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Out in the Mountains

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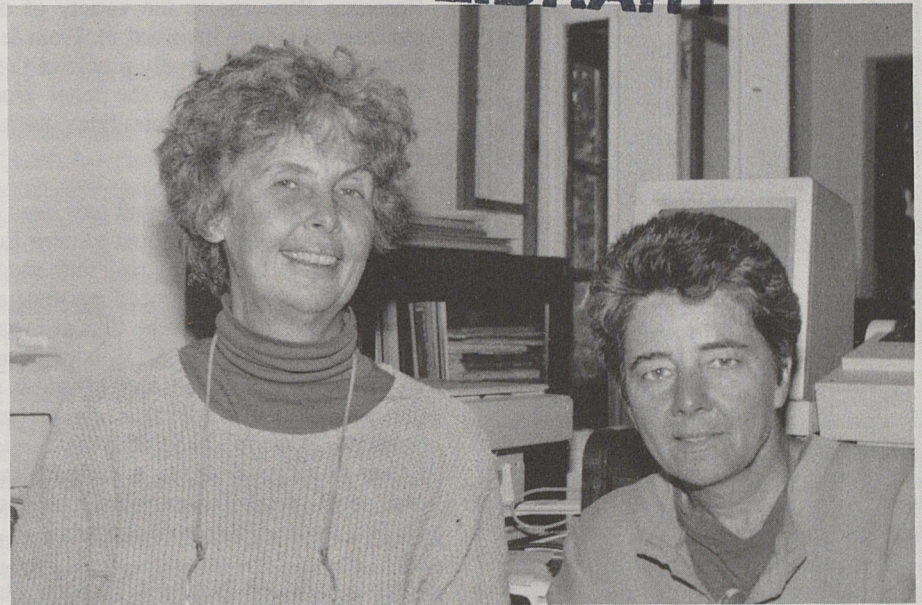
New Victoria Publishers: Riding a Revolution

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Five or six years ago, one of New Victoria Publishers' distributors addressed a meeting of the New England Booksellers Association. He predicted a very big market for lesbian books, and said that if he were going into publishing, he would be a lesbian publisher - if he could.

According to Claudia Lamperti and Beth Dingman, who together make up most of New Victoria Publishers, he was right. New Victoria, located in Norwich, Vermont, is one of a handful of small, predominantly lesbian-feminist publishing houses, currently riding the wave of the revolution in consciousness brought about by the gay/lesbian and women's movements. Lesbians like to read about lesbians; and these publishers, which include Naiad, Firebrand, Seal, Spinsters and Aunt Lute, are meeting a rapidly growing demand. (Spinsters/Aunt Lute, which operated jointly for a time, recently separated back into its component parts.) Of these, Naiad is the only one publishing lesbian titles exclusively, although New Victoria comes very close.

New Victoria's identification with a long feminist tradition is symbolized by its name. In England in the 1860s, a woman named Emily Faithful owned and operated a printshop and magazine, staffed entirely by women, which she called Victoria Press, because it published by appointment to the Queen. New Victoria began in 1975 in Lebanon, New Hampshire, as a women's printshop collective. Lamperti wanted to go into publishing though, and after ten years, they sold the printshop, moved the business across the river to Dingman's house, and began. According to Lamperti, "We didn't have any manuscripts to publish, so I said, 'Let's write some.'" And so she and two of her friends did. Once the first three



Claudia Lamperti (l) & Beth Dingman (r) New Victoria Publishers

books were published, other manuscripts began arriving. Dingman and Lamperti were lucky enough to get Sarah Dreher's first Stoner McTavish mystery, which put them on the map.

They learned their new trade as they went along, and got lots of advice and help from other lesbian-feminist publishers, especially Barbara Grier of Naiad. Lesbian publishers place a high value on working cooperatively, rather than competitively, meeting once a year at the American Booksellers Convention to exchange ideas and compare notes on the state of lesbian publishing. (One of the group's recent observations is that mainstream publishers, always alive to new markets, are starting to move into lesbian publishing.)

New Victoria is still small. They publish six books a year, and have published about 27 titles since they began. Lam-

perti is the only full-time employee; Dingman and another editor work part-time. They have found a variety of ways to maximize their efforts. They do the type-setting themselves on a desktop system with a new laser printer, and send books to the printer camera-ready. The cover design is contracted out to a lesbian designer; some editing is contracted to outside editors (also lesbians). Much of the marketing is handled by their distributors.

New Victoria is true to its feminist principles, both in the way it operates and the books it publishes. Dingman and Lamperti like to publish local authors. The majority of their authors come from New England and several, including Rebecca Beguin, Ellen Frye, and Morgan Grey, are from Vermont. The designer and the outside editors live in the Norwich area.

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