
CANADIAN ABORTION RIGHTS ACTION LEAGUE (CARAL)
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LE DROIT A L'AVORTEMENT (ACDA)

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JANUARY, 1981

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear CARAL members:

We have been very busy since our last newsletter. Early in December, in response to a request from the Victoria Chapter at our last annual meeting, we sent a letter to the Hon. Monique Begin, Minister of Health and the Hon. Jean Chretien, Minister of Justice. Copies were sent to Pierre Trudeau, Joe Clark, Ed Broadbent and Lloyd Axworthy, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

In the letter we asked the Ministers to direct Therapeutic Abortion Committees to use the World Health Organization's definition of the word "health" in their interpretation of Section 251 of the Criminal Code.

The W.H.O.'s definition of health has been accepted by the Canadian Medical Association for all other medical procedures and should apply to abortion as well. The W.H.O. defines health as, "a state of complete physical and mental well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

The letters were endorsed by 20 of our Honourary Directors.

This action by CARAL in no way changes our position that abortion is a matter between a woman and her physician. To ensure equal access we believe, at the very least, that this interpretation of the word health should be applied until such time as we have achieved greater changes in the law.

We will be holding our annual meeting in Ottawa this year in conjunction with visits to Members of Parliament during April 4 - 6. The week prior to the AGM has been designated Pro-Choice Action Week during which each of you will be asked to visit your MP in your own riding (if you can't make it to Ottawa with us). More information about all of this will be sent to you soon.

In the meantime - make a New Year's resolution. Plan to write at least one, short letter a month to a politician, either federal, provincial or municipal, about freedom of choice. We can't say it often enough - your letters count! If you never tell the politicians what you think, they'll never know that we are the majority. Even if you know your MP is steadfastly opposed to legal abortion - write! If he or she is sitting on the fence, they need your input. If he or she is pro-choice, write with encouragement - they appreciate it. In particular, write to the Minister of Health, Monique Begin and the Minister of Justice, Jean Chretien. If you are complacent about this issue, you can hardly expect the politicians to get excited about it, much less expect them to make any changes in the law. Keep prodding them - don't let them forget we're out here!

Take advantage of the form letters we will be including in the newsletters (see letter to Jean Chretien in this issue).

1981 is already proving to be a very busy year for us. The Board of Directors of CARAL cannot hope to win the struggle for freedom of choice alone - we need you, our members, to give us every assistance you can.

Karen

Karen Hammond,
President

CARAL MAKES PRESENTATION TO SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION

On Thursday, December 11, Honorary Directors Eleanor Wright Pelrine and Dr. Wendell Watters, along with lawyer J. Robert Kellerman, made a presentation to the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution.

Our brief warned the committee that Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms uses language which could provide the basis for litigation directed at depriving women of the right to choose an abortion - or even to obtain one - under the current provisions of the Criminal Code. The section reads:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

It is already being argued in the courts that the "right to life" phrase in the Bill of Rights extends to the embryo and fetus. CARAL suggested that the surest method of making Parliament's intention clear would be to include an additional paragraph following the present Section 25 in the Charter. The paragraph would read:

Nothing in this Charter is intended to extend rights to the embryo or fetus, nor to restrict in any manner the right of women to medically safe abortion.

Two days before our brief was presented, the Coalition for the Protection of Human Life - which calls itself a "human rights" organization - presented a brief to the Committee, asking that the right to life of the "unborn" be guaranteed by the Charter.

Enclosed is a letter which you can copy or re-write and send to your MP, the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition (the Hon. Joe Clark) and the leader of the NDP (Mr. Ed. Broadbent) on the subject of the Charter. J. Chrétien gets the original.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Legal abortion has been approved by the lower house of the Dutch Parliament, with the result that abortions can now be carried out in licensed clinics and hospitals upon the decision of a woman and her physician. Although a doctor's concurrence is required, the doctor must make a decision within five days of the woman's request for the abortion.

NOT-SO-GOOD NEWS FROM OUR PARLIAMENT

You should be aware that a lot of letter-writing is going to be needed over the duration of this current federal House; out of 282 MP's, the anti-choice lobby claims 96 as their own.

If any of the following people is your member, write and write frequently to remind him or her that the so-called "Right to Lifers" represent 5% of the Canadian population (Gallup Poll, March, 1979). If your member's name does not appear on this list, write to him or her anyway to guarantee that it never does!

