

# THE TIME HAS COME AGAIN FOR MANITOBA WOMEN TO FIGHT FOR THEIR FREEDOM.

Long before the Morgentaler Clinic opened its doors in May, anti-choice organizations and individuals in Winnipeg demanded that the government prevent the Clinic from opening. Once the Clinic doors opened, the same people demanded that the provincial NDP government close the facility and charge those who worked there.

They got their wish on June 3, when police raided the building. Within a week, Dr. Morgentaler and seven other Clinic staff members were charged with conspiracy to procure abortions. Although the police took some equipment and most of its records, the Clinic re-opened shortly. A second police raid took place two weeks later, on June 25th. The police confiscated most of the equipment and all its records and took the people on the premises in for questioning. Several patients were released but the staff was again charged with conspiracy, and three staff members were charged with performing an abortion (one charged being the counsellor).

This time, all but one of the staff members spent two nights in jail, rather than comply with the bail condition that they not go within one block of the Clinic. They were released when a second judge overturned that condition on June 27.

The Clinic is now trying to acquire new equipment but it continues to provide counselling and other reproductive health care services. Primary health care services (such as blood tests and pap smears) which can be billed to medicare are being provided to aid the economic viability of the Clinic. Volunteer Doctors are donating their fees to the Clinic in an effort to keep it from bankruptcy. Despite the raids, women still telephone for appointments. Until they can be provided at the Clinic, appointments are made at North Dakota clinics and Coalition members drive women from Winnipeg to Grand Forks once a week.

Meanwhile, the Manitoba NDP party members have voiced their displeasure with the government's position. At a recent meeting of the Provincial Council (the party's governing body between conventions) members and the Party executive voted in favour of a woman's right to choose and urged the provincial government to petition the federal government to repeal the abortion law, Section 251 of the federal Criminal Code. The Council also expressed its "regrets" about the conspiracy charges. Several weeks later, NDP members attending the party's federal convention in Regina, condemned the Manitoba government's actions. They voted overwhelmingly in support of a woman's right to choose and supported a motion to drop the charges against the Clinic staff.

The situation in Manitoba now is desperate. Estimates of Clinic defense have reach \$250,000. The Coalition for Reproductive Choice has launched a civil suit challenging the constitutionality of Section 251 of the Criminal Code. This suit, while legal services are being provided at drastically reduced rates, will cost approximately \$15,000. Education and publicity have been severely hampered by lack of funds. Fundraising has become an urgent priority. The Coalition appeals for support from across the country. It is not a Manitoba struggle. It is a National struggle. Defending our rights costs money. Please send donations to the Coalition for Reproductive Choice

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and specify whether you would like your donation to go to the Clinic Defense Fund or the Coalition.

**Support Choice** A campaign for reproductive freedom.