



# FEMINIST PARTY OF CANADA PARTI FEMINISTE DU CANADA

Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1982

## Editorial

We have recently celebrated International Women's Day, and as I looked at the thousands of women (and men) who gathered in Toronto to march through the streets on March 6, I began to think about what it means to be a feminist. Most of us would agree that a feminist is one whose primary commitment and energy is directed towards women and women's issues, with the result, we demand, of significant social and political change.

But there are still questions. What does it mean to direct one's primary commitment and energy to women? Are lesbians who relate to women more "feminist" than straight women? Or are straight women who are struggling with the implications of their relationships with a man or men within a feminist context somehow more "feminist"? Are feminist separatists more "feminist" because they reject everything about the patriarchal society, or are women executives more "feminist" because they recognize that the patriarchal hierarchy exists and work for change from within? Are middle class women more "feminist" because they have the time and the resources to work for the movement, or are working-class women more "feminist" because they must daily wage war against some of the worst forms of male chauvinism in the workplace?

None of these questions can be answered "Yes". In fact, they are questions which defeat themselves in the asking, for they imply a "more feminist than thou" attitude which divides feminist from feminist, woman from woman. We cannot afford this division within the ranks when our common enemy, the patriarchal system, is so strong. To be a feminist, a woman need only do what her time, resources and energy allow to improve her lot and the lot of other women.

Now what does it mean for a man to claim to be a feminist?

## Editorial

Nous venons de célébrer le Jour International de la Femme et, en regardant les milles de femmes (et d'hommes) qui ont rassemblé à Toronto pour marcher le long des rues de la ville le 6 mars, j'ai commencé à penser de ce qu'il veut dire d'être féministe. La plupart d'entre nous serait d'accord qu'une féministe est quelqu'une qui dirige l'obligation et l'énergie primaires vers les femmes et vers les problèmes des femmes, avec le resultat, nous demandons, du changement important dans les systèmes sociaux et politiques.

Mais il nous reste des questions. Qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire de diriger l'obligation et l'énergie primaires vers les femmes? Est-ce que les lesbiennes qui établissent des relations avec des femmes sont plus "féministes"? Ou est-ce que les femmes hétérosexuelles qui traitent avec de la peine les implications de leurs relations avec un homme ou des hommes dans un contexte féministe sont plus "féministes"? Est-ce que les séparatistes féministes sont plus "féministes" parce qu'elles rejettent tout aspect de la société patriarcale, ou est-ce que les administrateurs femmes sont plus "féministes" parce qu'elles reconnaissent que l'hierarchie patriarcale existe et elles essaient de changer le système de l'intérieur? Est-ce que les femmes de la classe moyenne sont plus "féministes" parce qu'elles ont le temps et les ressources de travailler pour le mouvement ou est-ce que les femmes de la classe ouvrière sont plus "féministes" parce qu'elles doivent faire la guerre quotidiennement contre les plus mauvaises formes du chauvinisme mâle dans les lieux de travail.

On ne peut répondre "Oui" à aucune de ces questions. En fait, elles se vainquent en se posant car elles suggèrent une attitude de "plus féministe que vous" qui crée des divisions entre les féministes, entre les femmes. Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de créer de divisions entre nous quand notre ennemi commun, le système patriarcal, est si fort. Pour être féministe, une femme doit simplement

---

(Your comments on the role of men in the feminist movement are welcome. We look forward to printing them. Send your ideas to:

The Newsletter,  
Feminist Party of Canada,  
175 Carlton St.,  
Toronto, Ont. M5A 2K3.)

2  
faire ce que son temps, ses ressources et son énergie lui permettent de faire pour améliorer son sort à elle et le sort des autres femmes.

Maintenant, qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire pour un homme de se déclarer féministe?

(Nous sommes heureuses d'accueillir vos idées sur le rôle des hommes dans le mouvement féministe. Nous nous attendons à les publier. Envoyez vos idées à:

Nouvelles,  
Parti Féministe du Canada  
175 Carlton St.,  
Toronto, Ont. M5A 2K3

## Supreme Court Decision

by Laurie Kokko

A new committee, named Justice for Assaulted Women, has been struck as a result of the Supreme Court decision to uphold the B.C. Court of Appeal ruling that provincially appointed judges, that is, Family Court judges, do not have jurisdiction to issue restraining orders and (yet to be clarified in Ontario) orders of exclusive possession.