THE WEST

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|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Assiniboia | Len Gustafson PC |
| Bow River | Gordon Taylor PC |
| Brandon Souris | Walter Dinsdale PC |
| Calgary Centre | Harvie Andre PC |
| Cariboo-Chilcotin | Lorne Greenaway PC |
| Crowfoot | Arnold Malone PC |
| Dauphin | Laverne Lewycky NDP |
| Edmonton East | Bill Yurko PC |
| Edmonton North | Steve Paproski PC |
| Edmonton South | Doug Roche PC |
| Edmonton Strathcona | David Kilgour PC |
| Edmonton West | Marcel Lambert PC |
| Esquimalt-Saanich | Don Munro PC |
| Humboldt-Lake Centre | Vic Althouse NDP |
| Kindersley-Lloyd. | Bill McKnight PC |
| Lisgar | Jack Murta PC |
| Mackenzie | Stan Korchinski PC |
| Moose Jaw | Doug Neil PC |
| N. Vancouver-Burnaby | Chuck Cook PC |
| Okanagan North | Vince Dantzer PC |
| Okanagan-Similkameen | Fred King PC |
| Pembina | Peter Elzinga PC |
| Pr. Geo.-Bulkley Vly | Lorne McCuish PC |
| Pr. Geo.-Peace R. | Frank Oberle PC |
| Provencher | Jake Epp PC |
| Qu'Appelle-Moose Mnt. | Alvin Hamilton PC |
| Red Deer | Gordon Towers PC |
| Richmond-South Delta | Tom Siddon PC |
| St. Boniface | Robert Bockstael L |
| Saskatoon East | Bob Ogle NDP |
| Surrey-White Rock | Benno Friesen PC |
| Vancouver Quadra | Wm. Clarke PC |
| Vegreville | Don Mazankowski PC |

QUEBEC AND ONTARIO

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Beauharnois-Salab'y | Gerald Lanier L |
| Brant | Derek Blackburn NDP |
| Cambridge | Chris Speyer PC |
| Cochrane | Keith Penner L |
| Durham Northumb. | Allan Lawrence PC |
| Eglinton-Lawrence | R. de Corneille L |
| Essex-Kent | Robert Daudlin L |
| Essex-Windsor | Eugene Whelan L |
| Etobicoke-Lakeshore | Ken Robinson L |
| Glengarry-Pres-Russ | Denis Ethier L |
| Grey-Simcoe | Gus Mitges PC |
| Hamilton East | John Munro L |
| Hull | Gaston Isabelle L |
| Huron-Bruce | Murray Cardiff PC |
| Kenora-Rainy River | John Reid L |
| Kent | Maurice Bossy L |
| Kitchener | Peter Lang L |
| Lambton-Middlesex | Ralph Ferguson L |
| Laval-des-Rapides | Jeanne Sauve L |
| Leeds-Grenville | Tom Cossitt PC |
| London Middlesex | Garnet Bloomfield L |
| Mississauga South | Don Blenkarn PC |
| Nepean-Carleton | Walter Baker PC |
| Nipissing | Jean-Jacques Blais L |
| Notre Dame de Grace | Warren Allmand L |
| Oxford | Bruce Halliday PC |
| Parry Sound-Muskoka | Stan Darling PC |
| Perth | Bill Jarvis PC |
| Peterborough | Bill Domm PC |
| St. Michel | Therese Killens L |
| Scarborough East | Gordon Gilchrist PC |
| Scarborough West | David Weatherhead L |
| Thunder Bay-Atikokan | Paul McRae L |
| Thunder Bay-Nipigon | Jack Masters L |
| Timmins-Chapleau | J. Ray Chenier L |

Vaudreuil	Hal Herbert L
Victoria-Haliburton	Bill Scott PC
Wellington-Duff-Sim	Perrin Beatty PC
Windsor-Walkerville	Mark MacGuigan L
York Centre	Robert Kaplan L
York East	David Collenette L
York Peel	Sinclair Stevens PC
York Scarborough	Paul Cosgrove L
York South-Weston	Ursula Appolloni L

THE MARITIMES

Burin-St. George's	Roger Simmons L
CB-Sydneys	Russell McLellan L
Cardigan	Daniel MacDonald L
Central Nova	Elmer MacKay PC
Dart. Halifax East	Mike Forrestall PC
Egmont	George Henderson L
Fundy Royal	Bob Corbett PC
Gander-Twillingate	George Baker L
Gr. Falls-White Bay	Bill Rompkey L
Hillsborough	Tom McMillan PC
Madawaska-Victoria	Eymard Corbin L
Moncton	Gary McCauley L
Northumberland-Mira	Maurice Dionne L
St. John's East	James McGrath PC
St. John's West	John Crosbie PC
Saint John	Mike Landers L
South Shore	Lloyd Crouse PC
South West Nova	Coline Campbell L
Westmoreland-Kent	Romeo LeBlanc L

proceeds to disband the TAC, any anti-choice lobby can sabotage the law allowing women medically safe abortions. As a technique, it's a highly effective one, side-stepping, as it does, any need to change the law or to deal with the fact that the majority of Canadians do not support the anti-choice position. A well-financed, well-organized minority can decide whether or not the rest of Canadians will have access to health care, regardless of legal or democratic principles.

Hence the need for eternal vigilance on our part: watch to see what's happening at your local hospital, find out how the Board is elected and when, buy a membership, and get involved! Stand for membership on the Board yourself!

THE NAZI CONNECTION

We would like to draw your attention to two articles by Gloria Steinem in Ms. Magazine in October and November, 1980. The articles are entitled "The Nazi Connection - If Hitler Were Alive, Whose Side Would He Be On?"

