

PRAIRIEWOMAN

VOL I
No 5

NOVEMBER 77



A NEWSLETTER OF SASKATOON WOMEN'S LIBERATION



Dear Prairie Woman,

Just a note of congratulations
 It's so nice to read an intelligent,
 non-sectarian, (non NDP supporting)
 left publication dealing with down to
 to earth issues. I also wanted to cast
 a consultative vote in favor of an
 autonomous women's movement.
 I don't know of any organization
 that consistently doesn't shove
 women's issues into the category
 of lesser areas of work.

Enclosed is a small contribution.

Keep up the good work.

In Solidarity,
 Cameron Hay

ANNOUNCEMENTS

November 5—Day of Action Against Rape; Public Forum with speakers, discussion and workshops, 9 a.m.—12 p.m.—Centennial Auditorium; mini-workshops

SASKATOON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Nov 13—General Meeting of SWL
 7:00 p.m. 233-22nd St. E.
 (School of Social Work) all interested women welcome.

Nov 27—General Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
 233-22nd St. E. All interested women welcome

WOMEN'S DIRECTORATE

Business Meeting every Monday, 5 p.m.
 Room 14, MUB Tunnel on campus; all interested women welcome
 Brown bag Discussion Group, every Wed., 12:30 p.m. Room 14, all interested women welcome. Hoping

to have musicians present alternate Wed.

Nov. 10— "Mystery Theatre" showing of video tapes including Robin Morgan, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. For details call Vicki or Wiesia at 343-3747 or 242-5542.

GAY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Wed. Nights—7:30-9:30—Awareness Nite
 Fri Nights—12:00-4:00 a.m. After Hours Disco

Sat Nights—9:00-2:00 A.M. Dance for members and guests

Nov 13— Sunday Get Together Supper, 5 p.m.

Nov. 18— Open Dance 9-1:--

Nov. 18— Open Dance 9-1:00 a.m.
 After Hours Disco to follow

For more information contact Gay Community Centre at 652-0972.

Editorial

Because we believe the prevalence of rape to be symptomatic of the society in which we live, November 5th 1977 is to be declared the "National Day of Protest Against Rape" by women's groups across the country. The fact that all men are potential rapists demonstrates that rape is a disease of society and not in the same category of crime as murder.

This issue of *Prairie Woman* addresses itself not only to the act of rape as a personal attack on the privacy of a woman, but also the more implicit forces surrounding the issue which allude to the political nature of rape.

The basis of our economy is dependant on an expandable working force which can increase and decrease depending on the economic climate. It is therefore expedient to relegate women as housewives or draw them into the active labour force as the need arises. This fact together with the historical emergence of private property explains why it was the males who controlled the means of production and also the means and products of reproduction. Thus, it is possible for men to not only maintain their dominant position in the capitalist system, but also, to regard women and children as part of the private property of individual males.

It is only from this perspective that the laws, and practices surrounding the law can be interpreted and understood. It is as a revelation when one realizes that rape is not only a personal attack on the dignity of the woman, but that rape is an offense against property--the property of the man to whom the woman belongs, that is, the father or husband. Or, put more succinctly, rape is a political not sexual action.

Why else would the near universal initial reaction of a raped and assaulted woman be shame and guilt? Why else is the attitude of the man whose property has been damaged one of outrage?

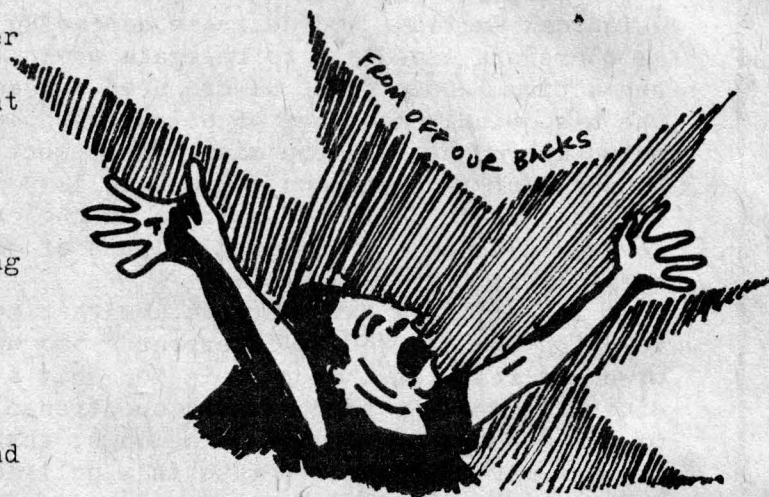
The prevalent attitude that "What has once been defiled cannot again be violated" and the image of the fallen woman are the basis for the intimate questioning in a rape trial of the "victim" about her past sexual conduct. The laws thus act not in the interest of the women, not to protect their dignity and independence, not to ensure their physical self-determination, but in the interests of the men who made them.

