



ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE



photo by Sima Khorrami

Eighteen hours



BOARD MEETING MINUTES from the weekend meeting held in Calgary, June 6/7/8, 1986.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Lisa Walter, Terri Ann Marco, Suzn Morgan, Lavera Creasy, Amanda LeRougetel, Aura Rose, Eunice Olsen, Marty White Sun. VISITORS: Debra Carnat, Deborah Perret, Shelagh Bouttell.

EMERGENCY CONSULTATION BETWEEN GROUPS RECEIVING WOMEN'S PROGRAM FUNDS AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE. Frances will attend this meeting in Ottawa on June 25 to 27. ASWAC will be among 60 groups in attendance at the meetings with Benoit Bouchard and Secretary of State Women's Program staff, Walter McLean and MPs from across the country.

LABOUR LAWS. ASWAC will attend the rally on June 12 at the Legislature.

CANADIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF ♀. Frances, Lisa and Aura will attend at meeting with Pat Cooper, Western Vice-President of CACSW and Ann Tweedie, north representative on June 16 in Edmonton.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES CONVENTION. Lavera will attend on our behalf and will attempt to set up an ASWAC literature table. Lisa will attend part of the proceedings.

NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF ♀. See separate report in this Newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP. A letter to immediate past members of ASWAC asking them to renew will be written by Frances. We discussed the size of our membership, how we might build it and whether or not we should increase the suggested fee.

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING. Eunice suggested that ASWAC might sponsor or co-sponsor such workshops in Red Deer. She will work on a proposal and bring it back to us.

ELECTION MAIL-OUT. We received positive feedback and media coverage of the flyer on Party positions that Aura prepared.

NEWSLETTER. Aura will interview one woman from each of the three parties with women MLAs - probably Pam Barrett, Bettie Hewes and Connie Osterman. Watch the next Newsletter.

DENNIS ANDERSON. Suzn will contact the new Minister for the Status of Women and request a meeting in Calgary. Debra Carnat, Terri Ann and Lavera will attempt to make this meeting.

Frances will ask for a meeting between Edmonton women's groups and Dennis Anderson and Margaret Leahey to discuss the "Advisory Council/Citizen's Advisory Committee" and other issues.

ASWAC Lethbridge. Our members in Lethbridge, who have been doing some fantastic work, have proposed formalizing their group, setting up a women's building in Lethbridge with a full-time staff member, etc. See the next Newsletter for more info.

ALBERTA COALITION AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY AND POSITIVE ACTION AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY. Both of these groups have asked ASWAC to become members. After much discussion about the merit of joining

other provincial and local groups, their need for increased membership and the fact that we are members of the Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography, we decided to support these groups as much as possible but not to take out a formal membership.

EDMONTON LEARNER CENTRE. Lisa wrote a letter to the Centre in regard to what we believe was the wrongful dismissal of Ann Dolina.

PAY EQUITY. Lisa will contact Stanley Scudder, Chairperson of the AHRC for a follow-up meeting. She will also contact Ian Reid, new Minister of Labour, for an appointment. Lisa, Frances and Cathy will represent ASWAC at the former and, if possible, Aura and Eunice will attend the latter meeting. We will attempt to reschedule pay equity workshops in Red Deer (July) and Lethbridge (fall). Board members will divvy up the list of organizations which we have written for their endorsement of our pay equity goals. Organizations that have not yet responded will be phoned. We are hoping to help establish a pay equity coalition, province-wide, by the end of the year. The possibility of a Western Symposium on Pay Equity to be held in Alberta, as early as next spring was discussed. We will discuss this with Pat Cooper from CACSW. Marty will ask Donna Tink from Grande Prairie to write a 'fact sheet' on pay equity and small business. Pieces like this should be gathered for a kit on this issue - one job for the future 3rd staff person.

CHILD CARE. See separate article about the child care hearings. Frances will prepare a follow-up letter to our members, asking for action at the provincial and municipal levels on funding and standards of child care.

FUNDING. We discussed the MPs response to our letter requesting support of our application to Sec State. Gordon Taylor, MP for Bow River has requested our position on abortion, women fighting in the trenches and lesbianism. We decided to respond, citing our perspective on choice and peace. We just received notification that \$32,500 has been approved as in 'interim' grant to ASWAC from Sec State. We may be waiting a long time for approval of our total grant application. Our funds would have been depleted by mid-July so the interim grant is a relief if only a short respite. Frances reported on the fundraising work she and Diana Chown have been doing. We will be submitting an application for a charitable registration number and seeking private donations.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS CO-ORDINATOR. See advertisement. We worked on the job description and decided to advertise the position(s) but not hire until our funding is confirmed.

HARASSMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY. A quite bizarre and outrageous case of harassment was brought to our attention by Deborah

at a glance

Research and Publications Co-ordinator



ASWAC Job Opportunity

Perret, ASWAC member. She and two other women in a 400-level Social Work course filed an informal complaint with the Sexual Harassment Committee at U. of C. Professor Richard Grinnell, who was harassing women in the class and continually making sexist remarks, failed all three women - everyone else passed the course. Upon receipt of her mid-term, the first she had ever failed, Deborah said, in jest, that she would like to bomb his car. This remark made its way back to the Dean, Mr. Tomlinson, who has since expelled Deborah who only needed one more course to complete her BSW. ASWAC will do what we can to support Deborah while she goes through university channels of appeal.

ASSEMBLY '86. Eunice and Frances reported on their visit to the Country Lodge in Innisfail and we decided to book this facility for our Nov. 14-16 Assembly. A preliminary sketch of the weekend was drawn but we have to do much more work on it. Eunice, Frances and Amanda will pull together a budget request for the provincial government/Women's Secretariat. Eunice and two women from Red Deer have volunteered to do local organizing work for the Assembly.

RENATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS. Left too late in the weekend, Amanda and Cathy will bring a proposal re. financial and personnel policy to our next meeting, July 25-27 in Coronation.

- prepare and conduct research projects on specific issues facing Alberta women
- research (primarily secondary), composition and design of educational materials
- assists in preparation of position papers and briefs
- may negotiate for and supervise practicum placements
- co-ordination of Newsletter production, including solicitation of articles, photographs and graphics; research and preparation of major articles; paste-up
- distribution of materials; expansion of distribution system
- library maintenance
- participates on board as per by-laws
- media work when appropriate as per media policy
- assists other staff members

NOTE: ASWAC's funding for the 1986/87 fiscal year is not yet finalized, thus, hiring for this position may be delayed. We will be accepting applications for one full-time research & publications co-ordinator OR a half-time researcher and half-time publications co-ordinator OR job-sharing of the position. Salary for a full-time staff member is \$22,000 with good dental and medical benefits. Salary and benefits for half-time staff will be pro-rated accordingly. Deadline for application is July 15 with a tentative starting date of August 4.



MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT

Tackling Continuing Problems

by Patricia Tucker

If you are experiencing difficulties in receiving maintenance payments for your children from your ex-spouse, we urge you to register in the Maintenance Enforcement Program. The Maintenance Enforcement Action Committee has been made aware that women are very reluctant to get themselves on the plan. They are very apprehensive; they do not want to rock the boat; or they are just too tired and worn out to cope with just another hurdle.

Your ex-spouse has a financial and legal obligation toward the care of your children. Here is how to get on the plan:

1. Call
in Edmonton: 422-3803
other areas in Alberta: 1-800-642-3803 to receive the necessary information and the registration package.
2. Complete the required data as quickly as possible.
3. Mail to Box 2402, Edmonton T5J 3Z7 or deliver it to 10365 97 Street (J.E. Brownlee Bldg., 7th Floor).

If you are having problems in completing the form, there are Maintenance Enforcement Program staff available who can help you. You

should receive a letter from the Maintenance Enforcement Dept. confirming that you are registered on the Plan and who your assigned worker is. (If you do not receive any correspondence within 14 days, please follow-up with a call to the Dept. and ensure they have received your application.

Once you are registered, the assigned worker sends a letter to your ex-spouse requesting certain information and your ex-spouse has 14 days to respond to the Dept. If your ex-spouse calls you, you can direct him to the Dept. You can leave the communication to the staff. What we, the Maintenance Enforcement Action Committee, are finding is that as soon as a letter comes in from a lawyer or a call is received from an ex-spouse (which is usually intimidating or threatening), a woman will phone her lawyer - and there we go again - **MORE LEGAL BILLS!**

The law states that if you have a valid Court Order, it must be enforced until such time as a Court Variance is received by Maintenance Enforcement or an injunction is filed. Let the Dept. handle it. The Dept. will only stop the enforcement if they receive an official document indicating a Court Order Variance

(a change in the amount of the support payment). If this should happen, you will be notified. If your money is not coming in or you are not getting any results, call the M.E. Director, and speak to him directly about your case.

