

# inside story of Miss Canada contest

page 8

# VELVET

a women's liberation newspaper



# FIST

Vol. 1 No. 9 25¢



## Nov. 20 abortion action reports

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## feminist position on abortion laws

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# 1. sign, circulate abortion petition!

November 20th did not mark the end of the campaign to repeal Canadian abortion laws - it was merely the beginning.

At the founding conference of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition in October, two further actions were projected for the immediate future: a cross-Canada petition campaign (which was later ratified by coalitions in other provinces) and a campaign for campus referendums on repeal, which was planned in the student workshop.

Within the first month after the conference, about 18,000 people signed the petition across the country. 6,000 of these were from the Toronto area alone.

In building for November 20, the petition offered endless opportunities to talk to people on the question of abortion. Now we want to move the petition campaign into high gear. 10,000 petitions have been distributed for circulation - that's a potential of 150,000 signatures, and we're not stopping there.

New suggestions and experiences

with the petition are continually coming into the coalition and being passed on. Women are circulating petitions on campuses, in high schools, at work, in shopping centers, cafeterias, at public meetings and social events, in apartment buildings and university residences, on street corners, at busstops, in subways, and movies. Wherever there are people, we want to be with the petition.

**NEWS FLASH:** The Provincial Council of the Ontario NDP, at its meeting on Dec. 4, endorsed the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition.

Campus coalitions are beginning to organize now toward campus referendums. In many cases, the fight to get student councils to sponsor referendums at all will be as big a struggle as winning the referendum when it is held. The referendum campaign will offer opportunities to hold speak-outs and debates, to write articles and letters in the campus papers, to



take a petition with you wherever you go

carry massive publicity campaigns. With the referendum and the petition, we can aim to educate entire student bodies on the issue of abortion and mobilize them in support of repeal.

The petition and the campus refer-

endums are important instruments; we want to use them to channel the sentiment for repeal into one powerful voice, representing the millions of Canadians who support a woman's right to choose.

# 2. feminism grows with abortion struggle

As we approach the end of 1971, it's a good time to examine the experience of the women's liberation movement--accomplishments and difficulties--over the past year.

1971 has seen the feminist movement grow in breadth, strength and confidence, and establish itself as a firm opposition to the present power structure that oppresses and exploits women. We in North America are not alone in our struggle--our sisters around the world are making their views well known.

Women in Ireland have been fighting to change restrictive contraceptive laws. French, German, Italian, Australian and New Zealand women have begun to organize against their oppression. This year saw the first women's demonstration in the Philippines--around the issue of equal pay for equal work.

Even in the Soviet Union, where gains made by women after the 1917 revolution were largely reversed during Stalin's rise to power, women

today are again questioning their subordinate status. These women--part of the rising movement for socialist democracy in the Soviet bloc nations--are coming to a new feminist consciousness.

The abortion struggle has emerged as an international focus for the feminist movement. Feminists in many countries have initiated a campaign for a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child.

The violent reaction in opposition to this campaign has thrust the abortion issue to the forefront of the women's liberation struggle. Prime Minister Trudeau has made many statements against the abortion struggle; he has consistently refused to meet with feminists presenting briefs to the government, and continues to postpone the long-promised debate on abortion law repeal in the House. Organizations such as the Right to Life and Alliance for Life, supported by strong forces like the Catholic Church, have sprung up across North America.

Women have taken up this challenge, recognizing the dual importance of winning the abortion struggle and defending the women's movement against this vicious attack.

In North America, broad coalitions for abortion law repeal have been formed, drawing together large numbers of women in united action. Women of the Toronto Women's Caucus, together with women of other feminist groups, have played a key role in building these coalitions and bringing more and more women to feminism through the abortion struggle.

The feminist movement has given women the confidence to develop their many talents. We have organized and planned demonstrations and public meetings, given speeches, written and published pamphlets, circulated petitions and carried out a whole range of activities designed to bring the ideas of feminism to all women. We are learning to be leaders of this movement--giving and gaining strength and experience from our

sisters.

The Velvet Fist itself has made strides over the past year, as the women contributing to it learn more about putting out a paper and learn to reflect the changes and growth of the movement. We are getting reports that the paper has increasing appeal to women all over Canada--for example, sisters in Winnipeg tell us their sales have quadrupled with the past two issues. We feel that the growth of the Fist is tangible evidence of the growth of a more effective and powerful movement.

We women are now forging the weapons to fight for our liberation. Every struggle, every project, develops our collective abilities, our understanding of the tasks before us--and brings new women to feminism. Our most important task, our most effective weapon, is the building of a mass united movement of conscious, able women. Only when we are united in action will we have the power to free ourselves.

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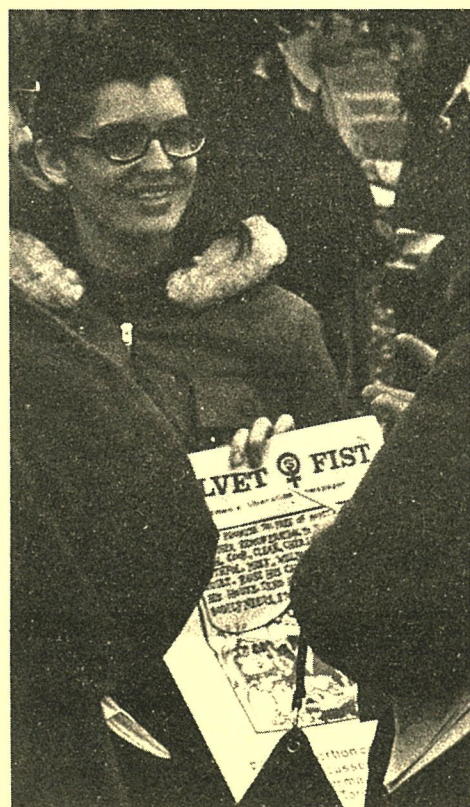
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## Velvet Fist

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Toronto Women's Caucus, 188 Adelaide St. W. 368-6583  
Women's Liberation Movement, 380 Victoria St. 863-9949  
WLM Abortion Referral, 533-9006  
ARCAL abortion referral, 924-2895  
York Women's Caucus, 241-6557 or 449-2961  
**OTTAWA:**  
Women's Justice, Box 14, Station A.  
**MONTREAL:**  
Women's Action Movement, Box 37, Station N  
Women's Center, 3964 Ste. Famille  
**HALIFAX:**  
Ruth Taillon, 2614 Windsor St.  
Please let us know if we have omitted your group or if any address is wrong or incomplete.

## why feminists call for total repeal

# no substitute abortion laws

Abortion Law Repeal (sort of): A Warning to Women.

Following are excerpts of an article which appeared in *Notes from the Second Year*. The article was written by Lucinda Cisler, an American feminist who has been campaigning for many years for a woman's right to control her own body. The article was abridged by Jill Thompson and Lorna Grant.

One of the few things everyone in the women's movement seems to agree on is that we have to get rid of the abortion laws and make sure that any woman who wants an abortion can get one. It sounds like a pretty clear and simple demand.

