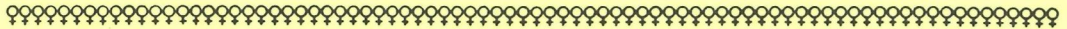


FREEDOM OF CHOICE



Canadian Association for Repeal of the Abortion Law
L'Association canadienne pour l'abrogation de la loi sur l'avortement



a quick reading summary on **THE PURPOSE OF CARAL** --from our Constitution

The purpose of CARAL is to ensure that no woman in Canada is denied access to safe, legal abortion. Our aim is the repeal of all sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion, and the establishment of comprehensive contraceptive and abortion services, including appropriate counselling, across the country.

"We regard the right to safe, legal abortion as a fundamental human right."

IS CARAL PRO-ABORTION?

No. **CARAL** stands for *Freedom of Choice* on abortion.

We recognize that unwanted pregnancy causes women to seek abortion.

The need for abortion arises from failure of birth-control methods, lack of availability of, or education in the proper use of those methods, or human error.

A woman faced with the problem of an unwanted pregnancy must have *the freedom to choose* whether to continue the pregnancy or to have a safe, legal abortion. She may choose to seek assistance and advice from her partner, her family, her physician or her church, but she shouldn't have to worry about politicians, or the criminal law.

WHAT IS THE ABORTION LAW?

Section 251 of the Criminal Code forbids abortion, except when performed in an approved or accredited hospital, after approval by a Therapeutic Abortion Committee of at least three doctors (none of whom may perform the abortion), who certify *that continuation of the pregnancy would, or would be likely to endanger the life or health of the woman.*

THIS LAW SOUNDS LIBERAL AND FAIR. WHY REPEAL IT?

The Federal Government-appointed Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law (*The Badgley Report*, Feb. 1977), lists only 559 out of 1,348 civilian hospitals as eligible to perform abortions. The central finding of the Committee is summed up in these words: "...*the procedure provided in the Criminal Code for obtaining therapeutic abortion is in practice illusory for many Canadian women.*" Another conclusion: many women and doctors do not know that abortion is legal in Canada under the present law and the circumstances described, or they are not aware of the law as it is written.

A recent survey (1975) by the *Doctors for Repeal of the Abortion Law* shows that:

1. *Canada's Abortion Law is unfairly and unequally applied and tends to discriminate against low-income and rural women. This conclusion is confirmed by the Badgley Committee.*
2. *Access to safe, legal abortion will remain unavailable to most Canadian women until abortion is removed from the Criminal Code.*

The *World Health Organization* definition of health has been accepted by the Canadian Medical Association: "**Health is a complete state of physical, mental and social well-**

being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Unfortunately most Canadian hospitals do not apply the W.H.O. definition. Some hospitals, and doctors, trying to serve the public within the law, have been picketed and intimidated by pressure groups who believe in compulsory pregnancy and are against abortion under *any* circumstances. Remember that hospitals are publicly financed. Women pay for them with taxes.

WON'T REPEALING THE LAW LEAD TO INDISCRIMINATE ABORTION?

No, it won't. Most advanced countries now perform abortions, and some have fewer abortions than we do. England has safe, legal abortions, but its abortion rate remains one of the lowest in the world. England has good sex education and birth control programs, whereas the use of birth-control is still opposed by many in Canada. France and Austria, both Catholic countries, have legalized early abortion. Even Italy, recognizing the need for change, has legalized abortion. Israel has also passed a bill making abortion legal.

IS REPEAL OF THE ABORTION LAW A RELIGIOUS ISSUE?

Religious, yes - denominational, no. For the last 100 years, Popes have been taking a strong stand against birth-control and abortion under any circumstances, but many Catholics do not agree. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Unitarians, Humanists, Agnostics and Atheists are working together for repeal. No woman should be pressured into either undergoing an abortion, or carrying a pregnancy to term because of the beliefs and attitudes of others.

IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE?

Very much so! **CARAL** believes that the present law, because it is unevenly applied, violates the Canadian Bill of Rights by denying Canadian

women equal access to a legal medical procedure.

In a pluralistic society, one where respect for differing views and attitudes is encouraged, it is unacceptable that the religious or moral convictions of one group be imposed by law upon all. Removal of abortion from the Criminal Code would permit all Canadians to act according to personal conscience.

IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A WOMEN'S ISSUE?

Certainly. Many women resent the fact that laws telling them what they may do with their lives are written and enforced largely by men. However, many men favour repeal, and have joined the campaign to remove the abortion law from the Criminal Code.

It should be emphasized that, frequently, groups which favour repressive abortion legislation also oppose contraception and sterilization. We question whether these groups sincerely want to reduce the abortion rate, or whether they are, in fact, opposed to *any* and *all* measures which allow women to control their fertility and therefore their lives.

IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A WORLD ISSUE?

Yes. The United States, England, France, Austria, Japan, China, the USSR, and many others, allow legal abortions, so that approximately two-thirds of the world's women live in countries where abortion is *safe* and *legal*. Few social changes have swept the world so rapidly. Why should we lag behind?

This world movement reflects an increased willingness by governments to face the reality of abortion as a major public health issue. They recognize that legal **prohibition of abortion does not prevent its practice**. Women continue to seek abortion even though illegal and dangerous. In fact, one of every three pregnancies

in the world today is terminated by abortion, either legal or illegal.

Canadians must convince their MPs not only to decriminalize abortion by removing it from the Criminal Code, but also to provide the necessary funds for further research into better, and safer, birth-control methods.

We must insist that all levels of government develop educational programs and community services to encourage early sex education and good contraceptive practice. This is the humane and effective way to reduce the number of abortions performed in Canada.

IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Yes. Every country where abortion has been liberalized or made legal shows a decrease in the maternal death rate. This health benefit results not only in fewer dangerous, illegal abortions, but when *safe* abortion is available, fewer births take place during those child-bearing years, early and late, which are the most hazardous for women.

The death and illness rates are greater not only for *women* in these age groups, but for their *infants* as well. Thus, complete freedom to choose abortion when necessary helps us to have healthier mothers, children, and families: A HEALTHIER SOCIETY.

ARE MOST CANADIANS IN FAVOUR OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE ON ABORTION?

Yes. A Gallup poll survey, October 1974, showed that 62% of adult Canadians believe that the decision whether or not to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician. The *Centre de Recherche sur L'Opinion Publique* found in 1975 that 57% of the Quebec population shared this view.

IS ABORTION SAFE?

Yes. In most cases, first trimester (up to 12 weeks) abortions by vacuum aspiration, performed by qualified physicians, are ten times safer than actual childbirth.

WHAT IS THE CARAL PROGRAM? An educational one. Many Canadians, including Parliamentarians, are not aware that Section 251 is inequitable and unworkable. Canadian women and their families are suffering, as are conscientious physicians who want only to provide the best possible care for their patients. We need help to educate our MPs as well as the public.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1 JOIN CARAL

CARAL is the only coast-to-coast organization working full-time for abortion law repeal. Make your influence felt at this critical time. Get your friends to join.

2 CONTRIBUTE

You can join for as little as \$10.00, but if you can afford a larger contribution, remember that we don't have government grants or the support of wealthy religious organizations. This is a grass-roots organization.

3 *Write to your Member of Parliament and tell him or her that you support freedom of choice in the matter of abortion and believe that abortion should be removed from the Criminal Code.*

DON'T PUT IT ASIDE -- DO IT NOW

Send your membership fee and contribution to:

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