The Maintenance Enforcement Action Committee is monitoring the situation but we need your input. We understand there is a problem with large numbers of Court Variances. Ex-spouses are filing applications to have their payments reduced and the reductions, as well as the delays in payments are causing monumental problems. Please call ASWAC and ask to have your comments passed on to the M.E. Action Committee.

For your information, the Director tells us that there have been a total of 1,810 cases registered to date and \$591,000 collected since February 1st; of this, 871 claimants are from Edmonton, 509 from Calgary and the balance from the rest of the province.

NOTE: Patricia has also prepared a question and answer sheet that, due to space limitations, we are unable to publish in this Newsletter. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please let one of us in the ASWAC office know.

Antidote For Burnout

Don't work tomorrow
When you cough, when your throat burns,
stomach hurts, chest feels tight, legs ache...

Don't work
Read Meridel Le Sueur's short story
"Biography of My Daughter" and remember
activism can kill as easily as capitalism
though the death is not as sour,
Remember a serious illness
can divert your effort for years,
Remember it takes a long life
to finish this job you've chosen,
and don't work tomorrow.

When you can't sleep at night, cry
unexpectedly over a lover, friend, parents,
your dog who died
or for no reason you know...

Pick one of these instead:
sleep
think however you like
walk
plan food
dream
make love
eat

Do it with someone you love
Do it with yourself

Only pick one
Take this remedy until all symptoms disappear

Trust the heart
which brought you here
(your heart will bring you back)
and
don't work tomorrow

adrienne lauby

we recommend
**Sima
Khorrami**

freelance
photographer
468-4822

ASWAC BOARD MEMBERS

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LISA WALTER	9525-77 Avenue, Edmonton, T6C 0M3	431-0296
MARTY WHITE SUN	Box 418, Hythe, T0H 0H1	356-3797

1985/86 REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

GERRY BAILEY	RR 1, Westrose, T0C 2V0	586-2983 WestCentral
JOAN WHITE CALF	5603-50 Avenue, Camrose, T4V 0T6	672-2210 EastCentral
ROSEMARY TAYLOR	#3-806-2 Avenue NW, Calgary, T2N 0E5	270-2187 Calgary

ASWAC NEEDS A VOLUNTEER OR TWO
TO SET UP THE BOOKS WE RECEIVED
FROM EVERY WOMAN'S PLACE. LET
US KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ASWAC Board will be held in Coronation at Lavera's acreage on July 25-27. Anyone interested in attending all or part of the meeting are asked to call Lavera ahead of time.

Further meetings are scheduled for September 12-14 in Grande Prairie and October 17-19 in Edmonton. MARK your calendars for our Annual Assembly to be held November 14-16 at the Country Lodge in Innisfail.

Excerpts From ASWAC Review

The following is another excerpt from Renate Shearer's review of ASWAC and the Secretary of State Women's Program.

ASWAC'S WORK

1. What does ASWAC do for women with the use of government funds?

Appendix 6, 7 & 8 outline ASWAC activities for the past three years. They clearly indicate that the organization has carried out an incredible amount of work. When one looks at the three years, and realizes that there were only 1 or 2 staff, a few Board members, and a province to serve, one can only respond that the productivity of women's organizations is extremely high.

2. Do these activities fit into Secretary of State guidelines?

Again, the answer is clearly yes. The majority fit into education, violence, information giving, isolation, and this year, economic development.

3. When is it ASWAC work?

The question has arisen as to when is an action or activity sponsored by ASWAC or when is it that of an individual ASWAC woman. At this time in history it appears to be easier to distinguish between these areas, primarily because the Board has established clear work priorities. Some areas will always however remain hazy. This may come from the nature of women's work, the way one works in a given community or the nature of the collective. This area has been discussed previously in the report, however I wish to elaborate.

a. nature of women's work

Individuals involved in social change in a given area are often few in number, find themselves wearing a multitude of hats, involved in various aspects of a given issue, and sitting on numerous committees and boards.