But just because it sounds so simple and so obvious and is such a great point of unity, a lot of us haven't really looked below the surface of the abortion fight and seen how complicated it may be to get what we want. The most important thing feminists have done and have to keep doing is to insist that the basic reason for repealing the laws and making abortions available is **JUSTICE**: women's right to abortion.

Everyone recognizes the cruder forms of opposition to abortion traditionally used by the forces of sexism and religious reaction. But a feminist philosophy must be able to deal with all the stumbling blocks that keep us from reaching our goal, and must develop a consciousness about the far more subtle dangers we face from many who honestly believe they are our friends.

The abortion issue is one of the very few issues vital to the women's movement that well-meaning people outside the movement were dealing with on an organized basis even before the new feminism began to explode a couple of years ago. Whatever we may like to think, there is quite definitely an abortion movement that is distinct from the feminist movement, and the good intentions of most of the people in it can turn out to be either a tremendous source of support for our goals or the most tragic barrier to our ever achieving them. The choice is up to us: we must subject every proposal for change and every tactic to the clearest feminist scrutiny, demand only what is good for **all** women, and not let some of us be bought off at the expense of the rest.

Some people are in the abortion movement today for very good reasons: they are concerned with important issues like the public health problem presented by illegal abortions, the doctor's right to provide patients with good medical care and the suffering of unwanted children and unhappy families.

But the basis for all these good reasons to be concerned with abortion is, in the final analysis, simple expediency. Such reasons are peripheral to the central rationale for making abortion available: justice for women. And unless a well-thought-out feminism underlies the dedication of these people, they will accept all kinds of token gains from legislators and judges and the medical establishment in the name of "getting something done NOW" - never mind what that is, or how much it cuts the chances for real changes later by lulling the public into a false sense of accomplishment.

These people believe that their approach is the "realistic" one - that one must accept the small so-called "steps in the right direction" that can

be wrested from reluctant politicians, that it isn't quite dignified to demonstrate or shout what you want, that raising the women's rights issue will "alienate" politicians, and so on. They tend to have a rather over-awed attitude toward politicians, doctors, lawyers and traditional "experts" of all kinds.

However, it is the women's movement whose demand for **REPEAL** rather than "reform" of the abortion laws has spurred the general acceleration in the abortion movement and its influence. Unfortunately, and ironically, the very rapidity of the

selfs about the complexities of the abortion situation or developed a feminist critique of abortion that goes beyond "it's our right".

Many in the abortion movement want very badly to think that these laws and decisions are somehow repeal. It seems pretty clear that when you repeal an abortion law you just get rid of it; you do not put things back into the statutes or make special rules that apply to abortion but not to other medical procedures.

An example of one such restriction is the question of up to what point abortion may be performed. A time

"Protection" has often turned out to be but another means of control over the protected; labour law offers many examples. When childbirth becomes as safe as it should be, perhaps it will be safer than abortion: will we put back our abortion laws, to "protect women"?

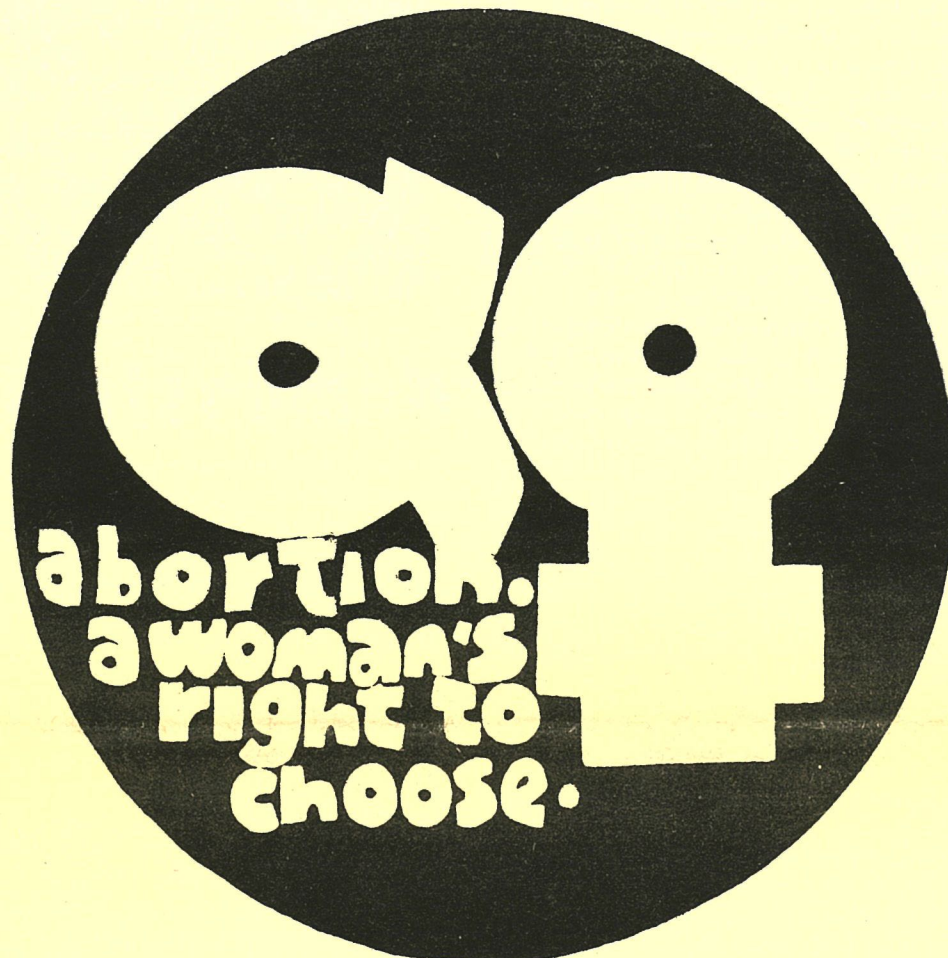
All the talk about "quickenings", "viability" and so on, is based on old religious myths (if the woman believes in them, of course, she won't look for an abortion) or tied to ever-shifting technology (who knows how soon a three-day-old fertilized egg may be considered "viable" because heroic mechanical devices allow it to survive and grow outside the woman's uterus?). To listen to judges and legislators play with the ghostly arithmetic of months and weeks is to hear the music by which angels used to dance on the head of a pin.

There are many reasons why a woman might seek a late abortion, and she should be able to find one legally if she wants it. She may suddenly discover that she had German measles in early pregnancy and that her fetus is deformed; she may have had a sudden mental breakdown; or some calamity may have changed the circumstances of her life; whatever her reasons, she belongs to herself and not to the state.

This limitation speaks to the hangups many people have and is **NOT** repeal. It is a last-ditch attempt at retaining a little of the state ownership of pregnant women provided for under the worst laws we have now.

