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# Exclusive! the full story behind the Ottawa anti-abortion injunction

see pages 3 & 4

## VELVET

a women's liberation newspaper



## FIST

Vol. 2 No. 1 25¢

**Abortion:  
a woman's right**

**Cross-Canada  
conference called**  
see page 8



# Abortion: "A question of liberty"

In this issue of the Velvet Fist, we have devoted a good deal of space to abortion: to reports on the campaign for repeal of anti-abortion laws, to material on the recent anti-abortion injunction and the significance of that injunction, and to the upcoming March conference in Winnipeg.

We have allocated so much space to abortion for a simple reason: we know that abortion is very important to women in Canada and for the building of a Canadian women's movement.

What makes the fight for the right to abortion so important?

Our unnamed sister in Ottawa was asked by a reporter why she had fought to have the injunction lifted if she didn't plan to have an abortion.

She replied, "It was my duty to do something because it is a question of liberty, and all the women were involved in that case."

In other words, she saw it as a woman's liberation fight--a fight for the rights of all women, which were threatened by the injunction.

She recognized the far-reaching implications of an injunction which prevented a woman from having the right to choose to have an abortion.

As long as we are denied the right to decide for ourselves what our bodies will be used for, all other rights are in jeopardy. While we are forced by the government, the Church, and all those who support restrictive abortion laws, to live under the dictatorship of our reproductive organs, our freedoms are only illusions.

Abortion is not a theoretical question. For the thousands of women who have abortions in Canada each year. It is a matter of life or death for us.

forced by present laws to bear unwanted children.

Nor for the thousands of high school women who are forced to drop out of school every year because of pregnancy--their life plans cancelled by one unfortunate accident.

Nor for all of us who live each month under the threat of unwanted, unplanned pregnancy, because of inadequate birth control.

We are tired of being told by men what is moral and immoral, what we really need and don't need, when to have children and when not to, and what we should think of laws and court decisions that threaten our existence.

In the fight against the anti-abortion forces, we find that underlying every anti-abortion argument are all the most oppressive attitudes about women: that women's lives, outside the role of mother, are unimportant; that a woman's place is in the family, and that any of her needs are secondary to those of the family; that it is wrong for women to have sex simply for enjoyment--and if they get pregnant it is their fault and they should be punished; and -- most basic of all--that it is wrong for women to make decisions for themselves.

These poisonous anti-woman attitudes are what is hidden under the "concern for life" platitudes of the anti-abortionists.

We saw a graphic illustration in the Ottawa case of the "concern for life" exhibited by Dave Dehler, Alliance for Life member and lawyer for the husband and "infant plaintiff".

Dehler did not bother to find out, he is financially supporting the family. He did not inquire into how she would be able to continue to meet this obligation



Toronto women protest anti-abortion injunction

with a newborn child to look after.

He did not consider that several of the children were already suffering emotional disabilities because of the home situation, nor did he care whether an additional child might not be an intolerable burden for both mother and children to bear.

In fact, the only thing that Dehler was demonstrably interested in was establishing as many legal precedents as possible, to use this unfortunate family situation as a springboard for launching an all-out legal attack on the rights of all women in regard to abortion.

In the face of enormous pressures

bearing down on her personal life, this

woman--whose name we do not even know--fought her struggle because it was the common struggle of all women. That is sisterhood in its fullest sense.

We are proud that we too acknowledged this sisterhood--that we stood up across the country and protested this attack on her because it was an attack on all of us.

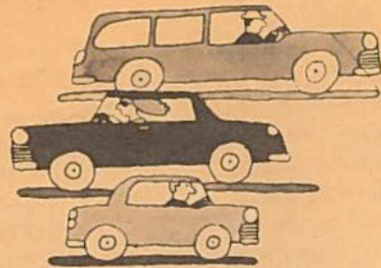
We can expect other attacks like this in the future. We have to prepare our defense. And the best defense is what we are in the process of building: a strong united movement for repeal of all anti-abortion laws.

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## How to find us:



### Abortion law repeal Coalitions

NOVA SCOTIA COALITION FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL: 5172 Bishop St., Halifax.

ONTARIO WOMEN'S ABORTION LAW REPEAL COALITION: Box 5673, Station A, Toronto. 863-9773

COMITE POUR L'ABROGATION DES LOIS SUR L'AVORTEMENT: 877 av. Dollard, Outremont.

WOMEN'S COALITION FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL: 1650 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal.

MANITOBA ABORTION ACTION COALITION: 315B-416 Main St., Winnipeg.

SASKATOON WOMEN FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL: #2, 521-18th St. W., Saskatoon.

EDMONTON COALITION FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL: 9307-104th Ave., Edmonton, Alta. 423-1856

B.C. WOMEN'S ABORTION LAW REPEAL COALITION: 483 East 28th St., Vancouver.

### Women's liberation groups

VANCOUVER: Women's Liberation Alliance, 1776 Alberni, 684-3535  
Women's Centre, 511 Carrall St., 684-0523

CALGARY: Jo Ann Dundas, 215-22nd Ave., NE Calgary 64

LETHBRIDGE: Lorna and Linda Rasmussen, 722-10th St. S.

REGINA: Women's Liberation, 2259 Cameron, 525-6252  
WINNIPEG: Women's Liberation, 606B, 416 Main St.  
U. of Manitoba Feminist Club, Students' Union, University of Manitoba

THUNDER BAY: Laurie Wendt, Women's Liberation, Lakehead University

SUDBURY: Cynthia Gedy, WLM, Rm. 319, Mine-Mill Hall, 19 Regent South

SAULT STE. MARIE: Mercedes Clark, Algoma College

KITCHENER-WATERLOO: Women's Caucus, P.O. Box 664, Waterloo

GUELPH: U. of Guelph Women's Liberation, c/o Marilyn Bell, Box 2, Johnson Hall

WINDSOR: Women's Liberation Office, Room 603, 76

ST. CATHARINES: Pat Smith, 123 Lake St. 685-1915

PETERBOROUGH: Pat Saunders, Trent University, Lady Eaton College

HAMILTON: Hamilton and District W.L., 77 Delaware Dr. Apt. 707, Stoney Creek

STOWE-GULLEN Feminists of the Hamilton Area, P. O. Box 207, Ancaster

TORONTO: Toronto Women's Caucus, 188 Adelaide St. W. 368-6583  
Women's Liberation Movement, 380 Victoria St. 863-9949  
WLM Abortion Referral, 533-9006  
ARCA Abortion Referral, 924-2895  
York Women's Caucus, 241-6557 or 449-2961

OTTAWA: Women's Justice, Box 14, Station A  
MONTREAL: Women's Action Movement, Box 37, Station N.  
Women's Centre, 3964 Ste. Famille

HALIFAX: Ruth Taillon, 2614 Windsor St.

Please let us know if we have omitted your group or if any address should be corrected.