As a result, it is often difficult to ascertain in which capacity one is working.

b. style of work

The strategies one develops for achieving goals for an organization depend on the particular community and its unique character. Sometimes it is appropriate to enter with clear organizational identification. At other times it is better to remain somewhat anonymous. In both cases, the goal is the organizations work; the problem only occurs when the community member working must later account for the activities.

c. equal responsibility

The collective model is ideal-

ly based on all members taking equal responsibility for action and decision. This could mean that one member in a particular region is doing organizational work with particular strategies or action as an ASWAC member with out total involvement of the ASWAC Board.

All these factors may have contributed in the past to the confusion as to ownership of activities or accountability to the organization. What is critical, I believe, is that the work continues to be done; that women's education, information on issues, lobbying and community activities take place regardless of official sponsorship.

I am aware that this concept has been discussed and reviewed by ASWAC Board members over several years with no easy solution. I do however suggest that it be considered again. Perhaps with particular emphasis on clarifying when a woman is sitting on a community based committee as an ASWAC representative or when she is there due to her individual expertise in a given area.

4. How does ASWAC decide what its activities will be?

Clearly the AGM in 1985 approved basic directions for ASWAC's major work. This work is prioritized.

In addition however, there are all the unplanned events: the crisis which occur on a regular basis. Then there are the expectations of the members as reflected in the responses to the questionnaires and the interviews. How the decisions are made on these areas is where the process becomes hazy.

I think it is possible for ASWAC to meet many of the expectations of its members without conflict or without over-extension of human resources.

There are four areas which might be helpful. I recommend that ASWAC consider each of these.

- clarifying their goals and objectives
 - analyzing the activities they select for a given area of work through self evaluation
 - keeping some type of record on success or problems with a particular action to be used for future plans, and
 - making application for a third staff person with specific responsibility for research
- Recommendation b and c require further clarification.

Self evaluation.

Evaluation usually has a negative connotation and is connected to funding cuts. I submit to you under separate cover a self evaluation guide developed by the Women's Research Centre in Vancouver, BC. It was developed by a woman's group specifically for women to assist them in making decisions on the most effective ways to carry out activities. I suggest that ASWAC consider using this as a tool for guidance in their own work decisions.

Staffing

The membership and external groups clearly want a stronger research component within ASWAC, but not to the exclusion of other work. This can only be provided by the addition of another staff member.

It is impossible, from my observation, that existing staff can carry any more responsibilities, and ongoing research is not an activity which can be carried out by Board members who already have employment or are living miles away from the existing resources.

5. Have ASWAC lobbying and actions been successful?

Lobbying is a tool for social change. It attempts to change



Excerpts From ASWAC Review

institutions and attitudes deeply rooted in our society. It is seldom a simple cause and effect process and will rarely produce results in a short period of time. Therefore the usual tools for measurement are inappropriate! For example: If ASWAC carries out a lobby and 10 years later there is a response, is this a success? If ASWAC, as one of hundreds of groups across Canada, makes a presentation to a government task force, and the position is accepted; is ASWAC given credit for their portion of the work? If ASWAC presents a position paper and lobbies but there is no government response; however an educational process takes place for other, is that a success? All these examples are real and illustrate the inappropriateness of the usual measurements for lobbying as an action. There is another area where the usual measurements are inappropriate. This is normally referred to as outreach but includes education and community development. During the interview process, several women outlined their work for me, I will quote one of these now since I believe it describes the situation clearly.

In 1982, ASWAC received a grant for outreach. This employed women to work in different areas of the province. Here is one person's story.

"My whole family got involved in this work. I packed them up for a camping trip which would coincide with my area of the Province. I needed to let women know that I was in the area and was interested in meeting them to plan a conference. I put posters up, met with church groups, put ads in the paper, sat in laundromats waiting for women so I could talk to them while they did their work. I picked up the local newspapers so I would know what the issues were in that particular town. I left notices telling them when I would be back; then I would head off to the next town and start the process all over again. My goal was to have four conferences planned and take place in my area by the fall. When I went back to the towns for the meetings, sometimes there would be two women, and sometimes five would show up. We planned the conferences in the local hall or church basement, using their interests as the theme; work, peace, violence and health. Three conferences took place. 20-25 women came to each one. Most of them had never before participated in a women's event.

Making the contacts and working with them to plan the conferences took almost six months. But the story goes on. Out of those conferences emerged women's groups. Those groups met for over two years, regularly to discuss issues, support each other--to network. Now all those groups have developed women's centers in their communities. They are now planning their own conferences, they are supporting other women, and they are carrying out the education work. This whole process took three years."

How can the usual standard of measurement apply to this type of work?

