
CANADIAN ABORTION RIGHTS ACTION LEAGUE (CARAL)

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LE DROIT A L'AVORTEMENT (ACDA)

NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER, 1980

Dear Friends,

As a change of pace from our regular newsletters we have decided to bring you up to date on different regions of our vast country. This newsletter is about the Atlantic region and the two active chapters there - St. John's, Newfoundland and Halifax, Nova Scotia. We hope that in doing this we can all get a better feel for our situations in the different areas of Canada. Also not everyone can attend the Annual Meeting and this is one way of expanding our information base.

Anyone in Atlantic Canada should be able to use this newsletter to inform friends of our activities and encourage them to join the struggle for abortion rights for women.

ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

Chapter Representative: Sally Grenville
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St. John's, Newfoundland

CARAL-St. John's, Newfoundland has been in existence since 1975 and has been endeavouring ever since to promote abortion rights in this province.

Our group is restricted to St. John's since womanpower and manpower is rather limited and we can't possibly cover the vast geographic area of Newfoundland and Labrador. We do distribute information to these areas via Status of Women Councils in Corner Brook (west); Grand Falls (central) and Wabush, Labrador City in Labrador West. There are some people in these areas supportive of our activities, but each of these areas are one-industry company towns where it is difficult to "make waves". Within St. John's, our membership numbers 65 although members are fairly generous financially. Local people are very hesitant to get involved and most of our workers and members are people who have settled here from elsewhere. We can only speculate that local people are too intimidated by being in a small area.

The focal point of our past year's activities was a public meeting held in October last, at which Drs. May Cohen and Wendell Watters were guest speakers. This was attended by over 100 people and although the local anti-choice group had a contingent of nuns, a priest, and some others in attendance, the audience was 95% pro-choice. The meeting was a boost for us all. Drs. Cohen and Watters also spoke to about 250 medical students - a phenomenal attendance. This particular meeting was organized by one of our members who is a medical student herself. We video-taped the public meeting and now have an edited version of the highlights available for public viewing. A studio tape was also completed with Drs. Cohen and Watters and Sue Malla. This tape is mainly for information purposes and can be used for guest appearances which are sometimes requested by the university. Both of these tapes are valuable for leading discussion groups and we hope to use them extensively.

Up until May of 1980 there were two hospitals in the whole province with active Therapeutic Abortion Committees. Corner Brook has now ceased to have an active committee which leaves only the Health Sciences Complex in St. John's. There is one doctor only performing abortions at this hospital and only one day per week! Abortions are performed in Newfoundland only within 12 weeks of conception.

Right now, we feel we are in dire straits. Pressure has been increasingly heavy by the Anti-Choice groups here. Everyday during Lenten Season, high school girls

from our largest Catholic High School picket the hospital. On Good Friday they are joined by parents, relatives, friends and clergy. Press coverage is extremely biased in their favour. The Press, especially CBC wouldn't cover our public meeting last October - said it had no local interest! We have consistently and constantly lodged complaints with CBC, CRTC and CBC's president.

In St. John's we have 2 daily papers. Letters to the Editor average 5-1 for Anti-Choice. We have been trying to keep a record of Pro-Choice letters that have not been printed, but this is sometimes difficult to do.

Recently one of our members spent considerable time compiling an information package. This is now ready for printing and distribution. All we need is the money but we're optimistic about it.

Whenever possible we try to make public comment on the issue and to rectify inaccurate information carried by the media. We did manage to get a ½ hour program on at a local TV station which had the format of a question/answer session. We compiled the questions ourselves to make sure we discussed the important points rather than get sidetracked by a biased interviewer.

The Newfoundland Status of Women Council - St. John's has been most helpful with mail-outs of booklets. They include them with their monthly newsletter which reaches people in all parts of the province. They have also publicly stated their support of abortion rights.

We foresee a long, hard and constant struggle. This is a province with a denominational educational system and for a good part we're fighting the church - a very strong voice here.

We feel that we need more vocal support and a strong national and provincial force. Instead of gaining ground, we're losing it. Rural women of Newfoundland have no alternative to unwanted pregnancy.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Representative: Cathie Daw
Halifax Representative: Betty Smith
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Halifax, N.S.
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CARAL/Halifax has been in existence since 1979 and as a young chapter is working hard to establish a solid base of support in Nova Scotia. In January of this year we launched a major campaign to increase our membership and now have 35 members in Halifax/Dartmouth and another 15 in the rest of the province. This number is continuing to grow steadily as more people become aware of us and our activities.

