FEATURE

# World March of Women 2000

Trish Morrison
*The Brunswickan*

From March 8 to October 17 of this year, a number of demonstrations took place internationally as part of The World March of Women 2000.

It was a historical global movement. There were 157 countries, about 5,200 organizations, and millions of individuals involved in an effort to eradicate poverty and violence against women.

Historically, women have had the short end of the stick in all aspects of life, and while enormous breakthroughs have been achieved, the UN Population Fund's annual report confirms that discrimination and violence against women and girls is *still* deeply imbedded in societies worldwide, and more developed countries are breaking their commitments to take measures to resolve this issue.

For example, women are still denied access to education and health care, or are given less attention in those areas. They are still denied opportunities in the workplace and still receive 2/3 less pay than men. In Canada women make up 2/3 of all unpaid work which equals $319 billion to the economy according to Statistics Canada. New Brunswick has the worst rates in Canada at only 65% of men's wages.

One in six women are poor. Women's legal rights are still not protected. One in three are subjected to abuse and violence. Our own federal government has admitted to spending approximately $4 billion per year on the medical costs of wife assault.

Besides these statistics, shocking events - such as the assaults in Central Park last summer - clearly demonstrate insufficient progress in these matters.

In recognition of these facts, women and men around the world have been gathering by the thousands in a relentless effort to raise awareness, to protest, and offer solutions. Meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, panel discussions, debates, fund-raisers, marches, demonstrations, rallies, and strikes were organized. Songs, music, plays, and stories were written, performed, and published. Informative and symbolic brochures, pamphlets, flyers, videos, pins, bookmarks, banners, quilts, art, and logos were created, carried, and distributed. Festivals, parades, dances, potluck dinners, sports, rafting, and various cultural events were held in honor and support of this movement. One group bicycled 6,700 kilometers from Vancouver, to the New York World Rally, in a journey that lasted the full eight month duration of the Women's March.

Inspired by the 1995 Federation des Femmes du Quebec's highly successful "Bed of Roses March" against poverty, the World March of Women was established to promote equality of the sexes, pressure governments to introduce the necessary changes to improve women's quality of life, and encourage wealthier countries to invest more money in developing countries.

A millennium marker for the women's movement, the 2000 March, was launched on International Women's Day, March 8. The Canadian Women's March Committee published "It's Time for Change: Demands to the Federal Government to End Poverty and Violence Against Women in Canada," to serve the World March of Women campaign. These 68 proposals for legislative and policy reforms are organized by theme, including protecting and promoting women's social, economic, and cultural rights; recognizing, respecting and honoring women's work; respecting and promoting human rights of immigrant women, Aboriginal women and lesbians; irradicating violence against women; supporting human rights of women around the world; and encouraging women's active citizenship.

Within this document is another, entitled "The Feminist Dozen," which outlines 13 reasonable methods to implement necessary and basic changes. This was presented in Ottawa on October 16 and 17, to the Standing House of Commons on Heritage, federal Cabinet Ministers, and numerous key ministers.




Mike Cormier Photo / *The Brunswickan*

***One of the largest women's rights gatherings in New Brunswick history was held last Friday, October 13th.***

Prime Minister John Chretien was also presented with "The Feminist Dozen," despite fact initially refusing to meet with the Canadian Women's March. He reconsidered meeting the women after receiving pressure nationwide from individuals, groups, and organizations. This marked the first time in about 15 years a Prime Minister met with a feminist lobby.

Bernard Lord, Premier of New Brunswick, was also presented with the thirteen demands at the Women's March 2000 local rally held on the grounds of the provincial legislature. The provincial government officials who made presentations at the Fredericton rally showed interest in working with women to resolve these issues, however, none who spoke proposed any plan of action.

Contributors to the Policy Action Research List (PAR-L) newsletter expressed concern that others also in a position to implement these changes for women were "simply paying lip service," and "the Canadian media has virtually ignored" the March.

The World Rally gathered in New York to present their demands to the president of International Monetary Funds and the managing director of the World Bank. The Secretary General of the United Nations was in the Middle East and thus, not available. Alternative arrangements were made to receive the demands and a petition signed by 4,616,352 people worldwide (source: World March website).

The onlookers and passersby were impassioned by the grand scale of the uplifting event. "The route was lined with women of all ages and races who offered encouragement to the marchers. Completely unexpected, and deeply affecting, were the extraordinary personal and warm responses of New York storekeepers and passersby.... Men in hard hats, about 15 floors above the crowd yelled their support and then sent down, in a mechanical basket, a worker who collected a flag from one of the Quebec marchers and took it back up with him skyward." (Wendy Robbins, PAR-L moderator)

Numerous similar rallies occurred simultaneously in over 150 countries worldwide, such as the 30,000 who gathered in Montreal.

At press time, the response of officials to whom the women involved in the World March of Women 2000 presented their demands is unclear. The canada.marchofwomen.org section of the international site will promptly post information on the climactic conclusion of the March.