Men who can call a woman a "piece of ass", a "lay", a "cunt", a "hippie chick" and men who ask each other "Did you score?", "Does she put out?", "had any lately?" share a basic inability to see women as human beings. And it is that inability which turns some otherwise ordinary men into rapists.

ONE CASE...

I was taking a nap one afternoon fully-dressed, and oblivious to how such an incriminating deed as taking a nap in the afternoon would look in court when I heard a knock at the door. Thinking it was my neighbor, who had been in and out during the day, I did not bother to get up. Come on in, I yelled, but instead of my bothersome neighbor, he came in. I was momentarily startled. I knew him from before, I'd gone out with him about a year ago, and I also had a blanket over me, but his appearance surprised me. He came in and sat down in the chair at my desk, the same chair I vainly tried to destroy after the whole ugly thing that happened. He placed it so it was right in front of the door. What do you want? I asked, not really being frightened because I figured he was a more or less courteous, human type. He once told me he did not believe in hunting wild animals. In response to my question, he began haranguing me about messing up his life, about being a whore for breaking up with him, about owing him money for all the gas he'd burned driving me around when we used to date. He was a bit of a jerk, but I used to have a soft spot in my heart for jerks, you know, and so once again I went through all this sickening soothe-the-jerk-without-telling-him-he's-one bullshit. Yes, it was just bullshit but I'm an excellent diplomat with 220 lb weightlifters. Oh no, dear, it isn't because you're a bad person or anything, it's because the relationship wasn't working out, I said, to placate him, wondering how on earth I would get rid of him. He over-stayed what scant welcome he'd had, wasting my time by going over in detail every single argument we'd ever had, everything I'd ever said or done when we had dated a year ago. He's very proud of having a good memory, and I hope he remembers everything I said in the ensuing, long impatient speech I

delivered when I finally tired of pacifying the creep hours later. He could not understand why I refused to go out with him anymore, the logistics of it didn't work out: why should this five-foot-one ninety-eight pound weakling refuse her favors to a tall, blonde, tanned heavyweight jerk? Oh, if only I could've made you come, he said, and told me to fuck him. He was still between myself and the door. Somewhere I'd heard the best way is to get it over with, and submit and when he told me to take my clothes off, I did. My initial



resistance was only to swear at him and refuse to kiss that greasy, unforgettable face of him smiling while degrading me. He was getting so much pleasure from the fear and pain I was experiencing. And then suddenly I thought, fuck! what's happening to me, I can't let this pervert violate my body. So while he pinned me down and intermittently choked out the words, come you little bitch, come, I began to curse him very loudly, and then to scream. My neighbors could hear me down the hall and 2 floors above, but no one came. I guess I should have specified what was happening to me. I was expressionless. I thought, oh God what if my parents find out, what if my boyfriend finds out. I wished I could puke on

that piece of filth raping me, puke all down the zits on his back. I was feeling so incredibly, incredibly bad, so very ugly, and all I could do was make noise, I couldn't move. I guess he became frightened then or maybe wasn't getting his rocks off like he wanted, and he let me get dressed. I, felt devastated, all I could do was pull on my shirt and pants. He told me to pay him, and I felt so guilty I did. Self-conscious about his odor on my flesh, I reached for a can of anti-perspirant. He mistook my action for escape. He picked me up and threw me--literally threw me like a dog throws a rat--across the room and onto the bed. That was the final straw; I began to scream and I screamed like I'd never screamed before and never hope to again. I had nothing left to lose. I was so goddamn humiliated, so frustrated, so ANGRY I thought I was going to die. And I didn't care. Even writing this brings back a part of a very horrible feeling you only have to feel once. They have counselled me, they sent me to a shrink afterwards, they even suggested I ignore it, but I'll never forget that feeling. It was the final injustice.

But the injustices were just beginning. Someone finally came to my rescue, and I left with the image of him looking threatening and yet imploring. She asked me what had happened and I ran through the whole violent scene again. Then, after he had been allowed to leave my apartment, she suggested I go back and have some sleep. In the very same bed. I could not even stay in the same room. That night my best friend and I took a long walk. We walked all night. My blood turned to bile. I could not even eat breakfast the next morning, all I could do was cry in my grapefruit. I honestly wished I were dead.

