



ABORTION CARAVAN DEMANDS

WE DEMAND:

- I. REPEAL - That in this session of Parliament the government sponsor a bill removing all mention of abortion from the Criminal Code.

PARDON -- That all persons charged under sections 209, 237 and 238 of the Criminal Code be pardoned by the Minister of Justice.
- II. That the government provide access to FREE AND SAFE BIRTH CONTROL for all women.
- III. The construction of women's community-controlled clinics to provide free birth control, abortion on demand, and pre-natal and post-natal care; to be financed 50% by Federal funds and 50% by Provincial funds to come from taxing corporate profits specifically for this purpose.

BRIEF OF THE ABORTION CARAVAN, MAY 1970

We women are not here to beg male politicians for our rights. We are here to tell you what our needs are, and to find out whether you are prepared to act. We demand answers on behalf of all the women in this country who are today wondering if they are pregnant; for all the women who can only worry about their futures since they cannot plan them. Women must find answers today and every month. We cannot wait for the male politicians' months and years of useless discussions. We want answers today to our demands. We will get more answers this week and next week and next month from our local hospitals and doctors.

THE PRINCIPLES OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO ABORTION

Get Your Laws Off Our Backs!

We women will have control of our bodies. We can no longer put up with the present situation where our entire lives are controlled by the medical profession and the politicians and lawmakers - all men. Trudeau's "Just Society" has no place in the wombs of the women of Canada. No one should make a decision for a woman about how to control her body or when and how she will have her children. It is her future, her very life, as well as that of her children, that is being decided, and a truly 'just' society must recognize the basic human rights of fifty percent of the people.

We have been given a reformed abortion law. This law has done nothing but give the doctors the right to do as they wish. If these men think that young girls should be punished for being pregnant they can say no to an abortion. If they, who have never been pregnant or missed one menstrual period in their lives, think that an abortion is more 'traumatic' than bearing an unwanted child, they can say no. If these doctors are too busy making thousands of dollars a month from women patients, and have not got room in their schedules for a woman with no money, they can say no to an abortion. And no woman can even be considered for the abortion board unless she can find a doctor, and in most cases two psychiatrists, who will take her case to the board. Nineteen women out of twenty who want abortions are refused by their doctors before they even get to the hospital board.

Therapeutic abortion boards, that is, a half-dozen little male gods who sit at a table once a month, can say yes or no to the desperation and aspirations of thousands of women in every city of this country. What blatant male supremacist arrogance! We demand immediate repeal of all abortion laws by this government and we are going to rid ourselves of those hospital boards.

We Have No Rights Without Birth Control

Women do not even have the possibility of control of our lives without access to birth control. Our training for jobs is irrelevant when we cannot plan when and how we will be able to work. Therefore, we are forced to marry to support ourselves rather than to plan our lives according to our individual interests. There must be totally

free access to birth control for all young women from puberty, so that they can have the same freedom to choose their futures as young men do. We want real equality for a change.

In the world of the 1970's there is no more room for the double standard. Young women will no longer accept the hypocritical ideas of a sick society that teaches them how to sell their bodies in home economics courses, on T.V., in the advertisements of every magazine and then turns around to say that they as women have no right to sexual expression. A truly moral society would teach young people the responsibilities of their relationships and give them the means to be responsible - for themselves. Let us stop warping the personalities of young women by teaching them to be afraid of their basic human needs, and allow them to enjoy being human through control over their bodies.

At present, millions of women know nothing about birth control. Even the Planned Parenthood Federation, one of the few sources of information, refuses to give the facts to young unmarried women. We do not need any more contradictory moral values pushed at us, we just need the information in order to be able to make our own decisions about our lives.

No More Forced Birth Control

We are absolutely opposed to all forms of 'population control' by any government which are nothing more than forcing birth control and sterility on certain women because they are poor. When we demand women's control over our bodies we mean total control. If we are poor, we demand the same rights as rich women, that is to have children or not, as we see fit. Birth control and abortion is our right, but should not be forced on us. Some of the men in this government are against abortion on the grounds that it is murder of a potential human being, while all the governments of this country allow their welfare departments to permit abortions for women on welfare only if they agree to sterilization and this in return for a mere pittance to feed their existing children! The hypocrisy of this government is clear to all women - let rich women do as they like and force the rest of us to suffer.

