

# Briefs

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

## CONTESTANT QUILTS AUCTION

Behind the surface appearance of every beauty contest, from Home Coming Queen to “Miss World,” exists an entire framework that represses and objectifies women. That framework had produced the idea that exposing one’s flesh, with proper techniques of body exhibition, is a desirable skill, to be rewarded with prizes and tribute.

But Sybil Hess, an Oakland University Freshman and recent finalist in the Miss Rochester beauty pageant, was not convinced that crude public display was an enviable fate.

She has withdrawn from the “auction” and in a letter to the pageant’s sponsors explained why she refused to continue to parade across stages and attempt to appeal to an audience of meat-watchers.

In order to become one of those finalists, the women had to compete against each other and persuade male judges that they had the best walk, the most attractive face, and the sexiest body. After such a degrading ordeal the “winner” is then qualified to move on and hustle her product in other similar competitions.

Sybil remarked that the standards for these categories were pre-set by males, narrow, and phony so that all the women looked alike. They were stereotypes and it “didn’t matter who won,” because they were “all the same.”

Sybil Hess is a sister who now understands that a beauty pageant is a hype, and, more importantly, is only one of the many which perpetuate the subservient role forced upon women. It reinforces the myth that a woman’s foremost aim during her life is to cater to a man and to his definitions.

A woman is told that her ultimate status is achieved when she can be a good homemaker-mother and still remain an appealing sex object.

Sybil Hess’ withdrawal was a protest against those myths, but she noted that most women, systematically indoctrinated since birth, are still unaware of their own oppression. This was exemplified by one of the remaining contestant’s responses to Sybil’s decision. She stated that she didn’t understand and felt Sybil was “throwing away a wonderful opportunity.”

## CRAZY MINAS STRIKE AGAIN

Amsterdam (LNS)—“Crazy Mina” guerilla bands have begun whistling down Dutch men on street corners and falling into step behind them to discuss their good and bad points aloud, according to a UPI report.

The Crazy Minas are a group of about 30 radical women who take their name from Vilhelmina Drucker, a famous Dutch suffragist. They launched their struggle in January by burning down a public bathroom near a statue of Vilhelmina.

The Minas taped shut the doors of public men’s rooms or placed out of order signs on them, dramatizing their grievance that there are no public bathrooms for women in the city of Amsterdam.

Other Minas kidnapped young men, driving them outside the city for “special treatment.” UPI claims that none of the men so kidnapped would disclose to newsmen what this treatment was.

Recently, when the women were kept from raiding a beauty contest by bouncers at the door, they grabbed Dutch film director Pim de la Parra outside the building and hustled him off in a car, and, instead of judging women, he spent the evening listening at a nearby night club to the Crazy Minas’ discussion of male privilege.

## **ABORT THE LAW**

LANSING, March 18—The Michigan state capital was the scene of a protest march by about 100 women demanding that the abortion laws be abolished. The demonstration was organized by Michigan Organization for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL).

Several state senators participated and watched as the women performed guerrilla theatre skits and held a short rally on the steps of the capitol building. The group was there specifically to urge passage of several reform and repeal bills that were supposed to come to the senate floor that day, but all of them remain bottled up in committee.

## **HAWAII DOES IT**

HAWAII, (LNS)—Hawaii, 49<sup>th</sup> state of the union, came in first in the uphill battle to repeal antiquated abortion laws in this country. An abortion in Hawaii today is strictly a matter between a woman and her physician.

The only “legal” requirement is that she be a resident of Hawaii for 90 days. It is considered unsafe to undergo abortion after the third month, so Hawaii will not be besieged by women seeking legal abortions there.



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