

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Vol. 3, No. 2

January/February, 1989

News & Views from Toronto Socialist Feminist Action



Photo: Left Eye

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No Peace Until Justice

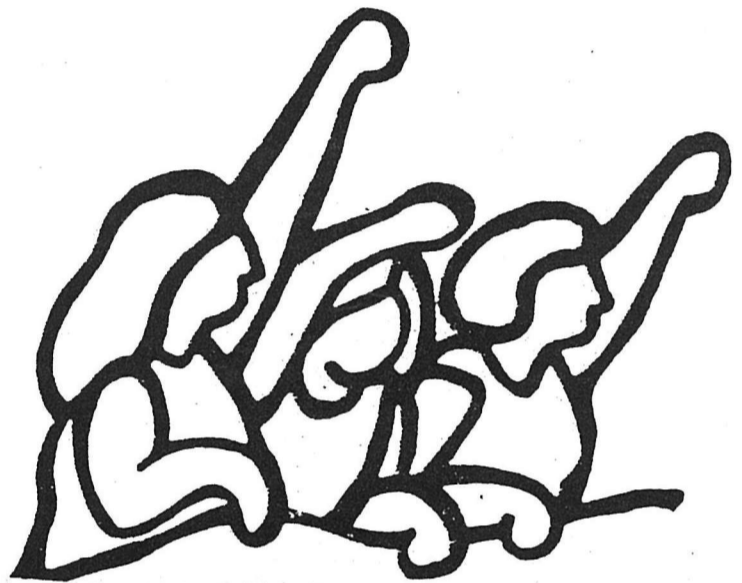
by Nancy Farmer

On December 8th Wade Lawson, a high school youth, was needlessly killed by Mississauga Police Officers. Lawson was shot in the back of the head as he backed out of a driveway in an allegedly stolen car. The bullets used were the banned hollow point bullets which mushroom on impact to cause greater damage.

Lawson was what you'd call an "all round Canadian kid." He was a good student and a hockey star. The police knew their target. They had staked out the car in a residential area. They knew they were dealing with two teenagers without any history of law breaking. They were unarmed, and posed no threat, and they were black.

People were outraged. Two days later over 500 supporters marched six miles through the streets of Mississauga from the Civic Centre to the police station, demanding that the officers be charged with murder.

The cry for justice broadened and public sympathy grew. Many events were organized to protest Lawson's killing. A candle light vigil was organized by the Coalition of Visible Minority Women, there was a memorial service held at a Mississauga High School, and a huge rally was held in conjunction with Martin Luther King Day celebrations on January 16th. Letters of support have come from the Canadian Auto Workers, the Ontario Federation of Labour, womens' organization and community groups.



Eventually the police involved were charged, one with manslaughter and the other with aggravated assault. Several days later Constable David Deviney was also charged with manslaughter for the Lester Donaldson shooting. The black community and its supporters were still not satisfied.

The police response attempted to discredit the opposition. Immediately they organized a work to rule protest. They have labeled the Black Action Defense Committee a fringe group with no popular support and claim the laying of charges is politically motivated. The police are also insisting that they have been overwhelmed with calls of support.

Besides being a tragic, needless death, the killing of Wade Lawson has shed light on other racist attacks. Our society has always been racist...but, now, suddenly it's newsworthy. In Dartmouth NS, a high school was closed because of racial tensions. In Scarborough only a few weeks ago, 12 officers with shotguns and bullet proof vests stormed the Malvern Christian Church during the Sunday Service. Five black youths were handcuffed and dragged out of the church while the congregation watched. The youths were later released without charges. It was a case of mistaken identity, according to the cops. Somehow, I'm sure it would have been handled quite differently if it had been the Timothy Eaton Church service that had been in progress.

In Miami racial tensions have once more erupted in the aftermath of the police killing of two black youths. Their crime...they were trying to drive away from a parking ticket.

Recently the Globe & Mail ran a story about eight Natives who were

killed walking along the side of the road. The deaths were never investigated. In this same northern Manitoba community Native people are prohibited from entering several hotels and bars. Nearby, Natives are living in plastic tents after being moved several years ago out of their homes, due to the expansion of a mine.

These aren't isolated events. Anyone who can't see the degree of racism in our society is living with their heads buried in the sand. From housing to jobs to police investigations, men and women of colour are discriminated against.

So what can we do about it? In the long term... well, this article isn't long enough to deal with the whole issue of changing this society. However in the short term, we can demonstrate our support for the Lawson Family and the Black Action Defense Committee by coming out to their events and rallies. We can also call the police and let them know that we don't support their racist attacks. We can demand that an Independent Citizens Review Board, independent from any police influence, be established to investigate police conduct and that murder charges be laid against the police who killed Wade Lawson. For more information on events and actions call 924-1104.

Denounce Racist Police Action

Press statement in support of the Black Action Defense Committee press conference held Tuesday January 16, 1989.

Toronto Socialist Feminist Action (formerly the International Women's Day Committee) has been in existence for 11 years. We have been active in the Women's movement, in anti-racist work, and the trade union movement, working for social change to fight against sexism, racism and economic exploitation.

We are here today to show our support for the Black Action Defense Committee in its struggle for justice in the murders of Wade Lawson and Lester Donaldson.

We join the call for the establishment of an independent inquiry into the murders of Lester Donaldson and Wade Lawson. We also join the call for an independent Public Complaints Commission which must be publicly chosen and publicly conducted. We demand that the manslaughter charges be changed to murder charges. The

police forces are not immune to the racism which permeates this society.

The possession of a badge and gun by police officers should not be a license for officially condoned and racially motivated attacks against the Black community.

In its statements and actions, the Police Association continues to provoke and exacerbate division. The Association has done nothing to dispell charges of racism against the police forces. We reject statements that the Black Action Defense Committee does not represent the Black community, People of Colour and others in this city who are fighting racism.

We also condemn statements by Metro Police officials which, for example, compare Toronto to Detroit and imply that the Black community in Detroit is responsible for dividing that city. The issue here is racism, and the responsibility lies with whites to challenge racism in ourselves and our communities.