All women are oppressed by the present abortion laws, by old-style "reforms", and by seductive new fake repeal bills and court decisions. But the possibility of fake repeal - if it becomes reality - is the most dangerous: it will divide women from each other. It can buy off most middle-class women and make them believe things have really changed, while it leaves poor women to suffer and keeps us all saddled with abortion laws for many more years to come. There are many nice people who would like to see abortion made more or less legal, but their reasons are fuzzy and their tactics acquiescent. Because no one else except the women's movement is going to cry out against these restrictions, it is up to feminists to make the strongest and most precise demands upon the lawmakers - who ostensibly exist to serve us. We will not accept insults and call them "steps in the right direction".

Only if we know what we **don't** want, and why, and say so over and over again, will we be able to recognize and reject all the clever plastic limitations of our goal.

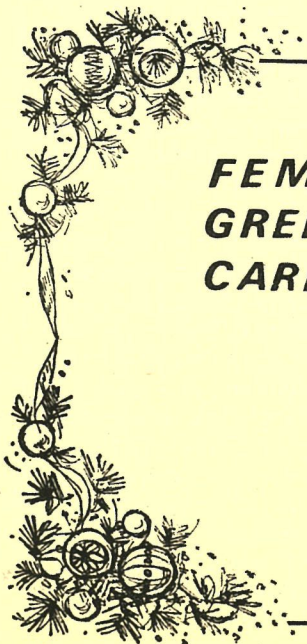


change for which we are responsible is threatening to bring us to the point where we are offered something so close to what we want that our demands for true radical change may never be achieved.

Most of us recognize the "reforms" of the old rape-incest-fetal deformity variety are not in women's interest and in fact, in their very specificity, are almost more of an insult to our dignity as active self-determining humans than are the old laws that simply forbid us to have abortions unless we are about to die. But new reform legislation is not in our interest either: it looks pretty good, and the improvements it seems to promise (at least for middle class women) are almost irresistible to those who haven't informed them-

limit is proposed after which time abortion may be performed only if a woman's life is at stake. This kind of restriction essentially says two things to women:

- at a certain stage, your body suddenly belongs to the state and it can force you to have a child, whatever your own reasons for waiting an abortion late in pregnancy;
- because late abortion entails more risk to you than early abortion, the state must "protect" you even if your considered decision is that you want to run that risk and your doctor is willing to help you. This restriction insults women in the same way the present "preservation-of-life" laws do; it assumes that we must be in a state of tutelage and cannot assume responsibility for our own acts.



### FEMINIST GREETING CARDS

General message but suitable also for the Christmas season. Send cheque or money order to Cards, Toronto Women's Caucus, 188 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ontario.

Enclosed is \$1.50 plus 25¢ for postage (10 cards in a box)

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

No. of boxes of cards \_\_\_\_\_

### abortion campaign addresses

ONTARIO WOMEN'S ABORTION LAW REPEAL COALITION, BOX 5673, Station A, Toronto.

WOMEN'S COALITION FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL, 1355 Dorchester Blvd. W., Montreal

COMITE POUR L'ABROGATION DES LOIS SUR L'AVORTEMENT, 877 av. DOLLARD, OUTREMENT, QUEBEC.

MANITOBA ABORTION ACTION COALITION, 315B-416 Main St., Winnipeg.

B.C. WOMEN'S ABORTION LAW REPEAL COALITION, 483 East 28th Street, Vancouver.

SASKATOON WOMEN FOR ABORTION LAW REPEAL, #2, 521-18th St. W., Saskatoon.

# NOVEMBER 20: INTERNATIONAL

## women's court finds Cdn. government guilty

"My aunt, who was a nurse, inserted the catheter and told me to leave it in place as long as possible. The air would kill the fetus and then it would be expelled. (It was years later that I found out the air could have killed me too.)"

"My pregnancy was showing by then. Days later I went into labour in my own bed and in silence, so the rest of the family would not know. I expelled the fetus and, what hurt even more, the placenta. My aunt had me admitted to hospital for a D.&C. and she carried a newspaper wrapped parcel..."

This was one of the testimonies given at a women's trial of the Government written and performed by women of the OWALRC at the assembly in Ottawa on Nov. 20. The Government of Canada was charged with "causing gross physical and emotional harm to the women of Canada by retaining abortion in the Criminal Code".

Other women testified to the illegal abortions they had been forced to obtain under varying conditions over the past few years. The sharing of these experiences, often for the first time, had the effect of creating a sense of solidarity among the audience, most of whom were women. There was a real sense of identification with the women who had suffered illegal abortions. Many women and men were moved to tears which few tried to conceal.

Women who shared their pain and humiliation with us pointed out by their example that it is not enough to intellectualize about a woman's right to choose, but that it is a personal, gut issue of immediate concern to all women. The law as it stands now forced marriages, abortion by catheter in a rented room off an alley, well-meaning friends or relatives with home remedies, the cries of terror, the loneliness of the ordeal, the fear the abortion will fail and a tremendous financial burden.

As well as the testimonies,

excerpts were quoted from Grace MacInnis' (NDP Vancouver-Kingsway) speech of November 2, in the House of Commons. She said, "Mr. Speaker, in deliberately keeping the matter of abortion from being discussed in the House of Commons, the Government is guilty of a series of very unfair and very cruel acts. It is forcing unknown numbers of women to bear unwanted children, with all the terrible consequences to them and to society. It is forcing women on low income to face the horrors of a backstreet operator or the do-it-yourself procedures which cripple and kill. It is forcing women who can afford it to go to foreign countries for an abortion. Last year 1,649 Canadian women had to seek such help in New York State. I understand that 44% of them were from the Province of Quebec alone. It is forcing uncounted other women to run from hospital to hospital in Canada trying desperately to find one that will help them while the clock ticks remorselessly on and the authorities, with eyes averted from their misery, pass by on the other side."

The defense quoted Trudeau's recent comment that he personally did not wish to see further liberalization and Turner's view that abortion should be taken out of the Criminal Code but that opinion in Canada was "50-50" on the issue and his view might not prevail. At the end of the court proceedings, the jury found the Government guilty. The sentence passed by the Judge on behalf of the Canadian people was that the Government "be constantly reminded of its failure to meet the needs of Canadian women and therefore the needs of Canada. It is directed to rectify this situation immediately by removing the present abortion laws from the Criminal Code and creating a situation whereby abortion will be a woman's right to choose."

Many women felt the judge was too lenient.

## international protests

A group of 3,000 marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in the first feminist march in Washington since 5,000 women demonstrated for the right to vote in 1913. Abortion and women's groups came from Boston, Philadelphia, Tallahassee, Houston. Several carloads came from Atlanta and several buses from New Haven. A small demonstration of several hundred anti-abortionists organized by a group called Mothers for the Unborn took place on one side of the Capital while a rally at which the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band entertained, took place on the other side.