The same morning, I was "counselled" I repeated my story, was interrogated on my facts, and was told it would be useless to try to prosecute. I had known him before, you see, he'd

fucked me before with my consent, you see, I'd taken off my clothes, you see, I'll get over it, you see--and we wouldn't want to wreck the future career of this bright young man, would we? I did not know what to do, so I did what they said.

They promised they'd "have a talk" with him, but I doubt how much good it did. When he found out I'd been going to a shrink, he sent me a taunting letter; I was in therapy to get over the rape, or perhaps I should say, my inability to handle it. I wish I would have prosecuted him before my feelings of anger grew so out-of-proportion. I wished I would have made that bastard pay. I try not to think about it, but invariably my mind replays the whole event and a very real pain of the crime committed on my body, my mind, floods back. I didn't know what hatred was before this: hatred of my--yes, my--rapist, hatred of the clearly-inadequate punishment he received, hatred of myself, hatred of social mores that say I asked for it, and what's a poor guy supposed to do, anyways?

I still see him around, but I have to look straight ahead, pretend like I don't know he's there, observing me like an animal caged within the rules of civility. I worry he may be waiting for a second chance. A part of me imagines that he would try again, and that this time I would be armed with a long, sharp knife and I would cut him and stab him and stick him until he's dead, and falls on the floor in many bloody pieces.



Day of Action Against Rape

by Susan Woolway

At a meeting held on October 24, Saskatoon City Council joined with other city councils across Canada in declaring November 5 as an official Day of Action against Rape. The motion was introduced in response to a letter signed by various community and provincial groups including Saskatoon Women's Liberation, U.S.S.U. Women's Directorate, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and Planned Parenthood of Saskatoon.

The concept for a National Day of Action was originated by the B.C. Federation of Women and has spread rapidly, being officially endorsed by women's groups and city councils in all Prairie Provinces and in Ontario. Public education and awareness to the growing crime



of rape is the goal for November 5. A cursory glance at statistics points drastically to the need for such a day and for many more like it. The rising rate of rape in Saskatoon is not an isolated phenomenon.

The proposed plan for activities in Saskatoon include a public forum to be held in the Confederation Room at the Centennial Auditorium from 9 a.m. until 12 a.m. and mini-workshops have been planned to occur at various locations throughout the city. Saskatoon Women's Liberation urge you to watch for posters and public announcements providing further information with regard to events. Contact people for are:

Sheila Adams 244-2224 Rape Crisis
Center

Wiesia Kolaskinska 242-5542



Rape Fantasies

by Gail Osachoff

Do normal women have rape fantasies? That's a loaded question, of course. Who's to judge what is "normal"; and, more important here, who's to define the term "rape fantasy"?

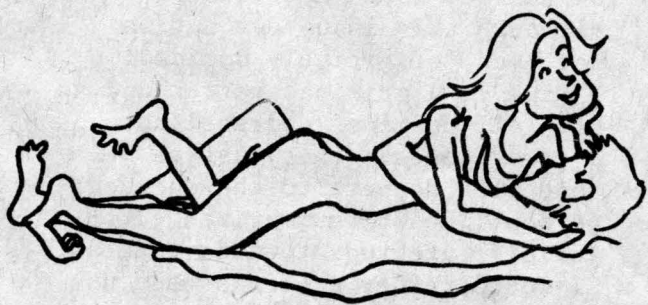
There are people who maintain that no woman can be raped, that she really means "yes" when she says "no" and that physical force is essential to her enjoyment of sex. Thus, rape and sexual intercourse would actually be the same thing. For people who make such an equation, coercion would be the vital ingredient in women's sexual fantasies. And men who rape women, of course, would only be giving them what they really want. Such an idea is at the heart of that much over-praised movie Last Tango in Paris, for instance. This movie shows us what constitutes a man's fantasy about pleasurable sex and a man's fantasy about the nature of a woman's sexual fantasy: women enjoy being raped.

A movie (this one directed by a woman) that gets a more ambivalent response from women is Swept Away. Here a rich bitch "gets what she deserves" from the downtrodden hero, a member of the Italian proletariat. If our class bias wins out, we are tempted to cheer him on. If our feminism comes to the fore, we deplore

rape being used on any woman no matter how rich or how bitchy she might be. And the idea that a woman can come to love her rapist is a totally suspect and repellant notion that is at the heart of "rape fantasy" as usually defined. A more recent example of this idea at work is found in Morley Callaghan's latest novel, Close to the Sun Again, where the "special relationship" between a woman and her rapist is crucial to the plot.