## Velvet Fist

Vol. 2 No. 1

## LETTERS

To the Editor:

I have been following the Velvet Fist for approximately 5 months and am pleased to note the consistent improvement in quality and content. One suggestion - I would like to see some form of coverage of the educationals at the T.W.C. meetings. Many of them are excellent and for those who cannot attend I think a column covering the basic ideas would be of interest.  
Yours,  
Carole Atkins

Thanks for your good word! As a matter of fact, we have used T.W.C. educationals in the Velvet Fist in the past. The article "Sugar 'n Spice" from No. 8 was given by Sandra Pike and the article "On being a Feminist Mother" in the last issue was presented by Paula Howard.

To the Editor:

Congratulations on the last issue! I hope we can expect more of the same. And please, more personal stories, as I think most women can identify in some way with the hardships these women have overcome to achieve their feminism.

To the Editor:

Definitely the best issue yet. Keep up the good work.

Linda R.  
Windsor, Ont.

To the Editor:

While participating as a contestant in the Miss Canada Pageant, I received your letter of protest against such beauty contests. I strongly agree with your remarks. I am now in the process of writing a major term paper on Women's Liberation. I would sincerely appreciate it if you could send me, at your earliest convenience, some material and statistics on women's status in society. These would be of ultimate value in helping me in my project.  
Sincerely,  
Leona Lamie, Antigonish.  
Miss Nova Scotia.

Ed. Note: The letter referred to was drawn up and delivered to all contestants by women of T.W.C. prior to our demonstration protesting the Miss Canada Pageant.

# Injunction victim tells her story

A 37-year old mother of four recently had her plans for an abortion halted by an Ontario Supreme Court injunction.

Because of the publicity surrounding the case and not wishing to set a precedent, she applies for an order to rescind the injunction. The following statements are taken from the affidavit which she swore for this application.

She succeeded on February 8 in having the injunction lifted; however, it can be reinstated at any time on 24 hours notice. At the time of the hearing, she stated that she would not seek an abortion in spite of this victory.

We do not know her reasons for deciding to have the child; we can only speculate. It may be that no hospital would now perform her abortion; or that she feels the abortion would completely destroy her marriage or that she made this concession in order to have the injunction lifted.

This affidavit is now public property. The Velvet Fist has access to it thanks to the efforts of Pat Schulz, who was sent to Ottawa by the Ontario Coalition to find out the facts about the case. No other reporters expressed any interest in this woman's statement.

On January 25, I had documents served on me in the English language which I do not understand well. I was told "the papers he was giving me were from the hospital". I took this to mean the Riverside Hospital where the abortion committee had agreed to my abortion. Having read them I determined they related to court proceedings surrounding my pregnancy to prevent me from obtaining an abortion, but I was unable to fully understand their significance.

Half an hour later that same day, I discussed this briefly with my husband and he advised me that since he was not planning to attend Court it wasn't necessary for me to attend either.

I didn't seek independent legal advice and was mistaken as to the significance of the papers for the following reasons:

I was unable to read and clearly understand the meaning of the papers;

My husband advised me it was unnecessary for me to attend Court.

As well as the above, I was not given reasonable or sufficient notice in order to seek and retain independent legal advice. As a resident of Quebec, I did not know a lawyer in Ontario and needed more than 24 hours notice to obtain a lawyer and prepare for the procedures.

I was also advised by my physician before receiving the papers that Riverside Hospital had reversed their decision to grant me an abortion because of my husband's objections.

Later on in the evening of the same

day, David Dehler, my husband's lawyer, called me. He addressed me in French and I understood I was compelled to visit a doctor the following morning and that it would be in my best interests to do so.

I told Mr. Dehler I didn't want to see him because I already had a doctor. However, he persuaded me to see him and I intended to convince him of my reasons for the abortion so that he could convince Riverside. Mr. Dehler also told me I should see the doctor to make certain my husband did not hold back any facts to the Court that might have some bearing on the case.

The next day I saw the doctor who examined me physically. He did not take into account my emotional, social and psychological reasons given in order to terminate the pregnancy. "I understood him to convey to me that he was opposed to abortions, in principle."

After that the Court case was held at which I was not represented. The temporary injunction was granted.

My failure to appear was not due to my acquiescence or consent to any restraining order made against me but for the reasons I have outlined above.

On January 27, "I first became fully aware of the significance and nature of the aforesaid proceedings as a result of extensive coverage in front page headlines in all newspapers in the City of Ottawa area and due to frequent broadcasts reporting the outcome of said proceedings over local radio and television stations.

Although my name was not mentioned pursuant to an order made by the Honourable Mr. Justice Lief, I was extremely upset and depressed in view of constant telephone calls from members of the news media who ascertained my identity and questioned me about my intentions."

On Friday, January 28, I called Dehler and expressed to him that I was greatly upset with the publicity given to a personal and private matter between husband and wife.

To backtrack - I became aware of my pregnancy in November, 1971 in my second week. This pregnancy was not planned between my husband and myself. The next day I saw a doctor who confirmed my pregnancy and I said it was my intention to terminate the pregnancy.

This doctor, a week after my visit, referred me to another doctor at Ottawa Civic Hospital to have my pregnancy terminated. I was advised by the Hospital that since I was a Quebec resident I could not have the operation at that hospital.

I then decided to go to New York during Christmas holidays. Arrangements were made on my behalf and I discussed my intentions to terminate the pregnancy with my husband who consented to go to New York with me.

On December 21, en route to New York via Montreal, my husband was advised by officials at the U.S. consulate he could not enter the U.S. without a visa. (Her husband's affidavit states: "I agreed to go to New York only for the purpose of getting my wife to Montreal to be examined by her former obstetrician, Dr. Laramee.")

In view of this fact, my husband made arrangements for me to see a doctor in Montreal to determine if my pregnancy could be terminated in Quebec. I went to the doctor on that date and was not physically examined by him. The next day we returned home.

On or about January 10, I called my doctor who advised me that if the Therapeutic Abortion Committee at Riverside Hospital decided the continuation of the pregnancy would endanger my health, the necessary medical procedures could be carried out at that hospital in Ottawa.

I believe that on January 10 my husband called my doctor and verbally agreed with him that if an abortion was necessary he would consent to one.

One week later, my doctor made an appointment to see a doctor at Riverside who, following a complete physical examination, advised me that the continuation of my pregnancy would likely endanger my health and that a therapeutic abortion, in his opinion, was justified and would be carried out by way of a Caesarean operation. He advised me the Therapeutic Abortion Committee at Riverside would review my case and advise me of their decision.

I was later advised the committee had

granted permission for the abortion in accordance with the laws.