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A Forum of Women's Resistance

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We are a socialist-feminist group
which operates on the principle that
mass action is our most effective in-
strument of change. We believe that
the oppression of women touches
every aspect of our lives and that the
liberation of women will require fun-
damental changes in the structure of
society.

We hold bi-weekly meetings
where our policy and overall direc-
tion are determined. Smaller commit-
tees work on specific events or in
different constituencies.

We welcome new members. For
more information, phone Debi at 962-
8242.

This issue was put together by:
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Signed articles do not necessarily
reflect the views of the Toronto
Socialist Feminist Action, but those of
the author.

Editorial: The Last word we want to say about the federal election

The recent federal election was a major disappointment for social democrats. Throughout the pre-election period, a growing alliance of trade unionists, women's organizations and cultural nationalists campaigned against the Free Trade Agreement. Many assumed that this campaign, organized largely outside the arena of electoral politics, would be taken up by the NDP. They were deeply disturbed when the NDP's campaign unfolded along the lines of typical liberal reform. Where was the strident opposition to Free Trade? Where was the strong attack against the Mulroney agenda? How could the NDP have failed to stem the tide of the new conservatism? Did the NDP adopt a 'middle-of-the-street' liberal platform because they thought that would win them sufficient popular support to break out of their third-party status? Many people anticipated this final breakthrough, expecting that the NDP would finally become a truly 'national' party with strong support from Quebec. Failure to achieve that status brought disillusionment and criticism. It has also left open the question of what we do now about Free Trade.

The Conservatives are steadily putting into place a coherent economic programme, one which attacks every plank and assumption of the 'welfare state'. The ideology and economic strategies of conservative ruling blocs, from Reagan and Thatcher to Mulroney, present a cohesive programme in defense of the 'free market'. This ideology of 'economic rationalism' has been implemented through privatization, free trade agreements, a complete restructuring and scaling down of social services, and deregulation. In the third week of January alone, three major mergers in the brewing, air carrier and the oil industries will result in rounds of layoffs and a massive con-

centration of capital. This is exactly what many of us have been anticipating, and what opponents of 'market rationalism' - of which free trade is a part - have argued for at least the past 2 years. What did the NDP propose during the election? Defense of the status quo. Economic nationalism.

During the federal election, the NDP consciously avoided any discussion of economic policy, in the belief that it would lose 'popular' support in the polls. The NDP does not have a clear economic programme which is strong enough, or developed enough to withstand the conservative attack. However, it is also the case that any close look at the NDP's policy record would show how ill-prepared the NDP is to present a clear direction that can challenge the conservative agenda. Much of the party's policy has retreated from the socialist views of the 1970s debate, taking up instead a defensive nationalism, a social democratic version of "fortress Canada".

NDP opposition to the Free Trade Agreement followed the lines of economic nationalism, making it very easy for the Liberals to scoop the social democrats. Nowhere did the NDP put forward any opposition which represented working class opposition to Free Trade. There was no comment about layoffs, the erosion of trade union - collective bargaining rights; not a word about the effects of deregulation, the fight against contracting-out, or the struggle for successor rights, job reduction, 'rationalization', plant shut-downs, wage and benefit concessions and cutbacks. Of course the business lobby had no problem with the dreaded 'C'-word, and made it quite clear whose class interests they were defending. Instead, the NDP stuck to an ideology which is more typically the terrain of liberal nationalists: the family, the 'average - ordinary - working

Canadian', those who 'fall through the cracks' into the 'safety net', the 'overtaxed middle class'. No wonder some argue that liberals have always been the primary target of NDP campaigns.

When Turner came out against free trade, it was clear that political opportunism was his motive, and that he betrayed the class interests of the Liberal party. At the same time, the strategy of isolating Free Trade from the rest of the conservative programme made it impossible to distinguish social democrat opposition to free trade from the Liberal line. Is Canadian capital somehow more 'pure' than US capital? We hoped for a strong attack from the NDP, one which saw free trade as yet another mechanism in the Conservative free market agenda. We expected the NDP to defend trade union and collective bargaining rights. It's since come out that the NDP ignored, and in some cases overrode, criticisms of its own campaign strategy from some parts of the trade union leadership, even if those criticisms came after the fact.

So the Conservatives have won another 4 year term and the Free Trade Agreement has been signed. We face 4 years of the implementation of the whole Conservative economic programme. So how do we fight plant closures, layoffs, social spending cuts, wage cuts? Is it by fighting free trade on a nationalist basis or is it, as we have argued in earlier editorials, by building alliances of all the groups most affected by the Conservative agenda? If the NDP wants to be seen to lead an effective opposition, they've got to present a coherent alternative. There must be a clear recognition of the current economic climate, not a single-minded opposition to one aspect the Conservative - business agenda. Most of all, we must put forward an economic alternative which goes beyond the defense of the status quo.



Who is Toronto Socialist Feminist Action?

After what seems like years of discussion, IWDC has finally changed its name to Toronto Socialist Feminist Action (TSFA)! Suggestions ranged from Twisted Sisters to Material Girls to Daughters of the Canadian Revolution, but we finally opted for TSFA.

The March 8 Coalition was formed in 1977 to organize the first International Women's Day to be held in Toronto. Out of the Coalition's first year of meetings a group of us decided to carry on as a permanent political organization, and we decided that our politics would be an explicitly socialist feminist one. We called ourselves the International Women's Day Committee. IWDC continued to participate as a member of the March 8 Coalition. However, keeping our original name, the International Women's Day Committee, created major confusion over who was what! IWDC has been in existence for 11 years now, and we were reluctant to part with our name, but part we must.

We felt that it was important that we clearly show through our name that we are a socialist feminist organization committed to an activist orientation.

We believe that the class system maintains and perpetuates racism, sexism, and heterosexism, and must be overturned before these oppressions can finally be eradicated. We also believe that the women's movement, the working class movement, the anti-racist movement and all progressive movements must struggle against these specific oppressions as we work together for a socialist society. Because our objective is to be part of building a broad movement of women that will take up a mass action perspective, and organize alliances with other oppressed groupings, particularly of the working class, we agreed that our name should clearly reflect our politics. We're in the process of getting used to it, and we hope you like it!