6. Does ASWAC involve its members?

ASWAC'S membership is diverse and women join for different reasons. This is clear from the questionnaires and the interviews. The reality of the involvement relates to where a woman lives, what other factors affect her life, and what type of involvement she wants to have. The desire to involve more members and how to do it has been an ongoing quest for the organization. It is a two pronged effort. One, to ensure that ASWAC is representative of the women it serves, and two, to have more women share in the actual work and leadership. At this time, ASWAC has taken two steps directed at the membership specifically:

- a. Regional representatives who will help the problem by providing greater visibility in various regions of the province.
- b. Extensive outreach work by staff and Board.

Another step could be the expansion of the committee structure, giving them specific areas of work. These need not be in Edmonton but could be located in other areas of the province using local Board members as facilitators or organizers. Finally, it must be mentioned that the involvement of members is not just a problem of ASWAC. It is ongoing concern for all organizations. ASWAC has probably done more than most to attempt to rectify this problem. There are no easy solutions.

THE FUTURE

ASWAC members have given some clear indications of their concerns for the direction and work of the organization. I hope the Board and membership will take these into account as they make future plans.

Girl's
Night Out
Women's
Pub
Saturday,
July 5
8 p.m.
Edm
Women's
Bldg.
Free
child care



Intro To Child Care

by Bonnie McEwen and Mariette Tremblay

Child care: a user-fee service for parents often referred to as babysitting.

The need for child care services in Canada goes undisputed. "When it is documented in Canada that a few children have died because of poor care, that some have been physically and emotionally battered, and that many are spending their days bored and almost ignored when they should be getting good care, guidance and instruction, it is clear Canada has a problem of major proportions mushrooming from coast to coast" (The Kin Trade, p. 17).

The most recent report on child care in Canada, the Katie Cooke Report, states that every parent needs some form of child care service at some time. This could be to provide child care to meet the needs of parents: for employed parents or parents seek-

ing work; during times of illness, emergencies, crisis; for parents involved in religious, educational, volunteer social or leisure pursuits. It could also be used to assist and support parents in meeting a child's needs - physical, social emotional, intellectual and aesthetic needs - in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment.

Pressures for out-of-home care comes from several sources. The majority of women with young children are in the work force providing primary to secondary sources of income. Women appreciate good care which can increase chances at equal opportunities for short and long-term employment and financial security. Parents are becoming more informed about the increasing knowledge on child development and seek to provide optimal experiences for their children. These need support, information and reliable services

task of childrearing. Demographic changes from rural to urban society, increased mobility, frequent job changes, and older women returning to the work force make it unrealistic to depend upon the extended family for child care. Advocates view child care as a right and a social responsibility where all members of our society - parents, fellow-workers, employers, and governing bodies work together to guarantee the well-being of a very important and vulnerable human resource.

What Does Free, Universal, Non-Profit, Quality Child Care Mean?

To understand this phrase that can easily become a cliché shaded by one's perceptions and values, a definition of each term is necessary.

Child Care: Child care is used to mean any choice of care that a parent decides to provide for chil-

Child Care . . . We Care Child Care . . . We Care

dren. Parents are consumers of a service for someone else: it is usually a user-fee service and often provided out of the parent's home. This includes child care centres (day care) for-profit or non-profit, family day homes, licensed or unlicensed, out-of-school care and play programs.

Free means a service guaranteed without a user-fee, such as public schools, health and social services, roads, libraries or (in some provinces) medical care. It means a right to the same privileges as children five years and older.

Universality suggests that good child care be provided to every child, regardless of age, sex, economic situation, special needs or geographic location. It demands that public monies be directed to fund services, and that child care become a political priority. It also implies a system of standards.

Non-profit means that the ulterior motive for the service is to meet a societal need. It is not a business venture, nor is it a free service: existing non-profit centres are usually government funded or subsidized (unless they are co-ops) and charge a user-fee comparable to for-profit services. A board of directors consisting of local people and parents provide direction. Research shows a link between non-profit centres and the following attributes: higher levels of staff training, better wages and benefits for workers, lower rates of staff turnover, higher levels of self-regulation for maintaining standards, and programming. In Alberta less than one-third of services are non-profit compared to two-thirds nationally.

