

PRIORITIES

A
FEMINIST
SOCIALIST
PERSPECTIVE

VOL. XI No. 4

PRICE: 50¢

NOVEMBER 1983

THIS BUDGET HURTS WOMEN



PRIORITIES is published six times a year by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual: \$ 5.00 per year
 Institution: \$10.00 per year

PRIORITIES welcomes letters and articles from its readers. All submissions must be signed, although names may be withheld on request. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit all copy received in the interest of brevity, clarity, and taste. Submissions should be typed, 39 characters to the line, triple-spaced if at all possible.

Submissions and subscriptions should be mailed to:

PRIORITIES
 517 East Broadway
 Vancouver, B.C.
 V5T 1X4

"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Typesetting and layout by
 ALFASET TYPESETTING
 1307 East 20th Street
 North Vancouver, B.C.

Printed by
 THE NORTH SHORE TIMES
 1460 Dominion Street
 North Vancouver, B.C.
 980-7531



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Thanks to all the workers who have made the production and distribution of this magazine possible.

EDITORIAL

The political leadership we need

A report by Anne Fraser, Hanna Hadikein, Cathy Jones and Mercia Stickney

This is an extremely crucial time for the NDP. It's no secret that there is a searching in the community for a viable political voice and a growing disenchantment with the NDP as a channel for that voice.

This is also an extremely important time for the NDP as we head into an election for the leader of the party.

The Women's Rights Committee decided, therefore, that the campaign for leader provided an opportunity to constructively address the criticisms directed at the party, criticisms such as: the NDP has become inactive on social issues, has not been a leading voice on political events, has been silent on philosophic direction, is becoming irrelevant, etc.

In order to examine how this has come about and what can be done about it, the Women's Rights Committee held a workshop on *What is Leadership* on Saturday, October 22, 1983.

A mood of frustration, isolation, powerlessness permeated the room at the start of the meeting, but the barriers to shared objectives and principles were broken down when the discussion moved to what participants saw as qualities essential to democratic leadership. They reported these as: accountability, education, informing of party policy, democratic decision-making, team leadership, egalitarianism, two-way communication, collectivity, grass-roots decision-making, public relations and the party as a real alternative.

The question then became: if these were the qualities people expected between themselves and leaders in a democratic institution, were these then the attitudes the NDP reflected to its members and the larger community?

This led to a critical review of the existing party organization and its relationship to members and community.

The feelings of disenchantment and frustration known to participants through their own and others' experiences, and the anger at where the province is going and the party's refusal to deal with that tended to be expressed in the notion that the organizational structure of the party inhibited the democratic process. However, on presentation of a model of the organizational flow of the party, it was obvious that the structure did not create the deficiencies that brought on the negative criticisms of the NDP.

The attitudes of the people who use those structures therefore become the source of the problem.

We then discussed what attitudes had become prevalent in the party as compared to the view we, as feminist-socialists, have of how democracy flourishes. In point form, the following illustrates how a structure is democratic or undemocratic depending on the attitudes that inform its use:

- when the aim is personal power rather than service
- when communication is propaganda rather than information-sharing
- when the connections of power are generated by secretiveness rather than openness
- when the model of decision-making is elitist rather than collective.

Continued on page 24

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT



by Joan Smallwood

The last few months have been very difficult for all of us, not only because of the impact of the Socred legislation, but in assessing how we can best further the cause of feminist socialism. Just reacting to the Socred initiative, in spite of the necessity to do so, is not enough. It is our responsibility to speak out, in opposition, and also to show that there are alternatives to capitalism—other ways of organizing society.

The Women's Committee has made major contributions to policy development in the NDP. However, like many on the left, we have not spent enough time coming to understand economics. It is the current economic system that will inhibit the fulfillment of our dream of a society of justice and equality.

In an excellent first step, the Boag Foundation sponsored a conference in October entitled "The Challenge of the Eighties and Beyond." While the conference had some major problems, none of which is unexpected in our patriarchal society, it did provide an opportunity for open discussion of economic issues.

I had the opportunity to speak to David Plotke, former editor of the *Socialist Review* (1976-81). David took the addresses of both myself and of Margaret Birrell (NDP Women's Organizer). He promised to put us in touch with a group of women in California organizing a new political force of women voters. Recent polls have shown that U.S. women are voting differently than their male counterparts: they vote for parties on the left.

Another conference presenter was Samuel Bowles, Economics Professor at the University of Massachusetts and a member of the Center for Popular Economics (CPE). Along with Judy Coffen I discovered that the CPE will hold 4 to 7 day workshops on economics. Judy is now trying to organize such an event at the University of British Columbia.

The lengthy debates we have had in the WRC have done us well. Despite my personal concerns about my ability to contribute to the discussion amidst professionals and academics, after this experience it was clear that we all have much to contribute to the development of an alternative economic strategy. ♀

No sooner had the Socred budget come down July 7 than B.C. feminists took one look and hit the ground running. Four months later, they show no signs of pausing for breath as they organize public opposition to the legislation.

The first action of women in the lower mainland was to form a coalition of women's groups and individuals they dubbed *Women Against the Budget* or WAB. Succeeding activities have ranged from an appearance before a Royal Commission to the staging of satirical street theatre.

Their July 13 founding meeting packed the small offices of the Vancouver Status of Women. Individuals from private and public sector unions, from community groups serving women, from human rights organizations, from women's rights committees, from community college women's programs, and from professional women's groups shared information about the contents of the legislative package and what it would mean to the women of B.C.

Renate Shearer, former human rights commissioner, related events surrounding the dissolution of the Human Rights Branch and the firing of the staff. Union women such as Marion Pollack of the Postal Workers presented their analyses of how the legislation would affect the gains women have made in labour law and collective agreements; how it would affect affirmative action in the trades, and how it would affect the ability of women to organize themselves into unions in the future.

NDP Women's Rights Committee

Hilda Thomas of the NDP Women's Rights Committee placed the legislation in the context of the Socred government's grand economic design for B.C. which represents a sharp turn to the political right, following the path of Reagan and Thatcher. As a recent opponent of Dr. Pat McGeer in the provincial election, Hilda was able to point out the cost to women of the Minister of Technology's strategy for attracting high technology companies to B.C. by offers of government subsidies and by excluding such companies from the labour code.

Coalition designed for all women

Following this information sharing, the group voted to form a coalition open to individuals as well as organizations so that women without group affiliation would be able to contribute to the budget battle, express their opinions, and receive support from other women. It was clear to all in attendance that

success would require support from the broadest possible base of women in the community. It was resolved, therefore, that participation would not be limited to feminists, but would deliberately reach out to encompass all women opposed to the legislation.

The women also voted to participate as WAB in the regional and provincial Solidarity Coalitions then being formed so that women could have a strong voice from the beginning, would be an integral part of the organizational structure, and could contribute to the overall work of the coalition by reaching out to unorganized women. However, WAB reserved the right to augment the activities of the broader coalitions with activities of its own.

A flurry of activity followed this initial organizational meeting. Frances Wasserlein (of Women Against Violence Against Women) was elected to speak on behalf of WAB at rallies in Vancouver and Victoria in July. To ensure that the speeches expressed more than the concerns of a particular individual, a committee of volunteers took on the task of producing these speeches nearly overnight. Frances proved to be a power-

ful and compelling speaker whose forceful words elicited strong approval from the crowds. She and others were subsequently asked to form a speakers' bureau to address audiences requesting WAB speakers.

Submission to Royal Commission

The media committee of WAB took advantage of the presence in Vancouver in September of a federal Royal Commission to win press coverage of women's concerns about the proposed legislation. With the assistance of the Women's Research Centre, WAB submitted a written brief to the MacDonald Commission on Economic Union and Development Proposals for Canada.

Referring to the 1971 Royal Commission on the Status of Women, it asked, "Why are the issues of equal pay, affirmative action, daycare, and non-traditional work still confronting us? Does the inaction on these issues mean this country can't afford to have a non-discriminatory society?" The brief went on to declare, "Poverty is our birthright," and to observe that when society does not meet the needs of its members, it is women who must "pick up the pieces."

Women in Solidarity



*The story of
Women Against
the Budget*

by Sharon Shniad

The United Nations Committee on the elimination of Discrimination Against Women also received a formal protest from *Women Against the Budget*. "Just 19 months after Canada ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women," it read, "the government of British Columbia is drastically reducing legal protections and services for women." This letter, designed to embarrass the Socred government before an international forum, demonstrated dramatically to the public the seriousness with which women viewed the issue.

Public information meeting

To reach women not in trade unions or women's organizations, women whose concerns are primarily those of home and neighbourhood, WAB sponsored a public information meeting on September 7 at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre. This meeting focused on the four areas which would have the most impact on women in the home: health, education, social services, and consumer rights.

Health issues were addressed by Dr. Adrienne Ross, a Vancouver physician currently working at Reach community clinic. She is also involved with the Vancouver Women's Health Collective whose funding has just been terminated by the provincial government.

Ruth Annis, a social worker in the Ministry of Human Resources whose employment will be terminated as of March

Grace McCarthy has stated that the services provided by MHR staff are to be taken over by churches and community groups. But the people who assist those groups to provide service have also been fired.



31, 1984, spoke on cut-backs to that ministry. Co-ordinator of the Senior and Child Care Service, she declared, "The budget cuts are setting back child care services in this province fifteen years. It may be impossible to re-establish the quality of these services in the future."

The future of education in B.C. in the face of funding restrictions and centralization of authority was the focus of remarks by Vancouver School Trustee and University of British Columbia Associate Professor of Education Pauline Weinstein. Weinstein noted, "Although the legislation adversely affects the entire education system, from kindergarten through to university, minority groups and people at or below the poverty line will be the most severely affected.

Yvonne Miles, President of the B.C. Branch of the Consumer's Association of Canada, a former CAC national president, discussed the implications of cuts to consumer protection.

Luncheon with Gracie

WAB members next turned their various talents to street theatre in an event billed as "Luncheon with Gracie." In front of Grace McCarthy's Shaughnessy mansion about 400 people met to sample soup ladled from pots boiling on Coleman stoves in the back of a truck.

A satirical skit featured a "chef" who gave the assembly lessons on how to cook "gracelessly." "You don't have to cut those carrots, you don't have to slash those services, you don't have to mince those words," she said. Instead, she declared, the soup would be tastier and more nourishing with the "vitamin E of a seniors' centre, the amino acids of a transition house, a dollop of post-partum counselling, and a whole mess of services to the disabled." Sniffed a "McCarthy" "This is no free lunch." "If you can't take the heat," the chef retorted, "stop stoking the fire."

While the skit was amusing, the speeches were angry and determined. An open mike allowed participants, including NDP MP Margaret Mitchell, to express their views.

While there was some controversy in the press about the rectitude of invading Shaughnessy with what was termed a personal attack on McCarthy, WAB organizers emphasized that the event was staged in order to dramatize the point that McCarthy's actions as Minister of Human Resources were threatening the personal security of thousands of homes and families in B.C.

Picnic against the budget

With the success of this event, WAB volunteered to organize a Picnic Against the Budget for the Solidarity Coalition.

This picnic, with food, a children's parade, and a dance, was the culmination of a week of attention on women's and children's issues. (A series of similar "theme" weeks, organized by the Solidarity Coalition, spotlighted particular segments of the community and publicized how each would be affected by the budget).

The purpose of the picnic was to encourage families to participate in the anti-budget fight by providing a comfortable, non-threatening environment.

After these long months of relentless organizing activity, the battle against the legislation is now entering a new stage as *Priorities* goes to press. The B.C. Government Employees Union will go out on strike November 1 if the government terminates 1600 workers as planned. Other public sector workers are taking strike votes to allow them to join a series of escalating job actions in support of GEU.

WAB Conference

Women Against the Budget held an all-day conference October 16 to discuss the current situation and explore ways that women could contribute to any strike action. The day began with a brief analysis of the economic and political thrust behind Bennett's legislation. Presentation of an alternative economic strategy, compiled from NDP and B.C. Federation of Labour policy documents, was presented.

The women in attendance then broke into small groups. From these brainstorming sessions came a resolution directing WAB representatives to Solidarity to ensure that the phrase "restoration of social services" was added to the Solidarity Coalition's demand for the withdrawal of the legislative package.

This was necessary because services such as the Women's Health Collective and Transition House are not specifically eliminated by the legislation. Rather, they have had their funding cut through general cutbacks in grant monies.

The conference also set up a committee to explore ways of working with both government employees and the recipients of social services to ensure that emergency services are provided by the community during a strike. Without such services being guaranteed, community support for striking social service workers would likely be undermined.

The provincial scene

The fight against the budget has not been confined to the Vancouver area. Clare Van Dusen from the NDP Women's Rights Committee reports that Nanaimo NDP women joined with other community groups to form a Women Against the Budget Coalition. They have identified priority areas of concern (health, tenants' rights, education, and social services) and assigned representatives to gather information in those areas. A public meeting is planned to inform women how the budget affects everyone in the community. The Nanaimo WAB has also sent representatives to the local Solidarity Coalition.