Ontario's Most Successful Tools for Peace Campaign

by Nancy Farmer

By the time the final tallies are in Tools For Peace committees in Ontario, will have raised very close to half a million dollars in aid for the people of Nicaragua. This has been Ontario's most successful collection of financial and material aid for Tools for Peace and is almost double last year's amount. The National total last year was \$1,000,000.

For the first time ever two shipments of aid were sent from Toronto to Nicaragua. This was as a result of the hurricane that devastated the east coast of Nicaragua Oct 22. Hurricane Joan caused more than \$1 Billion in damages - one tenth of Nicaragua's total accumulated capital. In Bluefields and Corn Island most of the housing, schools, health facilities and economic infrastructure were destroyed. Damage to the environment, agriculture and fisheries still can't be calculated.

An appeal went out. Eight drop off points were set up around Metro Toronto. The public was quick and generous with its response. A core of 50 volunteers worked to collect and process the donations. The first shipment of emergency aid arrived in Bluefields December 9. The second container left Toronto January 14 bound for Vancouver. Materials collected from across the country are expected to arrive in Managua early this spring.

You haven't missed the boat if you'd still like to get involved.

Financial donations will always be accepted to make bulk purchases. A donation can be sent to Tools For Peace, PO box 829, Stn P, Toronto. M5S 2Z1.

Unfortunately, people-to-people aid is not enough. Supporters are urged to put pressure on the Canadian government to increase its aid to Nicaragua. We are asking that the government commit itself to \$25 million a year for the next five years.

This year promises to be a big year for the campaign as we'll be celebrating 10 years of the revolution. Watch for upcoming events.

In January the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council approved a request from Tools For Peace for a \$10,000 donation. This donation will be matched 4 to 1 by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for a reconstruction project in Bluefields being organized by a consortium of non-governmental organizations, including Tools For Peace.

This aid is critically needed as the country is in a desperate situation because of the hurricane, 7 years of the US sponsored war and the US imposed trade embargo.

Toronto Socialist Feminist Action (formerly IWDC)
 Invites you to a benefit for Tools For Peace. Donations will be used to purchase roofing, gardening tools and rubber boots for women agricultural workers.

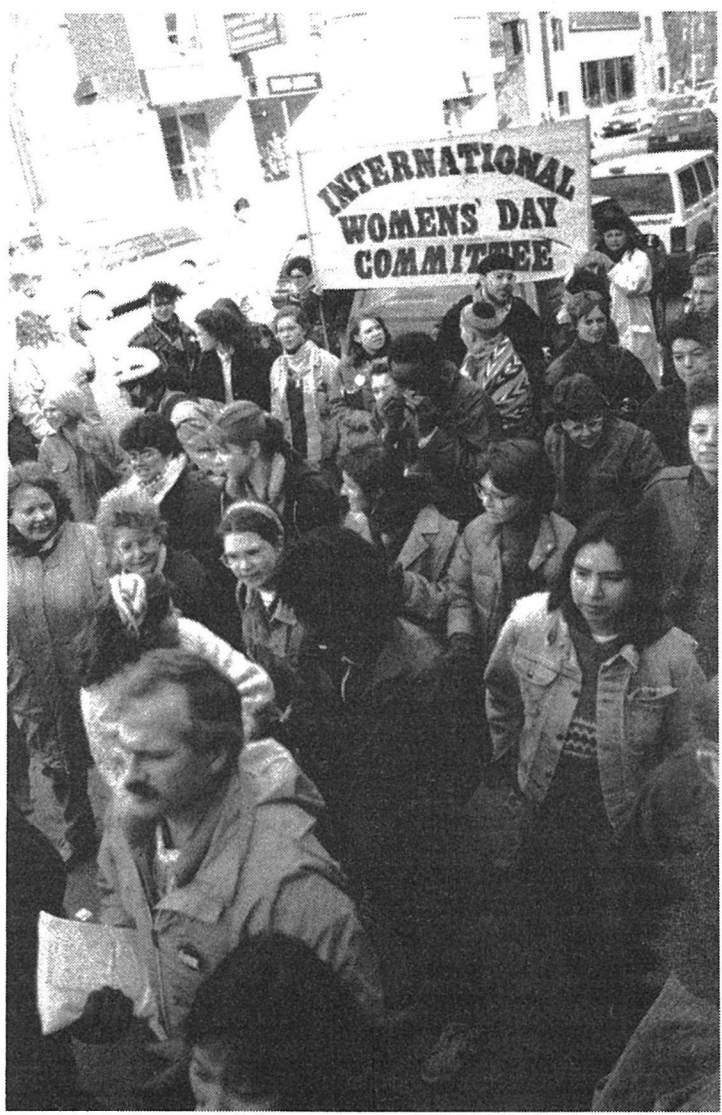
Sunday Feb. 5, 1989
 2pm to 5pm

463 Concord Ave.

Entertainment by
the Fly By Night Dyke Band

Refreshments provided
 but Bring Your Own Cheque Book!

reprinted from the Vancouver Sun



International Women's Day Committee ... Toronto Socialist Feminist Action ...
 Only the name has changed.

Letters

To Rebel Girls' Rag:

As a member of the group which helped initiate Prison Justice Day on Aug. 10th in 1976, in close collaboration with Eddie Nolan's friends in Millhaven Penitentiary, it was gratifying to read your coverage of 1988's event -- taking note at the same time of the single passing comment of a demonstration at the Vanier Centre for Women.

However, placing myself alongside those sisters in prison (particularly at P4W in Kingston at this precise moment) I would have to share with them their despair at this token approach of the feminist movement towards their situation. This season's partial score reads as follows: 7 slashed up (necks and arms); 2 stabbings; two attempted suicides by hanging; one suicide by overdose; 35 women refuse to leave their cells in protest over forced segregation of others; two husbands suicided...