Black, Asian-American and Native American women led the demonstration of approximately 3,000 in San Francisco. Black and Chicana women spoke of the need to end forced sterilization and the special problems of third-world women in attempting

to liberate themselves. The counter-demonstration of 50-100 opponents of a woman's right to choose used pickled fetuses and photographs of fetal development to indicate their position of abortion as murder. Simone de Beauvoir was among the 4,000-5,000 demonstrators who marched through the streets of Paris demanding "free abortion and contraception on demand" on November 20. This spirited demonstration was led by the Mouvement pour la Liberte de l'Avortement (Movement for the Right to Abortion), Femmes en Lutte (Women in Struggle) and the Mouvement de la Liberation des Femmes (Women's Liberation Movement) from the Place de la Republique to the Place de la Nation. As the marchers neared a women's prison near the end of the march they shouted their solidarity with the oppressed women prisoners.



The focus of Nov. 20 in Canada: women challenge the federal gov-

## demonstrations across

"We here represent not only ourselves; we represent the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who support repeal of the abortion laws." Lorna Grant, on staff of the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition, described the significance of the November 20, demonstration for abortion law repeal in Ottawa.

International Abortion Action Day was called by the Women's National Abortion Coalition in their founding conference in New York on July, 1971 and the challenge was taken up by men and women around the world. Demonstrations were held in New Zealand, England, France and in Washington and San Francisco, Ottawa and Vancouver.

The demonstrations were modest in size—approximately 1,500 people demonstrated across Canada; but this is the first time coalitions of this breadth have joined together to work toward a common goal. Thus, November 20 was an historic "first".

Most of us are aware of the results of our conditioning—that women can't get together to discuss anything more significant than fashion or child rearing; but we have made the first big step in proving to ourselves, to other women and to the Government that Canadian women do want change and we are prepared to work hard to obtain it.

Being socialized into passivity and faced with seemingly total oppression, women often feel defeated before we begin. Nothing we can do can make any difference. Women in Ottawa were encouraged by the sense of solidarity we felt with the other women there, although superficially we had little in common other than our strong desire for abortion law repeal.

Many women who turned out in Ottawa, and in other cities where demonstrations were held, had never taken part in a march or, in many cases, had never been involved in the women's movement in any aspect. These women will be out marching with us again and will bring their friends next time. These women, out for abortion this time, are also being exposed to feminism and will become a part of the growing women's movement involved in all areas of our oppression.

The tradition of demonstrating

for women in Canada is a new one. It will take time before the significance of demonstrating becomes apparent to all women. Women, through demonstrating, become aware of their power. Our socialization, again, has tended to keep us separated from each other. The power of the women's movement lies in showing women that we have many things in common and our oppression will serve to unite us rather than continue to divide us.

Women who watched the demonstrations on television or saw the newspaper photographs realize now there very definitely is a women's movement in Canada whose first priority is to win the right of every woman to choose whether or not to bear a child.

### Ontario

Women unite  
Stand up and fight  
Safe abortion  
Is our right

This was the rallying call of about 400 demonstrators, mostly women, in Ottawa on November 20 for the repeal of the abortion laws. The march from the Supreme Court Building to Parliament Hill was organized by the Ontario Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition which supports every woman's right to choose when and if she wishes to have an abortion. A small counter demonstration was staged by Action Life and Alliance for Life forces.

Five busloads of Toronto participants arrived in Ottawa at about 1 p.m. and met other groups from Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Peterborough. The demonstration was followed by an assembly in Glebe St. James United Church. It featured speakers Laura Sabia (Chairwoman of the National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women) and Dr. Harriet Christie of the United Church.

### Quebec

November 19, an exciting "spectacle" was held in Montreal to raise funds for the abortion law repeal coalition. The 400-seat theatre was sold out prior to that evening and people lined up in the streets the night of the show to see Pauline

# IAL ABORTION ACTION DAY



nt to repeal abortion law.

## nada

Julien and many other prominent Quebecois entertainers. The performers agreed to put on another show if there were more than 100 people in the audience and the hall was filled for the second time.

The march in Montreal was very well attended—400 to 500 people. The two Montreal coalitions joined together for this action and two rallies were held as well. The march through downtown Montreal stopped briefly before Premier Bourassa's office to protest the provincial governments' complicity: although the law has been liberalized, few hospital abortion committees have been set up in Quebec.

Mayor Drapeau's by-law against demonstrations around government buildings prevented the marchers from their planned action at the criminal court building; however, four women laid a wreath there reading "death to the abortion laws."

## B.C.

Despite foul weather, 100 people marched through downtown Vancouver for abortion law repeal. In the rally following at the Burr and YWCA, Dr. Robert Makaroff, who was imprisoned for several months for performing abortions said:—

"Women are demonstrating abortion and they are going to get it regardless of the fancy theological footwork by a bunch of celibate old men in the Roman Catholic hierarchy."

## Manitoba

Winnipeg women were unable to present their brief as James Richardson, Federal Cabinet Minister, did not show up. The women pledged to follow Richardson around that city on his next visit to ensure that he accepted their brief.

## and...

In other Canadian cities, abortion law repeal demonstrations were held in Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg and Montreal. Briefs calling for repeal of all abortion laws were presented to Minister of Welfare, Snyder, of the Saskatchewan NDP Government. The minister stated that a committee had been set up to study the issue of abortion.

## Concerning the Infanticide of Marie Farrar a poem by Bertolt Brecht

German-born poet and dramatist Bertolt Brecht is probably best known as the author of "The Three-Penny Opera", which includes the song "Mack The Knife". Brecht's literary works cried out in the name of the oppressed.

"Marie Farrar" exposes the pain and degradation of unwilling pregnancy. This poem was read by Lyn Hemblin as part of the women's court proceedings in Ottawa.

Marie Farrar, born in April,  
No marks, a minor, rachitic, both  
parents dead,  
Allegedly, up to now without police  
record,  
Committed infanticide, it is said,  
As follows: in her second month,  
she says,  
With the aid of a barmaid she did her  
best  
To get rid of her child with two  
douches,  
Allegedly painful but without success.  
But you, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

She then paid out, she says, what was  
agreed  
And continued to lace herself up tight.  
She also drank liquor with pepper  
mixed in it  
Which purged her but did not cure her  
plight.  
Her body distressed as she washed  
the dishes,  
It was swollen now quite visibly.  
She herself says, for she was still  
a child,  
She prayed to Mary most earnestly.  
But you, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

Her prayers, it seemed, helped her  
not at all.  
She longed for help. Her trouble  
made her falter  
And faint at early mass. Often drops  
of sweat  
Broke out in anguish as she knelt at  
the altar.  
Yet until her time had come upon her  
She kept secret her condition.  
For no one believed such a thing had  
happened,  
That she, so unenticing, had yielded  
to temptation.  
But you, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