My reasons for seeking medical assistance in accordance with the laws of Canada in order to obtain a therapeutic abortion, are as follows:

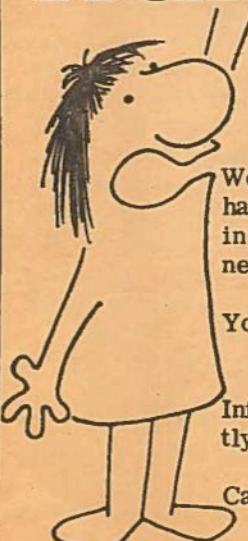
- a. That I am a woman of 37 years of age and presently have four children, two of whom are extremely nervous and emotional and their upbringing has imposed a great mental, physical and emotional strain on me;
- b. That this pregnancy was not planned by my husband and I;
- c. That I have maintained the role of "chef de famille" in our home and this responsibility over the years has imposed a heavy burden on me;
- d. My husband is 50 years of age, that marital discord has existed between my husband and myself for some time;
- e. That I am a small and anaemic person and presently I am not in good health;
- f. That I do not feel I am emotionally and psychologically able to cope with this pregnancy in view of the above reasons;
- g. That my husband does not enjoy employment security and, if terminated, he will be obliged to leave Canada and return to France;
- h. That my husband's nervous condition gives me cause for concern at the present time and this pregnancy will not assist his condition and will affect the well-being of myself and the rest of our family;
- i. That in view of the tension in our home, my oldest child on the recommendation of a psychiatrist, was sent to France to attend boarding school in September of 1971.

That I am informed and verily believe that time is of the essence in view of the fact that the passage of time increases the risk to my safety and well-being with respect to the procedures recommended by the Therapeutic Abortion Committee, to terminate my pregnancy.



AB 2/12

**Wanted**



Women who have had abortions within the last year needed for

York University study -

Information strictly confidential.

Call: 635-2557 or 445-0597

# Abortion injunction threatens all women

This article is adapted from a speech by Lorna Grant, co-ordinator of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition; she spoke at a demonstration on January 29, in front of the Ontario Supreme Court, to protest a court order which prevented an Ottawa woman - whose identity remains secret by court order - from having an abortion.

Similar demonstrations were held the same day in five provinces and in half a dozen cities. The Toronto demonstration was on national t.v., and Lorna also spoke on cross-Canada radio.

In her speech, Lorna described the international dynamics and of the struggle for and against women's rights to legal abortion, and provided a framework for understanding the significance of this injunction for Canadian women.

On January 26, an Ontario Supreme Court Judge issued an injunction which prevented an Ottawa woman from having an abortion.

The woman had successfully made her way through the weeks of red tape necessary under the present laws. The abortion committee at Ottawa's Riverside Hospital had approved an abortion for her on the recommendation of her doctor, who stated that his pregnancy might result in a

deformed child and that it endangered the life of the mother.

She was already in hospital, about to have the abortion, when Judge Lief issued an injunction preventing the abortion on behalf of her husband and "the infant plaintiff" (the fetus).

In the face of an immediate outcry across the country against this injunction, attempts were made the next day to downplay the significance of this event. "It's only a temporary injunction - a small family matter" "It sets no legal precedent." "The woman is very happy and looking forward to the birth of her fifth child."

But legal precedent or not, this move is a serious attack on the rights of all women to determine when and if they will bear a child. It is not simply a "small private matter" and cannot be treated as such.

The woman in Ottawa is already a mother of four. She had decided that she did not want to bear a fifth at this time. Under the present circumstances she is not allowed to make that decision for herself.

This woman's case is the case of millions of women across the country. They know her situation very well - they face it themselves. As long as the courts can enforce motherhood no woman is safe. We must point out very clearly the need for complete repeal of the laws from the Criminal Code. Until abortion decisions are taken out of the hands of politicians, lawyers and courts and put into the hands of pregnant women, no woman will be able to claim the right to have any control of her life.

I think there are several important considerations in discussing the significance of this injunction:

## ANTI-ABORTION CAMPAIGN ESCALATES

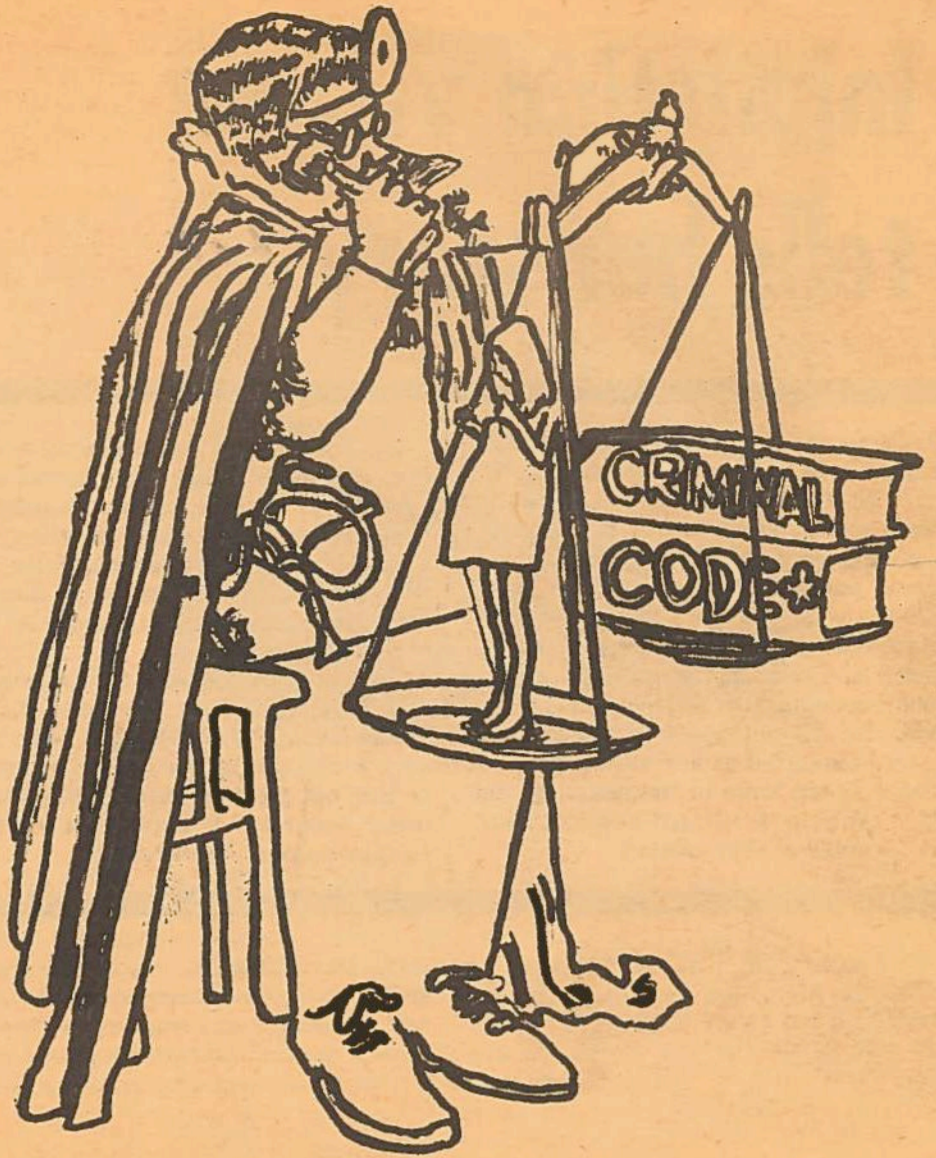
Firstly - and, I think, most importantly - the injunction should not be seen as an isolated incident. It is part of a mounting campaign by right-wing, anti-abortion forces against all women's right to abortion and directly against the abortion law repeal movement.