Since the spectacular is always newsworthy, it may be possible - THIS week - to whip up a storm of protest over this particular situation. But what may not prove to be as newsworthy are the daily, routine harrowing details of prison life for women - the pregnant teenagers, the preponderance of Native women, some of them grandmothers, the many mothers in for fraud, shoplifting, forgery (illegally cashing cheques when the welfare runs out before the

month's end) as well as the real victims of rape/abuse/violence -- leading in some instances to convictions for murder.

However, this is NOT attempted to be a litany of reasons why women who consider themselves enlightened, even revolutionary, should be concerned about the above tragedies. This IS a challenge to those who consider themselves politically aware of this society's moral bankruptcy, even while they set their sights on implementing theories, tactics and strategies.

And yet nowhere is the gap between political awareness and meaningful action more pronounced, more disgraceful, than that between the feminist movement and women prisoners who are at the very bottom of the social and economic heap.

As the effects of free trade, rising poverty rates, environmental and military crises take effect, a clear understanding of the State's need to operate prisons as the ultimate in social control would be a good start for the feminist movement to reach out to the women in prison.

Claire Culhane
 Prisoners Rights Group
 Vancouver, B.C.

OPERATION FIASCO FLUBS AGAIN!

by Helen Armstrong, Debi Brock and Jennifer Stephen

On October 29, the anti-choice launched their vigilante strategy which they call 'Operation Rescue' and attempted to blockade the Morgentaler Clinic in Toronto. They blocked the front and back entrances to the clinic, singing Sunday school hymns, clutching rosaries and chanting Hail Mary's. They also found the location of the 'safe' house, we were using that day as a rendezvous point for patients and women to escort them into the clinic. Anti-choice who have been barred from the area of the clinic used the opportunity to picket and harass the safe house instead. Some clinic staff and patients had already gained access to the building. We got the rest in later. All scheduled procedures were performed, and the anti-choice vigilantes skulked away to regroup and plan for another day.

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) and supporters of the pro-choice movement quickly rallied at the clinic and when it became apparent that police would make no effort to remove anti-choice trespassers blocking the clinic entrances, we moved in to do the job ourselves. It was only then that police began to physically haul the anti-choice 'crusaders' away. Had it been peace activists doing civil disobedience outside an armaments plant, or strikers picketing their workplace, police would have been much quicker in their response.



On January 8, more than 50 pro-choice supporters rallied at the home of Joyce Rosenthal, a pro-choice activist who escorts at the Morgentaler Clinic. The anti-choice had intended to let Rosenthal's neighbours know about her pro-choice activities, but a forewarned Rosenthal informed her neighbours of this herself, and of the anticipated picket of her home (she received strong support). When a group of 15 anti-choice arrived at her home, they were met with a spirited group of pro-choice supporters. They made a hasty retreat, although these enemies of choice returned later that evening to leaflet the neighbourhood. This was not the first display of anti-

choice harassment at clinic workers homes. For example, last year Dr. Nikki Colodny had her home picketed during her son's birthday party.

The operation rescue vigilantes showed up at the clinics again in a three day action over Thursday, January 12 to Saturday, January 14.

Thursday: Pro-choice supporters got to the Morgentaler Clinic first, although some anti-choice managed to get onto the clinic property. Again, we spent several hours physically removing them from the area, before police decided that the situation was getting messy and intervened.

Friday: The anti-choice changed strategy and converged on the Scott Clinic. When pro-choice supporters arrived just after 7:30 a.m., the vigilantes had the entrance blockaded. The moment we began to remove them from the steps and porch of the clinic, police intervened and threatened us with arrest. They stood between pro-choice supporters and the anti-choice thugs, protecting the anti-choice. We proceeded to clear the adjacent stairway, cleared a path to the clinic entrance, and escorted patients into the clinic. While one group of patients were being escorted in, the anti-choice tried to rush the door, knocking down patients and clinic staff, and even police. Of course, police were still preventing us from clearing the thugs out, and refused to do so themselves. No charges were laid against the vigilantes who rushed the door, even though a clinic staffperson was injured

in the process.

Saturday: Pro-choice supporters came out in force, and completely covered clinic property. We formed a barrier across the sidewalk facing Spadina. As we stood, arms linked, singing "We shall not be moved", about 200 anti-choice fanatics (with their biggest men in front) rushed us, trying to smash their way through our human barrier. We held the line. Individual anti-choice wormed their way onto clinic property from other points, but were picked up and carried off by our supporters (including some of our smallest women). When it became clear to the anti-choice that they could not get through our lines, they resorted to



slithering down the middle of Harbord Street on their hands and knees. Police formed a line and eventually began to clear them away, although it took police several attempts and hours. It was our bodies and struggles, not the police, which once again kept the clinic open.

By the time OCAC's scheduled rally began outside the clinic at noon, the last of the anti-choice had been physically removed or left in defeat on their own. Over 1,000 people showed up to celebrate our victory.

Over the three days of operation Fiasco, not a single woman was prevented from obtaining an abortion. This was not because of, but in spite of the police presence. In fact, police officials appeared to be completely unconcerned that these anti-choice vigilantes were violating numerous sections of the Criminal Code, including intimidation, assault and trespassing. We do not advocate the use of state power to squash the opposition: this we have the strength to do ourselves. However, we want to note that police refused to exercise the power of arrest which they freely use in other situations (for example, strikes and peace demonstrations). We wonder what the police presence was for: they threatened us with arrest when we removed the anti-choice from clinic property, but held off doing so themselves. They seemed to be there to control us as much as to deal with the anti-choice.

We want to also draw attention to the courage of the women patients who entered the clinic under these circumstances, being called 'murderers' and having pictures of dismembered fetuses thrust in their faces. Their determination further demonstrates the need for free-standing abortion clinics in this country.

The anti-choice are not passive in their Civil Disobedience; in fact, it is clear that they do not share the principles of action upon which CD is based. While they claim to be exercising the tactic of non-violence, they physically assaulted pro-choice supporters, and sexually assaulted pro-choice women who got in their way. Clutching rosaries in one hand, they grabbed between women's legs and at women's breasts with the other. One fanatic also

sprayed pro-choice supporters and the ground with 'holy water' from a Windex bottle.