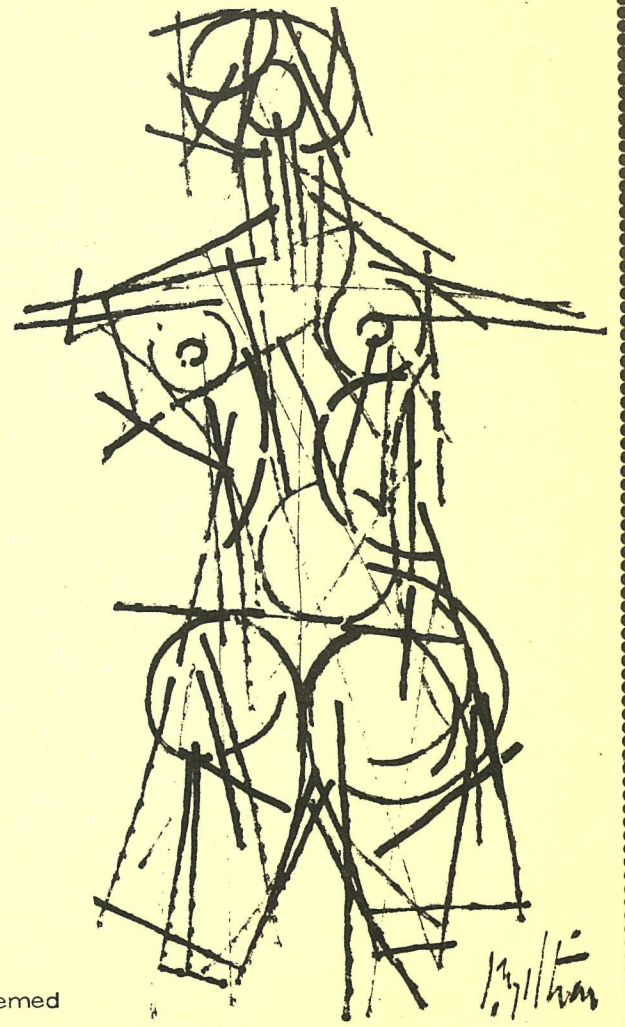
And on that day, she says, when it  
was dawn,

As she washed the stairs it seemed  
nail  
Was driven into her belly. She was  
wrung with pain.  
But still she secretly endured her  
travail.  
All day long while hanging out the  
laundry.  
She racked her brains until she got  
through her head  
She had to bear the child and her  
heart was heavy.  
It was very late when she went up to  
bed.  
But you, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

She was sent for again as soon as  
she lay down:  
Snow had fallen and she had to go  
downstairs.  
It went on till eleven. It was a long  
day.  
Only at night did she have time to  
bear.  
And so, she says, she gave birth to  
a son.

The son she bore was just like all  
the others.  
She was unlike the others but for this  
There was no reason to despise this  
mother.  
You, too, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

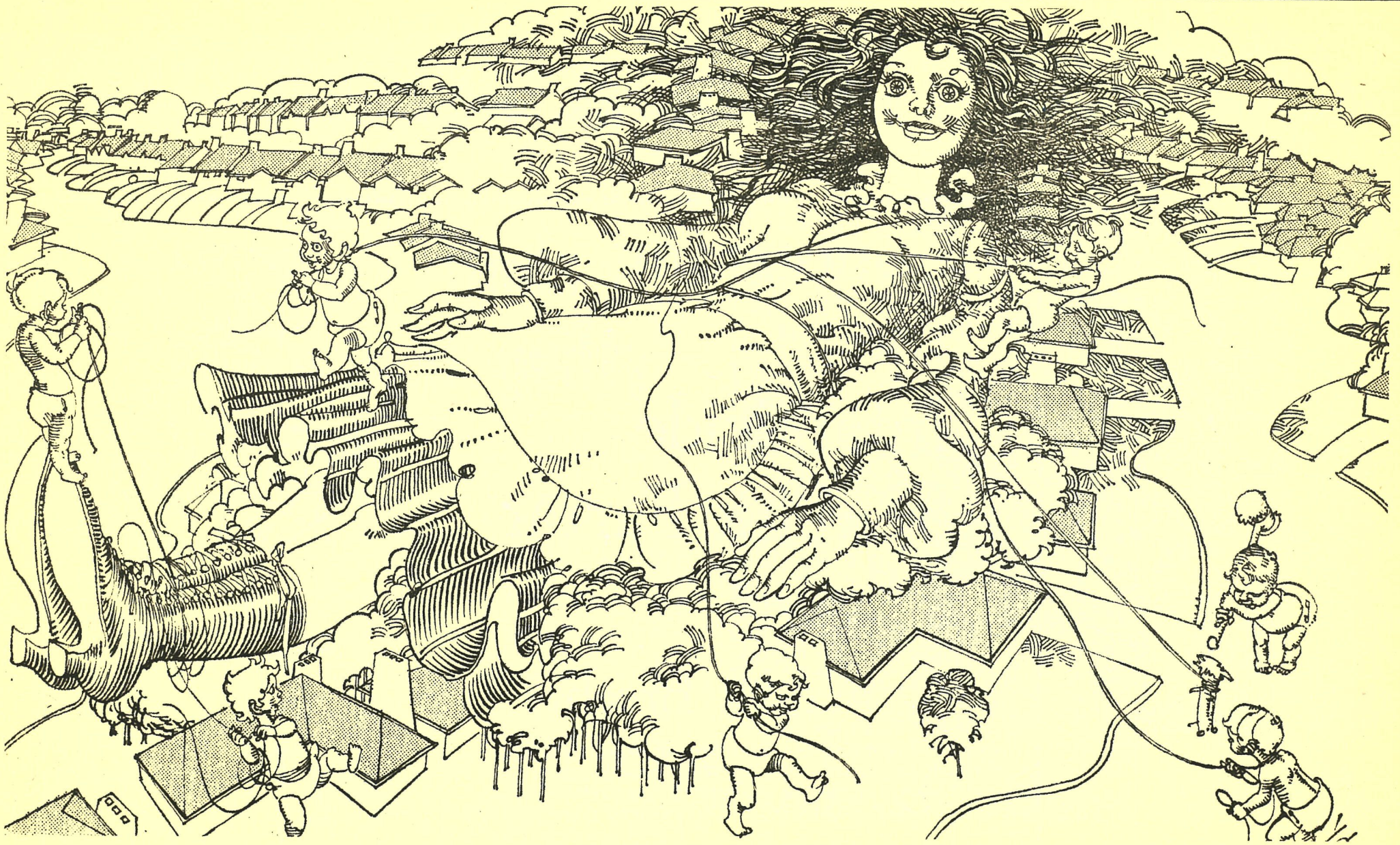
Accordingly I will go with the story  
Of what happened to the son that came  
to be.  
(She says she will hide nothing that  
befell)  
So let it be a judgment upon both you  
and me.  
She says she had scarcely gone to  
bed when she  
Was overcome with sickness and she  
was alone,  
Not knowing what would happen, yet  
she still  
Contrived to stifle all her moans.  
And you, I beg you, check your  
wrath and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.