Another project being planned is a boycott on consumer spending and credit buying. Instead, toys and services are exchanged in order to pressure local merchants to lobby the Socred government to withdraw the legislation. Victoria women have also formed a WAB coalition.

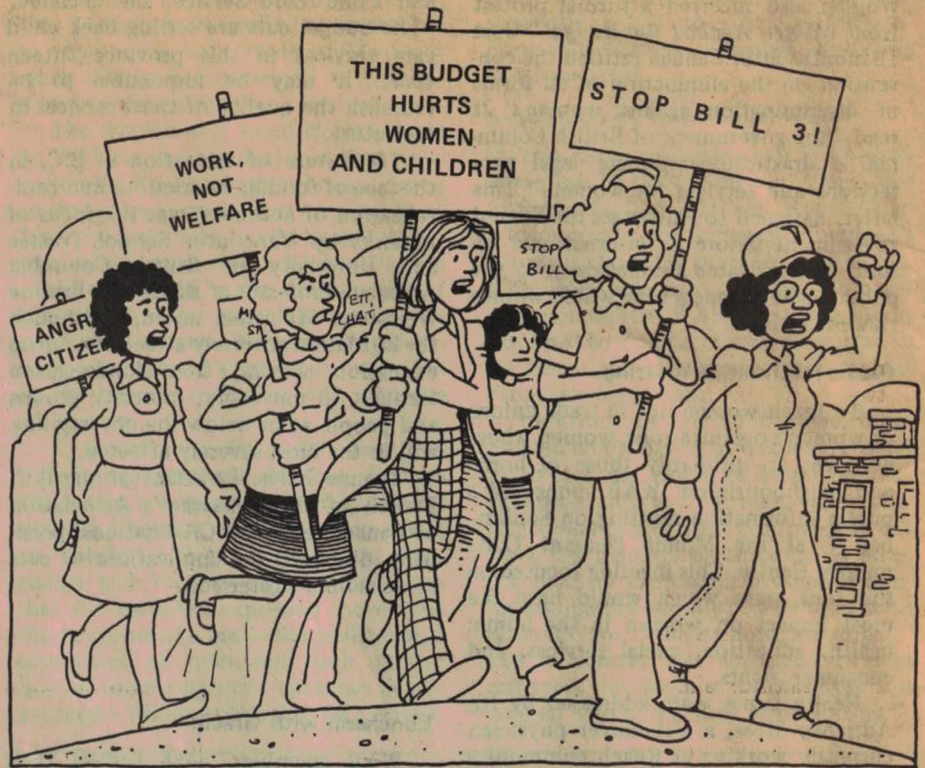
In other areas, particularly where women's organizations are too few in number to form a coalition, women (many of them feminists) are playing prominent roles in local Solidarity Coalitions. For example, Louise Maraukis of the NDP Women's Rights Committee, reports that the steering committee of the West Kootenay Solidarity is 50% women. Their media person, Carol Gordon, is both an NDP member and the Co-ordinator of the Cranbrook Women's Centre.

This budget hurts women

Two major goals have driven women throughout these long months of meetings and organizing work. First, they have been determined that their message will be heard by the public loud and clear: **THIS BUDGET HURTS WOMEN!** They knew that this message would not automatically be placed front and centre by the Solidarity Coalition without pressure from women's groups.

The point they have wanted to emphasize is that it is women who will bear the brunt of this legislation. It is women, with average incomes only a fraction of men's, who most depend upon those social services now being eliminated. It is women who are the target of male violence, and it is services designed to

Bill 11 extends the government's wage control program indefinitely and makes the "employer's ability to pay" paramount in determining compensation.



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protect women which are losing their funding. It is women workers, largely unorganized, who will suffer most from changes to employment and human rights legislation. It is even women who are most hurt by the 7% sales tax on restaurant meals, since most waitresses live on tips. And it is largely women who will lose their jobs with reductions in the public service, in hospital services, in education.

Finally, it is women who will once again have to shoulder the responsibilities abandoned by the government. It is women who will have to provide child care, care for the elderly, for the handicapped, for the sick, for victims of family violence. Once again it is women who will be required to work without pay, in isolation and without support.

The second goal driving women since July has been their determination that women would be full, active, and effective participants in any coalition formed in opposition to the budget legislation. They knew that the only way to be guaranteed their own voice was to insist on openness and democracy.

Lessons and skills put to good use

The lessons and skills learned during the last ten years by the women's movement in the development of their own organizations and in fighting for a voice

in the community are now being put to good use in the battle against the budget.

They have argued that expediency cannot justify use of procedural tools to ram motions through meetings nor can it justify the making of decisions behind closed doors. They have made the point that the fight will be a long one and that support of a broad cross-section of the population will be required for success. How the business of the Coalition is conducted, they argued, will be the key to whether it can attract new members who feel they can have a voice in decisions.

It is largely women who have insisted on information sharing, on rotating or group leadership, on a sharing of the role of press spokespersons, on affirmative action with regard to representation on steering committees and with regard to chairing, on patience with inexperienced members, and that all points of view be heard.

This fight for a truly democratic structure is, of course, an ongoing one. Democratic institutions are often unwieldy animals. The more powerful elements often do determine the course of events. But it is women's groups which have legitimized this struggle for openness and democracy, making the Solidarity Coalition an unprecedented and fascinating public experiment. ♀

The budget and working women

by Marion Pollack

Shop Steward, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Representative from Women Against the Budget to Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition

SOLIDARITY
COALITION



This budget is a major attack on the rights of working women. Over the past twenty years, B.C. has seen an unprecedented growth in the number of women workers. These women have not been content simply to take a paycheque and run. They have struggled, not only to join unions, but also to be heard and respected, to be paid decently, to be protected from sexual harassment, and to win paid maternity leave. In addition, women have fought to gain entrance to non-traditional jobs and to gain healthful and safe working conditions. The budget wipes out these gains.

This legislation totally eradicates women's fight for equal pay for work of equal value. In the past ten years, the wage gap between men and women has expanded, rather than narrowed. The present Socred legislation will widen this gap. It does so in several ways.

Limits on pay increases

First, Bill 11, the amendments to the Compensation Stabilization Act, limits any pay increases to percentages. Clearly, 5% of a woman's wage of \$5 is less than 5% of a man's wage of \$9. This "percentage" legislation will prevent union attempts to narrow the gap. For example, at UBC it would take a 44% wage increase to equal the base rates between women and men. In the summer of 1981 we saw women municipal workers make some gains in terms of equal base rates as the result of a long strike. This legislation erases those gains.

For the first time, the concept of the employer's "ability to pay" has been enshrined in legislation. This primarily affects women, as we are the majority of workers in education, health, and the social services. It is precisely these organizations, which are both poorly and publicly funded, that will fall under the ambit of this clause. Employers will state that they cannot pay and, in fact, may ask for wage rollbacks. Again, women will fall further and further behind.

Mass layoffs will lower wages

Women's wages will also fall behind because of the mass layoffs in the public sector. A huge percentage of the people directly affected will be women. This cruel and undemocratic action by the government will result in more women becoming permanently unemployed. Employers will use this opportunity to lower the already grossly inadequate wages of women.

The previous Human Rights Code included provisions which guaranteed equal pay for equal work. While it was an incredibly cumbersome and inadequate provision, it was used by many women. Beyond this, women have for years been demanding that the code include equal pay for work of equal value. In its final

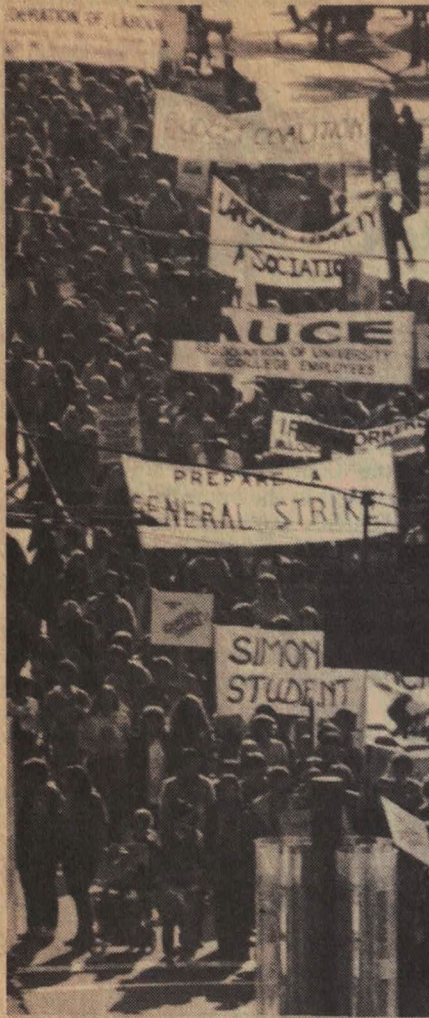
report, the now disbanded Human Rights Commission called for this. The changes to the Code have precluded this improvement in the immediate future.

Women's wages are also affected by the legislation as a whole. During periods of high or forced unemployment, women have no access to non-traditional jobs. With the layoffs in the public sector, employers have a large labour pool from which to hire. History has shown us that their choices will not include women. So, the new legislation will, in effect, further ghettoize women.

So far this discussion has only addressed itself to organized workers. Women also make up the majority of unorganized workers. If organized workers get meager wage increases, we can



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can be fired without cause, it is the employer who gets the upper hand to do whatever he wants. These bills have a spillover effect on unorganized workers, expanding the employers' control over the work force. Sexual harassment, which is already too prevalent in the unorganized sector, will be intensified and legitimized. With a simple stroke of the pen, the provincial government has denied women our right to dignity.

Maternity leave

For years women have been fighting to have our double roles as women and workers recognized. One very concrete example of this is the fight for paid maternity leave. The legislation destroys the gains made in this area. Bill 2, the amendments to the Public Service Relations Act, denies the B.C. Government Employees Union the right to negotiate on money issues, including paid maternity leave. Bill 26, amending the Employment Standards Act, states that if a contract contains maternity leave provisions poorer than that provided in the Act, the substandard provisions will apply. Unfortunately, since many contracts covering non-traditional jobs contain the latter type of provisions, this is another blow for women in traditionally male occupations.



expect non-union workers to get zero.

The budget cutbacks to social services also affect working women. Day care is badly hit, with subsidies to families needing day care having been abolished. Working women are faced with the Hobson's choice of either paying more of their income for day care, or quitting because there is no affordable day care.

This legislation also legitimizes sexual harassment. It gives men throughout B.C. permission to harass us "girls." This is accomplished in several ways. The dismantling of the Human Rights Code will deny women access to recourse in sexual harassment cases. In fact, the new code states that discrimination will only be upheld if intent is proven. In cases of sexual harassment, this is virtually impossible. The Human Rights Commission has also been eliminated. This Commission has, in the past, provided quality education on the issue of sexual harassment.

The climate of fear engendered by Bill 3 also contributes to the legitimization of sexual harassment. If people

Bill 3 enables employers—hospitals, universities, government, library boards—to fire workers without justification.

Bill 26 abolishes the Employment Standards Board, so grievances must be settled in the courts. It allows collective agreements to provide for less than minimum labour standards in such areas as pregnancy, overtime, vacation and hours of work.

The legislation on maternity leave can only worsen since improvements in legislation are generally preceded by breakthroughs in bargaining. Health and safety provisions are also under attack by this budget. In times of economic crisis employers generally allow the deterioration of health and safety standards. This budget inherits that trend.

Bill 3 chief weapon

Bill 3, which allows firing without recourse, is the government's chief weapon in this battle. Clearly, women will be more reluctant to refuse work on a VDT, now that the threat of firing looms over them. Already unorganized employers are holding the threat of firing over anyone who attempts to exercise her health and safety rights. The Sacred legislation comes down at a time when working women are actively struggling for healthier work places and for recognition of our reproductive rights. The bills and the atmosphere engendered by them put a major road block in front of this battle.

Bill 26, the amendments to the Employment Standards Act, attempts to weaken women's rights in a variety of other ways. It removes the provision that employees' wages are the first items to be paid in a bankruptcy situation. In B.C. the highest number of bankruptcies are currently in small retail businesses and restaurants, precisely those areas where women workers are concentrated.

Bill 26 also allows an "interested party" to ask the Director of the Employment Standards Branch to declare a collective agreement null and void after its expiry date. The minimum Employment Standards would then apply. This means that a woman could go from earning \$10 an hour and having paid maternity leave one day, to earning minimum wage and having no maternity leave the next day. While this is devastating to everyone, it is a particular attack on women, as it erases the workplace gains we have made in terms of equal pay, maternity leave, etc.

Work schedule negotiations eliminated

Bill 2, the amendments to the Public Service Relations Act, takes away the right of the B.C.G.E.U. to negotiate items such as schedules of work, overtime, hours for part-time work, etc. This legislation adversely affects women since we have responsibilities both as workers and parents. The right of the government to unilaterally schedule work makes it incredibly difficult for mothers to make arrangements for their children. Again, these bills hold women and children hostage.

Bill 2 takes away the unions' ability to influence work schedules, job evaluations, or job duties. It also opens the way to patronage in hiring at all levels of government.