Like the St. John's chapter most of our activities for the present have been restricted to the Halifax area. We have made our presence known through radio, public speaking and general press coverage. Also last fall in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Women's Action Committee we held a general meeting on abortion. Most recently Betty Smith and Cathie Daw appeared on a local cablevision show which dealt entirely with CARAL and its activities. We have purchased the tape and hope it will be of great use for speaking engagements. We have begun to make some efforts to expand outside of Halifax and hopefully our current project will do a lot of that work for us.

The current situation in Nova Scotia is not as desperate as Newfoundland's however it has deteriorated with the loss of one therapeutic abortion committee and the majority of abortions are now being performed by the Victoria General in Halifax. Last June a letter was issued to all doctors in the province from the VG outlining a procedure to insure that an application could be processed as quickly as possible - with a direct telephone line to the hospital solely for making appointments for women requiring an abortion. This was primarily done to try and eliminate as much red tape as possible. 2nd trimester abortions had been steadily increasing and the hospital wished to reduce this (over 2/3 of the 2nd trimesters were done on women from out of town). This new procedure has worked out well in the last

year and significantly reduced 2nd trimester abortions. We have approached representatives at the hospital and have found them to be most helpful and very positive in their approach to handling abortions.

Last year our focal point became the situation of a young Cape Breton woman, separated from her husband, who attempted to get an abortion. One of our members, Judith Wouk wrote an excellent article recounting the details of the case for the feminist magazine, Branching Out and is included as part of this newsletter. CARAL gave financial support to this woman for legal fees and assistance. In January of this year she had her baby. Her husband attempted to obtain custody of the child but recently the court overruled this request although he has some visiting rights. We have kept in close touch with her and continue to give her moral support through her hard times.

Due to the Cape Breton incident, the lack of information available to women (Planned Parenthood here does no referrals or counselling on abortion for fear of losing what little funding they have - they are under continuous attack from the anti-choice movement) and the increase of calls to members of CARAL for referrals and assistance we are in the organizing stages of setting up an abortion information, referral and support phone line for women in the province. We have almost completed collecting all pertinent information such as a list of sympathetic doctors (we mailed letters to all doctors in Halifax/Dartmouth and received a 20% response!), where and how to go outside of the province when necessary, information on the different types of abortion and when they are performed, etc. and of course follow-up information such as birth control literature. We will be trying the service on a 6 month trial basis, 3 days a week and if it is successful we will expand our hours and hopefully become permanent. The phone line will be staffed by volunteers and so we are setting up a short introductory course so we can all be consistent and hopefully no conflicts will arise. We are raising the money to fund this project through subscriptions - asking for \$2-\$5 per month fee for the 6 month period. It will cost a minimum of \$135 per month to operate the line - this will pay for a business phone, necessary since we are advertising the number and the ad in the newspaper. To date we have raised enough to operate for 2 months. We are launching a major subscription campaign by sending letters to doctors, friends and anyone else we think may be sympathetic. We are optimistic and plan to be able to go into operation in mid-September.

With the organizing of the phone line we are also designing an information pamphlet. It will discuss the phone line and give basic information on abortion - the hows, wheres, and whens. We plan to have it printed in September to distribute across the province.

So far the Nova Scotians United for Life (the local anti-choice group) have not taken us very seriously (believing we are a bunch of "misguided youngsters" being led by some activists). However we expect some reaction from them in the fall once our phone line opens. They have a very large membership (4,000 in Halifax/Dartmouth alone!) but are not as strong as we originally thought. Like us they have only a small group of active members. However they do have a good financial base - spending over \$17,000 for 1979/80 compared to our meagre \$200.!!

We are optimistic with the formation of our phone line that it will serve to educate as well as help women in need. We see it not as a solution to the problem but as a measure to help those who have to deal with our archaic laws.

P.S. Anyone interested in our method of setting up the phone line and other sundry information we will be glad to send you the literature.

One of the largest ever

High school students organize anti-abortion demonstration

One of the largest anti-abortion demonstrations ever held was staged in front of the Health Sciences Centre yesterday morning.

Organized by students of Holy Heart of Mary Regional High School and the Right to Life Association, the gathering drew about 500 people including Archbishop A.L. Penney and "a good cross-section of the population," according to Dr. Robert Quigley, a St. John's dentist who is president of the association.