Other clinics across Canada are experiencing the same vigilante tactics. On January 21, the Vancouver clinic was blockaded for fifteen hours before the anti-choice were cleared away, despite the fact that the Clinic had a court injunction to prevent them from doing so.

Operation "Rescue" was started in the US by Randall Terry, an evangelical minister and former used car salesman in Binghamton, New York. Terry was in Toronto recently, stirring up the degree of moral and religious fervour necessary for this tactic. The strategic direction for O.R. comes from Joseph Scheidler, director of the Pro-Life Action League in the U.S. and author of the book, Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion. In Toronto, long-time anti-choice fanatics such as the Reverend Ken Campbell, who leads the anti-choice group, Campaign Life (and set up their headquarters next door to the Morgentaler Clinic), were visible at the three day attempt to close the Clinics. Protesters were bussed in from rural Ontario (including members of Farmers for Christ), as well as from the U.S.

The leadership of Operation "Rescue" is small, but its agenda is large. We know who the fanatical religious right-wing are and what they represent. What's new is that Operation "Rescue" represents an escalation by the anti-choice from the usual tactics of harassment and intimidation, to physical attack and violence. These tactics are not only directed against clinic property, but are now being carried out in direct confrontation with the pro-choice movement. Joan Andrews, who served a prison sentence in the U.S. after attempting to unplug Clinic operating equipment while an abortion was in progress, was seen at Toronto Operation Rescue actions. Clinics have been fire-bombed in the US, and the Morgentaler clinic in Toronto attacked by arsonists in 1983, but we are now facing direct attacks on women's bodies. These fanatics are not non-violent. They are seeking martyrdom through what they consider to be a 'holy crusade.'

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The Victory for Choice: One Year Later

The following is a speech delivered by Carolyn Egan on behalf of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, at the OCAC public meeting on January 21, 1989, held to celebrate the anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling which struck down the abortion law.

I am pleased to be welcoming you tonight on behalf of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics.

This is the first anniversary celebration of the Supreme Court decision on abortion, one of the most significant advances that the women's movement has ever made in this country. That decision was a clear victory for women in our long battle for the right to control our bodies, and has shown that we, the labour movement, and our other allies have the capacity to stand up to the State and win!



Tonight OCAC wants to celebrate that victory with you, and to express its gratitude for the tremendous support that you have given this campaign over the past six years.

We know that the Supreme Court justices were forced by the strength of our movement to overturn that law. You are the life and strength of that movement, and without your political commitment and that of thousands of others across this country, this victory would not have been possible.

But as we relish in that victory today, we want to speak about the long-term objectives of our campaign, the current situation that we are facing and the critical need to build a strong bi-national movement so that we can continue to fight the new abortion law and defend the gains that we have made. We must move forward to the day when every woman in this country has full access to free abortion in her own community.

This particular campaign is part of a long term struggle for reproductive rights for all women. To many of us in the women's movement, the struggle for choice was one of our first concerns. And when we speak of it, we are referring to a whole range of feminist issues: the right to decide when and if we are going to have children; the right to safe

and effective birth control with information and services in our own languages and communities; the right to childcare and paid parental leave; the right to determine our own sexuality as women; the licensing of midwifery; an end to forced or coerced sterilization which particularly affects Native, Black and Disabled women; and, of course, full access to free abortion. We understand that if we are truly to have choice in our lives, that all of these are required.

We began the campaign because of the very privileged access to abortion which existed in this country. Women with private gynecologists, or who could afford to go to the US, had the right to an abortion. It was the working class woman and immigrant woman, the young woman, rural woman, the woman of colour who was denied that right. And this we would not allow!

The right to choose is an illusion until the facilities are there to allow all women to actually make that choice.

The Federal law, with its committee system, the take-over of hospital boards, the cutbacks, had all severely limited access. And changing this was what the campaign was all about.

We began this struggle understanding that most women in this country are paid inadequately, and make up the largest percentage of the poor. They are denied paid parental leave and childcare. They are subject to rape and violence, racial and sexual harassment. They are denied the right to live freely and openly as lesbians. And still, they bear the major responsibility for domestic work and child-raising.

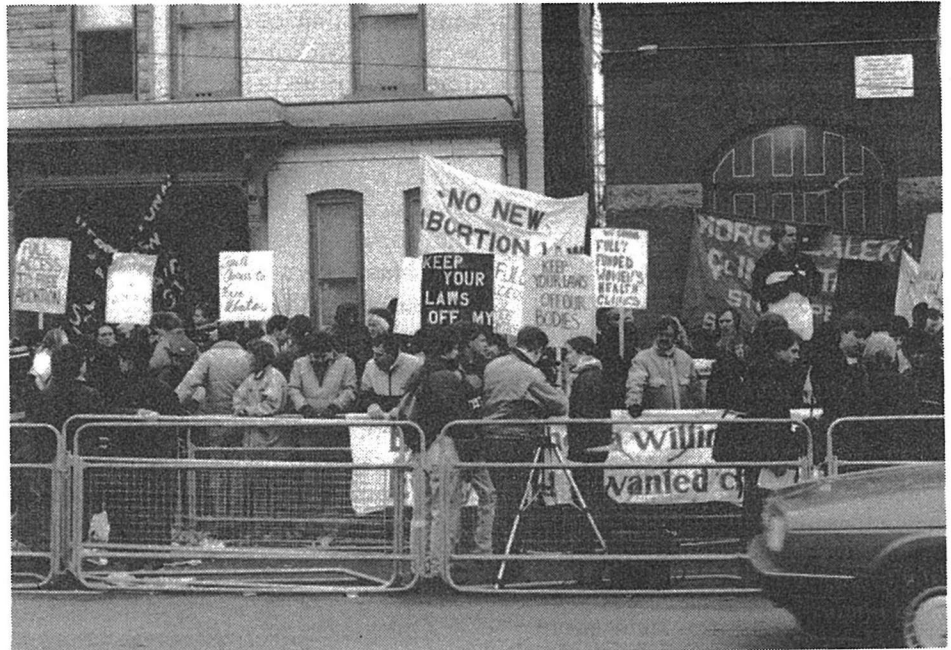
It is in this context that we raised the demand for abortion rights, calling on the women's movement, the labour movement, and the anti-racist movement to take it up as a major focus.