The legislative package takes away community control of colleges and universities and places universities in a severe funding crisis. Higher fees mean less access for women. This results in the further ghettoization of women. Women wanting to take courses to enable them

In the last couple of years, women entering or re-entering the labour force found work in the rapidly expanding public sectors. The legislation stops this cold and forces women back into the home. It creates high unemployment rates for women, as we have said. One result is that employers will use this period to decrease wages. Women who are already underpaid will be even more so. Another result is that non-union employers will be able to extend their control over the work-place. Already large banks are threatening their employees with arbitrary firings and wage decreases.

Bill 3 would allow the employer to fire people in the future as technology comes increasingly on the scene. The entire attempt to weaken the union movement is also an effort to set the pre-conditions for massive technological change. The government wants to build an employer-controlled technological "paradise" in B.C. This is further confirmed by the fact that the government has drafted a "Technological Assistance" bill designed to turn B.C. into a "Phillippines of the North."

Union-busting

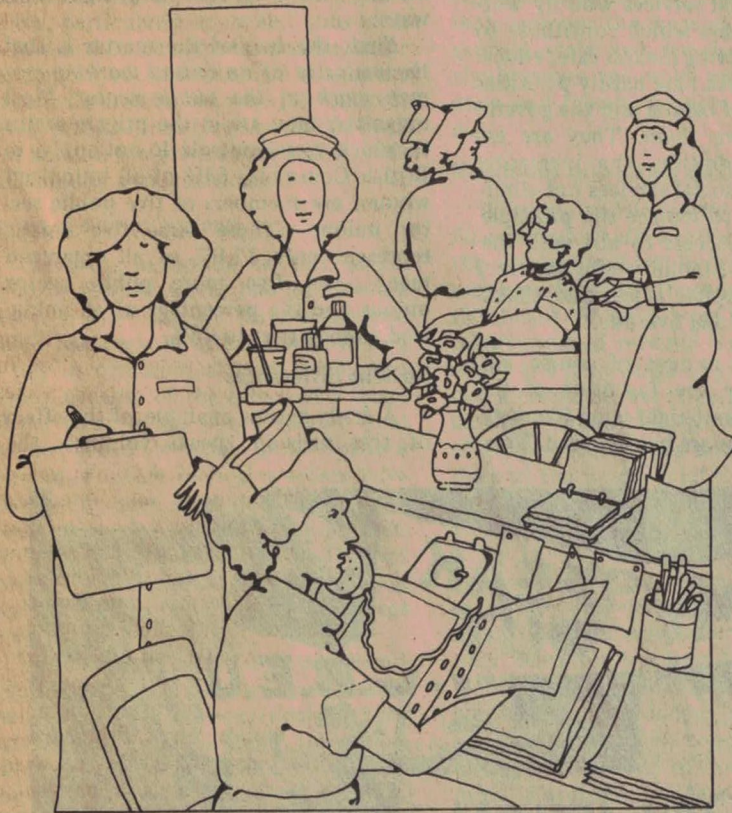
The Sacred legislation is an attempt to destroy the trade union movement in B.C. The legislation removes bargaining and job security rights. It is designed to make the public sector union free. It is no coincidence that the legislation was imposed at the same time that the HEU, CUPE, and BCGEU were preparing to enter negotiations. These unions all have a high percentage of female members and have all made inroads in bargaining on women's rights.

History has shown that the advancements made by working women are totally tied to the trade union movement. It has been the labour movement that has fought for equal pay, access to non-traditional jobs, paid maternity leave, protection from sexual harassment, etc. Any attempt to weaken the union movement is a setback for women's rights. It is no accident that this legislation was introduced during a period when working women are beginning to demand our rights.

The legislation attempts to weaken unions in another way. It states that workers can be fired without cause. This draconian clause serves to intimidate union members from actively pursuing their full union rights. For example, many union activists feel that it is precisely their union activism that will get them singled out and fired. This has proven true in the case of the firing of two BCGEU executive members. Workers seem to be quite reluctant to approach shop stewards when that may lead to their termination. This legislation is union-busting!

The legislation has another, equally draconian effect. The budget is forcing unions to bargain primarily for job security and to maintain present contract provisions. Once again, specific women's issues and concerns will not be addressed.

This budget hurts women. It must be opposed. We must be prepared to take any action up to and including a general strike to have the whole package withdrawn. ♀



to enter the non-traditional job fields will find their desires thwarted by the legislation. More and more women will be channelled into clerical courses.

Long-term unemployment

The net effect of these bills is to create long-term unemployment, with women the hardest hit. In the recent round of teacher layoffs, 70% of the 1,000 or so teachers who lost their jobs were women. Bill 3, covering all public sector workers, hits precisely the sector where women are concentrated. More women will lose their jobs, and the higher unemployment rate for women will be with us for a long time.

Technological change groundwork

The entire legislative package prepares the ground work for the massive introduction of technological change in the work place. Current collective agreements would make it impossible for the government to introduce widespread technological change. Contractual language on issues such as hours of work, layoffs, etc., would not permit the employer to introduce an automation package designed to reduce and control the work force.

So, the employer introduced legislation (Bills 2 and 3) designed to eliminate bargaining and job security rights.

Against restraints - a fight to lead

by Sharon Yandle

who is a Director of the B.C. Hospital Employees Union. The views expressed here are her own.

This article was originally written for the Feminist Socialist Conference newsletter which will be published next year.

Public sector wage controls and the elimination of jobs are not designed specifically to (1) increase the wage gap between men and women, or (2) to increase women's unpaid labour.

They just might as well be.

Certainly, the basic reason behind the B.C. Social Credit's (and the federal Liberals') programs of wage controls is to assist the earnest desire of capital to drive down all wages generally. Restricting, or better still, eliminating wage increases in the public sector goes a long way towards realizing that attempt. It puts a ceiling on worker "expectation"—i.e. what workers are prepared to fight for, how hard, how long; and with what possible success. A wage controls program is both premised on, and results in, a weakening of the labour movement (a concomitant and equally earnest desire of capital).

Social wages expendable

Eliminating public sector jobs, as well, is another broadside attack on all workers generally. The "social wage," that is, the social services won by workers over the years which contribute to our standard of living (health care, education, day care, etc.) are hardly priorities to the owners of capital and the governments that serve them. They are expendable. In addition, the increasing privatization of social services not eliminated threatens to replace the principle of universality (access to all) with the principle of profitability (for the very few) which, to capital, is just fine, thank you very much, long overdue.

None of this is new, of course, except that under the floodtide of the currently ascendant right-wing ideology these basic truths are hardly aired. They

need to be. But, in addition, what is at least of equal concern is that women, as both the producers and the consumers of social services, are bearing the brunt of the attack in four very significant ways:

First, the fact of the matter is that the majority of unionized working women work in the public sector. Most organized men are in the private sector to which wage controls do not apply. In British Columbia, 54% of all unionized women are members of five public sector unions. (These same five unions represent only 17.6% of all organized men). Add five more public sector unions and the percentage of all unionized women rises to 63%.

Striking differences

A fairly recent example of the effect of this division speaks volumes: the



1982 construction strike in B.C. produced a wage increase of 17%. The wage increase for hospital workers (equal in number to the combined membership of the plumbers' and carpenters' unions) was deemed under wage controls to be limited to 5% for the same period. Almost all plumbers and carpenters are men. Almost all hospital workers are women.

If and when public sector wage controls are lifted, the gap between organized male and female workers will have increased substantially.

Secondly, *the only jobs where the public sector pays more than the private sector is the female job ghetto of secretarial work.*

Traditionally, jobs in the public sector do not pay as well as in the private sector, particularly in "male" jobs such as trades. Accordingly, the public sector has never had the effect of raising the wages of a traditional male job—indeed, the reverse has been true. An electrician's rate is set in the private sector and tends to lag in the public sector.

Thorn in side of business

The great exception to this, secretarial or clerical work, has long been a thorn in the side of private business which has been threatened with having to pay its own clerical work force more money because of the effect of a wage-setting trend in the public sector. What has happened is that, unlike private companies where clerical workers have historically been excluded from union certifications for one reason or another, public sector unions have established industry-wide bargaining units, sweeping clerical workers into negotiating wage increases.

The response of capital to this phenomenon was never more clearly expressed than at the time of the clerical workers' last strike at Simon Fraser University. Bill Hamilton, then SFU Board of Governors' member and head of the Employers' Council of B.C. and now a member of the MacDonald Commission on the Economy, urged that SFU clerical rates be set by reference to a mean average of B.C. clerical rates. The "comparable" institutions Hamilton proposed included a heavy representation of non-union companies — a comparison unacceptable in any other labour dispute where union rates are rarely compared to non-union rates. (The cry that the public sector must never lead the private sector is uttered for more than mere philosophical convictions).

Consequently, the effect of driving down the real wages of public sector clerical workers means that the wages of

Bill 24 allows restriction of practices, extra billing, "opting out", and at a time when this is under negotiation.

Bill 9 removes planning decisions from elected municipal and regional officials.

Bill 8 dissolves the Alcohol and Drug Commission.

Group Homes and Treatment Centres, providing the only alternative for seriously disturbed children, are being cut.

their counterparts in the private sector will also be depressed. The same process that increases the wage gap between organized male and female workers will also increase the wage gap between all male and female workers, organized or not.

Enormous organizing difficulties

Thirdly, *public sector unions now face enormous difficulties in organizing the unorganized.* This is because of a number of factors: their inability to win significant (if any) wage increases; the relative loss of revenue (i.e. union dues, which as a percentage of gross wages will not increase in real terms); the absolute loss of revenue through the elimination of public sector jobs and therefore of dues to the unions; and the necessity of such unions to devote energy and money to struggle against anti-labour laws.

In 1981 in B.C., 65% of all working women were unorganized. Their generally poverty-line existence is now much more likely to continue. They will not only work for less than they otherwise would in a union situation, but they will continue to work longer hours and days and years and in poor conditions. Union-negotiated benefits of longer vacations, more statutory holidays and shorter work days are denied them. They will not have access to the now common union-negotiated sick leave, medical and dental plans. Their health will suffer. Their rest will be inadequate. And lest it be viewed that the public sector is already essentially organized, or that effective restrictions on such unions' ability to organize do not threaten serious consequences, consider the following: largely through a program of continuous organizing, one of B.C.'s biggest public sector unions over the past eight years increased its membership by 40%—by approximately 10,000 workers. Over 90% of these newly-organized workers are women. At any point in

time—on any day in the year—there are hundreds of unorganized women workers in B.C.'s public sector. Wage controls threaten to keep them that way.

Women's unpaid social services

Fourthly, *social services if not provided by the public sector end up being provided at home by unpaid women.* Where day care is not available the task falls to mothers and grandmothers. When after school programs are taken away working women go home because there's no one to be with the children. When care for the chronically ill is eliminated, or privatized and financially inaccessible, the chronically ill are cared for at home by unpaid middle-aged daughters and daughters-in-law.

Before the 1978 B.C. health care program which introduced affordable long term institutional care for the elderly and chronically ill, the largest single segment in society providing such care consisted of women in the home. Such was the extent of that service that the B.C. Health Ministry, in introducing the new program, was totally unprepared for and, in fact, overwhelmed by the demand for such institutional care that was made by hitherto unknown and unanticipated numbers of unpaid women on behalf of their aged relatives, whose care had fallen upon them. It is not coincidental that the Socreds are increasingly verbal about drafting laws requiring children to care for their aged and infirm relatives. Guess which children.

Women suffer first, longer and more

All consumers of social services bear the brunt of their elimination. But women bear it first and longer and more. The fight for wage equality for women, for our liberation from the "second job" of unpaid domestic work and, indeed, for our fundamental right to earn our own living, is absolutely squarely dependent upon the continuing existence and *expansion* of social services. We need the jobs, we need the wages, and we need the services. Wage controls and the elimination of public sector jobs undermine and hurt us just as surely as if that were the intent. It is not; the intent is to weaken all workers. But because women have not gained as much as men and therefore have more to lose, the effect is that we *are* more undermined and we hurt more.

There is no question that women have an enormous stake in fighting back against both wage controls and more general attacks on the public sector. But it is not a fight for us to join. It is one we must lead. ♀

Bill 27 guts human rights

by Hannah Jensen
former Director, B.C. Human Rights Code



As part of its "budget package," the B.C. government tabled Bill 27 on July 7, 1983. Once passed, it will dramatically change the way in which statutory human rights protection is handled. The first drastic changes, however, took place the following day when letters of termination, signed by Isabel Kelly, were hand delivered to 20 human rights workers throughout the province. They were all told to vacate the premises, hand over all keys, and warned not to return.

When I pointed out to the Minister of Labour that the Human Rights Code of 1973 remained in effect and that I, as Director, still had the statutory obligation to ensure that all complaints were dealt with (including the 500 open cases in the system), I, too, was terminated.

This unprecedented attack on a statutory human rights agency has been condemned by a wide range of individuals and organizations concerned with human rights protection throughout Canada. But what does it mean? Specifically, what will be the effect on women?

