revolutionary ideal got us all in the same wavelength.

5. I have also experienced in the contact with the people. And I can say, coming from a country which is South from the North



that the real simple people in the rural areas, in the factories wherever, even in the shipyards, where only men work, do not discriminate at all against a woman exercising political power.

It is when we come to the upper classes of society that women exercising political power are discriminated. Because, indeed, they disrupt the prestige men have acquired and they disrupt very basically the prestige the wives of those men have, because these women are nothing but the mirrors of their husbands.

But the people in general? Thinking not only of a developing country like my own, but also of people in highly industrialized countries who have to undergo a lot of work, a lot of frustration commuting from the job to their homes - being subject to all the demands of the consumer society, we verify that they too identify and recognise a woman in any function of political power without discrimination.

6. A third group with whom I experienced equality in a strong way has been with women who have nothing to loose. These are women who have acquired a very high degree of awareness of their situation as women and as oppressed beings. When women who have nothing to loose have identified with me in my own struggle - then I have felt completely equal. I have felt behind me an esteem which is not in official figures and official laws, but is in something that gives you much more strength than the formal esteem would have.

7. I have also experienced equality in the traditional sense, I think we shouldn't make a point about that. At this moment in society, technical questions and managerial tasks of governing either in local, at national or even at international level, can be tackled equally by men or women. Equally, I mean, with the same capacity to deal with them in a strict point of view.

8. Can we say that there is equality? Of course there is not. Women practically have the right to vote everywhere, nevertheless they don't exercise their right to vote as fully as men, the percentage is always lower, they don't elect other women and there are few women in decision-making.

As a friend of mine from Finland pointed out in a recent meeting of Unitar, even when there is a great number of women and a high percentage in a national governing or legislative body



she mentioned 26% of women in the Finnish parliament - even then you can ask if those women make a difference. Or are they, like in the labour-force, just adding to the numbers that already are there? Is there a difference?

9. Some quantitative facts are always pointed out: that there are more women exercising political power at the local level than at national level. Well but what after that? If those facts that we know all about are clear, I think that there is one element that is extremely important: it is that women exercising power in the traditional way may behave as men do and certainly ^{many} of us do that. But I am convinced that when the quantity will amount to a certain number, a qualitative change will take place. And the impact of women will really be felt, not only because person A, B or C is quite different and quite aware of her own being as a woman, but because that force of women will try, will express sociologically another type of concern.

10. I think however that the direct change at a qualitative level is very important. I think that we have to be aware that there are women who are trying to exercise political power in a way in which it is exercised on the same platform as men, but because these women are on the same platform and they are sure that they are equal, they can dare to be different. They can dare to be just what they are. And just what they are may very often mean breaking the rules as they have been used by men without really being challenged.

That being different, certainly, will point to other sets of values. There is nothing more disrupting in a society than the emergence of new values, because they will put very strong demands on the routine to which we all finally are submitted.

11. I would ask what is so interesting about exercising political power as men do? At the recent seminar of Unitar I could not resist telling a story which I can't resist telling now. In '75 several women ministers from Eastern and Western Europe met in Belgium at the invitation of the minister of culture. It was a very nice cosy atmosphere. A woman who was at the time minister of justice and culture in Denmark was asking the minister of health from the Netherlands. The three of us were sharing notes on what we had been doing and the one from Denmark says to the Dutch one: "What have you been doing lately?"



She thought for a while and replied: "Well, you know, a lot of nonsense and a few nice things."

I ask who are the men who would be able to say that? That a lot of the red tape in whatever administration really is a lot of nonsense; in the midst of it there are some nice things which need to be done and which indeed mean an improvement in peoples' lives.

12. So for me, equality is an attitude but it is also a social acknowledgement. We often tend to think more of the social acknowledgement but we have got to be ourselves.

13. I would like to specify some traps in which we women very often fall even in the analysis we make about women in political power.