Previously, a woman could go on her own, or accompanied by a legal clinic worker, friend or relative to Family Court to seek a restraining order. Now, a lawyer is needed to go to Supreme or County Court. Those eligible for legal aid must get a certificate of eligibility which takes two to three weeks, although a "red tag" procedure could alleviate the wait. The added costs and time are deplorable in a situation which was already difficult due to lack of police enforcement of the orders unless they contained a judge's directive for enforcement. Assaulted women now have no recourse except to leave their homes, a difficult thing to do, especially when children are involved.

The Justice for Assaulted Women committee is circulating a petition demanding that the Attorney General:

1. Encourage the federal appointment of Ontario Family Court judges in sufficient number to make restraining orders and orders of exclusive possession quick, efficient, inexpensive and easily accessible to all women in Ontario.
2. Take all possible steps to bring into effect a unified Family Court in all parts of Ontario.
3. Draft legislation with appropriate enforcement provisions to protect assaulted women.

The committee is also meeting to draft a flyer that discusses the issue. Their next meeting will be held at the Scarborough Community Legal Services, 695 Markham Rd., Suite 9, Scarborough. For further information, call the clinic at 438-7182.

## Municipal Action

Feminists have mixed thoughts about political systems. Politics as we know them work through a bulging non-entity called the State. On the one hand, an oppressive structure which controls the means of violence and will use them, externally or internally, if the boys in power want to. On the other hand, reluctant trustees for the civil liberties, however flawed, which we have, and the only available source of funds for many important women-centred projects. Corporate capitalism has only one interest in women, which is as a source of cheap labour. The State helps them to get away with this by using dribbles of the taxpayers' money to muzzle the sharper blasts of protest with social services, education, pretty ads on TV telling us how lucky we all are. When the issues are actually political -- that is, about real power -- we see the sort of cynicism which emerged recently in the Constitutional affair.

However, the choice for women is not the simple one of whether to destroy, reform, or patch up the state apparatus, for none of these ambitions comes with a simple how-to-do-it strategy. The FPC was founded on the notion that the party system would be around for a while; that none of the parties regarded women's rights and aspirations seriously; that women needed a party of their own to fight in public for feminist policies and practices. Not all members feel that this is the way to go, but the FPC hopes to be able to provide political space for a wide range of strategies and principles. The present political system depends on the notion of monolithic policy and leadership. This takes up a lot of time in fighting and power struggles. The FPC aspires to diversity and respect for different political priorities, and believes that this can be made to work.

The women in the Municipal Action group think that the urgent thing to do RIGHT NOW is tackle our main enemy -- the patriarchal politics of the Nearly New Right Industry -- on their own ground. The Right strategy is local -- to infiltrate and control the basic

institutions of ideological indoctrination -- family, school, community. They are therefore working hard on school and health boards and in municipal politics. They must be challenged and opposed, and this seems to a number of us a place where the FPC could function effectively and gain a wealth of practical political experience. We want to start now planning direct intervention in the municipal elections at the end of the year, and invite interested members to join in planning strategy and mobilizing wider support for feminist politics in our communities.

Fight for local control!  
Strategize! Organize! Energize!

Call Frieda Forman at 531-2905

Or write to the FPC at 175 Carlton St., Toronto. M5A 2K3

## Bulletin Board

- March 28 -- FPC General Membership meeting at the FPC Centre at 2:00 p.m.
- April 4 -- TACWL public meeting about Bill C53 in the Hart House Debates Room at 8:00p.m.
- April 23 -- "Right Out of History" sponsored by CARAL at OISE. Showings at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- May 1 -- Festival Fighting the Right -- at Harbord Collegiate from 12-5 p.m. More information to come. Interested in helping to organize? Call Terry at 925-6486.

\* Coming Soon\*

A trip to Montreal to see Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party"

## Bill 53

Bill C53 is a controversial piece of legislation which would change the crime of rape to sexual assault. Many feminist groups are hailing this as an improvement, feeling that it will result in more convictions. Some feminist groups, however, feel that there are serious flaws in the legislation which could work against women's interests. In the following article, Laurie Kokko outlines some of these flaws.