It has been said—and I agree fully—that the Human Rights Code of B.C. is not truly a "rights" code. It neither creates nor does it guarantee any fundamental rights. Rather it is an anti-discrimination law, and it gives only the right to *complain* about alleged discriminatory treatment relating to employment, housing and public services. As such, it parallels similar legislation across Canada.

The enactment of statutory human rights legislation is a demonstration of a government accepting its unique responsibility, in a democracy, to guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens. It is a statement of values. It raises expectations. Expectations that minority groups—and women—can be and *are* protected. How realistic are those expectations, and how can one measure the impact of the efforts of the Human Rights Branch of B.C., now defunct? Many groups and individuals may have written off the whole thing and called it "window-dressing," obviously disappointed with the handling and outcome of individual complaints. Why is that?

Clearly, any government that is committed to achieve a certain goal has at its disposal a wide range of powers and resources to achieve the desirable result. (Witness the powers given the Compensation Stabilization Commissioner!) In the case of human rights protection (or protection against specific types of discriminatory conduct) all Canadian governments have adopted legislation which seeks to: a) change attitudes, b) change behaviour, and c) provide redress for individuals who have suffered adverse consequences as a result of discriminatory acts.

Past practice

Under the Human Rights Code of B.C., in effect since October 1974, the Human Rights Branch (the Director and staff) was responsible for accepting, investigating, and endeavouring to settle all complaints of discrimination. The Human Rights Commission, meanwhile, was responsible for promoting fundamental freedoms and developing educational programs aimed at eliminating discrimination. The *quality* of that promotional effort, of course, hinged on the individuals which government saw fit to appoint as Human Rights Commissioners, as well as the budget allocated for its activities. The *efficiency* of the enforcement effort depended on several factors, but most importantly:

1. Scope of protection afforded in legislation and through case law,
2. Expertise and commitment of staff,
3. Budgetary allocation sufficient to meet the demand for assistance, and
4. The degree of support from the Minister responsible (Minister of Labour) in the exercise of his discretionary power to decide whether an individual unsettled complaint warranted the appointment of a Board of Inquiry.

Dependent on government good will

Clearly, the quality and efficiency of human rights promotion and protection in B.C. under the Code depended on the good will of the government in power. It may not have been able to control the expertise and commitment of staff, but through budgetary decisions and decisions with respect to unsettled cases, it is obvious that committed and capable people in the Branch endeavouring to

deliver an effective level of human rights protection could still end up "spinning their wheels." And so we did. The frustration and despair felt by many people who have worked in the Human Rights Branch since 1974 was further aggravated when accusations of incompetence—and worse—were made by groups and individuals who clearly failed to appreciate just who was responsible for what decisions made, and who were unable to grasp that the chronic delay in handling complaints was caused primarily by inadequate staffing. B.C. Human Rights officers carried a case load more than twice the national average.

What did the Branch achieve?

The problems of discrimination encountered by women included access to non-traditional employment, discriminatory fringe benefit packages, unequal pay, and sexual harassment in the workplace. So what exactly did the Human Rights Branch achieve?

Clearly prohibited discriminatory acts were the easiest to tackle, such as sex-segregated help-wanted columns which were the norm in this province in 1973; application forms and job advertisements which suggested an intent to discriminate; and outright refusals to hire women because of their sex. Through vigorous enforcement of high-profile individual complaints, the message to employers was loud and clear: if you engage in discriminatory activity you face the real possibility of a complaint being made. You will have to answer to an investigation of your personnel practices, and you may have to pay compensation to the individual, possibly after a public hearing.

Not every employer embraced the spirit and intent of the Code, but some practices did change. On the other hand, as some people say, some discrimination went "underground." What women began to encounter—as did other 'protected groups (racial minorities and the disabled)—were employers who used unfair selection systems, such as unrealistic tests, height and weight restrictions, demand for previous industrial experience, and hiring through word-of-mouth. It became clear that in order for human rights enforcement to be effective in overcoming barriers to equality of opportunity, indirect or unintentional discrimination had to be addressed.

1973 Supreme Court ruling

Such a shift had already taken place in the U.S. where the Supreme Court ruled in 1973 in a landmark case known as *Griggs vs Duke Power Company* that employers who rely on hiring systems that appear neutral, but which result in the disproportionate rejection of women or minorities, must justify those systems as a "business necessity," and where employers fail to meet that test, they are in violation of anti-discrimination laws.

This type of discrimination has been called indirect, unintentional, and "systemic." An employer who insists that all job applicants meet the height and weight standards of 5' 8" and 140 lbs. may not intend to exclude most women (or, at least, it's awfully hard to prove intent), but the effect is still discriminatory, unless the employer can justify those requirements as essential to the performance of the job.

Complaints from women raising the issue of systemic discrimination had not yet been referred to a Board of Inquiry in B.C. However, the issue was addressed in the complaint of *Dhaliwal vs B.C. Timber*. In that decision, released just before July 7, the Board concluded that the employer had breached the Code when it refused to hire Dhaliwal because he, in their opinion, "failed to meet the English proficiency requirement" for a job that clearly did not require much in the way of language skills. Although there was no evidence that the Company had intended to discriminate against East Indians, it was clear to the Board that its hiring criteria had the same effect and couldn't be justified. That decision was applauded by editorials and human rights experts across Canada.

Bill 27 giant leap backwards

Bill 27, in my opinion, is a giant leap backwards to the early forms of anti-discrimination legislation which were

proven totally ineffective in addressing individual cases, never mind the patterns of inequality which affect women and minorities. Instead of incorporating what Canadian statutory human rights agencies have learned over the past ten years, Bill 27 ignores the recent developments in Canada which clearly focus on systemic discrimination as the major barrier to equality of opportunity.

In addition, Bill 27 fails to provide for equal pay for work of equal value, by all experts considered the most effective way of addressing the wage gap between men and women; fails specifically to prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace; leaves the protection of pregnant workers uncertain; no longer makes it illegal to use discriminatory job application forms or ask discriminatory questions during a job interview; nor does it provide for any form of affirmative action programs.

Bill 27 eliminates the Human Rights Branch and the Commission so that there is no longer any staff to investigate or arbitrate in discrimination cases.



As if that isn't bad enough, substantial administrative changes will create considerable barriers even if a woman wants to complain about an overt act of sex discrimination. First of all, only the 'victim' may complain. And only on her own behalf. So if a woman worker discovers that her employer pays all women

less than men in apparent conflict with Bill 27, only *her* situation can be addressed by the Council. All other women would have to complain individually if the protection of the law was to be extended to them. Needless to say, the requirement for an individual woman to come forward will act as a deterrent for all women who can't afford to jeopardize their jobs. A women's group or a union can no longer file a complaint on behalf of women affected by a particular discriminatory practice.

Complaint scenario

Let's assume a woman is prepared to complain. To whom will she take her complaint? It isn't clear yet how the Bill will be enforced since there is no provision for staff. The council of five members (Cabinet-appointed) will surely not staff the telephone lines. Even if they are to be appointed on a full-time basis, they can't possibly handle the approximately 10,000 inquiries logged annually by the Human Rights Branch, in addition to carrying out all the investigations and making preliminary decisions with respect to individual cases.

The Minister of Labour has suggested that other Ministry of Labour employees will be at the Council's disposal. Elevator inspectors? Apprenticeship counsellors? Industrial relations officers? Probably the latter—the people who are already overworked, have no training in human rights enforcement, and have in many cases demonstrated their personal distaste and disdain for human rights issues. They were used in the mid-70's to handle human rights complaints but this proved to be an abject failure and was later discontinued. Keep in mind that all human rights officers with training, sensitivity, experience and expertise have been terminated.

Next hurdle

Assuming a woman has cleared the hurdle of finding the Council, she must now make out her complaint with particulars. The Council has the power to reject her complaint before any investigation if it deems the complaint to be trivial, frivolous, vexatious or made in bad faith, or in their opinion could be dealt with under another Act. It doesn't have to give any reasons or rationale for its decision.

If the Council decides to accept the complaint, it is unclear just who will investigate the complaint. In any case, once the results of a probable perfunctory investigation are in, the Council can either dismiss it or recommend a settlement to the parties. No explanation, no conciliation, no education. If accepted

If you are fired, or not hired because of your colour, nationality, religion, sex, age, physical disability, there is no one to help you fight for your rights. Some of your rights are no longer included under the new Human Rights Code. We need to get our Human Rights Commission back!

— Women Against the Budget pamphlet

by all, the matter is closed. If rejected by one or both parties, the file goes to the Minister of Labour, who can either drop the whole thing or recommend a settlement (possibly a different one from the Council's)—or refer the case to a hearing consisting of one person he appoints. If the parties choose to reject his recommendation, he can either drop the whole thing or refer the complaint to a hearing. In all of these administrative functions, the Minister of Labour will enjoy complete protection from ever having to give reasons for his decisions. A specific section in Bill 27 appears to have the effect of stonewalling inquiries by the Ombudsman, even members of the Opposition asking questions in the House. No wonder he calls the Bill the "strongest human rights legislation in Canada!"

No help or support

If a woman's complaint is referred to a hearing, she'll be completely on her own. Under the old system, she had the support of the Director and a lawyer provided at no cost. Now, the Council will remain "neutral." If the outcome of the hearing is in her favour, the Board no longer has the power to award compensation for mental anguish or injury to self-respect. If she loses, costs may be awarded against her.

Furthermore, there is no appeal from the decision of the Board (which will probably be a lay panel, by the way, judging from the Minister's most recent appointments.

Well, some people will say, "You can't legislate attitudes anyway, you can only eliminate discrimination through education."

If ever there was an enforcement bill that cried out for massive human rights education, this is the one. However, the Council has no mandate whatsoever to educate; nor to explain to employers what their responsibilities are, nor to individuals as to their rights; certainly no attempt to address new and potentially controversial human rights issues.

Profit before human rights

What does it all add up to? To me, it is clearly part and parcel of a legislative program that seeks to remove "regulatory activities." Bill 27 paves the way for businesses to pursue profits and prosperity without having to worry too much about "interference" from pesky

human rights officers who ask embarrassing questions and arrive at unwelcome conclusions.

The government clearly sees human rights protection, not as a fundamental right, but as a favour, a charity, and probably considers the status quo an acceptable state of affairs. Discrimination is only an occasional and perhaps unfortunate occurrence, rather than a pervasive problem of fundamental inequality of opportunity in our society.

The Minister of Labour has delivered an explicit public message to employers that they will have to carry more responsibility for human rights protection. But to back it up he has introduced Bill 27 which makes it clear that there will be precious little for employers and landlords to worry about. In my opinion, he has halted, in a particularly brutal fashion, the momentum which had been building for the past nine years, slowly and painfully, toward public and employer recognition of the validity and reality of human rights concerns.

The set-back will probably not be measurable until employers in the province revert back to the good old days when they didn't have to worry about what they said during an interview or how they hired whom they wanted. And many women, who may have questioned the value of the Human Rights Branch, will only come to appreciate what has been lost when they encounter the personnel officer who insists on being told what her method of birth control is, and she realizes there is nothing she can do about it in law.

Section 15 of the Charter of Rights

It appears inevitable that Bill 27 will pass and the cabinet-appointed Council of Human Rights will take over statutory human rights matters in the province, I predict they will have their hands full, whoever they are, and that they'll be on a steep learning curve. There is obviously a need to document what happens with the Council and to women over the next years.

But perhaps more importantly, there will be time for women to re-think what human rights legislation can do and should do and how to work towards it.

The protection for B.C. women found in the Canadian Human Rights Act applies to federal undertakings. The equality provisions in Section 15 of the Charter hold out a glimmer of hope that the courts may have the last word. ♀



- Employers can advertise openly for 'men only.'
- Employers can ask any questions at a pre-employment interview. Questions about birth control methods, marital status, childcare arrangements, sexual orientation, politics, spouse, and age will all be legal.
- Pregnant women will have no guaranteed protection from discrimination*
- Women will have no guaranteed protection from sexual harassment*.
- Employers can openly discriminate against lesbian women.
- Only the simplest and most overt acts of sex discrimination are clearly prohibited.
- There will be no guaranteed protection from indirect or systemic discrimination.
- There will be no provision for affirmative action programs.
- The present B.C. Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Branch will be abolished (already happened).
- Only an individual woman who is a victim of discrimination can file a complaint. No women's organization or trade union can file a complaint on behalf of a woman or a group of women.
- No complaint can be filed on behalf of a class of persons. Even if a whole group of women is affected by a particular discriminatory act, each individual woman must file a complaint on her own behalf.
- No staff is provided to investigate complaints.



The bottom line: restraint on rights

A summary of the restraints on human rights delivered by Bill 27

by Shelagh Day

- There will be no information or education provided to the public on human rights.

- Complaints can be refused by the new Council on Human Rights and there is no appeal available from such a refusal.

- In British Columbia present protections from discrimination for pregnant women and from sexual harassment rely on both the prohibition against sex discrimination and the prohibition against discrimination 'without reasonable cause.' Bill 27 will remove the 'without reasonable cause' clause and throws protections in these two essential areas into jeopardy.