Women, of course, do have sexual fantasies (read Margaret Atwood's story "Rape Fantasies" for a humorous approach to the topic), but in my opinion their contents would not fit the standard definition of "rape fantasy". We do indeed fantasize about sex without responsibility and guilt, sex where we are completely swept away by passion, sex without aftermath, sex with the perfect stranger. However, violence and brutality play no part in all this: everything is easy and joyous and nothing happens that the woman does not wish to happen. "Rape fantasy" is the wrong word for such imagined events. Erica Jong's term, "the zipless fuck", defines such fantasies admirably. And like her heroine in Fear of Flying, we know the difference between fantasy and reality, and we want the fantasies to stay in our heads. If the perfect stranger moved from fantasy to reality, he would probably prove to be just another problem with which we would have to cope.

Rape is sexual aggression and a woman's response is one of horror and fear. A sane woman does not want to be raped and does not have "rape fantasies". A true rape fantasy would be as infrequent in women as a castration fantasy would be in men.



LEGAL ASPE

This article was written by Women in Law

It has been said that our rape laws are a caricature of society's views of women. Thus as with all society, it is the story behind the scenes that is more significant than what one sees at first glance, therefore the purpose of this article is to expose some of the legal realities of rape.

Rape is an indictable offense for which the maximum penalty is life imprisonment. In actuality, however the average sentence is about four years and parole obviously shortens the actual time spent in prison by the convicted rapist to about two to three years.

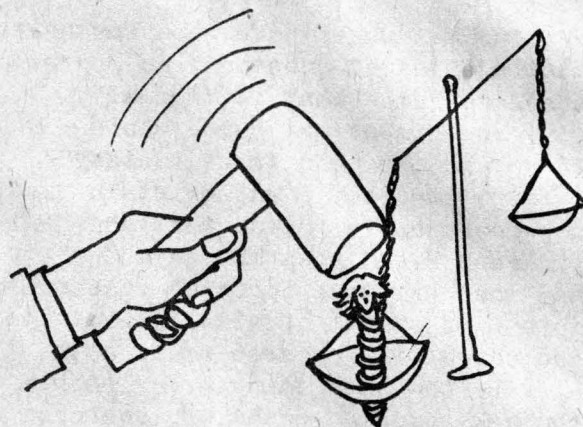
The general rape section in the Criminal Code is as follows:

s.143 A male person commits rape when he has sexual intercourse with a female person who is not his wife,

- (a) without her consent, or
- (b) with her consent if the consent
 - (i) is extorted by threats or fear of bodily harm
 - (ii) is obtained by impersonating her husband
 - (iii) is obtained by false and fraudulent representations as to the nature and quality of the act.

It should be noted from this definition that a husband cannot rape his wife, that rape is defined heterosexually, and that threats of an economic nature or of any other nature other than that causing fear of bodily harm do not vitiate or cancel out a women's consent. This definition is further narrowed judicially especially with respect to consent (which is usually the major issue) and also regarding the "nature and quality of the act".

The act of intercourse has to occur without the consent of the woman. Accordingly, in those cases which go to court, it is often



the issue of consent which is pursued by counsel for the accused rapist. Often the accused doesn't deny that he had intercourse with the woman. However, he maintains or simply suggests that he believed for one reason or another that the woman was consenting. In a recent English case it was stated that if the Accused person believed consent was there, whether or not this was based on a reasonable belief, the Accused is still not guilty. The repercussions of this could be disastrous as there would seem to be no room with this decision to give any credibility to the victim's story.. Further, "nature and quality" have been held judicially to refer only to the physical aspects of the act, thus any fraudulent representations regarding the moral quality of the act would not vitiate consent although this issue has not as yet been definitively decided.

Rape is a criminal matter and as with all criminal charges there is a great concern that justice be done with respect to the accused person. The ACSW* summarizes the judicial attitude towards rape as, "I would rather embarrass ten women that send an innocent man to

* A.C.S.W. is the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

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EFFECTS of RAPE

jail". The standard of proof, is that the Accused must seem to be guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Thus any proof offered must add up almost conclusively to the guilt of the person charged. It is with this in mind that the courts have set up and justified their rules regarding evidence at trials. The two more obnoxious aspects of these rules, in the context of rape, are with respect to the complainant's previous moral behavior and corroboration of the complainant's testimony.