With her last strength, she says,  
because  
Her room had now grown icy cold,  
she then  
Dragged herself to the latrine and  
there  
Gave birth as best she could (not  
knowing when)  
But toward morning. She says she  
was already  
Quite distracted and could barely  
hold  
The child for snow came into the  
latrine  
And her fingers were half numb with  
cold.  
You too, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

Between the latrine and her room,  
she says,  
Not earlier, the child began to cry  
until  
It drove her mad so that she says  
She did not cease to beat it with her  
fists  
Blindly for some time til it was still.  
And then she took the body to her bed  
And kept it with her there all through  
the night:  
When morning came she hid it in the  
shed.  
But you, I beg you, check your wrath  
and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.

Marie Farrar, born in April,  
An unmarried mother, convicted,  
died in  
The Meissen penitentiary,  
She brings home to you all men's sin.  
You who bear pleasantly between  
clean sheets  
And give the name "blessed" to your  
womb's weight  
Must not damn the weakness of the  
outcast,  
For her sin was black but her pain  
was great.  
Therefore, I beg you, check your  
wrath and scorn  
For man needs help from every  
creature born.



# “An oyster can be a mother. The difficult thing is to be a person.” \*

## on being a feminist mother

By PAULA HOWARD

As both a mother and a feminist I find a conflicting sense of awareness and conflicting responsibilities. I recognize the oppressiveness of my female role and particularly my role as a mother. It ties me down, limits my flexibility and my ability to participate in meetings and movement activities. I find my life consumed by shit work and it makes me angry.

I am also aware of the oppression of my children - that I am forced to limit them, thwart their desires. My moods and frustrations affect them. I am angry at the forces that oppress them, that stifle their capacities for loving and encase their spontaneously pursued pleasures in learned rigidities.

I find myself wanting to fight repressive school boards and theories of child rearing that leave no room for me. Faced with rising pollution and international wars, I want to make a better world for my children to live in. And yet, I don't want to lose sight of myself and fighting for my own liberation as a woman.

Most of the women in the feminist movement at this time tend to be young working women or students, mostly childless. Yet a movement that ignores the majority of women - mothers - would be utopian. We

cannot be liberated as a sex by a few young women. The liberation of women is a monumental task that can only be achieved by a mass movement that includes all women.

We are engaged in one of the most profoundly revolutionary movements in the history of human consciousness. But revolution comes from below, from the lower classes, from savages and ne'er-do-wells, from women and children, from seemingly trivial and contemptible events. ". . . The everyday event remains trivial for those who do not have the eyes to see", writes poet-philosopher Norman O. Brown, as if he would know. It is women who have done the world's shit work since the beginning of time and are forced to do it still all the way into the cybernetic age. "To find peace", chant the gurus, "we must know humility and we find humility in shit work." But where does humility end and humiliation take over.

In that orchestrated La Traviata of the mundane, of Lorca and laundry, creaking and groaning under the burden of sexist male oppression, we have learned that everything is holy, everything is symbolic. In our everyday dealings with the trivial and the commonplace, with untied shoe laces

and burned dinners, we have learned that there is no special time, place or person privileged to represent the rest. We have also learned Rage. Rage at the chains of oppression that shame and bind us to roles that are inflexible and degrading, and cut us off from a moving and developing world.

We are indeed involved with the trivial, and we become so involved with fighting for a sane situation for our children that we forget about ourselves. The Motherhood Myth

There is a man who calls me wife who knows me but does not know my life

and my two sons who call me mother see me not as any other yet if the fabric of my day should be unwound and fall away what coloured skeins would carelessly unwind where I live secretly?

Miriam Waddington  
from Call Them Canadians

has been thoroughly engrained in all of us. Mom is a self-sacrificing martyr who puts everyone first and in doing so loses sight of herself completely. How well I know. There came a moment in my life, a moment of intense isolation and little pleasure. That realization was the beginning of

a battle to recover myself. In the women's movement I had opportunities to share this moment with other mothers and together we staggered along. In that final moment of desperation we learned that it is legitimate for us to think of ourselves first.

It is not possible to resolve the problem of motherhood and conflicting interests as an individual woman. As long as child rearing remains the primary responsibility of woman we are forced to seek individual solutions and these are at best temporary, stop-gap measures.

This conflict will not be resolved until child-rearing becomes a collective responsibility and this means free and adequate day care centers available to all women. We must also have the right to choose whether or not to bear a child in the first place.

To complete ourselves as whole individuals with the capacity for love and dignity, we must have control over our own lives. This can only be achieved by a mass women's movement that seeks to free women from the oppressive and repressive nature of the motherhood role. Disengaged from normal social life we have been robbed of our essential humanity.

\* Francis Perkins Gilman, 19th century feminist

# once you've found sisterhood, you've found yourself

By Rita MacNeil

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS: One of the most memorable developments of the past year has been Rita MacNeil's emergence as a feminist songwriter and singer.

Although she only began singing this spring in Toronto, Rita has rapidly become known across the country. In mid-November she toured campuses in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Cher Welmsley, in a review printed in *The Sheaf* (University of Saskatchewan paper), gives her impressions of Rita's singing:

"In describing her style, words like energy, spontaneity, vibrance, and soul come to mind. Soul because she gives and believes and sings from her heart . . . It was hard to believe the tremendous emotional impact her songs and her voice had on a crowd of people suffering from typical mid-week lethargy."

Rita in many ways embodies the dual dynamic of women coming to the feminist movement: it was the movement which first gave her the strength and the confidence to develop her abilities as a writer and singer, and in the process Rita has become one of the most powerful popularizers and builders of the women's liberation movement.

Her songs cut across the divisions and differences between women to express the fears and frustrations and anger that all of us have felt - we learn from her that we can share a pride in our strength as women. The emotional impact of Rita's songs is a preview of what it will feel like to be part of a mass movement. Listening to her sing, we realize how desperately we need that movement.

Born a woman - in Nova Scotia in 1944.

My family owned the local store in a country village at the time. My memories of my early years there are happy ones; it was not until I started school that I became aware that I had a harelip. Like anyone else who is different or suffers from a defect I experienced the rejection of other children.

Operations to correct this defect were taboo, and the local doctor informed my parents that there was no one who would be able to perform such an operation anyway. However, the local priest was kind enough to bless my lip every week and assured us that that was all I needed. Believe it or not, that little gesture saw me through many a school day.

My family eventually moved to Sidney, but life was no easier for me in a larger city. My school work suffered from lack of concentration - I was too busy worrying about what would happen after class. The usual crowd gathered to shout their farewell chant to me as I walked home.

School dances were another experience for me. Every week I insisted on going, and every week I was never asked to dance. When I returned home in tears, my mother would be waiting to comfort me, saying it didn't matter. She insisted in her own way that I exaggerated their re-

jection of me. I would try hard to believe her and go again next week. One of my friends paid her brother once to dance with me - but I found out and that was worse.

Those years were not entirely unhappy. I had a few good friends - women in my class at school who were very kind.

During my years of growing up I developed a great love for music. I would spend hours in my rocking chair listening to the radio: this always eased my mind. Singing is the way I can express myself best, and has proven a great emotional release for me.