Quality child care is difficult to define in measurable terms. There are many components, inter-related and integrated, which cannot work in isolation, needed to guarantee good care. Underlying the philosophy of an early childhood program is a strong belief in the developmental approach, which sees that a setting provides for growth and development for the child, for the worker and for the parents. There is also a recognition of the importance of human relationships for a child's personal growth, self-awareness and self-esteem; and between the staff parents and among staff members. The ultimate goal is the well-being of the child. Listed below are some of the basic requirements of quality care:

- *care must be reliable, consistent, accessible and affordable.
- *minimum legal standards for

group size, ratio, physical indoor and outdoor space, health and safety procedures, staff training and minimum wage must at least be met and maintained. The standards vary from province to province. Alberta compares favorably in some areas, such as group size and ratio, but has no training requirements for any staff, and nutritional requirements are not specified. A major concern, however, has been lack of maintenance of standards (Bagley Report).

*staff training is essential for workers to understand what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how it needs to be done. A professional attitude will then reflect in their understanding of child growth and development, interpersonal skills, methods of curriculum planning and sense of commitment to the field. This enhances the worker's innate ability to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment. Training also increases the ability to gain perceptiveness and insight into changes of behaviour or special needs. A well-trained staff becomes a positive role model for the child and a resource for parents. It is interesting that as parents, we may seek specialists for medical aid, well trained coaches for sports, but for the child care task, training has not been considered necessary.

*Parents need to be respected, implicated and involved in some decision-making processes to see that the program meets their needs. A parental commitment demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility, care and concern about the importance of service to the child. It also creates a network where the staff members and parents work together toward a common goal.

*The physical environment and the primary focus for program planning are child-oriented. Good care goes beyond providing adequate physical and custodial care.

Activities and environmental possibilities need to be planned to safely enhance the growth of the developing child. Social interactions with, and individual attention with adults are promoted and encouraged by the use of effective interpersonal communication skills.

*Self regulations and self-evaluations become an ongoing process for trained child care workers. The desire to achieve optimal performance is intrinsic.

*Values to promote (Good Day Care, pp. 59-65) are equality, cooperation, critical thoughtfulness, empathy, creativity, respect for others, enjoyment of people (rather than things) and a desire to contribute to society. Discriminations to combat include ageism (young and old), sexism, classism, racism and intolerance of those with special needs.

Myths

There are several existing myths that create a sense of mistrust toward organized child care. These need to be re-examined.

1. Day Care will weaken the parent-child bond.

Research has linked a parent's strong mental health with a child's mental state, this being more important than exclusive parental care. Children are able to form many strong attachments with a variety of people.

2. Home care is best for optimal child development.

Physical and intellectual development are related to encouragement, space and stimulus. No research has yet proven that mothers instinctively have parental skills: knowing a child best is not the same as knowing what is best for your child. The main concern is the separation, espec-



ially for children between 7-18 months, who usually lack an inner sense of security and self-identity and fear a permanent loss.

3. Young children cannot relate to one another.

Parallel play exists but social interaction among children even at a very young age occurs and taking pleasure in other babies is very evident.

4. Children in group care are more likely to become ill.

Studies show that, initially, children in group care are more exposed to communicable disease and are more likely to become ill but this is reduced with time. Quality care guarantees a preventative approach including sanitation, routine, health and illness policies and procedures.

5. Universal is equated to centralized, institutionalized, depersonalized group care.

Universal means accessible to every child. Certain standards are set and maintained by a committed government body, but decision-making, policy control can all be made at the grass roots level.

6. Free service is an abused service.

This reflects the attitude of blaming the victim. Usually society trusts that only a minority of user will abuse a free public service. If a child's well-being is seen as a social responsibility, then it follows that the necessary means will be taken to guarantee good care. In this case the logical consequence is providing adequate monetary funds for a comprehensive child care system.

7. Out-of-home care assumes a parental responsibility and invades the realm of privacy. Good care provides a network, a support system and resources for parents. This sharing aids in adding pleasure and a sense of fulfillment for a very challenging and awesome task.

8. Its Too Expensive.

When the costs of poor care are considered, the cost to parents, cost to employers, cost to society and the cost to the children themselves, the feasibility of a comprehensive system takes on a new perspective. Public services are difficult to assess in fiscal terms and many studies look at the cost of inaction and the benefits of action in short and long term ranges (see the Cooke Report).

How to Organize

A public program is implemented when governing bodies decide that there is a societal need, according to the voice of its people. Concerned citizens need to take a public stand on this issue.