Even David Dehler, the lawyer handling the Ottawa case, has made this obvious. Since the injunction, he has revealed that he is a member of Alliance for Life. He stated that "the next step was to have a guardian appointed for all unborn children in Ontario" - preferably himself.

The Catholic Women's League has stepped up its letter-writing campaign in opposition to legal abortion. Earlier this month the Justice Minister's office issued a press release stating that the letters on abortion were "running 3 to 1 against abortion."

The editorial staff of the United Church Observer recent came out in opposition to the repeal movement and against the official position of the United Church in support of repeal.

"Birthright", ostensibly a counselling service for pregnant women but in fact an anti-abortion propaganda organization which plays on women's guilt feelings in attempting to prevent them from seeking abortions, has begun to organize on many campuses across the country. Alliance for Life and Right to Life have set up groups in several high schools and some Catholic colleges. These anti-abortion groups are moving out aggressively to build their forces, and the press has been increasing its cover-



age of these groups.

## DEFENSE OF THE PRESENT LAWS IS A TRAP

The escalation of the anti-abortion campaign not only in Canada but internationally was shown in the recent New York injunction preventing all abortions in public hospitals - a blatant attempt to roll back gains already made by the women's movement.

These New York and Ottawa injunctions open the doors for a big campaign in defense of the present abortion laws. Even they, restrictive as they are, are threatened by this injunction. It is possible that the government may use this incident as an excuse for not raising abortion in the House.

The injunction, along with the other moves by the right, provides the cover Trudeau needs in order to maintain this reactionary stand supporting the status quo. We know that he would like to present himself as the great liberal, taking the middle of the road, resisting pressures from both ends to change the laws. We know that maintaining this stance is particularly important at this time with an election forthcoming.

But the facts of the matter are that according to the polls, the present abortion laws represent the interests of a minority in this country. We must not get caught up wasting time and energy defending these restrictive laws. We women demand that abortion be made completely legal, and millions of Canadians support us in our fight.

## REPEAL CAMPAIGN CHALLENGED

We, the repeal forces, are facing a tremendous challenge at the moment. We must meet arguments and attacks from three sides - those of the anti-abortionists, those of the defenders of the present laws, and also those of women within the feminist movement who oppose the struggle for the right to abortion.

This feminist opposition must be understood as a concession in response to powerful pressures on the feminist movement to abandon the

abortion struggle in favor of less controversial issues. The strength of these pressures from opposition forces serves as evidence of how fundamental the abortion struggle is to the fight against women's oppression.

Giving in to these pressures can only lead to right-wing, anti-woman positions, e.g., Marlene Dixon, once a well-known spokeswoman for the feminist movement, recently criticized the movement for its focus on abortion and declared that feminists shouldn't fight for the right to abortion because abortions take human lives.

## THE REPEAL MOVEMENT

Judging from the response of women to the events of these last few weeks, I feel confident that we can meet all these challenges and more.

Our main task in meeting such challenges is to spread the abortion law repeal campaign from coast to coast with all the resources at our disposal. We must strengthen and build the various coalitions and work closely with women in other provinces; we must get the repeal petition into as many hands as possible, and draw thousands of new women into the campaign.

The campaign for legal abortion is gaining strength. While abortion has been for some time the key focus for the struggle of women in Canada to gain control over their lives, it becomes even more so at this time.

The cross-country abortion conference which has just been called for March is a big step forward. The movement for a woman's right to abortion moves into an exciting new level with this conference. For the first time, it is possible to project a truly unified cross-country repeal movement - the first united national campaign undertaken by Canadian women since the struggle for suffrage.

This conference will face the exciting task of consolidating this campaign and of planning a national strategy to meet present and future attacks on the movement - to defend all women's right to abortion by winning repeal of all abortion laws.

## Cross-Canada tour builds conference

Lorna Grant, staff co-ordinator of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition, will be undertaking a cross-Canada tour February 15-26.

The central purpose of the tour is to publicize and raise funds for the March 18 Winnipeg abortion conference.

She will speak to audiences in Halifax, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg about the implications of the recent Ottawa injunction; a broadside attack on women's right to abortion. This escalation by anti-abortion forces poses the urgent necessity for all of us who support repeal to redouble our efforts.

This escalation by anti-abortion forces illustrates the need for united, cross-country co-ordination of the repeal movement. The task of making such co-ordination a reality falls to the Winnipeg conference.

Lorna will begin the tour immediately after attending the Second National Conference of the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition in Boston, February 12-13.

This tour will play a key role in tying together the efforts and experiences of the international repeal movement, laying the foundation in Canada for close co-operation between provincial coalitions.

# ABORTION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

whether a woman should bear a child at any particular time should be made by her - only she knows whether she is emotionally and financially able to have a child at this time, only she can weigh the balance of her other responsibilities and plans. She has a right to make this decision. Abortion should be a medical procedure, subject to the same standards as tonsillectomies and appendectomies; it has no place in criminal law.

The present laws force women to abase themselves and undergo traumatic humiliations and delays in order to get legal abortions; or to spend large sums of money to get a foreign abortion; or to risk unsafe, illegal abortions; or to bear unwanted children. These laws deny women the right to any choice regarding motherhood. The results of these laws are seen in damaged lives, maimed and mutilated women, and unwelcome children.

- Q. Doesn't abortion mean taking a life?
- A. Emotionally-charged words like "murder" and "unborn child" are often used to cloud the issues. In fact the fetus is not a child, it is only potentially a child. True, the fetus is alive; but its life is completely dependent on the life of the mother. How can we equate the life of a group of subdivided cells with the life of a woman, who has consciousness, social relationships, responsibilities, hopes and plans? Life is not a "yes or no" question; we are concerned with the quality of life. What kind of a life are we wishing on a child when we force it to be born to a mother desperately unprepared and unwilling to have it? More importantly, what kind of life is being imposed on women when we are denied the right to the most basic decisions in our lives, when we are forced to spend our lives being responsible for children we know beforehand we were in no position to have?
- Animals have no control over what happens in their lives - they are subject to chance and accidents of nature. In contrast, a fundamental aspect of human life is the ability to exercise some conscious choice and control over natural events. It is this that is denied women - and this denial is the taking of life in its fullest sense: the taking away of the rights of humanity, and reducing women's lives to the level of animal passivity.