It is obvious that some special portfolios or some sectors of activity in one country have been exercised by women. Health, welfare, social affairs, education, culture, environment, these have been the first fields in which women have exercised political power at local and at national level. Often there has been criticism among us, among feminist circles saying this is that way because those sectors are 'soft' issues. In a way they are a continuation of what women have always done. I would agree to some extent. It is very seldom that you see women having responsibility in terms of foreign affairs, economics, industry. But I think that it is important to stress something. To call social and cultural issues 'soft' issues at this time, at this turning of civilization, is a trap. These issues are 'soft' for those whose concept of development, of planning, of government-program is fragmented and sectorial and goes along with the system and the rules of the status quo.

But when these issues are taken in a government-program which is basically inter-sectorial and which is geared towards the fulfillment of the needs of real people, they can be a challenge to the whole system. I know of situations in which somebody having a portfolio on a soft issue became the major threat to the establishment. Have women been aware of that? I think we are not sufficiently aware. Our action in those fields should be much more daring and much more unique in a way. Much more positive.

We should take stock of what is going on in the world.



For me this is an example of how women are following the same pattern as men, by exercising or thinking that to exercise political power is just a question of management and introducing a few important changes once in a while. I think women have not seen enough of the significance of such fields of action in terms of radical social change. I am stressing that because the opinion of imminent economists is that economic science is coming to an end and is failing to come to grips with the present change. If we don't appeal to cultural values and to the fundamental cultural concepts of culture at the basis of development, we are not getting anywhere, neither in the South nor in the North.

14. I also think that another trap we fall into is that we consider political power very often as we would consider any other business - a kind of career. I am convinced that it is not. If women want another type of society, another way of conceiving the theory and the praxis of politics, something else is needed. It is not so much professional politics but the political dimension of all spheres of life. And if this political dimension comes to the fore, then all women, as all men are ready to exercise political functions. I think, here again, women have a lot to say.

15. To list some other aspects of the contradictions of political power as lived by women: central power versus local power, giving back power to the people versus the need for motivations, for inspiration, for more than the sum total that we get through the representative democracy and also the de-mythologising power, which some will call populism versus the need that exists everywhere for distant secluded political figures, which in fact can become elements of security for everyone.

Finally the concept of political power like the concept of development has been dealt with much of a mechanical way. What do I mean by that? Political power is person A exercising certain force over person, institution, society or nation B, minus the reaction that that other person, institution or society has against A. This is a strictly mechanical view.

But we don't live in the realm of simple and harsh mechanical facts any longer. Power can be seen in the thermodynamic



equilibrium of the whole cosmos and of society. It requires then another concept of energy. Energy which is at once heat and animated matter. Energy which can only be grasped in the systemic balance of the different living organisms. Energy which partly dissipates itself and partly animates from within. all the matter involved in any physical transformation. I assume that power in this context is leadership. It means sense of purpose and direction capacity to generate energy around and within.

--:--WOMEN AND THE CHURCH--:--

from Anita Saisi - Italy

The so-called "base christian communities" in Italy are formed by groups of people who gather together in order to live their faith according to the Gospel and to take an active participation in the transformation of society. There are many communities all over Italy and I usually go to their national meeting. This year it took place last April in Verona and I went with Claudia, Gemma and Antonella. There was a workgroup on women and we thought it would be interesting for our participation in the Grail network.

After an introduction on the present situation of the church, the participants divided into four groups according to these themes: 1. Youth

2. Women

3. Work and unemployment

4. Cultural base animators.

I joined a group of about 25 women from all over Italy. There was a spontaneous exchange of how each woman had lived faith in these past years. From what was said 2 approaches were clear:

1. Many women in the early seventies left the church and the search for faith and joined feminist groups in order to start their conscientisation as regards their role in a patriarchal society of which the church is part with its exclusive male members. Only very recently have some of them felt the need to re-think their faith and they carry on this search within one of these base communities.



2. Other women said that they had been in a community for years where they had learned to discover the radicality of the Gospel and to reach, at the same time, a personal liberation as women, through the Word of God and community life. From both these experiences it was clear that the integration as women and as christians was still to come about. I felt all the richness of our Grail life where political options and the problematic of woman have never been separated from the search for God. There could be a real contribution to make, but it is difficult to organise a meeting with women coming from so many parts of Italy.