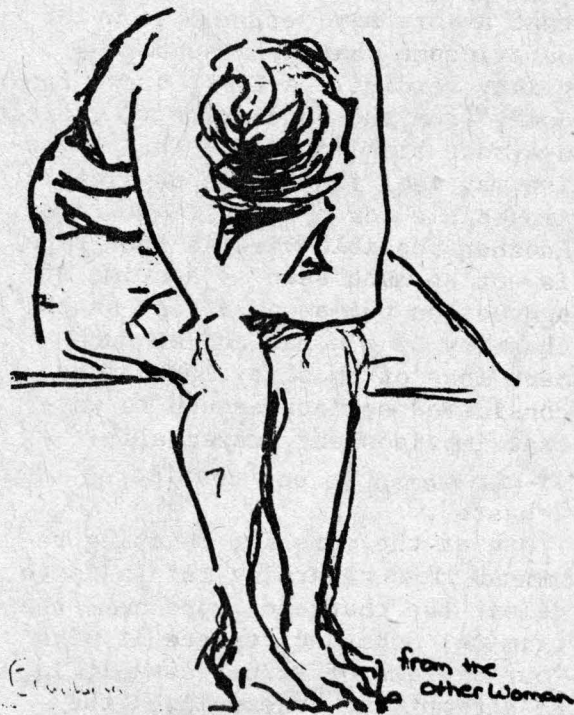
Previous to 1976, in a trial a rape victim or complainant could and was asked anything regarding her sexual life and habits. In addition other witnesses could be called to give their opinions as to whether the "victim" was telling the truth regarding this aspect of her life. Justification for doing this was that it may be relevant to the issue of consent (i.e. if she did it before, she'll do it again) and also, some tenuously argue that a connection between previous sexual behaviour and veracity in general as a witness could be made. After 1976 (the passing of the federal government's omnibus bill regarding women's legislation) questions regarding the victim's sexual life with anyone except the Accused are not permitted unless reasonable notice is given and if the judge considers these necessary for a just determination of the case. Obviously this whole reform depends on the trial judge's discretion. There are two alternatives to ameliorate this whole situation: that of absolutely debarring evidence of this kind, or as the CSW suggests, that if the rape victim is asked these questions, it must also be permissible to ask the Accused person the same questions. It should be noted that the

Accused man is not questioned on this, and he does not even have to take the witness stand except at his own choice.

Corroboration of the victim's story is another issue that although supposedly reformed, is left basically in its same state.

In the context of rape, corroboration could be the testimony of an eyewitness, possessions of the Accused left at the scene of a crime, and the physical condition of the complainant and her clothes.

Until 1976, a trial judge had to warn the jury of the dangers of finding an Accused person guilty without corroborative evidence or evidence in addition to that of the victim, as rape is one of those designated crimes requiring corroboration basically due to a fear that this was a crime particularly subject to false accusations. Although this has now been abolished, the crime must still be proved be-



yond a reasonable doubt, thus the sum result is not changed very much at all. In addition, it would seem that a defence of "lack of corroboration" could possibly be used as the Criminal Code retains common law defences and corroboration is one such defence.

Given the present definition of rape there seems to be no way around this problem.. The answer would seem to be to take the requirement of a lack of consent out of the definition of rape and re-define it in gradating terms of force--as, after all, sexual intercourse without consent is forceable rape.

The most serious criticism against rape laws is that they give no protection to a woman from the possibility of being a rape victim. The would-be rapist is protected in two respects in that a woman is often reluctant to undergo the degradation involved in a rape trial and in that the rate of convictions on charges that do get to trial is quite low. Both factors inadvertently protect the rapist from answering for his crime.

One significant difficulty is that a jury may refuse to convict on evidence that does support a guilty verdict. A jury drawn randomly from the population may reflect a strong bias on rape.. Thus, a jurist may feel that it is physically impossible for a woman to be raped. Another possible view is that rape is not so much seen as a crime of aggression but as an attack on the chastity of a woman and as such mere loss of chastity may not be considered serious enough to warrant imprisonment, especially if the woman is not considered "chaste".

One of the more far reaching recommendations regarding reform is to delete the charge of rape from the Criminal Code and replace it with four degrees of sexual assault in an attempt to "desexualize" the

offence. The degrees would focus on the amount of violence used in the assault, thus emphasizing the brutal and violent aspects of the crime. This idea of refocussing on the aggression of the offence has merit; however, it may simply have the effect of begging the question.