Women report that several questions are frequently asked them while circulating the petition.

- Q. What is the substance of the present laws on abortion?
- A. Under present law, abortion is illegal; anyone attempting to perform an abortion is liable to life imprisonment. The woman herself is liable to two years in jail. The only exception is when a hospital therapeutic abortion committee of at least three doctors (none of whom can perform abortions while on the committee) decides that continuation of a woman's pregnancy "would be likely to endanger her life or health." The abortion must be performed in an accredited hospital or one approved by the provincial Minister of Health.
- Q. Why do you want to abolish these laws?
- A. There are many reasons; we can state a few: Most importantly, we want abortion to stop being considered a crime. The decision as to



University of Toronto women in Ottawa Nov. 20 last year

## Student women campaign for abortion referendums

On several Canadian campuses, students will be voting in referendums this spring: for or against repeal of anti-abortion laws.

The campaigns to win these referendums will involve confrontation with such groups as Birthright and Right to Life, who have recently oriented their activities to winning support for their anti-abortion positions in the student milieu.

The fact that such referendums are being held at all is a victory for the campus women who fought to have them called. These women gathered names of supporters, circulated petitions, and argued their case in student council meetings until the councils agreed.

So far, referendums will be held at the University of Toronto, Humber College, York University, Carleton, Edmonton, Saskatchewan, Trent as well as others that are not as yet finalized. Most of them will take place around the middle of March, in conjunction with the spring student council elections.

The campaigns will provide a framework for carrying the arguments for repeal to the entire student body. Even

election candidates will be challenged to take a stand on repeal, as the referendums make abortion a key campaign issue.

A whole program of activities can be planned to arouse debate and mobilize support for a "yes" vote in the referendum.

At Humber College, women will recreate the women's court proceedings which on November 20 indicted the Canadian government for "causing gross physical and emotional harm to the women of Canada by retaining abortion in the Criminal Code" and condemned the government to being "constantly reminded of its failure to meet the needs of Canadian women and therefore the needs of Canada."

Other activities will be carried - panel discussions, articles in campus papers, etc. Student women plan to use the cross-country petition to win the referendum, and are taking on petition quotas for individual campuses.

The referendums will play an invaluable role in extending the base of the campaign for abortion law repeal among student women - who represent the future of this campaign and of women's struggles in this country.

## Thousands sign petition for legal abortion

BY LIS ANGUS

"We, the undersigned, support the private members' bills submitted by Grace McInnis (NDP, Vancouver-Kingsway) and Hylliard Chappell (Liberal, Peel South) which call for repeal of those sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion."

This is the text of a petition being circulated across Canada as part of the campaign to repeal anti-abortion laws and to win women's right to choose if and when to bear children.

Response to the petition has been phenomenal. A teacher in one Toronto high school gave six petitions to one of her students; the completed petitions were returned in 15 minutes. Since then about 800 students in that school - out of a student body of 1,000 - have signed the petition.

The circulation of the petition is being organized provincially by coalitions of organizations and individuals

united around repeal of the present restrictive abortion laws. Such coalitions have been formed already in seven provinces; a cross-country abortion conference is being held in Winnipeg in March to unite these separate coalitions and plan a united campaign.

The cut off date for gathering in all petitions to present them to the government has been tentatively set at sometime in May; the date will be finalized at the cross-country abortion conference.

Provincial coalitions are in the process of taking on quotas (a projected number of signatures aimed for by the cut-off date); e.g. the Ontario coalition is aiming for 50,000 (10,000 of these have already been collected) and B.C. is working for 25,000. The total should be considerably higher than the 100,000 anti-abortion letters

projected by the Catholic Women's League.

Within the provinces, these quotas are being divided up among city coalitions and individual organizations - e.g. the Toronto Women's Caucus has taken on a quota of 5,000.

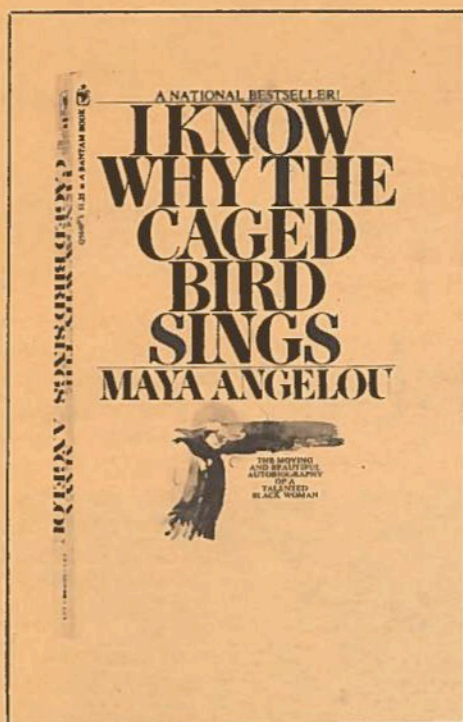
The petition is proving to be an effective way to involve many women in the day-to-day work of the campaign. Particularly on the campuses, where women are campaigning for referendums on abortion, the circulation of the petition is playing a big role.

Women - and men - are taking the petition to work and to school with them; they are taking part in petitioning teams going out to downtown shopping areas, and suburban centres; they are taking it to political meetings and social gatherings; they are going door-to-door in apartment

blocks and residential areas.

Since the Ottawa injunction the petition campaign is quickly gathering momentum. The Ontario coalition office has received dozens of calls every day from women requesting petitions - the injunction made them realize that the battle for legal abortion might be lost, and that they have to do what they could to help the repeal campaign.

Petitions and referendums have a long history in the Canadian women's movement. Our suffragist sisters gathered thousands of signatures in every province, often travelling miles by horse and buggy to reach isolated farm women. In 1914, thirty-three referendums on female suffrage were held - and won - across Ontario. Our forefathers' commitment to the struggles of their time can only inspire us in today's campaign.



BY GAIL ARTHUR

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", a moving autobiography by Maya Angelou, is not actually a new book. First published in 1970, it is one that may have passed unnoticed by feminists because it is not directly related to the subject of women's liberation.

The author's life had been particularly shaped by the two very remarkable women in her life - her mother and her grandmother.

Her grandmother, with whom she had spent most of her early years, was a strict woman who adhered to her religious beliefs and was remembered by the author for her power and strength.

Living most of her life in a small southern town, she was well aware of the distinct social divisions between Blacks, po' whites, and whites. Proudly pro-Black, she was not intimidated by white authorities. Once when Maya had an agonizing toothache, her grandmother had taken her to the only dentist in the area who refused to treat "nigra". The black dentist lived in Texarkana, some distance away and the trip would cost money. Her grandmother stood up to the dentist, demanding ten dollars from him as interest on a loan she had made to him some time before. "Even though, by rights he was paid up before, I figger, he gonna be that kind of nasty, he gonna have to pay for it." Then they went to the Black dentist in Texarkana.

