

Why Women's Liberation published that pamphlet

One of the most repressive aspects of our society is its "don't know and don't care" attitude to woman's sexuality. Sex education is not yet a part of the normal high school course and in fact scarcely exists. Information about reproduction is not sex education, these subjects barely have a nodding acquaintance with each other. Consequently, women's liberation has started a campaign for true sex education in schools.

In practical terms, puberty for a girl means that she is capable of conceiving. She becomes more of a sexual being than she was in childhood: more subject to sexual drives and to the often disastrous consequences of living a sexual life whose existence this society refuses to recognise.

If such young women decide, as this society has already decided for them, that full expression of their sexuality has to be postponed until after school or until marriage, for educational, ethical, economic or other reasons, then that should be their choice as well. It cannot be called a choice for those now following such a decision when it is foisted upon them by owner-parents or warden-schools, and bolstered by a government programme of sex education by omission, or a church programme of sex education by repression.

Nor can such programmes, highly justifiable though they may be on spiritual grounds or on the more utilitarian ones of preparing girls for their later subservient second-class citizenship as women, be said to deal satisfactorily with those growing numbers of girls who are already leading sexual lives. And many young girls and other unmarried women are leading sexual lives.

They must not continue to make their decisions in an atmosphere of ignorance, distortions or shame.

THE CASE FOR SEX EDUCATION : PART 1

These things are happening:

- (i) there are an estimated 30,000-100,000 "illegal" abortions each year in Australia. Of these, an estimated 40-50 per cent are performed on unmarried women and girls;
- (ii) 12 per cent of all Queensland births are "illegitimate".
- (iii) 33per cent of all Australian births are conceived pre-nuptially
- (iv) V.D. is the most prevalent of all notifiable diseases in Australia and is steadily increasing. The greatest number of patients fall into the 15-24 category. The largest number of serious cases are girls.

On top of this, almost half the schoolgirl population leaves school at 15. 30 per cent of all Australian brides marry before they turn 20. It is urgent and imperative that these girls be given an adequate sex education on the sheer pragmatics of conception, contraception, abortion and V.D., so that they do not find their way into the above statistics, nor take their ignorance into marriage.

THE CASE FOR SEX EDUCATION : PART 2

But these are only the surface statistics of women's suffering (and available from the Commonwealth Year Books 1969 and 1970). There are no Australian studies on the extent of frigidity and Taylor's syndrome(a chronic and painful pelvic congestion due to lack of orgasmic release and thought to cause much pre-menstrual and menstrual suffering). What we do know is that women have a potentially greater ability to achieve orgasmic release than do men and that ignorance of, and uncertainty about, their own sexuality has resulted in a large number of women being severely sexually crippled. One speculates on the debilitating effects this has on the entire personality.

We do not propose therefore that sex education be confined to the current narrow textbook approach. •Concentration on the mechanics of reproduction (desirable in itself)

is simply not good enough. Sex also serves the function of pleasure which has as much biological basis in the clitoral system as reproduction does in the reproductive system.

This is an especially important point to make with respect to the sex education of young women: unlike males they have a sexual organ, the clitoris, whose function is not strictly necessary for reproduction. Its malfunctioning, however, seriously affects the physiological and psychological well-being of the woman. In the light of this, strict precepts against masturbation may have to be rethought: sexual dysfunctioning like frigidity and Taylor's syndrome can often be remedied only via masturbation. Such a method may well be necessary if a woman is to overcome years of sexual suppression, or if a young girl is to fairly satisfactorily survive the sexual ordeal of a prolonged adolescence.

WHY GO TO THE SCHOOLGIRLS?

- (i) because it is patently obvious that if parents, schools, or churches are in possession of information in the above mentioned areas they are not passing it on to the school-girls.
- (ii) because it is the girls themselves who directly suffer the often sad consequences of ignorance or distortion; of sexual expression or sexual repression.
- (iii) because it is the girls themselves to whom such literature must be relevant -not just to their parents, their schools, or the various other authorities who attempt to run their lives. A sex education programme, indeed any education programme, must be relevant to the needs of the students concerned, and not simply a prescriptive passed on to them.

It is in the family and the schools that girls are moulded into the female stereotype demanded of them by this society. On the one hand the ideal of virtuous, kindly, nurturant, wife-and-mother is held up to them; on the other hand is the reality - the crass commercial exploitation of the female body, the constant subjection to whistles and whispers in the streets, and their exploitation as surplus labour, inside the home and/or outside it. Eventually women absorb the current male definitions of themselves, and one of the prime agents for this is a societally-enforced ignorance about their own sexual nature. Complete knowledge and control of their own bodies are essential if women are to achieve social parity with men.

THE REACTION

The reaction of hysteria from the press and repression from the state (cancellation of the P.M.G. box, threats of police action, intimidation of those girls who took the leaflet, and so on) is an explicit admission that this society will not easily relinquish its control over women and their bodies, nor allow one of its prime socializing agents, the school system, to be so easily subverted.

Their hypocritical moral posture is of course causing untold suffering to many women and girls.

The particular methods of intimidation used against Women's Liberation are of extreme importance to any one with an interest in civil liberties. The P.M.G. box number was revoked without any recourse to rational explanation nor even to regulations. And in a state which already legislates against the distribution of leaflets "for other than business purposes" without a permit, there is now talk of bringing down even stronger legislation. The implications of these acts, and the threatened police action against Women's Liberation, are extremely serious for any person or group which opposes any facet of government policy.

End the sexual discrimination which is reinforced by the lack of adequate sex education.

Declare your support for true sex education in schools.

CONTACT YOUR PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOC.

WRITE "YOUR" PAPER AND "YOUR" PARLIAMENTARIAN.

Write to Women's Liberation
Box 197,
North Quay.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMITTEE

C/- 459 Ann St.,
Brisbane 4000
Phone 21 7892
10a.m. - 3p.m.
or 55 3704 after 6p.m.

15th March, 1972

Mrs. D. Marchisotti,
25 Seaview Street,
BRIGHTON 4017

Dear Daisy,

Letters along the lines of the enclosed carbon copy have gone to the

Advancement Council
Abschol
Open Door
South Side Committee
Tribal Council
Black Panther Party
Kangaroo Club.

Maureen Watson has volunteered herself as speaker and has also agreed to check with the others to ensure they agree.

Can you suggest particular people we should invite?

Lots of love

PROGRAMME

- * **1ST JULY** = formation of locality based **WOMEN'S LIBERATION**
- * **8TH JULY** = speaker "TREATMENT OF WOMEN BY DOCTORS AND HOSPITALS"⁶⁰
- * **15 TH JULY** = discussion - High School campaign - 2 leaflets + poster. High School student to speak on conditions for girls.
- * **22 ND JULY** = speaker - 20 mins. paper - **ABORTION**.