"It was a Lenten project of the grade 11 girls at Holy Heart," he said, "to protest the abuse of the abortion law...by the medical committee on therapeutic abortions.

They held a demonstration every Friday morning during the Lenten season; and thought it would be appropriate to end the Lenten season with a major demonstration. They invited members from other schools and denominations; and various churches and organizations...there was a tremendous turnout."

In addition to those who showed up, Quigley estimates that "for every person who showed up, there were another 75 or 100 who didn't make it either because of work commitments, or other reasons."

Abortions are performed at the center every Friday morning; and the Right To Life Association has been staging protests in front of the hospital for about two years.

Quigley said the demonstrations are having an affect on the numbers of women who undergo or would have undergone the

procedure.

"An example would be that in 1976, there was only one refusal of a therapeutic abortion and no withdrawals of names from the list of women scheduled to have an abortion," he said.

"But in 1977-78, there was again only one refusal but 14 or 16 withdrawals...women who applied for the operation but withdrew their names.

We feel that is a significant number and it's probably because of the growing groundswell of support for the pro-life movement in the province."

Quigley estimated that "between 1,000 and 1,200" Newfoundland women have abortions every year, the bulk of them in St. John's but others — "an average of four a week" — at the surgery of Dr. Henry Morgentaler in Montreal.

Besides the "so-called legal abortions" the association president said other "murders" are performed in doctors' surgeries throughout the province through other methods.

Quigley said his organization will be stepping up its lobby to pressure government and hospital officials for controls "to stop this abortion committee from abusing the law."

Meetings are being arranged with government members and the board of directors of the Health Sciences Centre; and next week, the association will discuss with CBC representatives why a film produced on abortion has not been aired.

Halifax Right-to-Lifers Appointed Guardian to Foetus

A Nova Scotia woman from Cape Breton decided last summer to seek a therapeutic abortion. This set in motion a series of events which brought into court a number of basic legal rights; the right of a woman for whom an abortion has been approved to have it, the right of a father/husband in an abortion decision, and the right of an outsider to guardianship over a foetus.

Janet H. is 19 years old and has one child born during her final year of high school, eight months before she married the father. The marriage never ran smoothly and she and her husband separated and reconciled several times during the year. More than once she required medical attention after physical abuse, and even-

tually she laid charges in family court for assault. Feeling she could not cope on her own after the final separation, Janet applied for a therapeutic abortion and was accepted by the hospital board in Halifax. Her husband then applied for an injunction from the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia to stop the abortion, scheduled for the following week. The Supreme Court hearing for this injunction was never held. When the physician heard of the legal action he refused to perform the operation. Janet, by this time nearly eighteen weeks pregnant and frightened by the threat of the injunction, decided to continue her pregnancy to term. Meanwhile, another legal action took place; one Dorothy Simms was ap-

pointed "Guardian Ad Litem* of 'H,' an unborn child allegedly of eighteen weeks gestation" by a judge of the Nova Scotia Family Court. Simms had volunteered to be guardian after the lawyer for an anti-abortion group called Nova Scotians United for Life was requested to assist with the husband's injunction. Reasons given by the judge for allowing the application for guardianship included an interpretation of the *Children of Unmarried Parents Act* to include unborn children. He made references to International Year of the child and the principle of paramountcy of welfare of the child, then defined the unborn child as a child in need of protection and therefore under disability. With the help of the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Law (CARAL), Janet applied to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia for a declaration of the law, in other words, they asked if the Family Court had the right to do what it did. The Supreme Court determined, essentially, that the guardianship had lapsed when there was no hearing on the injunction and therefore the Court would not make a decision on the issue.

According to a Dalhousie law professor, this is the first time in the Anglo-Commonwealth system where a child not yet born has been appointed a guardian. However, because the order was granted without allowing an argument from the other side and because the Family Court is a lower level court this case will probably not set a precedent. Also, Canadian, British and American precedent is against the court appointing a guardianship ad litem over a foetus, which is not considered a person in the eyes of the law until its subsequent live birth.

Canadian women are watching this case with interest, as the outcome may affect others who find themselves in the same situation.

Judith Wouk

* Guardian Ad Litem is a guardian appointed solely for the duration of a legal action to act in the best interests of the "child."