The right to abortion is a fundamental, democratic right. Its denial is a key element in maintaining women's oppression. And it has to be fought on that basis.

The law that was recently overturned came into effect in 1969, and the so-called reform quickly revealed itself to be an unjust, unworkable measure: that owed everything to political compromise and nothing to concern for women and reproductive freedom. We can not allow that to happen again.

This campaign grew out of the women's movement. We saw the hoops that women were made to leap through, the humiliating and degrading manner in which they were treated. We were saddled with a system which allowed therapeutic abortion committees to control access, which abounded with racist and class-biased assumptions and stereotypes; which often insisted on the sterilization of Black and Native women as a prerequisite, and denied all women the basic right to control our fertility. And we will not let the federal government do this to us again.

But how are we going to prevent it? Let's look back to the beginning of



this campaign. For years, women had been writing briefs, pushing for increased hospital access, lobbying politicians ... But nothing had changed. The situation was getting worse.

In OCAC we thought long and hard about how we would begin to change an incredibly desperate situation for the majority of women. We knew that a legal strategy depending on the courts and the State would not win us abortion rights. We had to build a fighting movement, demanding repeal of the law and the provision of full access to free abortion for every woman who required it. We looked at what had happened in the province of Quebec, where community health centres and women's clinics were providing abortion to women and decided to follow their strategy. We found the combination of a clinic and a doctor willing to challenge the law by providing abortions in defiance of the Criminal Code, and we built a broad based alliance, led by the women's movement, fighting for the necessary changes.

Our clinics were our test cases but they in themselves could not win abortion rights for women. Our goal was the repeal of the federal law and full access to free abortion on demand throughout this country through the expansion of hospital services and a network of publicly funded, community controlled clinics.

No woman should be denied access to abortion; no woman should have to

pay for that right and we are still demanding that the provincial governments fully fund clinics.

The clinic strategy highlighted the crisis of access to abortion, and the oppressive nature of the law; the clinics became a rallying point for political mobilization. They sparked a movement, and because we organized strongly enough to keep them open. They became a symbol of women's resistance to state control.

But it was not the clinics that overturned the abortion law. It was the struggle of a movement, a movement which speaks to the reality of every woman's life. A movement which is broadly based and rooted in the women's movement, in trade unions, in immigrant communities, lesbian and gay organizations, anti-racist groups, and on the campuses. A movement willing to take to the streets and fight for necessary changes.

We knew that this was going to be a tough battle. The opposition, although small, was very strong, the state was not neutral on this question, and the role of the right was being made very clear.

So we built those alliances, we organized across Canada and Quebec, and we put reproductive rights and the pro-choice message on the top of the political agenda in this country! And we were able to repeal that oppressive law!

continued on page 6



Building Alliances

by Carolyn Egan

[The following is the text of a speech delivered to the October 22 AIDS Action Now! rally in Toronto. Reprinted, with permission, from Rites.]

I'm proud to be speaking at this AIDS Action Now! rally as an activist in the women's movement, adding feminist voices to the others here tonight, publically pledging to continue the fight against placebo testing, for life sustaining medication, and for control over defining and combatting this disease which has so affected our community. As the poster says, "Silence Equals Death", and we demand accountability from the three federal parties who seem to feel no need to deal with this life-threatening issue.

In the abortion rights struggle we saw very clearly that the state is not neutral in the area of sexual regulation. It is not simply ignoring our needs. It is actively working against them! Women gave a strong unequivocal No to state attempts to control our bodies, our sexuality, by denying the right to health care. Tonight our voices must be raised in the same way.

As you very well know, we are not talking about an abstract struggle. The issues we are fighting for are real and immediate. People are suffering and dying every day because the demands we are raising are being left unmet. It is vital that we continue to come together in rallies such as this, organizing both within our community and outside it. Militant, public actions are crucial both to our growth as a movement and to our individual lives. Our sexuality makes us criminals and outlaws in the eyes of the state! We know that there is a long history of neglect of lesbian and gay health care. This has become horrifyingly clear in our experience with AIDS. We find ourselves between what has been called the "spectre and the promise of medicine."

We must renew the process of building and sustaining our movement.

It is only through the strength of a movement, as we saw in the abortion campaign, that our demands can be won. The backdrop of sodomy laws, discrimination in housing and the workforce, controls on immigration and the denial of custody rights have created a political context in which gay lives have not been taken seriously. This homophobia, and the racism and class bias shown toward our brothers and sisters in the Black and Hispanic communities in the U.S., has enabled HIV to spread without concern. We know that racism, sexism and homophobia are fully integrated into the class system under which we live, its laws and institutions. As a socialist I believe that we will never have lesbian and gay liberation as long as that system remains.

Outside the social order

Our sexuality is seen to be outside social order...People of colour are seen to be other...We have long faced the ideological line that divides normal from abnormal, acceptable from the unacceptable. We and our allies in the union movement, anti-racist organizations, women's groups have been fighting oppressive laws and institutions for years. And we have learned that this struggle, like any other working class or social struggle, is about power and control! The gay and lesbian community is saying very clearly tonight, that we refuse to be seen as victims, or to be once again marginalized, while political, medical or moral "experts" under the auspices of the state, determine our fate. We're taking control of our future!