I recall one time when I sang for my class at school, and everyone seemed to like me all of a sudden, for a day at least. I can remember crying for an hour out of pure joy. But this feeling soon passed - anyway, I couldn't sing forever.

At the age of seventeen, having finally undergone five years of painful operations to correct my harelip, I left home. I had been too miserable in Nova Scotia to want to stay there; there were no job openings for me there anyway. I wanted to go away - anywhere - so I came to Toronto.

My intention was to become a singer but my lack of self-confidence prevented me from singing in front of people, even from taking singing lessons. The only time I found my-



self bursting forth was when I sang gospel music - however, gospel music was not the "in" thing. I went once to a talent agent - he stressed wearing low-cut dresses and the songs he wanted me to sing were things like "I Feel Pretty" and "I Enjoy Being a Girl!"

I found work in the credit department of a big department store. I did what every other girl was doing: I bought clothes and makeup, trying hard to play up my good points. I was still very conscious of the scar on my face and covered it carefully with makeup every day.

I wanted to attract a man. I succeeded, and fell deeply in love. After three years of courting, I was left - alone and pregnant. This adventure did to me what it does to every woman: it changed my life. I felt I had lost something, that I could never feel that way about anyone or anything again.

I proceeded to start over. I returned to work and eventually found a man who, I felt, understood me. We married; we now have two children, a son and a daughter.

During our six years of marriage, we tried many a scheme. One of these was buying a farm seventy-eight miles from Toronto and a quarter of a mile from the dirt road. I had much time to be alone; I became an excellent housekeeper and devoted mother. Somewhere along the line my head was neglected - the house became my whole world. I really didn't have much choice; I was there seven days a week.

It was during my time at the farm that my friend, Christine, introduced me to women's liberation. She brought up the topic at a party - she was very excited about a demonstration. At first I was very sceptical about the whole idea; then I began to think that just maybe this was what my mind needed.

We eventually sold our farm and moved into Toronto. I went to my first T.W.C. meeting with Christine. When I walked into the room, women were busy talking about a demonstration they had been on. I was overcome with their enthusiasm - so much so I could hardly wait until the next meeting. The next time I wore

less makeup - developing a bit of confidence in just being me.

What inspired me to write songs all of a sudden was these women. Their awareness of what has been happening to women reached me - I could relate to what they were saying. With the support of these women, I was able to sing in public and gradually developed confidence in my own abilities.

Each one of us has something to offer the movement. My songs try to get across a message to and about women. How long I'll write songs I don't know; I do know, once you've found sisterhood you've found yourself.

Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?  
Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?

You've appeared in history books of  
Man;  
There you were in the shadows once  
again.  
There's a very good chance you'll  
appear again--  
If there's room between the lines.

Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?

You've typed the letter for him to  
sign;  
You served him coffee with a  
winning smile.  
There's a very good chance when  
tomorrow comes--  
You can do it all over again.

Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?

You say these walls a prison make,  
And you're confined in so many ways.  
There's a very good chance that  
you'll survive--  
If you close the door to  
searching mind.

Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?  
Why are you angry, woman?  
Why do you rise?

-Rita MacNeil 1971



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MACNEIL  
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# Miss Canada contest: what it's really like

By GIELA DICKMAN AND ELLEN SERETAN

Laura Farquhar, a chaperone for the recent Miss Canada Beauty Pageant, contacted the Toronto Women's Caucus in hopes of exposing what she found to be exploitative in the contest production. We interviewed her and asked her to explain her opposition to the contest procedure.

"The contestants," she said, "were led to believe that the twelve days of preparation for the contest would be interesting and exciting and that they would enjoy sight-seeing and other activities in Toronto. In short, the experience was billed in advance as 'a good time', and it was obvious after several days that the girls hadn't known what they were getting into.

"What, in fact, happened," she explained, "was that every minute of their time was exploited by Cleo Productions and the various commercial sponsors. Each day began at 6:30 a.m., the hour the women had to be at the hairdresser's. And from the moment they left the hairdresser's they were on public display for the rest of the day, posing for photographers and advertising the products of the contest's sponsors.

"That the women suffered from fatigue," Ms. Farquhar continued, "should have been obvious to everyone. The schedule allowed no time for rest periods and most days ended at about 11:30 p.m. At times some of the women actually broke down under strain and exhaustion, but nothing was done to provide even a few minutes of relaxation.

"The only sightseeing they did in those twelve days consisted of a short trip to Niagara Falls, but this too was for commercial benefit - 'Miss Canada contestants ride Air Canada'.

"A rule of the contest was that none of the women were allowed to smoke in public (i.e., anywhere but their hotel rooms) and each woman could drink only one alcoholic beverage at a meal or reception. Thus, the women received one drink apiece at the wine party held at Ontario Place. This occasion too was nothing but an advertising gimmick. Photographers

recorded the fact that Miss Canada contestants drink Andre's Wines, even if it's only one glass.

"The girls found it very annoying to spend the first half-hour of every dinner under bright lights, but this couldn't be helped, said the contest's producers. The girls had to be photographed at every meal to advertise what was being eaten or where it was eaten, with hairstylists and cosmeticians busily at work around the dinner table making certain that each woman was picture perfect for every shot. The film sequence for Swift's Meats that was shown on T.V. during the contest telecast was photographed over an entire afternoon and in no way reflected the girls' candid and spontaneous reactions to the plates of luncheon meats.

"The Charity Ball, held by the Parkinson Foundation, was supposed to be a fun and gala celebration where the girls could wear the coats loaned to them by Bobby Bloom Furs. However, when they arrived at the Ball, they donned the furs only long enough to walk past the row of photographers and then the coats were whisked off their backs and returned to the fur salon representatives. The contestants had been told that this was really the only occasion they would have to spend with their parents before the pageant, but parents and chaperones were required to pay the \$25 per plate donation if they attended. Escorts were provided for the girls, or rather some of the girls (there weren't enough to go around)."

We asked Ms. Farquhar if she sensed any feeling of competition among the girls. She told us that surprisingly there was very little expression of competitiveness. The contest itself became a relatively unimportant part of the two weeks' activities. The T.V. production was rehearsed several hours each day, but the actual contest was obscured by the efforts of sponsors and the girls themselves to make a good production.