The sexual assault bill (Bill C53) is about to come to committee hearings. This bill has serious flaws and should not be supported. It would be better to scrap it and draft a new bill with input from women's groups across the country.

Basically, the problems

with the bill are:

1. a consent provision of honest belief. Thus, the more sexist the accused's beliefs can be shown to be, the more likely he is to be freed.
2. the complainant's prior sexual history can be admitted into evidence. This is irrelevant and links up with honest belief where the accused has prior knowledge of the complainant.
3. There is a provision that consent shall not necessarily be inferred from the fact that the complainant did not resist the use of force. Necessarily should be excluded since it suggests the possibility that consent can be inferred from non-resistance.
4. Corroboration provisions are unclear and poorly done.
5. The term "sexual assault" is never defined; therefore lesser sexual advances may not be classified as sexual assault.
6. There should be a minor offence charge of six months to a year to cover grabbing on the subways etc.
7. Sexual assault has a maximum penalty of ten years. This should be fourteen years to eliminate the possibility of unconditional discharge, allowable for sentences under fourteen years.
8. Life imprisonment is reserved for aggravated assault covering maiming (which is not defined) or carrying a weapon. Gang rape should be included.
9. Due to prevalent sexist attitudes, anything left to the judge's discretion (i.e. terms that have not been defined) has been interpreted to the disadvantage of women. Therefore the bill must be well defined and clearly stated. We cannot afford another like the one we have. Although rape is not defined in the present law, it has always been interpreted as penetration of the penis into the vagina, ignoring other types of forced sexual activity.

The good points are:

1. Spousal immunity is abolished. A man will no longer be legally able to sexually assault his wife.
2. Consent is not inferred when a woman is fearful of an authority, for example, employee/employer, student/teacher.
3. Consent is not obtained where fraud is used to obtain consent.

- 4. There is a potential for other degrees of sexual assault to be dealt with.

What can we do?

Lobby the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the three house leaders to stop this bill and begin immediate drafting of a new bill. Immediate changes to the existing law should be facilitated. These include:

- 1. Removal of spousal immunity. This is easily done since it involves removing only three words from the existing definition of rape.
- 2. Exclude all previous sexual history of anyone other than the accused as irrelevant.
- 3. Enlist the help of women's groups to draft an acceptable bill, and use the advice given.

The Toronto Area Caucus of Women Lawyers will be holding a public meeting on Bill C53 on April 4 at 8:00 p.m. in the Hart House Debates Room. For further information about this important issue contact: TACWL, P.O. Box 231, Stn. B, Toronto, Ont. M5T 2T2

Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if possible.

### A nos membres francophones

News/Nouvelles a grand besoin de vos contributions en français. Envoyez-nous vos idées, vos déclarations politiques, les nouvelles de vos activités, vos critiques, etc., etc. Vous vous sentez oubliées, peut-être, par nous les anglophones. Maintenant, c'est le temps de corriger cela.

"Maintenant plus que jamais."

## Newsletter Notes

Communication Bulletin.

Unbeknown to many members, we have a telephone tree which is a word-of-mouth update on important happenings that don't get into the Newsletter or that come up unexpectedly. If you would like to be included in the network and you live in the Toronto area, or you are on the telephone tree but are not receiving calls, phone the FPC office (960-3427) and leave your name and number on the recorder, or drop a note to the FPC, to the attention of the telephone tree.

## WCREC

WCREC is in trouble. This important service to the women of the Toronto area is a victim of government cutbacks and is in desperate need of support from the women's community. How can you help? Phone the Hon. Larry Grossman (960-0815) or send him a protest letter to the Hepburn Block, Queen's Park, Toronto. Remember, letters to Members of Parliament require no stamp.

## News Flash

Moira Armour has just returned from representing the FPC at NAC in Ottawa. This is the tenth anniversary of NAC, and Moira showed a film that she did of the first NAC meeting here in Toronto in 1972. The film is entitled "Strategies for Change".

Doris Anderson was acclaimed as president of NAC, and Moira was elected one of eight members-at-large. Congratulations, Moira!