Her mother was a fascinating person who met any disaster calmly. She supported herself and her family by her wits, playing pinochle for money and running poker games.

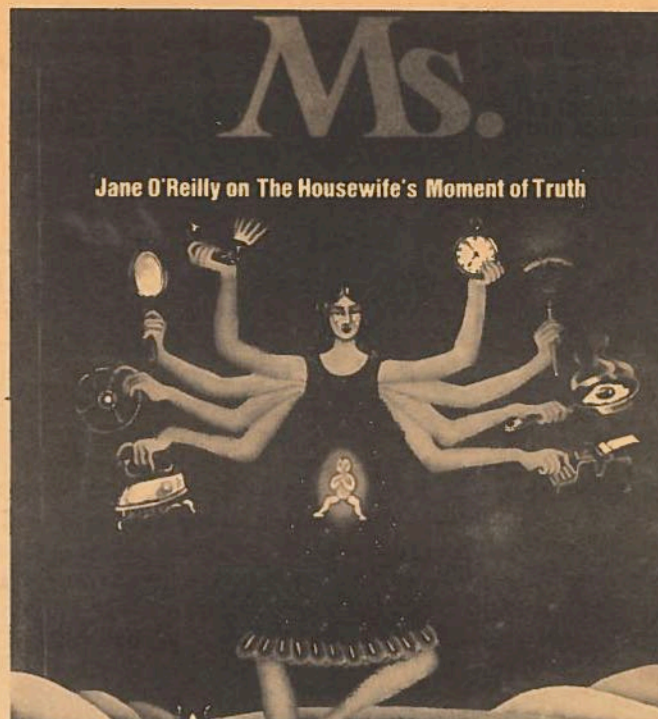
Mother calmed her daughter's adolescent anxiety that she might be a lesbian with humour and sensitivity. Later on she accepted Maya's pregnancy calmly and without condemnation. She encouraged both her children to live their own lives as they wanted without much interference from

her and she was repaid with love from both her children.

An incident showing the type of oppression that Maya had to overcome in Stamps, Arkansas, where she lived with her grandmother, occurred at the time of her graduation from grade school. She had been very excited over the event - in fact, the whole town was preparing for it. The guest speaker, however, was a white man who made it clear that he was doing the Black community a great favour by passing through their school before going on to more important duties. He spoke of the marvellous equipment the white school would be getting and the improvements being made there. All the Black school could hope for was the only paved playing field, and that provided they helped to elect him.

The effect of his words on the gathering was to totally destroy the mood of optimism and pride in the accomplishment of the graduates. This is how Maya described her feelings: "We were maids and farmers, handy-men and washerwomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous . . . It was awful to be a Negro and have no control over my life."

Maya makes an important comment which explains her life and the position of all Black women very clearly. "The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite cross-fire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power. The fact that the adult American Negro female emerges a formidable character is often met with amazement, distaste and even belligerence. It is seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance."



BY KAREN CUNLIFFE

Ms., The New Magazine for Women, edited and produced by women, is a slick, glossy publication. It will be well distributed and widely read and will bring to many women the nature of our oppression in a familiar and respectable format. It is an indication of the tremendous growth of our movement over the past few years that this magazine has appeared at all. It is an ambitious project and definitely of value in bringing feminist ideas to millions of women across the country.

Regarding format, it is unfortunate that Ms. has had to accept advertising which is degrading to women; something the women's movement has been attempting to end. For example: The copy of the Bloomingdale's ad reads: "You know who you are. A great looking girl dressed by a man who knows". One full pager had the heading: "The Death of the Dead-End Secretary". Aha! An advertiser who realizes how exploitive work as a secretary can be and he wants to change it. Reading down the copy we discover that, although it is admitted that secretarial work is of low status, the solution to our problem is in something new to buy, something our "complacent sisters of the previous generation" didn't have. The product - "word processing systems", i.e., fancy, computerized typewriting equipment!

All new material about women must be examined to determine its value in informing women about our oppression and building upon this consciousness the mass women's movement which will gain women their rights in this society. From this point of view it is necessary to look at what the philosophy is of this magazine as well as its political perspective - how does it tell us we can effect change?

On the first point - advising women of our oppression in many different areas - the magazine, as mentioned is quite effective. It deals with such issues as daycare, marriage, welfare, working women, black women, gay women, women and the war. It covers most of the bases as far as the basic feminist ideas is concerned. However, little mention is made of abortion other than a two-page appeal for signatures of women who have had abortions. There is no introductory article on why it is necessary for women to win the right to abortion.

After reading this material we know we are oppressed. What does Ms. tell us we can do about changing our situation? The article on daycare explains how one woman single-handedly can organize a community daycare centre. The article does not

tell us how we can fight for free daycare in all communities for all women.

The Housewife's Moment of Truth and How to Write Your Own Marriage Contract give readers individual solutions to our personal oppression. As an alternative to mass action, it seems we are to liberate ourselves - the "fix your head" approach.

We are told women can aid our struggle by signing the abortion statement. This petition will go to the White House and state legislatures. We are urged to join the Women's Action Alliance, a tax-deductible organization, "designed to help women initiate action-oriented projects in the community."

We are given the political alternative of voting for the 1972 presidential candidate who rates the highest on the scale of concern for the problems of women. The only woman candidate in the survey, Shirley Chisholm, wins - but barely. No concern is shown here for whether or not the entire platform of the party for which the candidate is running is pro-woman.

The whole perspective of this magazine is a reflection of the more conservative elements within the women's movement. The stress is on consciousness-raising among individual women and the magazine underestimates the power of the oppressive forces in our society.

Therefore, instead of telling us to join together to form an organized force to win gains for all women, Gloria Steinem, in her article on Sisterhood, tells us we should be aware of our oppression as an individual, explain it to others, and feel more of a sense of solidarity with other women. She doesn't tell us how to use this sense of solidarity.

It is significant that the one area where women are organizing on a mass basis is for abortion law repeal and that abortion is underplayed in the magazine. This omission is most disturbing considering the growth of the abortion law repeal movement on an international scale and indicates the magazine's failure to recognize the importance of women working together to improve our position in society. Only a strong women's movement, one that is not tax deductible, will enable us to win any real gains.

The basic articles on the various areas of women's oppression will serve to educate women about their role in society. Hopefully Ms. readers will be motivated to read further for a more effective strategy to change that role.

## Subscribe to Velvet Fist

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ \$1.00 for 5 issues, or \_\_\_\_\_ \$2.00 for 10 issues.

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# Did you know...?