As a general conclusion I can say that the situation of women in Italy as regards faith and the church presents 3 aspects:

- 1) The majority follow a traditional pattern of religion based on essential practices without real or active participation.
- 2) An ever-growing number of women abandon the church and any religious practice or any interest in faith.
- 3) A minority group, specially these women belonging to base communities, that discover a more responsible way to be a christian and to integrate their growing awareness as women with their faith.

We feel that the search of the third group, where we place ourselves, needs a more serious theological reflection and a deeper sharing of both personal and communal experience.

--:--BUILDING WOMEN--:--

from the International Presidency Team on Nigeria

A "Workshop for Women" was held during 8 Saturdays, from April - June, 1980 in Ajegungle, the huge ($\frac{1}{2}$ million population) slum area of Lagos, Nigeria. The 30 women who took part came from the Women's Centre of the Ajegungle Community Project where Joan Dilworth has worked for the past 4 years, or from the new groups just coming into being in Olodi, Amukoko and Maroko where living conditions are similar. Martha George of the Lagos Grail, who is engaged in a research and educational experimentation program with women in low-income areas, has been instrumental in developing the last three groups.



The Workshop gave the participants some practical training in various aspects of home economics and health care, identified as most needed in their living circumstances; but, more important, it helped the women to reflect on the lives and problems of their fellow-women. (Women in these slums on the city periphery are almost all newcomers to the city, having been brought in on marriage by their husbands already settled there. They are often very isolated, have no way of articulating their needs and they lose status because they are unable to make an economic contribution to the family as they did in their village or traditional home-town.) The participants also had practice in how to lead learning sessions with adults. Martha is continuing to work with all these groups while Theresa Garuba, also of Lagos Grail, is specially involved with the women of Maroko.

from Jaya - India

We organised a 'Women's Awareness Program' in which many women from slums participated to share with each other their role as women and the oppression they face. The women also expressed their need to form a Women's Organisation to fight injustices. On this occasion we brought out a card to show the contrast in the expected role and status of a woman in India and exactly what a Woman's role can be. I am translating the quotation into English:

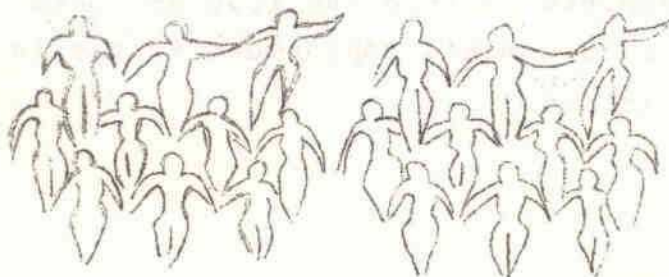
Manu says

She should do nothing
independently
Even in her own house.
In childhood subject
to her father,
In youth to her husband,
And when her husband is dead,
to her sons.
She should never enjoy
independence ...

Working Woman says ...

I shall drive away the enemy
To save our people
I shan't be content
with the customary fate
of women
To bow their heads as slaves.

Working Women and Tilling Women Unite



from April Mc Coneghey - U.S.A.

GRAIL RURAL WOMEN'S PROJECTS AND WOMEN'S
EMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S.A.

Over the past 10 years in the U.S.A., there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women working full or part-time outside the home. This fact both reflects and represents significant social change that affects the society as a whole and individual women as they seek and hold jobs.

The Grail Rural Women's Projects are trying to face both of these dimensions of women's employment issues. Since 1976, various Grail members have been working in the area surrounding Grailville to help women prepare for finding or changing jobs. We have specially focussed on the needs of rural women for employment because so many government and social programs are designed for urban people, leaving those in rural settings behind.

Currently, the Grail has several government and church grants to continue the work. Maria Buivenvoorden and April McConeghey together with Mary Gindhart as director and a number of community women are staffing the projects. From September to November, we will run workshops entitled The Job Market and You, designed to teach women how to recognize their own skills, abilities, and values and how to find jobs and/or training that will suit them. We expect that 50 to 75 women will participate. Also we will open 3 Drop-In Centres in communities around us where women can come for information about jobs or for help in the process of finding jobs. By next summer, we will have a manual ready that will give a course outline and materials for anyone who wants to work on employment needs with rural women.