ASWAC has presented a position paper to the parliamentary committee on child care. The organization focussed on three main concerns and supplied many recommendations. The paper discussed licensing and maintaining standards in child care, training and pay equity and problems exacerbated by a rural setting. Other topics included profit versus non-profit centres, parent education, cost-share programs, and implementation of a comprehensive child care system. Any one wishing a copy of our brief can obtain one by contacting the office.

When considering how to organize, there are three areas to consider: who to work with, building your organization and what types of activities you choose to do (Working Together For Change).

A. Who to Work With:

1. Front line - concerned parents, workers, providers, and local early childhood professionals.
2. Support services - children's services, women's groups, family services, volunteer and professional organizations.
3. The general public.
4. The media.

B. Building Your Organization. Working Together For Change. Vol. II Ptarmigan Press 1372 Island Hwy., Campbell River, B.C. V9W 2E1 is a good resource book. It focusses on how to define needs, organizing, assigning tasks,

meeting deadlines and addressing issues.

C. Special Activities: Activities need to be approved by the organization. Child care should be provided when necessary. A graphic artist for posters and brochures is an asset. Aim the activities for a broad base of support. Sebastian (from Good Day Care) recommends the following types of activities: petitions presented in public, letters and telephone campaigns, public meetings and debates, demonstrations, media campaigns, press conferences, lobbying politicians, private meetings with your local member of parliament or legislature. The nitty gritty means that a filed system of resources be organized to include annotated bibliographies of resources and materials, mailing lists of members, politicians, resource people, grant applications, publishing companies, telephone trees... This organization could borrow the green peace adage of "Think global, act local".

Further Reading

Bagley, Chris. Child Care in Alberta

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Johnson, L. & J. Deneen. The Kin Trade. Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1981.

Ross, Kathleen Gallagher. "Children and Values", Good Day Care. Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1978.

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Sebastian, Nikka. "How to Organize" Good Day Care, op cit.



It became obvious to me, sitting through a full day of presentations to the Federal Parliamentary Task Force on Child Care, that the Task Force should have been provincial rather than federal. While all levels of government are involved in child care, it is the Alberta Government that is responsible for a lack of training requirements for workers, lax licensing and supervision and financing of commercial care (which now makes up at least 75% of all centres compared to 34% nationally). These issues were most prevalent in the twenty-seven presentations that were heard in Edmonton on June 2nd.

Where there is consensus, at least among 'progressive' groups, it is reached on issues that pertain to provincial jurisdiction. I noted a definite lack of consensus in regard to federal financing (should it be continued via the Canada Assistance Plan or changed to direct funding?), a national child care policy and monies to parents who choose to stay at home. I think it will take some time for all of us to digest and form our opinions on the Katie Cooke Report with its far-reaching implications.

Unfortunately, this task force took just about every opportunity (Leo Duguay from Manitoba in particular) to criticize the financial projections for universal child care that came out of the Cooke Report and the Monica Townson cost/benefit analysis for the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association. Duguay, Vice-Chair, repeatedly told the presenters that the Canadian public will not accept universal child care as a financial priority and stated that both Cooke and Townson underestimated the cost. ASWAC was asked whether we had compiled our own cost estimate for universal child care. We replied that we had not (it would cost us more than our annual budget to do the research!) but that we supported the 'essence' and the goals of both studies.

Predictably, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce stood opposed to publicly funded day care, stating that we can't afford such programs as medicare and unemployment insurance at present. While Mr. Hamm said that the Chamber is not opposed to day care, it rejected virtually all of the 53 recommendations in the Cooke Report.

The Alberta Federation of Women United for the Family (AFWUF) also rejected the Cooke Report and stated that home care is more important than the intellectual

development of child care workers. Jeanne Takahashi, who represented AFWUF, argued that there is no crisis in day care. She closed by stating that her organization appreciated (1) the hard work of feminists in the past ten years but told the Task Force that they should recognize that feminists do not represent all women (and especially not AFWUF women who have been working in the home).