- Complaints can be discontinued at any point and no appeal will be available.

- Ministerial authority in the complaint process will be increased, making political interference more likely. The Minister can decide on whether and how to settle a complaint as well as on whether an unsettled complaint should be referred to a Board of Inquiry.

- A complainant going before a Board of Inquiry will have to represent herself or hire her own lawyer. There will no longer be free legal representation for those whose rights have been violated.

- Boards of Inquiry will not be able to order compensation for humiliation and damages to self-respect. Only direct losses (wages, expenses) can be compensated.

- Decisions of Boards of Inquiry cannot be appealed. ♀



Social services axed by Patsy George



With the July 7, 1983 budget and legislative package, the clients of the Ministry of Human Resources who receive Personal Social Services suffered one of the worst blows. The majority of the clients of MHR are children. 57,000 reside with their parents who are on welfare. 8,000 children are in the care of the Superintendent of Child Welfare. These children cannot vote and do not have a say in government policies which attack them viciously.

During the last three years, the Ministry of Human Resources has frozen staff hiring. The impact of inadequate staff is so severe in rural communities that even the senior staff of the Ministry deemed the reduced level of service to be unacceptable. Analyses of caseload statistics and descriptions of the work loads from various regions in the Ministry indicate a serious shortage of staff to deliver mandated services (i.e. those required by law).

Services required by law

The mandated services of the Ministry of Human Resources are:

a) the *Family Support* function which includes family counselling; protection, investigation and assessment; Helpline for Children; family and group day care information and assessment services.

b) the *Parenting* function which includes tracking of children in care, planning for them; foster home recruitment and support; specialized treatment and other resources for children in care; adoption services, etc.

c) *Rehabilitation* function which includes the Individual Opportunity Plan assisting persons on welfare to become independent; the Incentives Program which offered clients educational as well as life skills training; Services to Mentally Retarded Adults and Children.

These are the core programs administered through and delivered by 20 MHR regions across the province.

The July 7 budget cuts eliminate 599 additional positions from an already overburdened and shrunken work force. These positions include:

- 226 Family Support workers who help prevent family breakdown and serve

What are people doing about it?

So people are angry. More than 100,000 British Columbians have joined together at rallies to protest the budget and the new laws. People are telling the Premier and their MLAs by phone, at meetings, in person and by letter that the legislation must be withdrawn.

People are working with the **Solidarity Coalition**. The **Coalition** includes religious groups, community groups and labour groups. A majority of British Columbians are members of one of the groups in the **Coalition**.

What does the Solidarity Coalition want?

The government didn't tell you what it planned to do before it got elected. It didn't give you a fair chance to decide. That is not responsible government.

The **Solidarity Coalition** wants responsible government, a government that listens to the people. The **Solidarity Coalition** wants the government to withdraw its legislation and to initiate a broad public discussion with all British Columbians.

For more information, and if you want to help, contact us at:

6th Floor, 686 W. Broadway,
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873-6322

OPERATION
SOLIDARITY
COALITION

5,000 children across the province.

- 165 child care workers who help supervise children in group homes that could not be placed in their own homes or in foster homes.

- 28 child abuse experts who provided consultation, assessment, and training services province-wide to all Ministry staff, who dealt with 5,000 such cases least year alone.

- 7 staff of the Provincial In-Service Resource Team (PIRT) which is a training program for social workers and parents who care for severely developmentally-delayed children and adults.

- 30 homemakers who provide temporary relief to parents in stress, reducing the pressures on the family and helping to avoid apprehension of children.

- 7 staff at Post-Partum Counselling who assist parents undergoing severe emotional stress after childbirth.

- Over 70 staff who function as consultants, policy advisors, program planners, co-ordinators of services to Family or Children's Services, Income Assistance, Volunteer Services, Community Grants, and Services to the Mentally Retarded. These staff ensure that standards in child welfare are met in each region, assist with appeal hearings, aid community based groups in applying for government grants in order to undertake worthwhile community services, develop and support a core of volunteers within the Ministry and assist in the re-integration of clients discharged from large institutions.

Services described as "frills"

The government argues that these services are frills to be discarded during times of restraint. By eliminating the various positions within the Ministry of Human Resources, the government claims that these will not affect mandated core services. Preventing apprehension of children, preventing high-risk teenagers from prostituting and keeping them off the street (and thereby from further exploitation), preventing child abuse and saving children from "getting lost" in the system for years without proper planning, etc., etc.—these are not considered core services?

In the name of restraint, the government has eliminated the Family Support Worker Program.

The cost of this program per year per child is \$1200, whereas the same child placed in a regular foster home costs from \$3600 to \$7200, depending upon the age of the child. The same child, in a special foster care home, costs \$15,000 to \$18,000 per year, and ultimately the same child in a detention centre costs \$27,950.

Cuts in social services in the areas of human rights, tenant rights, legal aid, consumer services; increases in user fees in health care and sales tax; the freeze

on welfare and reduction of several other subsidies to the poor (who are the majority of clients of the Human Resources Ministry) represent a ruthless and systematic attack on the most vulnerable in our society. The devastation experienced by clients as well as workers who have been dismissed without cause are beyond one's comprehension. It is difficult not to charge the government with neglect and abuse.

Volunteer agencies the answer?

Can churches, grandmothers, and service clubs fill the gap, as Mrs. McCarthy hopes they will? In Vancouver alone, 84 non-profit community agencies such as the Crisis Centre, the Volunteer Bureau, Big Sisters, Family Places, Neighbourhood Houses, the Women's Health Collective, Planned Parenthood, etc. have lost a total of \$3,037,908 due to this budget.

Surely, any short-term gain accruing from these actions can never compensate for suffering, privation, and loss of human potential. Perhaps, for the first time, the clients and the workers of the Ministry of Human Resources can fight together for their rights. *Solidarity Coalition* with its adopted principle: *An injury to one is an injury to all* makes this possible. ♀

SPEAK UP NOW!

Position of



Operation Solidarity believes it is obvious that the government's main objective is not financial restraint. Its legislation will have virtually no effect on government spending.

We can only conclude that the budget and accompanying legislation are aimed at ending basic services to people and curtailing the rights of British Columbians.

The last election was not a mandate for such an attack. The government misled the public by not presenting this program during that election. Not one of the 26 Bills which they have now introduced was even mentioned.

Operation Solidarity urges all British Columbians to protest the government's actions. The provincial government must either withdraw its legislation, or call a new election where its programs can be openly debated.

SAVE YOUR RIGHTS!

The article on this and the previous page describes cuts in social services that will "save" the government the sum of \$3,037,908.

BUT

to quote from a "Women Against the Budget" Pamphlet this same government is going to spend \$20 million to construct a lake at B.C. Place on False Creek.



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Restraining the right to an affordable home



by Irene Howard

I live in the West End down by Lost Lagoon on a quiet street lined with apartment buildings. There's a mini-park three doors away, created by some benevolent city planner to block off the nearest side street to all through traffic. Here people come on sunny afternoons and long summer evenings to sit and talk and enjoy their community backyard, all planted with tubs of pine and oregon grape and a pretty little stand of dogwoods. There's a neighbourhood cat who has allowed himself to be adopted and named Tripod, and around four o'clock in the afternoon some one among the women brings him food. In the spring, when the Japanese plum trees are frilly pink and the horse chestnuts where the squirrels play are just coming into leaf, an amorous pair of mallards makes the two-block journey up from the Lagoon to honeymoon on our lawn.

It's a very pleasant neighbourhood, so pleasant that some people, who moved into our building thirty years ago when it was new, are still here. The building isn't so posh as it was then; in fact, it's getting a bit run down. But it's home and all we needed to make us live happily ever after was some new carpeting in the halls and a new roof. It's true that we were recently afflicted with a new landlord, a minotaur demanding live tenants to eat. But this simply meant that once a year, when he served notice of an extraordinary rent increase, we'd march in a body down to the Rent Review Commission office and soon send him back to his lair for another year.

New Residential Tenancy Act

So what happened to spoil this West End idyll? Bill Bennett happened, that's what. Bill Bennett and his new Residential Tenancy Act. As you probably know, this legislation abolished rent control immediately. But you may not be aware of the extent to which Bill 5 has caused financial hardship among tenants, robbed them of their rights and destroyed their peace of mind.

Under the new legislation, rent review is being phased out, and by September 30, 1984 will have ceased to exist though no new cases will be accepted

after June 30. However, until that time tenants may still appeal rent increases, though the whole process has been drastically altered. In the first place, they may appeal only increases in excess of 15%—if the rent is below \$500 per month.

Next, tenant and landlord no longer face each other across a table and present their arguments to a presiding Rentalsman, for the Rent Review Commission office is being closed, and some of its staff have already been fired.

Rent review is now accomplished by an exchange of paper. When the tenants receive their notice of rent increase, they submit, individually, a counter rent proposal with supporting argument. The landlord replies, point by point; then the tenant replies to the landlord's rebuttal. If the tenants have a common rent anniversary date, they may also submit a group argument. Once the rentalsman has a complete file, he studies the submissions and counter-submissions and hands down a decision. But the Rentalsman no longer has any power, and that is the third and most important change.

Fixed-point arbitration

The government has introduced something called fixed-point arbitration: the rentalsman cannot, as he could before, propose a compromise. *He must choose either the landlord's figures or the tenants' figures.* The scheme is positively diabolic, for naturally the closer the tenant's proposed rent is to the landlord's, the more chance the tenant has of having her figure accepted.

But even this unwieldy arbitration process will be abolished next year. After June 30, 1984 tenants will simply have to pay what landlords demand. Already rents have increased drastically in the West End and in other parts of the city. In my own building, rents have gone up by 37% to 45%, and individual suites have had their rents hiked with every change of tenant.

Meaning of vacancy rate

Minister of Consumer Affairs, Jim Hewitt, claims that the free market, if allowed to take its course, will even-

tually bring rents back to an equitable level, wherever they're excessive, once the vacancy rate is high enough. There are vacancy signs all over the West End these days, but as far as I know rents are still increasing.

What is this high vacancy rate anyway? In human terms, what exactly does it mean? It means people moving out of their homes looking for a cheaper place to live. It means people packing their dishes and linens and books into boxes, loading them into a hired van with the bed and sofa and tables and chairs, and starting all over again. It means getting used to new neighbours and putting down tentative roots again. It means money spent on moving that might have been spent on a holiday or some small luxury. When you talk about a high vacancy rate, you're talking about high instability, insecurity and anxiety.

Old and disadvantaged in fear

The old people in my building don't want to move, but now they're paying as much as 50% or 60% of their fixed income in rent. They've appealed their rent increases, but are too uneasy even to wait for the decision, and so they're searching the city for places they can afford. In another building I discovered in a chance encounter a young woman on welfare, physically disadvantaged in some way. Within a minute of my stepping inside her door, she told me, a complete stranger, that she would have to move because her rent had gone up by \$60. She signed my Refuse the Cruise petition, but what was really on her mind was not nuclear holocaust but her rent increase.

This kind of economic pressure and insecurity is affecting tenants of all conditions and age groups. Office workers, professional people, hotel and restaurant employees, sales people—they're on the move too in search of a permanent home.

There's a young man just down the hall from me who's furnished his apartment with early Canadian pine antiques

and other artifacts he brought from Ontario. He's placed the wagon wheel in the front hall. He's laid braided rugs down and in the kitchen hung old-fashioned white swag curtains with tie-backs and coloured borders. I'm sure going to hate to see this young man leave, but it's only sensible for him to take his pine sideboard and butter churn and wagon wheel to some other place where he can settle permanently with his cherished possessions.

Resulting social problems

Thus some of our neighbourhoods could soon be in a constant state of flux, with people staying for two or three months, deciding they can't afford the rent after all, and then moving out to make way for other transients. This kind of tenant mobility would be bound to have an effect on any given apartment block and on neighbourhoods too, as unstable drifters, their private troubles becoming social problems, make their presence felt.



But in addition to unaffordable rents, Bill 5 applies another squeeze—fear of eviction. If Bill 5 is passed, landlords will be permitted to evict *without cause* with nine months' notice beginning this October 1, with eight months' notice from November 1 and so on until April 1, 1984 when three months' notice will be required. *With cause*, as little as ten days' notice may be given.

At the disclosure of this provision, tenants felt a cold wind blowing through their windows. They have reason to shiver with apprehension, for if this bill passes, they'll be completely subject to the whims of their landlord. He may not like their politics or life style or the colour of their skin. Or, if they're on welfare, he may think he can't depend on

welfare, he may think he can't depend on them to pay the rent regularly. Whatever his reason for wanting to evict, he doesn't have to say.

Thus, tenants will no longer enjoy security of tenure. Not only that, their freedom of speech and expression will be undermined. They'll think twice before putting an *Operation Solidarity* sign in their window. They'll prudently clam up if a reporter comes around asking for information on rent increases.