The role of law reform in giving women fair protection under the law may in fact be minimal.. For many victims it is the persons who administer the law -- police, lawyers, judges and juries -- as much as the law itself that seem to bring about injustice. Thus the ACSW suggests that training be provided for people who are involved in treatment or prosecution of these cases, that a judge should be required to give reasons when he makes an order to exclude the public from a trial (and not only when such an order is denied) and that ultimately victims should be advised of possible compensation. The most constructive efforts to secure more convictions are made in supporting the rape victim and by changing public attitudes through long term education.



1st ~~X~~ CHEERS FOR S.F.L.

by Sylvia Pusch

"Whereas rape is an act of violence perpetuated against women in order to humiliate and degrade them;

Whereas the incidence of reported rape is increasing 70% per year in Saskatchewan;

Whereas the threat and act of rape restricts a woman's freedom to act and think independently, and therefore acts against the interest of all workers;

And whereas women's groups and their supporters are taking part in a national action day against rape on November 5, 1977;

Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour endorse the Action Day Against Rape as part of a campaign to raise the consciousness of all people."

This was the emergency resolution on rape put forward by women militants at the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It was passed unanimously by delegates. The conference, held in Saskatoon from October 12 to 15, was notable for the adoption of other positions in areas of vital importance to women.

The first of these resolutions called for child care to be recognized as a social responsibility and the right of every child "and family". It resolved that the trade union movement would commit itself to an active political campaign to demand quality, universal, 24-hour parent-controlled child-care (equal worker-control wasn't included), funded by the government in the same manner as the public school system. This, too, passed with little opposition.

But most surprising was the support given to the resolution on abortion and birth control. Pointing out that there is inadequate access to abortion

and birth control education, this resolution stated that "women trade unionists must establish the basic right of women to decide to have children." It resolved that local and central organizations of the trade union movement established a program of political action directed at the provincial and federal governments to provide adequate health care "by establishing separate health care clinics for birth control counselling and abortion". The resolution included a demand that these governments provide more research into safe birth control methods, and a statement that the trade union movement is responsible for pressuring the school system to provide birth control and sex education as well as a realistic view of family life. Despite the fact that two Roman Catholic delegates spoke against the portion calling for health care clinics to provide abortions (using the usual "murder of a human being" argument), the resolution passed by a large majority of votes.

Other resolutions passed with similar support. These included a call for paid maternity and paternity leave as well as provision for other parental leave on an equal basis for both sexes; and for across the board wage increases, or higher percentage wage increases for lower paid workers as a means of increasing the wages of women workers.

The Working Women's Conference held by the Federation in May of 1977 was instrumental in the passage of all these positions. A further resolution passed at the convention ensured that such a conference would be held on an annual basis. However, despite a motion passed at the first Working Women's Conference calling for the next to be open to all

working women, the Federation executive submitted a resolution to limit conference attendance to trade union women only. Such a move if not fought will work to the detriment of those women who are employed in non-unionized jobs, who work in the home, or who are students or unemployed, and will therefore serve to prevent the emergence of any unified strategy.

This 22nd convention, despite some successes, can only be seen as a limited gain for women in the province. It is significant that the resolutions affecting women often met with almost no discussion; particularly there was very little elaboration or outspoken support from delegates on the floor. Nor did women delegates organize to speak to important resolutions - those on women, on Quebec, on wage controls - in a united man-

ner. Furthermore, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour conventions have a history of passing some of the most radical resolutions of all the federations in English Canada. But while agreeing to a resolution on paper is a step in the right direction, talk remains cheap. That point was made time after time by delegates who spoke condemning the S.F.L. executive for its failure to act against the wage controls. Women in Saskatchewan have no reason to expect George McLeod, Nadine Hunt* and their ilk to act any differently upon the women's resolutions. It is up to women, both in and out of the trade unions, to ensure that these paper promises become a reality.

*George McLeod is President of the Federation. Nadine Hunt is Treasurer and "Chairman" of the SFL Women's Committee.