The struggle against AIDS must be seen in terms of our prior experience of political and social organizing, and must represent a continuation and expansion of that history. And, as we saw in the abortion rights movement, we can't do it alone. Most progressive and working class organizations have not taken seriously the question of sexual regulation in general, or AIDS in particular. I believe that we have to bring

this message to these movements, so that it becomes an integral part of all political struggle. Otherwise lesbian and gay liberation will always be politically marginalized. None of us is solely gay. We are trade unionists, anti-racist activists, feminists, community workers. These movements must be challenged to understand and concretely work to end the oppressions that we face. At the same time our movement must integrate an anti-racist, class analysis so that we are truly representative of our community, and so that our strategies are based on an understanding of the key role of the working class in any movement for change. We need to say to our allies in the progressive communities, that this is not simply a question of public

defense of our civil liberties, or a response to a devastating disease! It is a much more fundamental challenge of attitudes toward sex and sexuality, which are used to regulate all of us!

So we must build alliances, demanding that all progressive organizations take a strong stand in the federal election, and in their ongoing political programs, against placebo testing, and for an end to sexual regulation in all its manifestations. We have no choice but to make a direct response to an incredibly oppressive situation in which life sustaining medication is denied. We know that we have the collective power to make change. So let's leave this rally, go into the streets, letting the government and the community know that there is no turning back!



OPERATION FIASCO

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They are led by a tight leadership whose tactics they would not even think of questioning. Unlike the US, Operation Fiasco has yet to succeed in closing down any of our Toronto clinics.

At the Toronto Morgentaler Clinic, police accused the pro-choice movement of provoking a confrontation with the anti-choice, despite the fact that we were merely defending the Clinic and keeping it open, in response to anti-choice attack. In the same way, this latest development in the struggle could be used by anti-choice politicians to justify the need for a new abortion law in the Criminal Code, to "keep the peace". Anti-choice politicians are prone to reconstruct the struggle for women's reproductive freedom as a struggle between the pro-choice and anti-choice, rather than women seeking safe, legal abortions while a small group of fanatics attempt to interfere with their reproductive rights. They continue to ignore the strength of popular support for women's right to

choice and for free access to safe, medically - insured abortion. It is this misrepresentation of the situation that the

anti-choice are hoping to escalate, using their tactic of "Operation Rescue." They have searched for an effective way to gain a greater media profile, and have selected a tactic which minimizes the need for popular support for their own position.

Operation Fiasco only serves to make us stronger. Direct attacks on the Clinics and their staff and supporters have resulted in many many more pro-choice women and men getting involved in the work of OCAC, escorting patients and defending the Clinics. We have worked long and hard to open the Morgentaler Clinic and keep it and the other Clinics open. Our growing numbers will help to make full access to free abortion a reality for all Canadian women. If you would like to participate in the politics of OCAC and/or get involved in Clinic defence, call the OCAC office at 969-8463.

The Victory for Choice

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But we have got to remember that the Supreme Court ruling was not easy to come by. It had to be wrested from the hands of the state. And we have seen that the state fears the confidence and rising expectations of the people, where we are able, through our collective strength, to win a fundamental demand.

We saw how Vander Zalm in British Columbia immediately tried to limit access by removing medical coverage for abortion procedures, thereby creating a two-tiered health care system. This was fought and defeated. There was a demonstration of 3000 people called by the B.C. Federation of Labour and the pro choice movement.

The federal government has announced plans to introduce legislation to recriminalize abortion, in an attempt to roll back the gains that we have

made. Since our victory there has been a campaign of misinformation and confusion spread by the federal government and the anti-choice forces in this country, shifting the focus from the need to provide full access to free abortion, to focus on foetal age.

Implicit in this campaign is a very anti-woman ideology, that paints the women of this country as irresponsible, lacking in judgement, and requiring governmental control and criminal regulation to make the appropriate decision regarding a pregnancy.

CANADA DOES NOT HAVE TO BE PROTECTED FROM ITS WOMEN! Abortion is not a crime, and we refuse to be made criminals by the imposition of a new federal law which will arbitrarily limit our access.

No one wants late abortions! How do we prevent them? By providing full and free access to early abortions! And this is the government's responsibility.

Material Girls

by Cindee

Were women "born to shop"? Is a woman's place in the mall? Are some women compulsive shoppers? And how can you tell if you are one? Just how common is shoplifting? Is there really such a thing as kleptomania? This issue's "Material Girls" column will look at these questions in a special focus on Shopping and Shopping Dis-eases.

Are women born to shop? Well, as a socialist-feminist, I'm not going to accept too many naturalistic arguments about women's innate desire to shop. After all, I know women who'd rather empty a cat litter box than indulge in recreational clothes shopping. But what about those women who will tell you they were born to shop, happily displaying bumper stickers that say, "When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping" or "This car stops at all garage sales"?

Now I know some of you hard-boiled types out there think that all this women's love of shopping stuff was invented in the 50's to sell Tupperware. Think of all those Blondie and Dagwood cartoons in which Blondie is eternally spending Dagwood's hard earned bucks on red polka-dotted dresses and other household necessities. Or of the Herman cartoons: "My wife can say 'Charge It' in 31 languages."

Yet the link between women and shopping was made well before the fifties and goes back at least as far as the nineteenth century. For example, in his utopian novel, *Looking Backward* (1888), Edward Bellamy suggests that utopia for men is breaking down the division between intellectual and manual labour whereas, for women, it means changing the organization of shopping. Bellamy, in 1888, envisioned the shopping mall and the credit card - well before their historical appearance!