## The Feminist Dozen*

***13 Immediate Demands to the Federal Government to End Poverty and Violence Against Women***

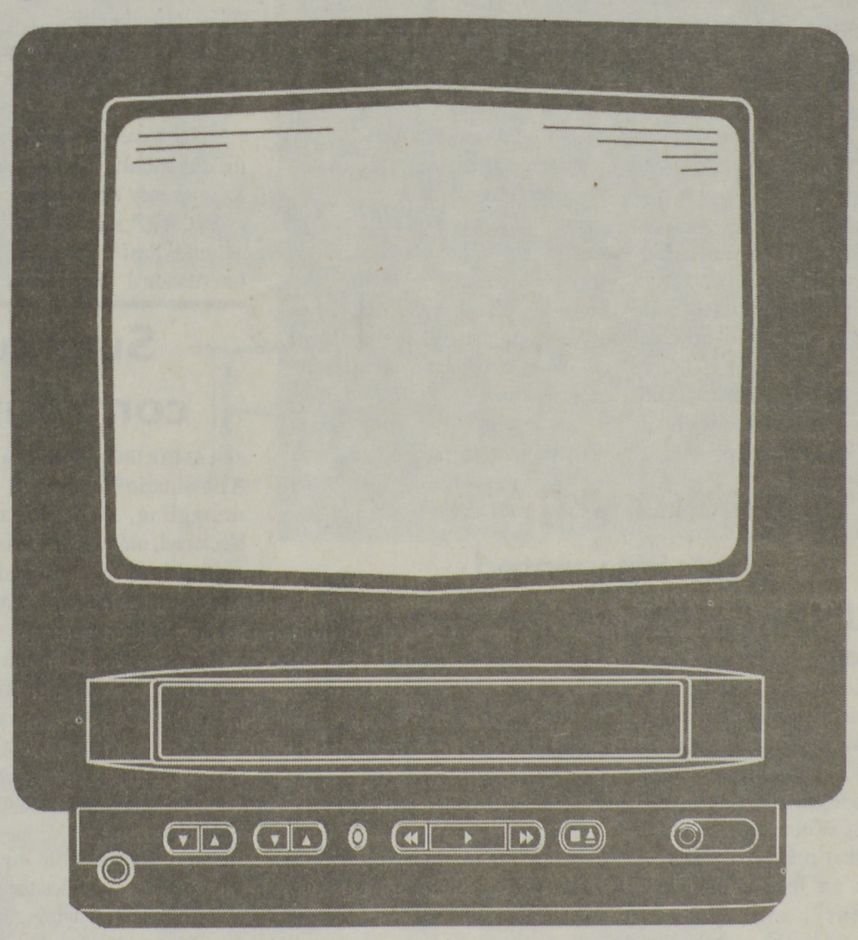
1. *Restore federal funding to health care and enforce rules against the privatization of our health care system, beginning with Alberta.*
2. *Spend an additional 1% of the budget on social housing.*
3. *Set up the promised national child-care fund, starting with an immediate contribution of $2 billion.*
4. *Increase Old Age Security payments to provide older women with a decent standard of living.*
5. *Use the surplus from the Employment Insurance Fund to increase benefits, provide longer payment periods and improve access, as well as improve maternity and family benefits.*
6. *Support women's organizing for equality and democracy by:*
   a. *allocating $50 million to front-line, independent, feminist, women-controlled groups committed to ending violence against women, such as women's centres, rape crisis centres and women's shelters;*
   b. *recognizing and funding the three autonomous national Aboriginal women's organizations to ensure full participation in all significant public policy decisions as well as provide adequate funding to Aboriginal women's services, including shelters, rural, remote and urban Aboriginal communities;*
   c. *funding a national meeting of lesbians to discuss and prioritize areas for legislative and public policy reform;*
   d. *providing $30 million in core funding for equality-seeking women's organizations, which represents only $2.00 for every woman and girl child in Canadaoour Fair Share.*
7. *Fund consultations with a wide range of women's equality-seeking organizations prior to all legislative reform of relevance to women's security and equality rights, beginning with the Criminal Code, and ensure access for women from marginalized communities.*
8. *Implement progressive immigration status on arrival; abolish the "head tax" on all immigrants; include persecution on the basis of gender and sexual orientation as grounds for claiming refugee status.*
9. *Contribute to the elimination of poverty around the world by: supporting the cancellation of the debts of the 53 poorest countries; increasing Canada's international development aid to 0.7% of the Gross National Product.*
10. *Adopt national standards which guarantee the right to welfare for everyone in need and ban workfare.*
11. *Recognize the ongoing exclusion of women with disabilities from economic, political and social life and take the essential first step of ensuring and funding full access for women with disabilities to all consultations on issues of relevance to women.*
12. *Establish a national system of grants based on need, not merit, to enable access to post-secondary education and reduce student debt.*
13. *Adopt proactive pay equity legislation.*

*It's time for change!*

**Please Note: Where these demands involve issues under the jurisdiction of Quebec, the Canadian Women's March recognizes that Quebec has the right to determine its own standards, programs, and policies in those areas.*

TONIGHT
Those who like it, like it a lot
Draft Special
All Night
$2.50 Double Frosted
Mug of Keith's
Prizes for
Best Original
Birthday Toast
COLLEGE HILL SOCIAL CLUB
HELP ALEX
TURN 205


The Lowest Prices Allowed by Law
For Members and Guests Only

Pajama Jam 2000

FREE TV/VCR
FREE Admittance, free Pizza and pop
Prizes to be won: TV/VCR, Panasonic CD Players,
and plenty more cool prizes
Hosted by
Much Music's Rick Campanelli
Fri Oct 20th, 8pm - 2am
Sub Cafeteria
FRESH HEADS