STOP THE PRESS NEWS

In British Columbia, the anti-choice attempts to take over hospital Boards of Trustees continue . At Lion's Gate Hospital in North Vancouver they were unsuccessful and pro-choice candidates were elected after some hard work by citizens determined to keep this vital medical service. However, the news from Surrey Memorial Hospital is not so good. Anti-choice candidates were elected and now the Board has a majority of members dedicated to eliminate abortion services at that hospital.

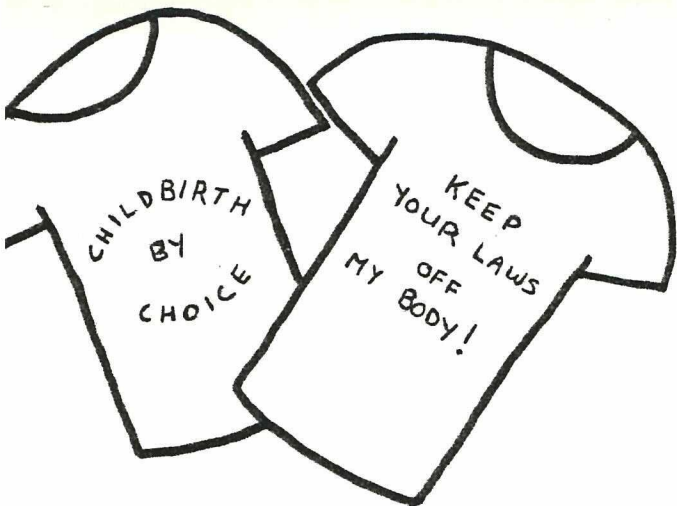
CARAL has sent telegrams to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and the Justice Minister about this situation. It is the law itself which allows single issue groups to eliminate abortion services at any hospital they can gain control of. The law requires a Therapeutic Abortion Committee to decide whether a woman can have an abortion but does not require hospitals to have Committees. Thus, anti-choice pressure groups, knowing that their chances of getting the Government to tighten up the law are slim, have set about to ensure that women will not be able to get legal abortions in their communities. It's up to us to keep an eye out for such attempts and to make sure they don't succeed. We have to insist that the provincial governments provide this service- by establishing clinics if necessary- and we have to insist that the federal government do something about the unequal application of the law.

→ Have you written a letter this month?

C. A. R. A. L. T-SHIRTS

At our Canadian National Exhibition Booth this summer CARAL had T-Shirts with two different messages for sale. We have some left over which we are offering to our membership at a very reasonable price:

\$ 6 . 0 0 I N C L U D I N G P O S T A G E



If you would like one clip the order form below and send with your cheque or money order to CARAL, P.O. Box 935, Station O, Toronto, Ont. M4T 2P1. We will send you your Terrific T-Shirt promptly.

Please send me _____ T-Shirt(s)

Check One {

SIZE S M L

COLOUR Red Blue Yellow

MESSAGE Keep Your Laws Off My Body

Childbirth By Choice

NAME

I Enclose

ADDRESS

POSTAL CODE

!! IMPORTANT !!

PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Dear members:

Below you will find a form letter addressed to Mr. William Rompkey, Minister of Revenue Canada. We are asking that all our members sign this letter, tear it off and mail it to him at the address shown. As you probably know, certain Knights of Columbus members across Canada have stated publicly they are refusing to pay a portion of their 1980 income tax in order to protest the grants the federal government gives to organizations like Planned Parenthood which do abortion counselling. Mr. Rompkey (a vocal advocate of the anti-choice movement) announced he would not prosecute these people for failure to pay their full tax.

Please sign the letter and mail it promptly. We want Rompkey to know there are many Canadians who vigorously object to his action.

The Hon. William Rompkey
Revenue Canada
Connaught Building
Mackenzie Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L5

Dear Mr. Rompkey:

I am writing to you to express my dismay at your recent decision not to prosecute Knights of Columbus members who have vowed to withhold a portion of their 1980 income tax. They have stated they are refusing to pay the full amount of their tax because federal funds are granted to organizations which counsel women seeking legal abortions.

Regardless of your personal opposition to abortion, which you have expressed in the past, and regardless of your stated sympathy for this action by the Knights of Columbus members, as an elected official you have a mandate from all the people of Canada to uphold the law.

It is very wrong for a person in your position to state that he supports such a flagrant disregard for the law. You are setting a dangerous precedent by your inaction which has serious implications for the future of justice in Canada. I strongly urge you to reverse your stance on this issue.

Yours sincerely,