While Canada has refused us the right to abortion, refused to make birth control available to us, it does want to make them available to the third world. In Latin America, in Brazil and Trinidad, where Canadian corporations such as Brascan, owned by present and former members of the Liberal government, make profits from the resources belonging to some of the poorest people of the world, Canadian and American governments think they can deter the peoples' just demands for self determination by 'population control'. As long as the rights of women, children, Indians, Blacks, workers and students are being denied, as long as any living person suffers injustice, we can not listen to arguments about the rights of the foetus : In this society concern for the foetus is not matched by an equal concern for the living child.

Maurice Strong, president of the Canadian International Development Agency, our representative on the U.N. Fund for Population Activities Advisory Board, is considering joining a \$15 million

project for birth control for the third world. But, the federal government has established no domestic policy on birth control, except a policy to avoid it, by saying it is a matter for provincial governments.

One in ten families in this country are maintained solely by women, who can earn an average wage which is half the wages that men are paid. Most Indian and Metis women of the rural areas of the North cannot find jobs. How do all these women afford the present cost of \$300-\$400 for an illegal safe abortion? They cannot. Where and how do they get birth control when they want it? They do not. But when they are forced on welfare because they cannot find jobs or cannot earn enough to pay the extra expenses of day-care, clothes, carfare, medical care, etc., the state suddenly sees fit to declare them unfit to have children.

Women Bear Total Responsibility For Children

This society that presumes to command all women to care for unborn foetuses gives no help at all in the care of living children. Every woman must take all responsibility for her children as best she can. The Childrens Aid will not help a woman with her children unless she will give them up.

Besides the right to have our children when we want them we demand the means to bear and raise them as they deserve. If it is our responsibility to reproduce this society, then the society has a responsibility to us. Childbearing is simply one function of women, it should not be our punishment.

As long as we must assume the full care of children we have basic needs that must be met. We demand laws from this government that give us the right to maternity leave with pay, security of our jobs during childbirth, and equal pay. We demand free pre-natal and post-natal care in clinics staffed by the best doctors and specialists, and controlled not by big business but by the people. No more clinics with inexperienced interns! We and our future children have an undeniable right to the best medical care available, and yet there is not one insurance plan existing that covers the complete costs of childbirth. Why should we go on paying for nothing? Why should we put up with haphazard treatment and callous indifference?

We demand low-cost housing for all mothers alone with children. We earn half of what men do and cannot afford inflated rents so our children must live in hovels or crowded homes. We demand child-care facilities now! The government maintains an economy that forces women already employed in the full time job of housework, to take jobs in order to exist. If the government wants us to work, which it obviously does since it employs large numbers of women at half-wage, it must take equal responsibility with us for child-care. It must set up child-care centers right across this country, especially for its employees. It must help us see to it that all corporations who benefit from women's half-wages provide child-care facilities to be controlled by us. We think this society owes us decent child-care but we will not let the bureaucracies and corporations run our childrens' lives the way they do ours.

IT IS OUR RIGHT TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN LIFE AS WE DECIDE.
IT IS OUR RIGHT TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE LIFE THEY DESERVE.

OUR DEMANDS:

1. **REPEAL** - That in this session of Parliament the government sponsor a bill removing all mention of abortion from the Criminal Code.

PARDON - That all persons charged under sections 209, 237 and 238 of the Criminal Code be pardoned by the Minister of Justice.

Politicians, doctors, hospital boards all tell us to wait and see, give the new law a chance to work. Health minister Munro has the audacity to say that any woman in Canada who wants a legal abortion can now get one. Trudeau passes the buck by saying we should go and talk to the medical profession. We are fed up with lies, stalls and diversions.

The new law is just a piece of political propaganda. It does nothing to protect the medical and human rights of women; it only protects the doctors and hospitals while we continue to be treated as we have always been treated. Mr. M. Ball, Director of Student Health Service at the University of Alberta maintains that the number of abortions performed in many hospitals is smaller than before the law was changed. An article in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix quoted a similar decrease for Saskatchewan. In Vancouver, only a few more abortions per month are performed under the new law (21 per month in 1969 and 25 per month in the first three months of 1970). Many hospitals across the country have no therapeutic abortion boards. The vast majority of abortions are still illegal (one estimate is that only one or two of every abortion performed are legal). In Toronto alone there are 25,000 estimated illegal abortions every year.

