CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CENTRE
1991 DUFFERIN ST.
TORONTO, ONTARIO M6E 3P9
TEL: (416) 653-2223

Immigrant Women's Centre
24 Major Street
Toronto, Ontario
May 10, 1977

Dear Friends,

We are circulating this statement to explain why we are not joining the May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights which is organizing with the slogan "Abortion - the right to choose".

At the Coalition meeting of April 27, we expressed the position outlined in our statement below and, in typical racist fashion, it was rejected by "majority vote". We want to expose these women who claim to represent the interests of all women: who even after they were told explicitly that their leaflets would not be circulated to Black women, stood by their position.

We are asking all immgrant groups and individuals who support us to endorse our statement. We also ask other women's groups who feel that their interests are also expressed in our statement to add their endorsements.

ERICA MERCER
for Immigrant Women's Centre
924-7161

or Black Education Project 533-1167

ABORTION AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights equates the "right to choose" with ABORTION, when many of us, both immigrant and native-born, are forced to have abortions because we cannot afford to have the children we want. Immigrant women have always experienced coercion either by being forced to have children (by denying us birth control information and abortion services),or by being prevented from having children (through genocidal birth control practices in the Third World, as well as against Black women in the USA and Native Peoples in Canada). For us, the "right to choose" can never be only the right to abortion, but must also be the right to have all the children we might want.

We, therefore, demand of the Canadian Government:

1. FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND
   -- Until contraception is fully safe and we don't run the risk of damage to our health, we need to abort freely without harassment about "multiple abortions"; without having to beg a handful of "therapeutic committees" throughout Canada and Quebec to take our "exceptional case" into consideration; and with free access to abortion counselling in our own languages
   -- Because as immigrant and as women we have always been poor, we want abortion to be fully covered by OHIP (with no doctor's fees added) and fully available to women who can't afford OHIP

2. FUNDING FOR CLINICS AND RELATED BIRTH CONTROL SERVICES IN ALL IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN WHO USE THEM
   -- We want the money to control the programs ourselves because the lack of it has always meant government programs which force us either to have more children than we want or to not have those we do want

--We want services which recognize that immigrant women often refuse contraception because our experience has taught us to be suspicious of the methods available, and not because we are "backward"

--We want contraception to be free of charge and available to women of all ages in their own languages

Finally, to ensure that we are in a better position to <u>choose freely</u>, we demand of the Canadian Government:

3. LIVING WAGES WITH FULL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW FOR <u>ALL</u> OUR WORK BOTH IN THE HOME AND OUTSIDE

4. FULLY PAID MATERNITY LEAVE WITHOUT LOSS OF SENIORITY OR BENEFITS

5. FUNDING FOR 24-HOUR CHILDCARE CONTROLLED BY US WITH PAID STAFF BOTH IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND IN EVERY SWEATSHOP WHERE WE ARE FORCED TO WORK

In making these demands, we speak with the same voice as the Quebecoise, who in their "MANIFESTO" of March 1977 said:

> "For us the struggle for free abortion on demand is part of a larger struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation which we experience daily. We are fighting not only to refuse unwanted pregnancies, but also for the right to bring <u>all</u> the children we wish into the world without being forced to have abortions because of our jobs or living conditions".