

The struggles of herstory

WOMEN WHO WANT A VOTE ARRESTED



Women's Day honors workers' struggle

By **LESLIE FARRIS**
Of the Emerald

March 8 commemorates a day in 1908 when thousands of working women marched in New York City under banners demanding better working conditions, equal pay for equal work, childcare centers and the right to vote.

Local women can celebrate International Women's Day at a Sunday potluck and forum entitled "Women Minus Money." Local economists Margaret Simeral and Jan Newton will speak on the effect of the economy on women and children of the Eugene-Springfield area.

The celebration, from 3 to 5:30 p.m. in Lincoln School at 650 W. 12th Ave., is sponsored by Women Against War, Head Start and Lane County Clients Council. Cost is 10 cents a serving, which will benefit the Clients Council, a low-income group advocating improved social services.

Also in honor of International Women's Day 1981, the African Peoples Solidarity Committee is sponsoring a program on "Women in Chile." Chilean exile Virginia Alarcon will speak about political prisoners in Chile and the role of women in the Chilean resistance. Kevin Duncan from the Latin America Resource Center in Berkeley, Calif., will discuss Reagan's Latin American policies.

The program will begin today at 7:30 p.m. in the Friends' Meeting Hall at 2274 Onyx St. in Eugene. A \$2 donation is requested to benefit the Chilean resistance.

It was March 8, 1860, when women shoe workers marched through snowdrifts in Marblehead, Mass., carrying banners with the slogan "American ladies never will be slaves." About 20,000 shoe workers were on strike in New England against \$1-per-week wages. Male shoe workers earned three times as much.

Again on March 8, 1908, a demonstration in New York City was organized by socialist garment workers involved in a long series of strikes for better working conditions and union recognition. In 1857, women garment workers marched from the poor East Side to a wealthier section of the city. While police were breaking up the march and arresting many of the women, some of the protesters were trampled.

The International Socialist Congress, at a 1910 conference in

Copenhagen, Denmark, declared March 8 a holiday in honor of the New York marchers.

During the same period, educated women in Russia began agitating for women's suffrage, legal equality, equal access to education and employment, divorce reform and birth control. In 1913, through the urgings of the All-Russian Conference of Feminists, the Duma (Russian parliament) declared March 8 a holiday for women.

On March 8, 1917, women textile workers demonstrated in Petrograd, Russia, chanting "bread, peace and down with the Tsar," signalling the beginning of the Russian revolution.

Although International Women's Day was celebrated in many countries worldwide, observance lagged in the United States until 1969 when women in Berkeley, Calif., commemorated "the struggles of herstory." Even in this second movement of women's liberation, feminists agitate over many of the same issues.

While earlier feminists sought equal pay for equal work, women today seek equal pay for work of comparable value, says Margaret Simeral, labor economist for the state of Oregon.

"The problem now is getting equal pay for slightly different work," Simeral says. "In our society, women do different work than men and, for whatever reasons, women's work is considered to be worth lower wages."

"Women are starting to get their jobs re-evaluated so, for example, a skilled word-processing operator would earn as much as a maintenance man."

Simeral says job-evaluation changes could come through unions. Within the last 15 years, unions have responded more to women's issues because women have comprised two-thirds of the growth in the labor force.

However, only about 10 percent of women workers are organized compared to 33 percent of men workers.

"But unions have seen the writing on the wall," Simeral says. "The fastest growing unions are those with large numbers of women workers — teachers' unions, service workers."

"It's still a man's world, but they're coming around. They understand how women workers are absolutely crucial to the strength of the labor movement."

Another struggle facing many

women today is the struggle against poverty. Simeral says women heads-of-household are twice as likely to be poor as men heads-of-household.

Any social-service budget cuts will mean "disaster" for low-income women, she says.

"Most poor, single women earn low wages, plus they have to pay for child care. Anytime you take back food stamps and support to dependent

children, you're not trimming flab, you're cutting right to the heart of these people's existence.

"It's very difficult for a woman to find a job that pays enough to support her family above the poverty level."

And although the early suffragists gained the right to vote, Simeral says women have yet to gain equal representation.

Early 'finishing school' graduated housewives

By **JIM GERSBACH**
Of the Emerald

When men and women walk into Deady Hall today, they enter by whatever entrance is most convenient. But a century ago University women were restricted to the east steps so that male students, who entered from the west, would not see the women's bare ankles.

Such restrictions were as much a reflection of the 19th century's preoccupation with protecting the respectability of unmarried women as a deliberate attempt by the University to subjugate women.

"The University was by social pressure much more forced to watch out for the female students," says University archivist Keith Richards.

"The University was treated by the women's parents as a finishing school," he says. Women students were sent to school to be exposed to good books, good conversation, French and Latin in the hope this would make them better wives and mothers, Richards says.

The University's early women students did indeed receive an excellent, rigorous education, the best the state had to offer. But in alumni lists from the 1920s, "almost uniformly the women are listed as housewives," Richards says.

However, Richard says, there were also a sprinkling of women determined to enter a career.

One, Lila Acheson, a 1917 graduate, went on to found the *Readers Digest* with husband Dewitt Wallace.

The University also produced a smattering of early professional women. In 1893 the University

granted a medical degree to a woman student for the first time. Four years later the first woman was graduated from the law school.

Ellen Condon was the University's first woman graduate, the daughter of famed geologist Thomas Condon, for whom Condon Hall is named.

Unlike most of the University's later female Victorian graduates, Ellen Condon majored in the sciences, specializing in geology. She later married and became a housewife.

Despite the many social restrictions placed on women, sports was one area in which University women didn't lag behind. Thanks to Dr. Mary Chapman, who came to Oregon in 1893, the University developed a strong women's physical education program. Women were playing field hockey, softball, basketball and gymnastics — and even boxing — in their P.E. classes by 1896.

In many other ways, Oregon was progressive. From the very start, University classes were integrated, although separate study halls were not dropped until a library opened on campus in 1891.

The University even had a co-ed dormitory as far back as 1893. Friendly Hall housed both men and women during its first year of existence. The dining hall, social hall and music room were co-ed, with men and women's living facilities on separate floors.

Although the arrangement worked out well, in 1894 Friendly Hall was made an all-male dorm and the women students were asked to find rooms in Eugene, says Richards. "At that point they felt they could trust the women downtown more than the men."

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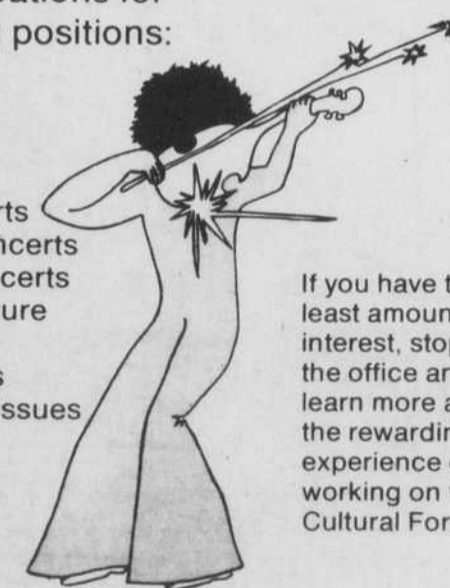
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