Over the years of the Rural Women's Projects, we have prepared booklets and reports about the work. Several of these might be specially interesting:

New Directions for Rural Women

Report prepared for the World Conference of
the UN Decade for Women, 1980

Final reports on 1978 and 1979 projects

To give you an idea of women's employment issues in the States here are some statistics.



There are 43 million women, both married and single, working outside the home and representing more than half of all American women. Of these women 16 million have children who are under 18 years of age. More than 40% of all working women are 'heads of households' which means that they provide the major source of income for their families and that others depend on their income. Another 20% of them are married but their husbands make salaries that are considered to be less than adequate in this economy by the U.S. government standards, so these women's incomes are essential to their families, too.

These social changes for U.S. society have impact on U.S. working people and businesses, on women's roles and expectations, and on family life.

Discrimination against women in employment is now illegal in the U.S., but many long-time patterns and prejudices hold women back. Of working women, nearly 80% fill jobs that are traditional women's jobs (secretary, sales clerk, teacher, nurse, social worker), and these are relatively lower paying jobs here. On the average, women who work full-time earn only 3/5 of the salaries earned by men. Women, then, experience real discrimination in job availability and in earnings. Women of racial and ethnic minority groups usually face double discrimination against them as minority persons and as women.

Government agencies and women's unions and organizations are taking actions to change the employment situation for women, but progress is slow.

Individual women feel various dimensions of these changes in their own lives. Many women work because they enjoy the challenge and productivity of their jobs. But more and more women in the U.S.A. have to work in order to support themselves or to make essential contributions to family income.

Women often start looking for jobs when they start feeling economically pinched because the family income does not meet family needs or when a crisis like husband's death or divorce occurs. Women who have been homemakers for many years are frequently rusty in their skills, short on education or low on self-confidence when they begin job-seeking.



These factors put them at a big disadvantage.

Women who are employed often continue to carry the major household tasks in their families and the responsibility for the children while they are gone. In essence they have two jobs -- one at home and one away from home.

Women's employment is an interesting and crucial area for our Grail work at this time.

If you would like copies of the Rural Women's Project materials, please write to:

Rural Women's Projects
Grailville
Loveland, Ohio 45140
U.S.A.

--:--:BUILDING GRAIL GROUPS:--:--

from the Women's Network - Netherlands

Reading the Bible with women's eyes

Two years ago we had a good weekend on 'Women in the Gospel of St. John' at the Piltensberg. Our resource person was Maria de Groot, a poet and theologian of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Maria put to us some questions which were thought-provoking and a help for our discussions, questions which we thought could be of help for other groups or individuals interested in feminist theology. Maybe your answer to one or more of the questions could result into a contribution to the next copy of 'Women Building'?

1. People are often valued and devalued on the basis of sex. Does this seem to you in agreement with the text in John 10: 9 and 10.
2. The direct and fully equal relationship between women and Jesus (disciple, deaconess, apostle, friend) challenges us to by-pass and to defy age-old teachings. Which clichés and prejudices regarding women could together with those teachings disappear. (Compare John 11: 21-27, John 4: 7-26, John 12: 3).



3. Just imagine this:

"On this Martha (John 11: 27) and Mary (John 12:3) I will build my Church".

What would such a Church look like?

4. The story in John 20 portrays Mary Magdalen as the first and great witness, the first apostle. Through tradition we have learnt to see Mary Magdalen mainly as the contrite sinner and the woman from whom seven devils had been driven out. Just forget for a moment all you learnt and see what image and impression she then makes on you in the scene of the Garden.

5. a. The family is the foundation of society.

b. "What is there between you and me?" (John 2: 4)

c. "My mother and brothers are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 8: 21)

Try to relate these three quotations with one another.

6. Images and presentations, myths and symbols often decide our behaviour. The myth of sexism (devaluation of women on the basis of sex) remains the deciding factor for conditioning our behaviour as long as no new symbols for human life are found.

Lazarus (the revived), Martha (the deaconess) and Mary (the loving one) became new people through Jesus (John 12) who overcame the old relationships. In which way would Christ want to renew us?

Can you think of an image of the new life you are seeking?

--:IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES:--

from Dé Broothuizen - Netherlands

Copenhagen



I am sure the media have informed you about the events so I only want to give you some impressions and suggestions.

All of us painfully felt the many tensions in the world of today, conflicts among peoples and nations, suffering because of exploitation, injustice, discrimination and poverty, to mention only some points.



Our solidarity has been challenged, and I hope that after the many words and papers this experience will be translated into deeds.

There were two types of meetings:

- the Conference - in the Bella Centre - where approximately 140 government delegations and several non-governmental (N.G.O.) like UFER were present.
- the Forum - an alternative meeting where N.G.O's and in fact every interested person could participate. The only thing to do was to give your name, background and country, and you received the obliged identity card, which you had to carry in a visible way. Around 8000 persons participated! The meetings were in an immense university building and other institutions of learning nearby. UFER delegates could go to the Conference and to the Forum; for each event there was a different ticket!

A newspaper with the program was daily available and on the first day we already knew what the Forum had planned. There were days with something like 130 workshops, panels and other meetings planned so you could decide where to go. One day I was in the Forum the whole day and participated in two workshops, organised by two different ecumenical women's groups, about the situation of migrant women in different parts of the world. For me it was a stimulating and very inspiring day. The Forum was a creative and more free event and I think this was so because there was less political pressure. Participants did not come with answers in line with their country's politics... but in spite of that, politics were not totally absent from the Forum.

In the Conference we had plenary meetings and committees. Only governmental delegates could speak, propose changes in content and formulation of the action plan. And they did! My goodness... it was sometimes an endless chain of interventions, statements, etc. They went on 13 full meeting days and on the last night July 30-31, till 3.30 in the morning. At such meetings the tension was felt, caused by 'Block Politic'. The result was: the plan of action for the coming five years was accepted by 84 countries; 22 countries abstained and 4 countries voted against. Now it will be discussed at the next U.N. session!!



I'd like to close by telling you that the Churches in Copenhagen had provided useful information in small folders. One evening we had an ecumenical prayer service in a beautiful old Lutheran Church. It was led by the woman minister, who had been a missionary in India before.

It was an inspiration and an encouragement to meet women from India, Tanzania, U.S.A., South Africa, etc. and from the World Council of Churches who told us how they had met the Grail and admired the work done by our people. Alleluia!

I hope you will now begin to find out what can be done in your situation, get the world plan and inquire about the national program. Then everyone can cooperate in her own situation to work in a concrete way, with all our 'sisters' near and far, to become free and convinced participants in the building of a better world for all.

from Marita Estor - Germany

Copenhagen - a delegate's view



In the very beginning of the World Conference Eileen Schaeffler, Dé Groothuizen and myself met with Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, who shared her views on equality at the Forum. Just about a year ago Maria as newly appointed Prime Minister of Portugal had shared her hopes with us at the General Assembly. She now shared her experiences as a woman in a government office. It's a man's world still and in Copenhagen, during the Conference, in our work in the German Government Delegation, we felt continually that the men were controlling the issues, setting the tone and determining the rules. For me it was a great source of strength to meet Eileen and Dé and to experience our roots, our task and solidarity in the Grail.

Under the glass-covered Bella Centre, all the issues of a world struggling and longing for peace were present. Women as the ones who carry most of the suffering and burden were the topic, the focal point, not a marginal issue. But still their voices were not always their own. Somebody called the Conference "a man's conference in woman's garb". All the issues and words men fight about in all UN-Conferences were there.



Whether the word 'Zionism' should be introduced into the World Program of Action as an equivalent oppression along with colonialism, imperialism, racism, apartheid - such topics absorbed energy, time and attention which were withdrawn from the women's concrete concerns like water supply, basic needs, primary health care. On the other hand, the women from the Third World realized that political and economic dependence are the primary causes of their problems. I think this was the reason why they supported the cause of the Palestinians. For me as a member of the German delegation however, this was deeply wounding, because without the Holocaust of Millions of Jewish People by a German Government, this problem could be quite different. However, seeing the hatred of the Palestinians and the self-justification of the Israelis - how can there ever be peace?