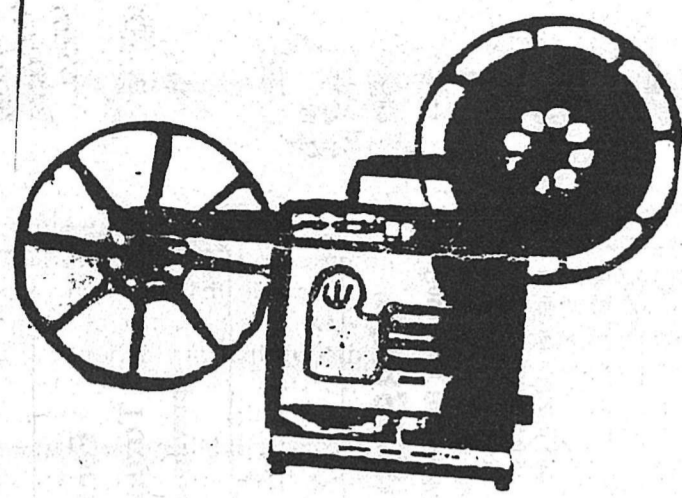
Are some women compulsive

shoppers? Absolutely. Are you one just because you go a little berserk at IKEA? Probably not. Basically, we're talking about women who have all of their credit cards over the limit, who hide their purchases and never open them, who buy fourty Benneton sweaters at one time, who drive for miles looking for an open shopping mall after the nearest one has closed. I find fascinating the number of articles on compulsive shopping in women's magazines lately. A while back, *Glamour* asked its readership to send them letters describing their experiences as compulsive shoppers. They got 5,000 replies! I wrote and asked to see the letters but they told me (politely) to buzz off.

What is striking is the way in which compulsive shopping is being medicalized and individualized in these articles, just like eating disorders and 'women who love too much'. There is no discussion of the ways in which consumerism works as a system precisely to break down so-called rational behavior.

What about shoplifting and kleptomania? Shoplifting is the Number One criminal charge laid against women, as Elizabeth Fry newsletters and workers can tell you, accounting for some 60% of cases. But is there really such a thing as kleptomania when the woman nicks all sorts of stuff she doesn't need or want, hardly aware of what she's doing? In nineteenth-century France, a lot of doctors and others such as the novelist Zola saw kleptomania as a kind of women's reproductive disease. Feminist historians such as Elaine Abelson are now arguing that kleptomania is a class and gender-based construction. To oversimplify: stealing is what working-class women do; ladies are afflicted by the disease of kleptomania.

Her book is coming out this fall: watch this space for a review and, as ever, Happy Shopping!



Coming Soon: an independent Theatre Near You

by Gillian Morton

There is no independent film coming to a theatre near you because there is no theatre near you.

-- Ron Mann, Independent filmmaker

Image making is an arena of cultural contestation, and alternative or independent film and video often work to subvert the messages so repetitiously churned out by Hollywood in the name of mass appeal. Independent video and filmmaking usually refers to work made outside the commercial mainstream; often, independent work is produced by those who have been marginalized not only by the Hollywood studio system but also by government agencies and cultural and art institutions which until very recently did not give any significant support to artists of colour, gays and lesbians, or women artists. Lack of support made it almost impossible to produce work which would speak to the concerns of labour, solidarity organizations, or the Asian, Native, Black and other ethnic and racial communities in Toronto.

The high cost of production is only the first obstacle. Once the work is produced, where and when can someone in Toronto get a chance to see it? Although some work plays in Toronto festivals (The Festival of Festivals, Images) and YYZ and A Space, parallel galleries, regularly show independent film and video, the work often cannot reach the community which it attempts to speak to because there is no appropriate venue. Approximately ninety percent of our exhibition spaces are American owned. Occasional screenings in art galleries, university classrooms, festivals, and libraries cannot substitute for a "screening room of our own", one which would truly serve the needs of communities in Toronto.

The Development Education Centre (DEC) is building just such a theatre, with a mandate to show Canadian and Quebecois, Third World,

and multi cultural film and video. The Euclid, which is scheduled to open at the beginning of May, will be equipped with top quality 16 mm film projection and high resolution large screen video. The wheel-chair accessible space will also be available for other cultural ac-

tivities such as small concerts, meetings, and readings.

Previously called The Visual Arts Theatre, the new name is a result of DEC Film's relocation to the corner of College and Euclid. The concept of community remains the emphasis, however. DEC will ensure accountability through community and programming committees and a programming policy reflecting the mandate for the theatre. The Euclid's advisory board is made up of individuals such as performer and playwright Salome Bey, video/film curator Sue Ditta, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Carmencita Hernandez, and video artist Lisa Steele.

DEC's programming committee will programme 120 nights of the year, and the theatre will be available for rental 200 nights of the year, at both standard and community rates (\$400 and \$200 respectively). DEC anticipates that both community groups and artists' organizations will take advantage of the space.

Despite the obvious need for this theatre, fundraising has been difficult, and DEC still has another \$50,000 to raise. Most of the money has come from the Department of Communications and the Ontario Ministry of Culture, with some operating funds promised by the City Council of Toronto. Small amounts have been donated by individuals and organizations. Volunteers for fundraising and other tasks related to running the theatre are needed.

DEC has tentative plans for an open house and tour which will provide a chance to see the space and an opportunity to raise questions and concerns.

Community involvement in The Euclid would be part of the realization of DEC's aspirations to offer a real alternative to dominant representations, to contribute to the forging of their cultural identities, and to provide a forum for the representation and discussion of political and social issues.

Programming suggestions and general comments (as well as volunteers) are welcomed by DEC. To make a donation or obtain further information, write The Euclid, 394 Euclid Ave, Toronto, M6G 2S9, or call Debbie Field at (416) 925-8104.



TALKING SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Toronto Socialist Feminist Action (TSFA), previously the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC), is organizing a series of forums for socialist feminists to discuss current issues.

REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY & TECHNIQUES *Tuesday January 24, 1989 - 7:30 p.m.*

Panelists: Vicki Van Wagner, Midwives Collective; B. Lee, Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics; and, Gillian Morton, Toronto Socialist Feminist Action

MASS ACTION / CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE *Tuesday February 21, 1989 - 7:30 p.m.*

Panelists: Deb Ellis, Alliance for Non-Violent Action - Women's Caucus; Salome Loukas, Women Working with Immigrant Women; and, Toronto Socialist Feminist Action representative

FEMINISTS ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE *Tuesday March 21, 1989 - 7:30 p.m.*

Panelists: To be announced

All forums to be held in the Fireside Room,
Trinity St. Paul Centre, 427 Bloor St. W., Toronto
Donation: \$2.00

For further information, call 531-2369
Toronto Socialist Feminist Action, TSFA
(previously International Women's Day Committee, IWDC)

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