Women Against Rape by Marge Piercy

*There is no difference between being raped
and being pushed down a flight of cement steps
except that the wounds also bleed inside.*

*There is no difference between being raped
and being run over by a truck,
except that afterward men ask you if you enjoyed it.*

*There is no difference between being raped
and being bitten by a rattlesnake
except people ask you if your skirt was short
and why you were out alone anyhow.*

*There is no difference between being raped
and going headfirst through a windshield
except that afterward you are afraid
not of cars
but of half the human race.*

RAPE and PATRIARCHY

The following excerpt comes from a paper entitled "Patriarchal Justice and the Threat of Rape" which was published by a group of French radical feminists. The excerpts have been selected for their relevance to the theme of this newsletter.

"The fact of rape itself reveals first that a certain number of activities are in fact forbidden to women: That a woman who is not 'protected' by a man (who doesn't have a 'protector'/pimp) cannot move about freely. She cannot go to the cinema, for a walk, camping, hitchhiking or out in the evenings without the 'risk' of being raped. Lesser sanctions against these independent acts by women are endless questioning, cat-calling and demands that she justify being alone in these places by men who try to pick her up. These are the inquisitors, the cops, the warders of the patriarchal system, who want us to be 'protected' and who condemn us if we are not.

In theory and according to the letter of the law (with the exception of marriage laws) NOTHING is specifically forbidden to women. But in fact and in jurisprudence, society has established a 'risk of rape' which increases with the woman's independence of behavior. That this risk has been socially established and measured is not accidental. It is part of the whole set of rewards and punishments which make up the system of social control of women. This system ensures that women remain in their place in the patriarchal order. Violent sexual aggression represents the extreme on the continuum of punishment; the penal, physical and violent sanction par excellence. Social control of women thus includes the threat of rape.

Further, the response of the police and what happens in court shows that these activities are not merely forbidden in fact. By treating

the autonomous behavior of women as incitements or proof of consent to rape, the law absolves rapists and legalises rape. It affirms that women do not have the right to carry out certain activities and penalises them by law (also meaning 'by right' in French) acquitting the rapist."

The group points out that the list of questions which are regularly put forward in courtrooms are such that "the victims cannot answer 'yes' without the rapist being systematically acquitted (even when the non-consent of the women has been proved)."

The paper then goes on to explain that there "are 2 main types of questions on their list which reveal the patriarchal nature of the judicial system:

(1) Questions which establish if the woman "ran the risk of being raped", that is if she engaged in activities which made rape materially, i.e. socially, possible such as living alone, wearing 'indecent' clothes, or having a drink with the rapist before the rape.

All these activities are seen not simply as making rape possible or easy, but as justifications which absolve the rapist even when non-consent is proved. It is thus not rape which is judged, but is circumstances: only a married woman, locked in her home, in company and decently clothed can be recognised as a victim. That is to say, when is it not only physically impossible, but above all socially unjustified from the point of view of patriarchy.

This coincidence of what is dangerous for the woman and what justifies the man's action clearly reveals the legal, and at the same time punitive, nature of rape.

(2) There are also questions on the list concerning actions which establish the autonomy of the woman (such as being unmarried, a divorcee, and adultress, having had an abortion,

having an illegitimate child, having a lover, etc.) but which are all absolutely irrelevant to the act of rape itself.

We can see that what is important here is how well founded the risk of rape was, since if the victim is a 'loose' woman the rapist is absolved: he did well to rape this woman.

The second kind of 'extenuating circumstances' illuminates the first and proves to us that the material danger which was in question in the first set of circumstances, was indeed not physical but social. How can one explain why a crime can be justified by the ease with which it can be committed unless it is precisely because this ease is evidence of reprehensible behavior in the victim? This is why the independence of a woman is enough to get the rapist acquitted even if the victim can answer 'no' to the questions about her attitude which could have been perceived by the rapist, and even if he knows nothing of the victim's independence.

Everything concurs to show us that it is not the rape which is judged:

-because the rape is a priori just-

ified by the fact that it was possible the very fact of rape incriminates the woman;

-because the life style of the victim takes the place of "extenuating circumstances", although it has nothing to do with the fact of rape.

What is judged is this:

(1) The right of the victim to complain or not; only circumstances rendering rape quasi - impossible give her this right.

(2) The legitimacy of the rape punishment which has in fact been inflicted. If the man is acquitted it is because the woman had committed acts which ran the risk of rape. If by some extraordinary chance the rapist is found guilty, it is because he has gone "beyond his duties as a policeman."

The paper concludes that women are oppressed by men through the judicial system, through the police and finally by the rapists (which they refer to as the private police.) Since, the collective suggests, we cannot depend on the court to safeguard our rights, we must challenge the political system which has abdicated its responsibility to women.