Every year in Canada 1000 to 2000 women die from illegal abortions. From 20,000 to 40,000 women enter hospitals with complications from illegal abortions. One out of every four women in Canada has an abortion sometime in her life. But these women were not the people who determined what the new law should say. Rather the new law follows closely the recommendations which the Canadian Medical Association made in 1968. We say that doctors should serve the needs of the people, not dictate to them. The Committee on Health and Welfare set up to study abortion made little effort to hear women speak on their own behalf. The token discussions around the rights of women meant nothing. The government bill was not even reviewed by this committee but rather was presented to a committee of the Justice Department which held no open hearings and in which no women spoke. And the law discriminates against all women who haven't the money and connections to find a sympathetic doctor who will plead her case.

Women in Canada are sick of politicians and doctors deciding what is best for them. It is the supreme insult that a woman pregnant with a child she does not want must prove to doctors that she is unstable, incapable of being a good mother, a failure, mentally ill, in order to get an abortion. We want an end to all laws that give control to governments, doctors and hospital boards etc., rather than to women. We want abortion removed from the Criminal Code.

11. We demand access to FREE and SAFE BIRTH CONTROL for all women.

The introduction of the Pill has created the myth that birth control is freely available in this society. In fact, we have no way of knowing what forms of birth control may be permanently detrimental to our health. Women are barraged with a mass of contradictory information in newspapers and magazines. We live in fear because the most effective forms of birth control - the PILL and IUD - are also those forms which we are told may be most dangerous to our health.

The control over research lies in the hands of the drug companies. An example of this is a study that is being undertaken in Regina by the Community Health Clinic to study whether the Pill causes depression in women. The J.D. Zeale Company agreed to contribute pills for use in the study only if no findings of adverse effects would be published, and on the condition that nothing be published before the company looked at the findings. The priority of the drug companies is their profits, not our needs. Drug companies spend \$4,500 a year per doctor on advertising alone, and the drug industry earns the second highest profit rate of any industry.

The way that the Pill was tested shows that the drug companies are not concerned with women's health. The pill was introduced at a dosage of 10 milligrams (most women on the pill now take 1 or 2 milligrams) on Puerto Rican women about ten years ago. These same women suffered sterilization, development of masculine traits and many other forms of irreparable damage. The lives of these women are obviously expendable as far as the drug companies are concerned and their importance is nothing more than that of guinea pigs. But the wives and daughters of the directors of these pharmaceutical companies are not asked to volunteer for testing. The government and the medical association endorse this state of affairs.

Therefore, in order to ensure that all women have access to safe and free birth control, we demand the facts. We demand that the Food and Drug Directorate be responsible for disseminating information on all existing birth control and abortion methods, including information which is now secret. We demand that information on the hazards of the Pill be enclosed in all packages by law. As it stands now, many women do not receive adequate attention from doctors who prescribe pills; many doctors do not go into medical histories before they prescribe pills. Therefore women need access to information that would let them know when the Pill might be dangerous for them to take.

We demand that the Food and Drug Directorate assume its proper function of initiating and directing research into new and safe methods of birth control and abortion. We will no longer be condemned to the monopoly by the drug companies over birth control methods. How can we expect research into improving the IUD or other devices when they would reduce the profits of the drug companies? At present, IUD is unsafe because of the high incidence of pregnancy and cervical cancer. We know that this kind of birth control - i.e. a non drug type, would be best for women. It must be the responsibility of the government to research these new methods and make them free and freely available to all women.

Research should also be done on birth control for men. Only women are now forced to take the risks of drugs, suffer the side effects of the Pill and be used as guinea pigs. But birth control for women must be the first priority because we are forced, by society and by our biological function, to accept the consequences of what is a mutual act.

We demand that the Food and Drug Directorate implement this programme of research immediately, and that the programme be directed by representatives from women's community-controlled clinics in order to assure that the research will be relevant to our needs.

111. We demand the CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED CLINICS to serve our needs and to implement our demand for free and safe birth control and abortion on demand.

Such clinics should disseminate free birth control to all women who want it; provide safe, painless abortions on demand; provide adequate pre-natal and post-natal care. The staff and services of these clinics must be directed by the women of the community.

These clinics are to be financed 50% by Federal funds and 50% by Provincial funds. This money must come from taxing corporate profits specifically for this purpose.

Only when the woman of a community control their clinics can we put an end to the inhuman and haphazard treatment of women in hospitals and to the discrimination against those who cannot afford a health care.