Vancouver City Council aids tenants

Vancouver City Council has recognized the urgency of the tenants' situation and approved a grant of \$10,000 to aid the West End Tenants' Association in setting up a tenants' advocacy service. On October 17 it opened its office to provide advice and practical help to tenants. It deals now with excessive rent increases, eviction notices, landlord-tenant disputes and other problems. If the new bill becomes law, it will continue to aid tenants to the extent allowed by the new legislation, and counsel and educate them as to their rights. It will also help them find legal aid when, as a last resort, a case is taken to court.

How did the courts get into this? Well, in the absence of the arbitrating service of the Rentalsman's Office, landlords and tenants will settle disputes in court. If, for example, a tenant served with an eviction notice refuses to move, the landlord will have to go to county court for a writ of possession, after which his case is set down to be heard in chambers. At any one time there could be sixty to eighty such cases waiting to be heard. If the judge finds that the tenant does have some legal claim, then the case is set down for actual trial, eight months or a year down the road.

The same process applies to a tenant taking action against a landlord, though legal fees are likely to be prohibitive. Settling such disputes in court is inefficient, cumbersome and expensive and has nothing whatever to do with restraint.

Rights Lost

In 1974 the NDP government enacted the Landlord-Tenant legislation which set up rent controls and gave tenants what any just and compassionate jurisdiction would allow to be one of the prerogatives of full citizenship—the right to a measure of security in one's home. At that time they implemented the recommendations of the 1973 Law Reform Commission, set up by an earlier Social Credit government.

If tenants are to retain the status of first-class citizens attained by the efforts of the NDP government, they'll have to continue to oppose Bill 5. They'll have to press the federal government to extend, not diminish, its co-op housing program. Most important, they'll have to join the fight to get rid of this repressive Social Credit government. ♀

TENANTS' AID DIRECTORY

West End Tenants' Association
1170 Bute Street
Pres. Valerie Barrett 682-4622

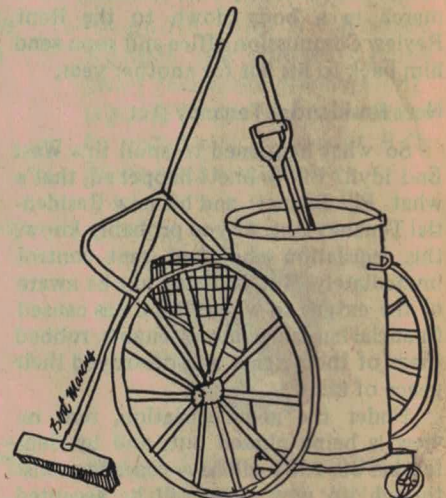
Tenants' Advocate Service
(operated by: West End Tenants' Association) 1170 Bute Street
Tenant Advocate Greg Richmond
682-4622

North Shore Tenants' Assn.
1900 Larson Rd. 985-8546
President and Tenant Advocate:
Richard Blackburn

Downtown Eastside Residents' Association 9 East Hastings
Pres. Glen Bullard; Org. Jim Green
682-0931

Vancouver & District Public Housing Tenants' Association
246 E. Broadway 872-8648
President: Stan Fraser
Community Worker: Jim Gould
Provides service for all tenants in public housing, especially those in the 8300 units managed and operated by the B.C. Housing Management Commission (e.g. Sunset Towers, Nicholson Towers, Cypress Walk)

B.C. Tenants' Rights Coalition
9 East Hastings 682-0931
Chairman: Jim Quail



The price of cutbacks to the Women's Health Collective

by Charlotte Waddell
on behalf of the Women's Health Collective



The Vancouver Women's Health Collective has been in existence for 12 years. It started as a group of "volunteers," but since 1976 it has been funded by the B.C. Health Ministry. Last year's grant was \$119,000 which provided a resource centre and support for 7 paid staff and 40 volunteers. This grant was cut off completely as of September 30, 1983.

Numerous services for women have been provided by the Health Collective: birth control information and counselling; pregnancy and abortion counselling and referrals; a health practitioner directory; public speakers, health groups and workshops; diaphragm and cervical cap fittings; instruction in breast and cervical self-examination; and outreach to native women through Carnegie Centre.

Used by 10,000 women a year

About 10,000 women a year have used these services—through phoning or coming to the resource centre, attending lectures, groups and workshops, or being fitted for diaphragms and cervical caps.

10,000 women received these services for the cost of maintaining one doctor's practice for a year!

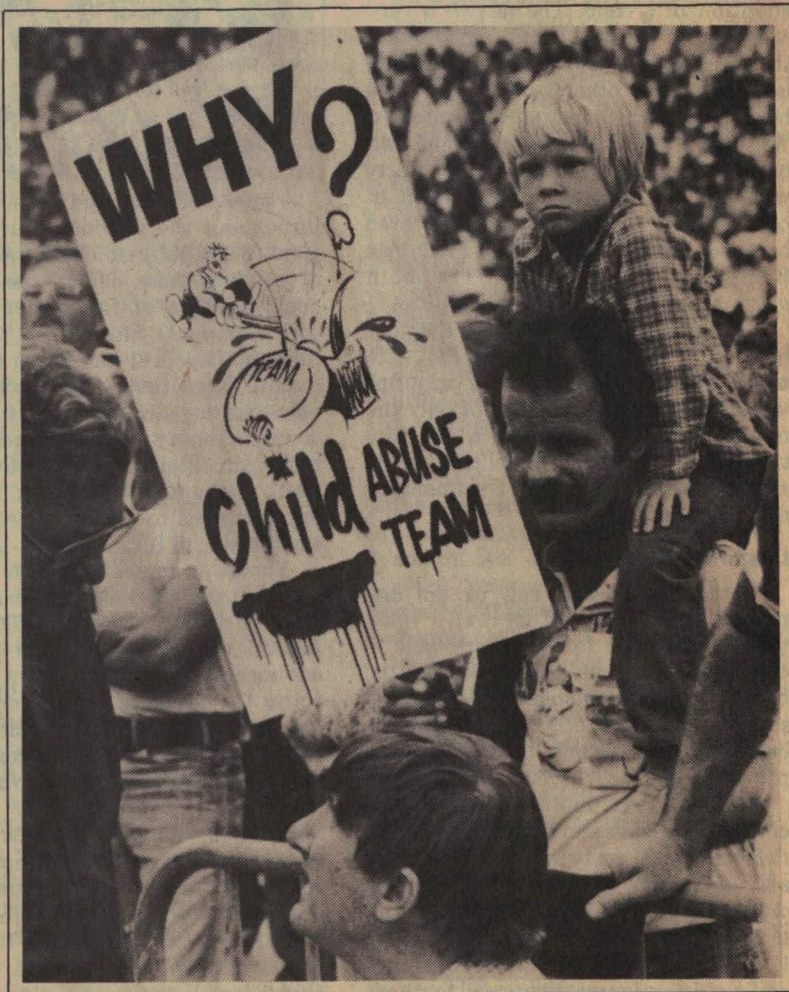
We deplore the loss of our funding for numerous reasons. First, our service was unique. It was the only place women could come to for health information that was understandable and thorough. Second, the cut makes no economic sense. By helping women make informed decisions, our service has been preventive. Preventive education saves tax dollars in the long run.

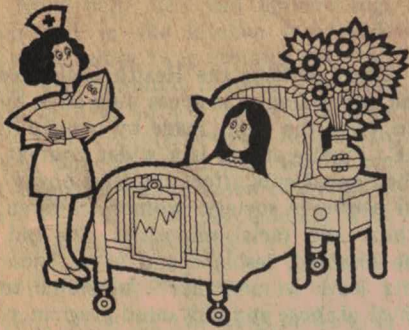
Third, cutting the Health Collective and other similar services puts back by ten years the gains made by women in B.C. Finally, there is a wider context. The Socred cuts affect the least powerful people in society—women, children, ethnic and racial minorities, the old, the disabled, lesbians and gays. These cuts leave women more vulnerable to physical abuse and unwanted pregnancy, and leave children more vulnerable to abuse because parent help is unavailable.

The fightback

We are not remaining passive. We are participating in *Women Against the Budget* and *Operation Solidarity*. We are also going to continue our services as long as we can, on a volunteer basis. So we are still open. But we need your support. Donations of any amount are badly needed. Please help out if you can:

Vancouver Women's Health Collective
1501 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.
(604) 736-6696 ♀





Post-partum program ended

by Sandra Knight, Allison Howard,
Fran Moore, Trisha Joel,
Penny Handford

The Post Partum Counselling Program is to be terminated October 31, 1983. The program is a service to women who become depressed after the birth or adoption of a child. The service is very effective. It is based on the proven fact that what helps a depressed woman most is to talk with other women who have been through the experience themselves. We are a staff of four full-time and two half-time social workers and thirty volunteers. The program has been in operation for eleven years; the last seven have been within the Ministry of Human Resources. The program has both national and international recognition.

Post partum depression is a serious business. The literature shows that 20% of all women giving birth or adopting will experience it. It affects not only the mother, but the family as a whole. Untreated, it can lead to suicide, child abuse, lengthy psychiatric treatment, or marital breakdown.

Desperate mothers

The mothers who call us are desperate for help. They all voice tremendous guilt for not being able to cope "properly" and feel totally isolated because of these feelings. They have all sought help from other sources before calling us, but no one has been able to provide what they need.

The doctors, public health nurses, concerned friends and families who refer depressed mothers to us rely on our staff and volunteers to provide the ongoing daily support that these mothers require in their struggle out of depression. There is no other service which can effectively and consistently treat depressed mothers.

Post Partum Counselling has eleven years of experience in the area of post partum depression.

The Minister of Human Resources, Grace McCarthy, has made statements that Post Partum Counselling should be privatized. We are in strong disagreement with this as we know this is not realistic. Many of the mothers we serve have middle class values and middle class education. Very few of them have middle class incomes. The poorest time in a family's life is when it has young children. These mothers cannot pay for the ongoing treatment they require.

The effects of the recent government cutbacks to services for women are extensive. The Vancouver Transition House will be closed as of March 31, 1984. Planned Parenthood and the Women's

Health Collective have had their funds drastically cut. Each of these services, including Post Partum Counselling, was started by women for women a decade ago. These services help to increase our power, both over our bodies and our lives. Without them our options will be vastly limited.

Would you be willing to help us fight for the survival of Post Partum Counselling, the Vancouver Transition House, Planned Parenthood and the Women's Health Collective?

We would appreciate letters of protest to Grace McCarthy (re: Post Partum Counselling and Transition House), your local MLA, newspapers, Jim Nielsen (re: Planned Parenthood and Women's Health Collective). Your support is essential for the survival of these programs. ♀

Planned Parenthood cut

by Marcie Bell



Planned Parenthood has 17 clinics throughout the province. Our provincial grant (\$116,000) which covered the cost of running these clinics, has been cut completely as of September 8, 1983. This represents more than 1/4 of our funding. We will be losing \$10,000 a month. Even though we are basically a volunteer organization, it is essential to maintain some paid staff in order to continue our vital work. The loss of our grant means it will be very difficult for our programs to continue, especially in small towns in B.C.

The government gives the feeble excuse that women can get the same service from their family doctors. 60% of the 18,000 women we saw last year were adolescents who had been sexually active for one year before they came to get birth control information. These young women, for obvious reasons, will not seek contraception from family doctors.

As well, minimal time is spent in medical school on contraception education, so that some doctors are not very well informed about the various methods, nor do many make the time to discuss the options in depth with their clients.

We spend an average of two hours with each new woman who comes to our clinic. We discuss anatomy, pelvic exams, menstruation, ovulation, all the different methods of birth control, sterilization, STD, breast exams. As well, we provide pregnancy testing and counselling.

At all times, we respect a woman's choice. Many women return to us for their health care for years because we have the time to spend with them in a warm, accepting, non-judgmental environment. We consider our clinics teaching clinics; i.e. we direct our energies toward teaching women to take control over our own bodies and thus our lives. We also try to educate men about their responsibilities for contraception.

The fee for an initial visit to us is \$5.00. Last year 3500 women came to our clinics in Vancouver, and we had another 700 phone calls each month in which we offered information and counselling on sexuality, contraception, pregnancy, abortion, sterilization, sexually transmitted disease, menopause. As a result of our grant ending, there will be more unplanned, unwanted pregnancies, more abortions, and more single mothers on welfare.

85% of teenage women who do get pregnant now keep their babies. With the Health Collective's funds cut, as well as Post Partum Counselling, and the natural family planning groups, there will be nowhere for these thousands of women to go, no one to call. The ramifications are far-reaching and deadly.

WE MUST FIGHT BACK! ♀

Bill 24: Medical Services Act

by David Schreck, Director CU&C Health Services
for the B.C. Health Coalition

While Bill 24, B.C.'s new Medical Services Act, lays the foundation for erosion of the principles of Medicare: Universality, Accessibility, Comprehensiveness and Public Administration, Federal Health Minister Monique Begin has promised a new Canada Health Act that would permit Ottawa to put financial pressure on provinces that permit Medicare to erode. One of the tests that has been discussed for the new Act is a simple review of provincial legislation. B.C. will fail the test.