MEETING REPORT

The last few general meetings of Saskatoon Women's Liberation (Sept. 25 Oct. 2 & Oct. 15) have focussed upon planning immediate events, taking action in problem areas and deciding the direction for SWL activity in the coming year.

Final plans for the Prairie Woman Benefit were made and thanks to the efforts of the Benefit Committee and many other women the Benefit was very successful. The proceeds will go to Prairie Woman and will cover its expenses for several months.

Saskatoon Women's Liberation decided to collaborate with other community groups in planning events for A Day of Protest Against Rape on Nov. 5th.

SWL will provide a speaker for the Public Meeting being held that day and a motion was passed at the Oct. 15 meeting in favour of making a financial contribution towards covering the expenses.

In the area of women's health several actions are being taken. A letter to be sent to the new provincial minister of health asking for clarification of his position on abortion was approved at the Sept. 25 meeting, and it was decided that a similar letter should be sent to the new federal minister of health. A questionnaire regarding women's health to be sent to Saskatoon hospitals has been prepared. The Sept.

25th meeting decided to seek endorsement of the questionnaire from other women's groups and then proceed with this project.

A motion was passed at the Oct. 2 meeting to draft a letter to the Sundog Committee stating SWL's objections to pro-life groups being at the Sundog Fair on the basis that they neither support the alternative community nor provide alternatives for women. As well, SWL made the decision to rent space for an educational booth at Sundog.

At the October 15 meeting SWL had the opportunity to meet with a representative from WACH, Terry Posyniak. It was very useful to have this exchange of information with our sister organization in Regina.

For the last month or so Saskatoon Women's Liberation has been discussing the possibility of holding

a Prairie Feminist Conference in the spring of 1978. This would be a major undertaking requiring much time and energy for planning and would of necessity limit the number of other activities SWL could undertake in the next few months. It was decided that we should vote on whether or not to plan the conference at the Oct. 30 meeting so as to allow members time to consider the question.

The Political Positions Committee distributed copies of the general position statement of Saskatoon Women's Liberation at the Oct. 15 meeting so that members could read it over and prepare to discuss it at the Oct. 30th meeting.

General meetings of Saskatoon Women's Liberation are held every second Sunday, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. at 233 - 22nd St. Women interested in developing a socialist-feminist analysis and in participating in social action are welcome to attend.

W.A.C.H. on RAPE

by Teri Posyniak

On November 5th, WACH, in conjunction with other women's groups, will present a panel on rape at the Regina Public Library. We believe rape to be an act of aggression and a direct manifestation of society's sexist attitude towards women. Furthermore, we feel that courts should deal with rape as a crime of assault to facilitate a just hearing for the victim and conviction of the rapist.

Shelley Gavigan will speak on the legal aspects of rape—one of the major factors which inhibits victims from actually reporting rapes for fear of being further victimized by court procedures.

Judy Eichorst and Teri Posyniak will follow with an enactment of a court scene between a rape victim and the lawyer for the defense. This will clarify in a dramatic way the injustices of the law concerning rape.

Pat Cavanaugh will discuss societal attitudes towards rape, the psyche of the rapist, and social

implications of the assault. She will try to eradicate the myths many people share about women feeling responsible for being raped—that they are supposed to be plagued by guilt feelings concerning a violent act which they have not instigated.

Another WACH member will present dramatic monologues of actual case histories of rape victims to further emphasize the harm—both physical and psychological—they are forced to endure.

We approached City Council on October 18th to have the week of November 5th declared Rape Protest Week. Discussions are continuing on this subject and nothing definite can be stated for a week or so. We are trying to stimulate as much public discussion as possible through radio, TV and newspaper interviews and general media coverage. We hope that our collective efforts will be productive and that we will hear from you soon.

PRAIRIE WOMAN is a newsletter of Saskatoon Women's Liberation. Contributions in the form of articles, news items, poetry, graphics, cartoons, and photographs are welcomed from women. Interested men are invited to contribute letters or funds. Because the newsletter is put out by voluntary labour, financial donations are encouraged.

PRAIRIE WOMAN is run as a collective. Writers have had their efforts acknowledged with their articles. Others working on the paper as an editorial collective are:

Linda Charlton	Colleen Odegard
Maylynn Woo	Vicki Barclay
Gail Osachoff	
Wiesia Kolasinska	
Maggie Dykes	
Susan Woolway	
Rosemarie Rupps	

Original graphics and headlines by Maylynn Woo and Delia Burdeyney

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