You are probably aware that right-wing anti-abortion rhetoric equates legal abortion with "genocide". This facile and historically inaccurate comparison is refuted by Ms. Steinem in her carefully researched articles.

We suggest that all pro-choice advocates familiarize themselves with the historical reality:

1. Hitler systematically destroyed the growing emancipation of German women.
2. His rhetoric consistently glorified "motherhood" as the noblest calling for Aryan women.
3. Abortion for Aryan women was illegal in Nazi Germany and punishable by death.
4. Abortion for Jewish women was compulsory.

The comparison between legal abortion and the genocide of the Jewish people is not only odious but historically unsupported. Anti-choice and Hitler are, in fact, birds of a feather. The rhetoric of the right-wing, anti-abortion, anti-choice movement in the United States and Canada is reminiscent of Nazi propaganda in the 1930's. That is the real Nazi connection - not the one the anti-choicers would have you believe.

JUDY LAMARSH AND ELSIE GREGORY MACGILL

Two Honorary Directors of our organization have recently died. Both women were strong supporters of freedom of choice and women's rights. They will be missed by all of us.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL *****

It's that time again. Once again, CARAL membership fees are not going up! Even though the cost of printing and mailing continues to rise, we're going to hold the line. Won't you help us to do that by renewing promptly. We need

BRITISH COLUMBIA UPDATE

A lot has been happening in B.C. - and much of it is bad. Health care for women has been gravely jeopardized by anti-choice actions in three British Columbia hospitals. In October, an anti-choice faction engineered its election to the board of Surrey Memorial Hospital; its first decision was to do away with the therapeutic abortion committee! In protest, the medical staff withdrew from all hospital committees. At the end of November, the board re-instated the committee, but on condition that abortions be allowed only on a limited basis.

Similar threats were made against Victoria General and the Royal Jubilee, the two hospitals on Vancouver Island. At Victoria General, the therapeutic abortion committee limited its approval of applications to less than ten percent, thereby forcing Jubilee to take up the slack. Meanwhile, at Jubilee, all four seats open on the 13-member board were won by anti-choicers.

Today, although the committees are still functioning, the number of applications has declined markedly. Clearly, women are going elsewhere for the health care that they can't get at their local hospital.

What we are seeing here is, of course, a continuation of the trend that has seen attacks on Scarborough Centenary Hospital in Toronto and St. Thomas-Elgin in St. Thomas, Ontario. By buying up membership to the hospital society which elects the Board, and then electing an anti-choice Board which

your support! If your address label has an "81", you are up-to-date

ARE YOU MOVING?

We don't want to lose you. Don't forget to send us your change of address. The post office has free cards for this purpose.

NEW AFFILIATES

CARAL welcomes new affiliated organizations, the Kingston Action Committee on the Status of Women in Kingston, Ontario, and the Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion in Vancouver. The latter group recently staged a huge and successful rally which got national coverage. It was timely in view of the events at Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Do you live in a city or town where there is no CARAL chapter? Would you like to be more involved? Write to us. If we receive a few letters from one city or town, we'll put you in touch with each other and help you get a chapter started.

CMA head assails those who oppose teen sex education

Globe and Mail-Nov.22/80

HALIFAX (CP) — The president of the Canadian Medical Association yesterday criticized "red-necked" opponents of sex education and urged doctors to fight for nation-wide programs to counter an alarming increase in teen-age pregnancies.

Dr. William Thomas, a Vancouver obstetrician, also repeated earlier calls for changes in the Criminal Code of Canada to allow women therapeutic abortions without going through hospital abortion committees.

In a speech prepared for the Medical Society of Nova Scotia, Dr. Thomas said past pleas to governments for comprehensive programs on contraception and sexual responsibility have fallen on deaf ears.

"For years we have allowed a few, very vocal, red-necked parents and school board officials to stifle attempts to reach our schoolchildren with information to aid them in handling the problems of adolescence."

Dr. Thomas said nearly 20,000 abortions are performed on teen-agers in Canada every year — more than 2,000 of them on girls under 15 — and more than 1,000 teen-agers get pregnant every week.

What's needed to reverse this growing problem, he said, is not only more birth-control information, but comprehensive counselling that will help young people build responsible rela-

tionships and understand different ways of showing affection.

"We cannot afford to continue with our present *laissez-faire* attitude regarding sex education in schools and in our communities," he said. "Surely there can be no question of the need for a suitable program of sexual counselling."

Dr. Thomas criticized the federal Government for reducing funds for the Planned Parenthood Federation and said the politicians had also "copped out" by refusing to eliminate the need for hospital abortion committees.

The Criminal Code sets down standards for therapeutic abortions and requires that they be approved in advance by hospital committees.

Dr. Thomas said no one should be forced to perform or submit to an abortion, but the decision should be left to individuals and their doctors alone.

Dr. Thomas also decried attempts by supporters and opponents of abortion to take control of hospital boards in British Columbia that he said have turned annual meetings of hospital associations into circuses.

The winners in these contests are those with the most signed-up members, while the losers are the hospitals and their patients.

An advance text of Dr. Thomas' speech was released in Ottawa.