By ANDREE ROY

A group of Toronto women have received a LIP (Local Initiatives Program) grant from the government and have set out, with the aid of a cable tv company, to train women for work in television. The women are learning everything from writing scripts to running tv cameras.

In 1895 an Ontario woman made the breakthrough into "traditionally unfeminine" work. She was Margaret Carlyle, who was appointed a factory inspectress to report on conditions affecting female labour in Toronto, the Niagara Peninsula and much of south-western Ontario. She guarded the occupational well-being of women factory workers in these areas until well into the 1920's. One of her early reports states "... inventions have made machinery almost human, needing directions only, and little manual strength. This has opened up new and wide fields of labour for the woman. In many cases she is now ... an active competitor with men."

In Amsterdam women tied pink ribbons around the men's outdoor public toilets... to protest the fact that women do not have free public facilities.

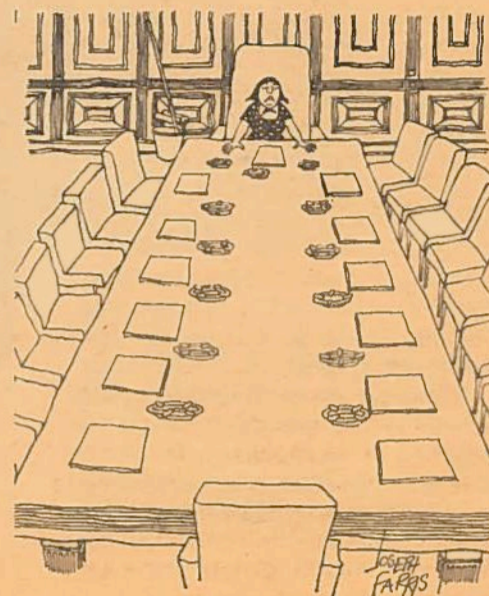
Dr. Estelle Ramey, an endocrinologist, and professor at Georgetown University Medical School, contends that men are the "weaker sex". Research has convinced her that men are more prone to a whole range of physical ills including heart disease, gastrointestinal cancer, peptic ulcer and a metabolic rate that "burns them out" faster than women.

George Jean Nathan: "A husband is a man who expects his wife to be perfect, and to understand why he isn't."

The Canadian Government is the largest employer of women in Canada, 83% of whom hold office support or administrative support jobs. (1967 figures).

Women Against Sexism in Textbooks and Education, a Halifax group has stated that textbooks and teachers perpetuate the myth that women's place is in the home and that some occupations are suitable for men only. This does a disservice to children and does not reflect actual conditions in the world, the group states.

In 1921 the women of the West tried to persuade Canada's Prime Minister to appoint a woman to the Senate. The Crown's legal advisers told the P.M. that he had no power to do so since in their opinion, a woman was not a "person" within the meaning of the BNA Act. Not until an appeal was made to the privy Council were women recognized as "persons" under the BNA Act. That was only 42 years ago!



"Attention, male chauvinist pigs..."

Forty per cent of all women who work in Ontario either support themselves or support a family.

In 1881 the women managers of the Y.W.C.A. were called "well meaning but misguided ladies who made an obvious error in judgement" when they announced that a course in "typewriting" would be opened to women. The female mind and constitution could not possibly withstand the strain of a six-month course in typing, it was said.

In Chile women and men use separate ballot boxes to cast their votes in election.

200,000 Bengali women have been deserted by their husbands in accordance with Moslem custom because the women were raped by West Pakistani occupation forces. The government has declared women "national heroes", in an attempt to get the husbands to accept them.

The Canadian Government has always subscribed to equal pay for equal work for men and women; the problem here has become one of defining equal work.

## Taking stock: Ontario's equal employment act

BY GAIL MATHIAS

The full title of this year-old act is "An Act to prevent Discrimination in Employment because of Sex or Marital Status." This wording reflects the intent of the act, which is primarily to correct the prevalent discrimination against women workers, but also to protect the growing numbers of men entering traditionally "feminine" fields such as nursing and secretarial work.

The act is administered by the Women's Bureau of the Ontario Department of Labour. Among the Bureau's

many functions are receiving and investigation complaints of conduct in contradiction to legislation providing for equal opportunity and enforcing legislation providing for equal employment opportunity for women. In the first year of enforcement of the Act, 238 complaints (48 of them by men) were registered with the Women's Bureau. The largest number of these complaints involved job classification and seniority lists that bar women.

The Act provides for a maternity

leave of 12 weeks for employees with one year of service or more and prohibits dismissal for pregnancy. The Act also prohibits discrimination based on sex or marital status in recruitment, hiring, training, promotion and dismissal.

Labelling jobs male or female violates the Act. In an Ontario Department of Labour Information Release dated December 20, 1971, is the statement, "Male and female job labels have been abolished by the Act and all jobs are open to qualified workers regardless of sex." However, under the Act, separate help-wanted columns - "Jobs Primarily of Interest to Men (Women)" may be continued for convenience sake, but must not be restrictive in effect. In other words, sex-typing of jobs is allowed under the Act.

Accordingly, the Globe and Mail, which separates its help-wanted columns into Male and Female, rationalizes this division by stating at the beginning of the advertisements, "Since some occupations are considered more attractive to persons of one sex than the other, advertisements are placed for convenience of readers and are not intended to exclude persons of either sex." The Toronto Star at least lists all job advertisements without sex division.

Still, the wording of an advertisement may be more of a deterrent to one or other of the sexes, rather than where an ad is placed. On January 4, D'Arcy and Associates (a Toronto employment agency) placed an advertisement in the Globe and Mail for a "Secretary Plus" who should have a "sunshine disposition, a ready smile - good sense of humour, to work in a sophisticated and posh environment, - You'll be the envy of your friends!" This disgusting advertisement insults the intelligence of women (to whom it is obviously directed) and by its tone, discourages male secretaries from applying.

Opportunities Unlimited, another employment agency, went even further in

an ad in the Globe on December 30. They proudly boast of their four areas of specialization: Accounting, Data Processing, Female, and Technical Engineering. The obvious implication of this ad is the exclusion of women from the three designated professional areas and the equating of "Female" with secretarial/clerical personnel.

It becomes apparent that employers, newspapers and employment agencies continue to violate the intent of the

280 Help Wanted, female

"The Women's Equal Opportunity Act 1970 prohibits discrimination because of sex or marital status, with certain exceptions. Since some occupations are considered more attractive to persons of one sex than the other, advertisements are placed for convenience of readers. Such listings are not intended to exclude persons of either sex. Enquiries regarding this Act should be addressed to The Women's Bureau, Ontario Department of Labour, 400 University Avenue, 10th floor, Toronto 2. Telephone 365-1537.



Act. Dr. Lita-Rose Betcherman, Director of the Women's Bureau, said in an article in *Topical Quarterly*, (November, 1970), "When fair employment practices for women become the law of the land, many employers, personnel directors and employment agencies will discover how short-sighted they have been in closing the door in the face of one-third of the labour force."