Ms. Farquhar went on to relate other objections the girls had to the way they were treated. "The contes-

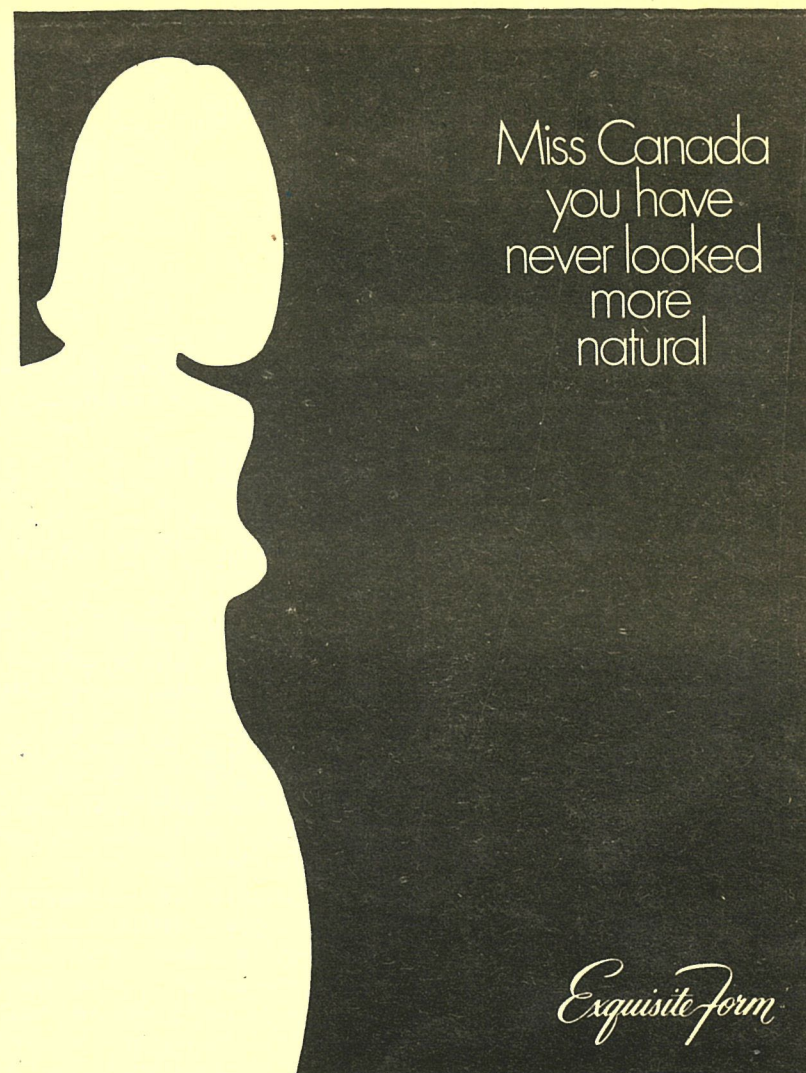
tants," she explained, "had no control over what they did or how they looked. As soon as they arrived in Toronto (and some arrived quite late at night) they were rushed off to beauticians and cosmeticians where long hair was chopped off against the girls' strenuous objections. Throughout the two-week ordeal, the girls were never allowed to apply their own makeup. They couldn't go anywhere, not even the hotel lobby, except in the presence of a chaperone.

"Perhaps the greatest disappointment, however, was the post-telecast reception. The girls had been told that this was their party, an opportunity to unwind, see their parents and take advantage of the open bar. However, after the telecast ended at 11:30 p.m., the girls were told to wait with their chaperones upstairs in the hotel. When the chaperones decided to escort them to the party anyway, they were herded into an upstairs lobby. At 1:00 a.m., the chaperones again led the girls downstairs to the reception but this time broke through the

security of Cleo Productions and made sure that the girls got in. The bar closed ten minutes later. The attitude of Cleo Productions seemed to be 'You're not Miss Canada now, so you might as well go home.'

"The whole thing," concluded Ms. Farquhar, "was a money-making procedure from start to finish, and there was never any consideration shown for either the girls or their chaperones (who were, by the way, unpaid volunteers). The girls were given a few gifts at the end, but they worked hard for them. The contestants in effect were used for two weeks of advertising and commercial promotion. There was never any thought on a human level for what the girls were going through."

When we asked what she thought of beauty competitions after her experience as chaperone, Ms. Farquhar replied, "The whole thing is dying out which I think is a good thing." Would she ever participate again in the production of a beauty pageant? We received an emphatic and resounding "NO!"



Ad from this year's Miss Canada Souvenir Program

## women at Bell Canada face deep-rooted discrimination

By LIS ANGUS

The six-month-long dispute between Bell Canada and its 8,000 women telephone operators in Ontario and Quebec has officially ended with the ratification of a new contract late in November. But the new contract does not eliminate one of the underlying factors of the dispute: a growing awareness among women operators that Bell is exploiting them as women.

"We are up against a ruthless, male-dominated and male-oriented management", said Mary Lennox, President of the Traffic Employees' Association which bargains for operators and some other employees. "Bell has no respect for its female employees."

Bell says it consults regularly with the union on mutual problems. But Lennox, in an interview with Toronto Star writer Rosemary Speirs, describes this consultation as a farce. "They figure if we say yes to them it is communication. But if we say no we are being defiant and they don't listen."

What lies behind these statements? Some light can be shed on Bell's employment practices by a statement released this December by the Equal

Employment Opportunities Commission in the U.S. The E.E.O.C. charged that the American Telephone and Telegraph Company - which owns controlling stock in the Bell System in the U.S. and in Bell Canada - is "without a doubt, the largest oppressor of women workers in the United States."

The E.E.O.C. statement said: "All low-paying, high-turnover, dead-end jobs are female. High-paying, desirable jobs with substantial chances for promotion to middle and upper management are male . . . the Bell system's failure to promote women must be classed as one of the most monumental inequities in private industry."

In Canada, 22,000 of Bell's 35,000 work force are women - but only two have ever made it to top management. Most are working as operators. "The telephone operator must never be ill," says Lennox. "She is expected to be on the job every day, to maintain a pleasant tone of service even though she is over-supervised and under-paid. She works split shifts, maybe spread over 13 to 14 hours a day, so she has no social life. She is expected to make the job her life."

For this, the operator is poorly paid. Operators in Toronto and Montreal receive the highest pay: before the new contract, they could earn \$104.75 a week after four years experience. Wage scales decline in communities further from the main centers: the lowest starting rate in towns like Barrie, Ont. or Drummondville, Quebec, was \$59.50 weekly.

The Association wanted an elimination of regional pay differences and a \$30 weekly increase over two years to give them parity with B.C. operators.

Bell justifies maintaining zoned pay scales and smaller pay increases on the basis of an annual wage survey of 21 comparable professions - clerical, office help, bank tellers, business exchange operators, receptionists. Lennox points out that this survey selects industries which are largely female, underpaid, and non-union, i.e., non-representative of wage levels as a whole. She describes the wage survey as "a diabolical instrument" to suppress Bell wages.

The Association conducted a strike vote last month for the first time in history. Ninety-six per cent of the operators voted in favour of a walk-out - which was only forestalled by the intervention of federal Labour Minister Bryce Mackasey. During the ensuing round-the-clock bargaining sessions with federal mediators, operators in some centers held wild-cat walkouts to protest the runaround they were getting.

Bell has made some concessions in the new contract, which Lennox described as being the hardest fought in the history of Bell Canada. Under the new contract, there will be only 3 different pay zones by October, 1973 (there used to be over half a dozen). Top pay in the highest-paid zone will go from \$104.75 to \$125.00 weekly. Although this does not meet the Association's demands, over 90 per cent of the membership voted to accept the contract.

Bell Canada has not heard the last from its female employees. As Lennox says, "The women in the union just won't take it any more."