Universality

Universality means that all persons entitled to be or remain in Canada are eligible for insured health services on uniform terms and conditions (which means no entitlement restrictions based on age, health problem, sex, ethnic group or income status).

BUT: in B.C. an insured person not only is restricted to a person "who has paid the required premium [Section 1(1)], but now regulations may also be made "prescribing different benefits and services for different classes of insured persons, and imposing monetary limits on services and benefits available to different classes of insured persons" [Section 53 (2a)].

Accessibility

Accessibility means that insured persons should be assured of adequate quantity, quality and distribution of insured services on a prepaid basis, unimpeded by financial barriers.

BUT: B.C. has steadily increased user fees and now proposes to restrict billing numbers for physicians.

In a paper entitled *General Background to Budget Changes* that was recently distributed to all Socred MLA's, considerable effort is made to apologize for user fees by expressing them as a percentage of total health costs. In so doing, the Socred paper demonstrates that considerable administrative expense is wasted on collecting numerous small bills. While illustrating that user fees are unimportant to the health budget, it fails to address the question of accessibility as could be done by expressing user fees as a percentage of user incomes. A pensioner's stay in a B.C. hospital could exhaust an entire month's Old Age Security payment.

Bill 24 will limit the availability of medical service by restricting physician

billing numbers. The Bill defines a practitioner as a physician "who has a billing number" [Section 1(1)] and provides for regulations that authorize "the commission to establish a maximum number of billing numbers that may be granted for rendering insured services in a particular geographic area" [Section 53 (2g)]. The paper for Socred MLA's acknowledges that these provisions are to deal with the over-supply of physicians, but rather than encouraging physicians to locate in under-served areas it will have the opposite effect. Physicians in remote areas will move before they get locked in by the Bill, and new physicians will simply by-pass B.C.

Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness has meant that insured services would include all medically-required services rendered by medical practitioners and hospital services, facilities and supplies, including meals and accommodation. The Health Coalitions have argued that comprehensiveness should include all health services as originally discussed in the Hall Royal Commission, and that provision should be made for service delivery by a range of health care personnel other than just physicians.

BUT: Bill 24 clearly gives government the power to exclude coverage for certain services that physicians may believe are medically necessary. Section 53 (2a) provides for regulations "prescribing (i) health care services and benefits rendered by practitioners that are not insured services." The Socred MLA paper meekly defends this power to over-rule doctors by claiming that it "does not reflect a policy change." However, the present regulations (O/C 147/81) clearly define insured services as including all "the medically required services that are rendered by a medical practitioner." Bill 24 is indeed a major policy change.

Public administration

Public Administration means that insured benefits be administered on a non-profit basis by a public authority appointed by the province.

BUT: In B.C. we now have the possibility of private health insurance under Section 42 of the new Bill which gives the Minister the power to permit a contract of private insurance for what has been Medicare. If that power is exercised, then Medicare will be dead. ♀



Fight for Choice update

by Joyce Meissenheimer

Because of pressure on space needed to give adequate coverage to the B.C. budget attacks and the historic fightback by Operation Solidarity, we can only highlight the progress of the struggle for choice on abortion. A fuller report will be found in the November *Democrat*.

Borowski's appeal to the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench for a ruling on a fetus's right to life under the Canadian Charter of Rights was lost. Justice William Matheson ruled that a fetus is nowhere defined as a "person" in Canadian law and is thus not covered by the Charter.

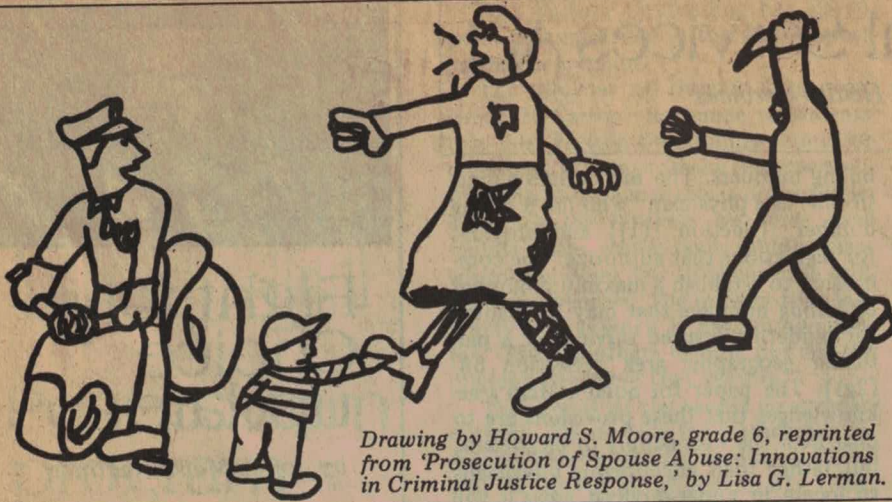
As Dr. Henry Morgentaler said, however, this ruling does nothing to make it easier for women to obtain abortions. In the trials proceeding against Dr. Morgentaler and his colleagues for operating free-standing abortion clinics in Winnipeg and Toronto, the defence plans to show that the "security of the person" protection under the Charter of Rights is denied by the danger to women's health occasioned by all the delays and difficulties faced in the seeking of abortions.

In October Judge Kris Stefanson committed Dr. Morgentaler and seven members of the Winnipeg clinic staff for trial on the conspiracy charges. MP Svend Robinson, NDP health critic, attended the hearing.

Thousands of people rallied in 20 cities across Canada on October 4 to defend the accused and the right of choice. The Vancouver rally of 500 heard speakers including Lynne Crocker (one of the Winnipeg 8) and Carmen Wernli, wife of Dr. Morgentaler. Messages of support included greetings from Lower Mainland Solidarity and from the NDP and its Federal Caucus, the latter delivered by Hilda Thomas. ♀

Vancouver Transition House to be privatized

by Nicola Barrie



Drawing by Howard S. Moore, grade 6, reprinted from 'Prosecution of Spouse Abuse: Innovations in Criminal Justice Response,' by Lisa G. Lerman.

In July of 1983, all regular employees at Vancouver Transition House received termination notices. By March 31, 1984 the provincial government plans to contract the house out to a private organization.

Vancouver Transition House opened its doors in December of 1973 as a direct response to the needs of battered women and children in Canada. Residents are provided with shelter, protection and counselling. Staff support women in making their own decisions, and aid them in exploring realistic options by providing legal, medical and financial information. Women and children are referred to various social services and staff provide advocacy. Since January of this year, over 1,000 women and children were refused their request for accommodation due to lack of space. In the ten years that Vancouver Transition House has been operating, staff have had to turn away over 10,000 battered women and children because they could not be accommodated.

Federal report on violence

According to the Federal House of Commons Report on Violence in the Family released in May of 1982, one out of every ten women who is in a relationship with a man is battered. Canadian homicide statistics reflect that approximately 60% of all female homicide victims were killed in the family context. In 1981 over 100 women were murdered by the men they live with. This reveals that wife battering is a severe social problem. By being isolated within the family, the result is that women and children remain hidden victims and their batterers hidden assailants.

Vancouver Transition House provides continuous staff coverage. A 24-hour crisis line is responded to by workers and referrals are frequently received during

the night from police, hospitals, or emergency services, when most social agencies are closed. This is a vital function, for according to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, "70% of wife battering occurs between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 a.m." Transition House workers are equipped to assess women and children in crisis and to offer appropriate intervention. Two full-time child care counsellors work directly with the children. Transition House offers a follow-up program which assists families to re-establish their lives, often after years of abuse. As well, Transition House workers provide consultation and education to a broad spectrum of the community, including police, medical, academic and legal services.

First Transition House in Canada

The first refuge to open in Canada for battered women and children was Vancouver Transition House. Within the last ten years, 25 other houses have opened in the province. Many of them have experienced problems due to lack of funding, inadequate facilities and understaffing. Funding is insecure as well as inconsistent across the province. Many of the houses run on a staff component of 1½ to 5 regular workers who are not able to provide staffing overnight. Due to lack of staff it is extremely difficult for these private Transition Houses to offer an ongoing public education, child care or follow-up program which Vancouver Transition House provides. The experiences of the other houses in the province demonstrates that if privatization occurs, the nature and the quality of the service will change. In particular, there is no guarantee that Vancouver Transition House will continue primarily to serve the needs of battered women and their children across this province.

Many other services have already been cut by the current reorganization in the Ministry of Human Resources, as well as other vital services which are government funded. Some of the services being threatened which, in recent years, have aided battered women and children in establishing a life without violence are:

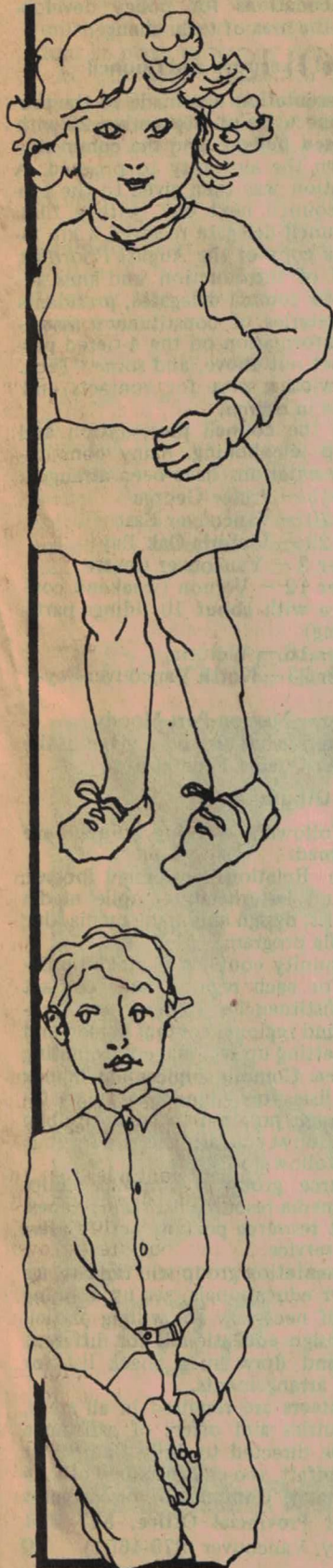
- Legal Services
- Human Rights Commission
- Child Abuse Team
- Rentalsman
- Emergency Services
- Immigrant Services
- Native Court Workers
- Mosaic
- G.A.I.N.
- Medical Services
- Vancouver Status of Women
- Women's Health Collective
- Community Involvement Program
- Family Support Workers
- Post Partum Counselling
- Day Care subsidies
- Homemakers
- Project Parent

Eventual cost greater

Many of these services aid in maintaining and developing a viable family unit for women and children leaving a battering relationship.

As the government continues to withdraw its commitment to permanently fund and operate vital services, more pressure will be put on already overburdened and underfunded private agencies and volunteer groups. The government's current proposals of re-organization will prove, in the long run, to be a poorly planned economic step, for the eventual cost to society will be greater due to permanent family breakdown. It is a step backwards in the government's recognition and commitment to battered women and children throughout the province of British Columbia. ♀

Child Abuse Teams: cancelled



As recently as June 1, 1983, in a letter regarding the re-assignment of an additional social worker to the Child Abuse Teams, Grace McCarthy stated:

"The Ministry of Human Resources has recognized the need for consultation for Ministry staff in the very complex area of sexual abuse has enlarged over the past few years. It has been deemed necessary to re-assign staff positions in the area of sexual abuse and the position of Human Sexuality Consultant will be used as a member of the Child Abuse Teams in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. The new assignment of this position was required to meet the Ministry's increased demand for consultation for its staff in the area of sexual abuse."

Child Abuse Teams — Family and Child Assessment Teams: Vancouver and Fraser Valley.

29 on staff; budget \$800,000 per year.

General Functions:

To assist local MHR social workers in initial assessments in situations where children are at risk. The team primarily dealt with sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect and emotional maltreatment. The team also researched existing literature to insure that lower mainland protection services were operating in keeping with any new knowledge developments in the field of child abuse and neglect. In addition the teams offered training to ministry staff and to professional and community groups.

Specific Functions

1. *Social Work Consultation:* The team assisted local office social workers in assessing high risk cases in situations where the children needed protection. These joint assessments provided on-the-job training for new staff, expert assessments for family court and specialized knowledge in the area of child abuse and neglect.

Loss of this service means a lack of support for line social workers intervening in child abuse cases, loss of specialized information of child abuse, and less likelihood of allowing expert testimony by social workers in courts. Ultimate impact will be that child abuse cases will not be handled as well and children may be left in situations where they are seriously at risk.

2. *Psychological/Psychiatric Consultation and Assessment:* Local office staff had available to them through the team psychological and psychiatric assessment by specialized staff willing to state professional opinions in family court and provide consultation.

Loss of this service will mean that

local community or private services will have to be used. They are not always trained in child abuse and are often not willing to be involved in court cases. Private services are expensive. Ultimate results of the loss of this service is that professional assessments will be less available for the court cases and therefore more cases will be lost by MHR. Ultimately, abused children will suffer. When private services are used they will cost more money.