Since women barely have their foot in the door, all working women should familiarize themselves with this legislation. Enquiries regarding the Act (and requests for copies of the Act) should be addressed to the Women's Bureau, Ontario Department of Labour, 400 University Avenue, 10th Floor, Toronto 2. Telephone 365-1537.

### BULLETINBOARD

TORONTO

## What women are doing..

### PANEL DISCUSSION ON ABORTION:

March 13, St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto.

Sponsored by Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition in conjunction with Community Affairs Department, Toronto Arts Foundation

Fur further information call 863-9773

### FESTIVAL OF WOMEN:

March 11-12, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Events include: film festival, Chicago Women's Rock Band, exhibition of photos, graphics, etc. by and of women. Literature display, dramatic review. Workshops include speakers from various women's groups.

Day care provided.

A project of the women registered in the Women's Study Program, U. of T.

For further information call 482-6277 or 781-4320.

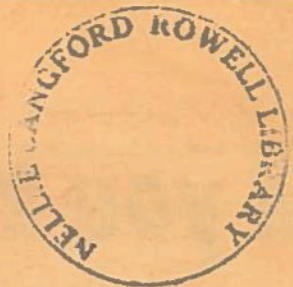
### WOMEN'S STRUGGLES IN 1972

February 28 - Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Speakers include Laura Sabia, Chairwoman, National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women, speaking generally on women's struggles; Lorenne Smith, Professor, University of Toronto, speaking on daycare; Lorna Grant, Coordinator of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition, speaking on abortion.

Sponsored by Toronto Women's Caucus and the General Support Staff Association, OISE.

For further information call 368-6583



# Can we cut the strings without a movement?

BY AVA KOBRINSKY AND PAM DINEEN

"Those marvelous new dimensions you're discovering in yourself were here all the time, waiting to be liberated."

This sounds like it could have been written by any feminist or taken from a women's liberation newspaper. It wasn't. Instead, it is a quotation from an ad for Slipstick, which has the power to liberate women from their typing errors.

Underlying this blatant commercialization of women's desires to free themselves is the misconception that liberation is a personal matter, that each woman can find her own road to liberation.

This misconception, when put forward by women who consider themselves feminists, is perhaps less obvious but certainly more dangerous.

There is a quite common opinion that all a woman has to do to become liberated is to gain an understanding of her own hangups, reject oppressive social standards and go on from there to live a so-called liberated lifestyle.

Many feminists place their emphasis on women fighting their oppression by making solely personal changes.

For example: A woman can assert her individuality by refusing to play submissive roles, not allowing men to open doors for her, keeping her own name, not wearing wedding rings or make-up and so on. Some go so far as to say women should not relate to men at all.

Women also can insist on dividing up household chores, demanding a mate do half the "shitwork". Setting up marriage contracts which will outline exactly who has to do what, even legislate sexual relations inside and outside marriage. Or having an important and meaningful career.

getting out of the confines of the home.

Certainly none of these ideas should be rejected and many women find such steps to be necessary in their own lives. However, this attitude as a basic approach to women's liberation is insufficient in itself. Most women in the home are economically dependent on their husbands and can express themselves only within a framework the husband sets. All too well we know how women are forced to use their "feminine wiles" to achieve their aims.

Such things as equally shared housework are an obvious prerequisite to an egalitarian relationship, but these measures will never be a solution for all women. Moreover, this "liberate yourself" philosophy perpetuates the oppressive isolation of women. This isolation has for so long kept women from realizing that their problems are not individual, but social problems common to all women, and therefore require a social solution.

There can be no islands of liberation. We live in a cruel and alienating society. Our oppression - individual and collective - is deeply enmeshed in the history of that society and is integral to the functioning of the system we live in.

Because the changes we need are so fundamental and far-reaching, it is easier for us to pretend that superficial changes will be enough. And indeed, it's impossible for an individual woman to do much to affect the sexist social structures which act on her.

Only when we realize that we need not struggle as individuals, but that all women share common needs and can work together, does the depth



of our oppression and the immensity of the tasks before us become challenging rather than overwhelming.

Our problems are social; our solutions will be social too. And because those solutions will threaten the power and position of those who benefit from our oppression, we will have to fight tremendous battles and face strong opposition.

Our only weapon is the building of a collective power through the mobilization of millions of angry women, independent of our oppressors and their agents, and directed against the institutions of their power.

Struggles such as the abortion law repeal campaign show us glimpses of the future of the movement we need to build.

Many weapons will be used against us to prevent us from building a movement. Our enemies are not above distorting our dreams and desires to lead us to mirages in the desert - and one of these is the illusion that personal solutions exist.

These treacherous deceptions are not always easy to resist. Our best defense will be the collective experience and traditions of the movement we are building, as we all learn to recognize and defeat our oppressors.

## Abortion conference Winnipeg March 18-19

There is an urgent need for coordination of the repeal movement on a united cross-Canada basis.

In view of the recent developments and in recognition of the need for coordination, the Manitoba Abortion Action Coalition, together with all the provincial coalitions, is issuing a call for an emergency cross-Canada conference of women for abortion law repeal at the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba on March 18-19.

Such actions as the recent Ontario Supreme Court Injunction, which halted an abortion in Ottawa, and the similar New York injunction are a reaction on the part of the most backward elements in this society to the movement for repeal and to our growing confidence that we, as women, can win the right to choose for ourselves when and if we will bear children.

The growing strength of the movement for repeal was shown on International Abortion Action Day when hundreds of Canadian women marched in the streets of all the major centres across Canada. The widespread support for this demand has been demonstrated by the many and varied organ-

izations which have taken a stand for repeal and the response seen already to the petition and campus referendum campaigns.


Yet, in the face of the constantly growing mass support, the government of Canada has refused to act; refused to even hold the debate which was promised in the speech from the throne.

The Prime Minister continues to ignore the mass movement for repeal that is growing across the country - a movement to ensure that every child is a wanted child and every mother is a willing mother.

In the face of these attacks and the government's evasions, we must join together to show the government of Canada that we will redouble our efforts to remove all abortion laws from the criminal code.

We must step up the petition campaign, build on the campuses through the referendums and carry the campaign into the high schools across Canada.

We must be ready for the possibility of an up-coming federal election and make the repeal of the abortion laws a major election issue.



### You don't have to fight alone

Toronto Women's Caucus (TWC) is a large, action-oriented group, capable of organizing around some of the crucial issues facing women: abortion, daycare, equal pay and so on.

TWC is open to all women who believe the status of women in society should, and can, be changed.

Come down to our headquarters. Join in our activities. Come to our Wednesday night meetings and bring your ideas, needs and talents to the group. Help build women's liberation. Help free our sisters, free ourselves!

## Join TWC

188 Adelaide Street West,  
Toronto, Ontario.  
368-6583