A brilliant young feminist parliamentarian from New Zealand pleaded that the word 'sexism' should also be inserted as an evil to be condemned like racism. This was strongly rejected by most of the men, the socialist countries and the countries of the Third World. Was it seen as a threat? The men quickly turned to issues they were familiar with and that do not touch them as persons. The representatives of the socialist countries in any case firmly believed that they had achieved equality. Possibly the Third World countries thought that this emphasis could divert the energies needed in their common struggle of men and women. And yet, there was a deep solidarity among the women with regard to their concerns. Resolutions that dealt with prostitution, women in extreme poverty, battered women, elderly women or disabled women were carried by consensus. The World Program of Action puts forward concrete measures in the fields of employment, education and health.

Will there be a change in the situation of women during the second half of the Decade (1980 - 1985)? I think we as Grail should study carefully the World Program of Action and place our own efforts within this main stream of women's struggle for development, equality and peace. We can bring to it our own firm hope in Christ's liberating death and resurrection.



????????????????????"A NEW NETWORK?"????????????????????

Come thoughts and suggestions for initiating

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK HEALTH - WHOLENESS

The topic could refer to elements like:

Realising that

1. HEALTH is deeply connected with a world to be redeemed (see life of Jesus, message)
2. HEALTH - in a more comprehensive view of the modern world and development gains momentum increasingly
3. HEALTH - and WOMAN have moreover a specific link, since she
 - is life-bearer - child-raiser - since in her role in the family she stands for life and wholeness
 - since also to concrete health care woman is usually the main agent in MNC (Mother-Child-Care), PNC (Primary Health Care) and often also in community organisation.

She is the ideal agent to build up from grassroot level all that is connected with health in the widest sense (physically; food, hygiene, care; psychologically; peace, strength, harmony, creative innovations etc.) She intuitively grasps the divine healing element.

- since more than 50% of all health care is provided by women.

4. In the GRAIL (surely no mere accident) a considerable number of members (see figures from the 1978 census) are working in the health sector, on primary and secondary level, in nursing and in nursing education, health education and promotion of community health organisation.

There is a considerable know-how and potential just in this relevant sector - a challenge we should not ignore. From our mission as Grail there would be certainly a message today.

After such a sort of introduction, one could ask, who is interested in participating, who would volunteer to serve as communicator co-ordinator for certain regions.

Those indicating interest could immediately suggest areas of interest, ideas and suggestions for the specific goal of such a network etc.

Magdalene Oberhoffer.



Here in Germany Magdalene Oberhoffer has suggested the launching of an 'International Network Health - Wholeness'. The IPT would not think, however, in terms of setting up another separate Network but rather of having the Women's Network incorporate the health issue. Many Grail members are in the field of health and could become enthusiastic about this idea.

What is your reaction?

LOOKING AHEAD TO VOL. 2, number 1

the editor of the next WOMEN BUILDING is

Moya Merrick
22 McHatton Street
North Sydney, N.S.W. 2060 AUSTRALIA

→ The deadline is January 15, 1981 ←

--:--BOOKS--:--

Resi Bokmeier, a member of the Grail in Germany working in the Adult Education Center of the Diocese of Eppingen-Stuttgart, has written a handbook entitled 'Nur Hausfrau?' (Just a housewife?). It is a guide for the preparation of Seminars for housewives aimed at awakening self-realisation. The book, which has run into 3 editions, contains program outlines, material for discussion and practical hints on how to organise.

Les nouveaux féminismes : Question pour les chrétiens? by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo. LES EDITIONS DU CERF PARIS 1980

In the book we find the texts of five conferences Maria gave in the 'Institut Catholique' of Paris during February-March 1979

In the first three conferences Maria reflects on the implications of the woman struggle for liberation, since the second half of the sixties. In the last two conferences she is deepening out the question of what the new feminist movements mean for christianity. Nothing better than the titles of the conferences will challenge you to read the book:

- I Les nouveaux mouvements de femmes: que veulent-ils?
- II La parole des femmes: que disent-elles?
- III PAROLE-ACTION: de l'histoire individuelle exemplaire à l'action collective engagée
- IV La symbolique primordiale du christianisme affrontée au féminisme contemporain
- V Des femmes qui font exister l'Eglise