3. *Medical and Sexual Abuse Cases:* Doctors were available for medical examination of sexually abused children. Loss of this service means that children will have to be examined by community doctors. The team doctors spent counselling time with each patient and prepared expert material for court. A private physician is only paid for a brief examination and is not necessarily trained in sexual abuse.

4. *Volunteer Program:* The team also provided trained volunteers to talk to community groups and high school students about child abuse. It was a preventative program to help parents or future parents identify what type of help they could get if they felt they were having difficulty in parenting.

Loss of this program means that those individuals will not be identified or made aware of child abuse.

5. *Professional Training:* Team members provided training to all community professionals in the area of child abuse and neglect and developed and collected information in this area.

Loss of this service means that MHR will no longer have individuals identified to develop and train staff in this area. As well, the training done by the team will not be taken up by other staff. As no one will be collecting up-to-date information B.C. protection services will not be at a standard that is in keeping with up-to-date knowledge about child abuse.

6. *Coordinated Response to Child Abuse:* The team members worked with communities and agencies to develop a coordinated response to child abuse, particularly sexual abuse. Existing agencies, e.g. MHR district offices, police, mental health experts, are already over-worked and do not have time to provide this coordination. It is therefore likely that coordination will not occur and that families that have been identified as abusive will be barraged by many "helpers" instead of being able to deal with a coordinated group. ♀



Detailed plans for tech. change investigation now under way

A Report from the Women's Rights Committee on Technological Change

In the August issue of *Priorities*, which focused on Technological Change, Bea Anderson reported on the Committee's formation, goals and general plans.

The first constituency presentation was held in North Vancouver-Capilano Riding on the evening of September 21, as part of that riding's series of educational meetings.

Fran Moffatt introduced the Committee and its origin, make-up and goals. The Canadian Labour Congress videotape *The Microelectronic Revolution—Ready or Not!* was then shown to the gathering, and Joan Smallwood led a discussion and answer period, with Judy Shipper, after the film. The format appeared to work well and the discussion was interesting and informative.

Schedule of community visits

The Planning Group of the Tech. Change Committee has held many meetings on the method of organizing the proceedings throughout the province. A schedule for community visits has been set up as follows, based on a 4-tiered level of organization (constituency presentations, public educationals, community forums and a report to the 1984 convention):

1. Constituency presentations — to

raise the level of understanding and concern about the whole issue; to receive information from those of our members who have knowledge/expertise in the area; to make those very necessary and important contacts with members who would be willing to assist the Committee in any way over the next few months with the public educationals and the community forums.

2. Public educationals — with the valued help of constituency contacts — to be set up to arouse interest and give information and to stimulate serious thought and discussion on the ramifications of high technological development; to foster a concern that will lead to an in-depth study of how the growth and implementation of technology affect the lives of people and how unionized and non-unionized workers can handle the issue.

3. Community forums — to hear and receive briefs from groups within the various communities who are concerned about the effects of technological change — followed, hopefully, by workshops to discuss how those effects can be ameliorated to result in a productive and humane environment for all the people of B.C.

4. Convention '84 — to present the findings of the committee and to make recommendations for policy development in the area of tech. change.

Provincial Executive and Council

A presentation was made to the provincial executive on September 23 with a proposed budget, and the committee was given the authority to proceed. A presentation was then given to the provincial council next day, with a film. Each council delegate received a kit, including a copy of the August *Priorities*, a letter of introduction and aims addressed to council delegates, presidents and secretaries of constituency associations, information on the 4-tiered process as set out above, and some "Tech. facts," with a plea for contacts and assistance in ridings.

From the council presentation and follow-up telephoning, many constituency presentations have been arranged:

October 15 — Prince George

October 20 — Vancouver East

October 28 — Victoria-Oak Bay

November 3 — Vancouver Centre

November 12 — Vernon (weekend conference with about 10 ridings participating)

November 16 — Victoria

November 23 — North Vancouver-Seymour

December — Mission-Port Moody

A presentation has also been given in the Vancouver-Quadra Federal Riding.

Working Groups

The following working groups have been formed:

Public Relations — design poster, leaflet and letterhead; compile media contact list; design and make media kits; plan media program.

Community contacts — make up file system for each region; make contact with constituencies (federal and provincial); find regional contact person and assist in setting up regional co-ordinating committee. Compile community/labour contact lists for educationals and forums; design program to ensure public participation at educationals and forums; compile follow-up lists.

Resource group — compile bibliography, media resource list (films, tapes, etc.); list resource persons, set up press clipping service.

A presentation group will then set up teams for educationals, set up training sessions if necessary for willing participants, design educationals for different events, and draw up a check list for physical arrangements.

Volunteers are required in all areas, and enquiries and offers of assistance should be directed to Judy Shipper or Fran Moffatt (co-chairpersons of the Tech. Change Committee), or Margaret Birrell at Provincial Office, 517 East Broadway, Vancouver (879-4601). ♀

For some unknown reason—a reaction against the restraint program, a surge of feminist consciousness—there is a sudden flowering of feminist/women's theatre in Vancouver this fall. For those of us in reach, we have the unfamiliar sight of women on stage in recognizable situations, in plays written by women.

At the Arts Theatre on Seymour Street, B.C. playwright Margaret Hollingsworth's *Ever Loving*: interwoven stories of war brides coming to Canada, not knowing what to expect or not getting what they expected, but coping in their different ways over the next twenty-five years. We see three different reactions to disillusionment, the after-effects of war, the dreams that do not come true.

The Dinner Party recalled

At the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, *Top Girls* by the British Caryl Churchill: this one has a stunning opening scene derived from Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. Marlene, a successful executive at an employment agency, has invited five historical women to dinner.

They are Pope Joan, the legendary woman who became Pope disguised as a man, Isabella Bird, Scottish Victorian explorer, Dull Griet, a peasant woman portrayed by Brueghel as leading an army of women against the devil, Lady Nijo, a Japanese courtesan of the thirteenth century, and Patient Griselda—the subject of Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale'—who obeyed her husband in every possible way without question. With Marlene, we listen to the women's stories. Griselda and Lady Nijo have both had babies taken from them at birth, while Dull Griet admits to ten children. Pope Joan describes her experience of childbirth while taking part in a papal procession, and the audience's laughter changes to appalled silence. Afterwards, she was stoned to death. "What happened to the baby?" someone asks. "It died, I suppose."

After the opening scene, we have the somewhat anti-climactic story of Marlene and her rise to power. A supporter of Margaret Thatcher, she is contrasted with her stay-at-home sister Joyce who

argues for the union point of view. Despite some loose ends and an uneasy transition from England to Canada, this is a feminist play making the point that it is possible to become a "Top Girl" by sheer determination, if that's what you want, but only if you are willing to trample on other people on your way to the top.

Terrace Tanzi

Both *Ever Loving* and *Top Girls* will be over by the time you read this. But *Terrace Tanzi* is coming to the Vancouver East Cultural Centre in November, staged by the Playhouse. This, too, is an English play, by Claire Luckham, about the trials and tribulations of a woman wrestler. Luckham has Americanized her text and according to one British reviewer "the play is a feminist cartoon—a world, as in all sports contests, of goodies and baddies, where life is reduced to the clearcut decisions of winning or losing." The battle for women's rights is converted into straight physical combat. The theatre is set up like a wrestling ring (at least I hope it is) and we see Terrace take on first her Mom—who really wanted a son—then a school psychiatrist—because she refuses to read as there is nothing she can identify with in books about boys—her best friend Platinum Sue, pretty and devious, and her Dad who doesn't want her to have a career. Finally she takes on Dean Rebel, the man she marries, who (according to the British reviews) finds her weeping in the fish and chip shop where she works and produces a hanky from his pearl embroidered leather codpiece. She takes him on again in the second act: the issue is which of them should give up their career and do the housework.

The play was originally written for performance in a pub; it is a noisy music-hall show where the audience boos and cheers as the actors whip up support for opposing sides. We could use some encouragement; I am looking forward to a show about a woman who takes control of her life and wins, sending us out happy and laughing, for a change.

Educating Rita

Another encouraging event should be the film *Educating Rita*, based on a successful London play about a young hairdresser who takes university courses through the equivalent of the Knowledge Network. As her relationship with her professor progresses, she begins to grow and to question. As her education and confidence increase, she becomes a more interesting person, while the professor becomes less so. Perhaps the most persuasive argument for the education of women since Mary Wollstonecraft? ♀

Theatre round-up

by Angela Page



- ☆ EVER LOVING
- ☆ TOP GIRLS
- ☆ TERRACE TANZI
- ☆ EDUCATING RITA

Design/Layout IMPACT ASSOCIATION



Letters to 'Priorities'

SOCREDS PARANOID

If you were having any qualms at all about the Socred government's restraint package, then we have some news that may change your mind.

In a very cheap tactical move, Socred MLA Don Campbell accused the Vancouver Women's Health Collective of running a lesbian drop-in. In fact it is the Lesbian Information Line (LIL) that runs the drop-in along with a telephone counselling and resources service from the Health Collective two nights a week in a space made available to us. He also accused the Collective of financing the drop-in when in fact it is LIL which operates and administers and raises its own funds. Not only has Campbell displayed his homophobia but he has shown all of us that he cannot even do basic investigative research. In short his facts which he then used to discredit the Women's Health Collective, the Lesbian Information Line and the lesbian lifestyle were completely incorrect.

He then went on to say that government should not fund a lesbian drop-in because the taxpayers would not like it. With such inane, paranoid remarks floating around the legislature, it all becomes very clear how this government has eliminated essential services such as the Women's Health Collective, rape crisis centres, transition houses and of course the Human Rights Act; we cannot even go after him for such discriminatory and bigoted remarks as previously mentioned.

At another level, though, because he was so stupid and incorrect, he may have furthered the lesbian cause. Never have I seen such bold headlines with the word "lesbian" and never have I heard people feel so much empathy for us. People are no longer willing to accept remarks and actions on minority peoples in a snow job called restraint. When Mr. Campbell thought he would find a just cause for eliminating the funding to the health collective, he has in fact encouraged more opposition to the cuts by his latest move.

I hope that all lesbians and gay men

will add this newest attack to their Homophobic People List. And if you want to quell any more attacks on all of us, get involved in action before it is too late.

Susan Harris
of the Lesbian Information Line

WINNIPEG COALITION FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

The NDP government and the Attorney-General have stated that the decision regarding the legality of abortion services being provided in free-standing clinics would be left to the court.

However, we now find that the substantive charges of procuring an illegal abortion are not proceeding. This means that no clear challenge can be made to Bill 251 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

The government is now actively sabo-

taging the possibility of such a clear challenge in spite of the fact that they have been directed by the party to begin lobbying to repeal the federal law.

Conspiracy charges offer no clear challenge to the legality of abortions performed in free-standing clinics.

Attorney-General Roland Penner defined conspiracy for his first year criminal law students as "the shabbiest weapon in the prosecutor's arsenal." (*Syllabus of Criminal Law*, Roland Penner, 1979-80, p. 18).

This government has clearly betrayed the women of Manitoba and the heroic staff of the Morgentaler clinic.

Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Manitoba, Inc.
P.O. Box 51, Station L
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 0Z4
786-6943, 774-5877

EDITORIAL (continued from page 1)

With the party's having slid into such a dismal state, suggestions were proffered on how the qualities seen by feminist-socialists as essential to democratic leadership could be encouraged at various levels of the party, with the aim of making the NDP once again a vibrant, active, responsive party. This direction brought the focus to the need for informed, active committed members and their right to be served by their representatives and their responsibility to develop and carry NDP policy, philosophy and action into their communities throughout the province.

Participants enthusiastically agreed on the outline of a model for restoring the qualities of democracy to the structure. Sparks of awareness that the NDP could be relevant to the lives of people like themselves jumped from one to the other. And this energizing raised the need to find out if there are other women and men who are genuinely seeking this spark and are prepared to act on it.

We take this opportunity to call to those who feel disenchanting, isolated, disfranchised, and who desire to work with us in revitalizing the NDP as a democratic socialist force to contact Leadership Workshop, Women's Rights Committee, c/o Suzanne Gerard, 3243 Kitchener, Vancouver, B.C. V5K 3G1 (phone 251-1608) and/or bring your input, energy, support to a workshop to further develop the model outlined and its implementation. The workshop takes place November 26, 1983 at Hillcrest Hall, 4360 Main Street, Vancouver from 1 to 5 p.m.

♀

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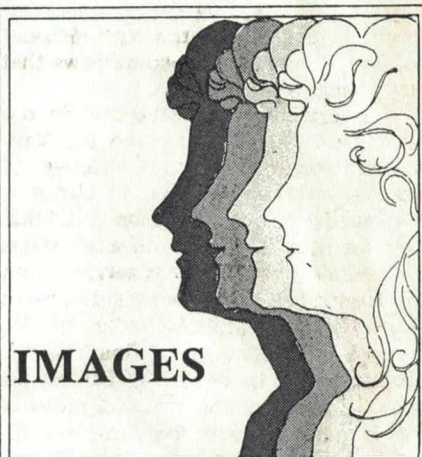
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**Priorities
thanks**

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