Unions and employers were questioned on work-site child care. Apparently Alberta lags behind most of the other provinces in provision of child care at parents' work places. I heard no hopeful responses to this question

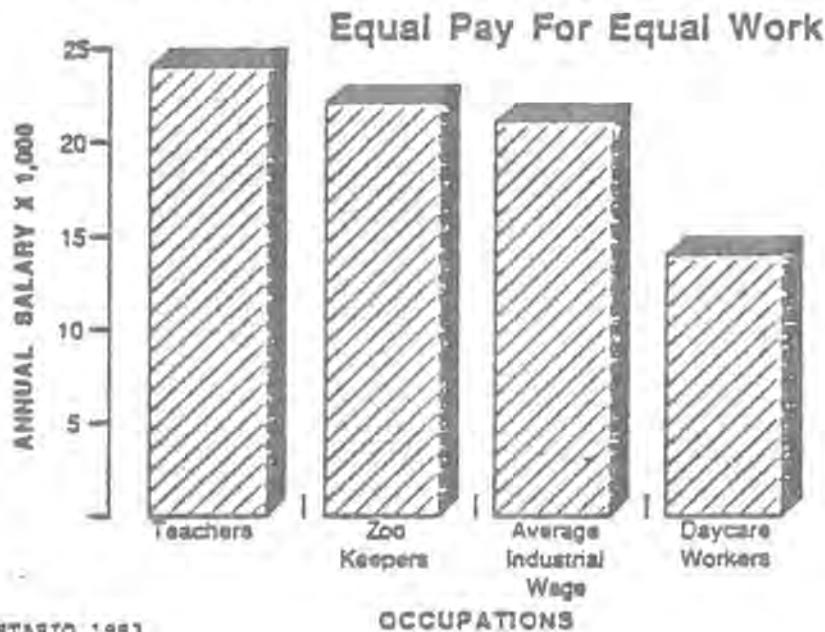
Commercial, for-profit centres responded to criticism by stating that they were really "non-profit profit", meaning they weren't making much money. While those of us who would like to see commercial child care phased out acknowledge that some centres do provide quality care, many do not.

Commercial centres do not have to meet very high standards, hire trained workers or work with parent/community boards. This issues arose time and time again but the response from the Task Force was that standards are a provincial responsibility and they do not foresee any change in jurisdiction.

I hesitate to speculate how great a difference there will be in the report of this Task Force (the absence of Lucie Pepin and Margaret Mitchell in Edmonton was unfortunate) but I do think that many of the Cooke Report's recommendations will be countered in the new report and shelved.

Now that the Task Force has come and gone, we need to direct our energies at the provincial government. I have the (possibly overly hopeful) expectation that we can have some effect at the provincial level in the next couple of years.

by Frances Adams



There are many local child care advocacy groups in Alberta as well as provincial and national organizations. These groups always need new members to help in the ongoing struggle for quality, accessible child care. If you are interested in getting involved but don't know how, give ASWAC a call. Chances are we can help connect you.

Women's Program Funding Delays

The federal Department of Secretary of State from whence ASWAC and many women's organizations receive funding still has not negotiated a budget with Treasury Board for the present fiscal year. ASWAC was lucky enough to get an interim cheque for \$32,500. Those organizations who receive "operational funding" have been given monies to tide us over. However, most groups receive project funding and monies have been frozen since February. We have no idea how long it will take for the budget to be negotiated and we expect long delays in processing the huge numbers of applications that are pending.

I am going to a national consultation on Women's Program funding July 25-27 in Ottawa. This meeting, which will include meetings with Mr. Bouchard, Secretary of State, Walter McLean, Minister for the Status of Women, Women's Program staff and MPs was organized by a number of national women's groups. There is reason for some very serious concern as to the future (not the mention the present state) of funding to all national, provincial and local women's groups. I will be making a full report on this meeting in the next Newsletter but as it will not be out until August, please contact me at the beginning of July if you want to know what happened in Ottawa.

ASWAC has had some interesting responses to our letters to all Alberta MPs requesting their support of our funding application. In "18 Hours at a Glance" you can read about Gordon Taylor's request for our position on abortion, les-

bianism and women fighting in the trenches. More recently we had a letter from Murray Dorin, MP for Edmonton West. He said:

"...I have been giving serious consideration to the whole policy area of government funding for non-governmental agencies and wanted to frame my response in the context of my overall attitude toward this type of funding.

"Women's groups are, of course, only one element of a very large sector of groups which government chooses to assist through grants and other means. These groups, by and large, promote the interests of special segments of society: cultural groups, ethnic groups, arts groups, lobby groups and so on. I have serious reservations about whether this is an appropriate use of tax dollars, particularly during a time when we are seriously considering cuts in fundamental programs which directly affect the income level of all Canadian families. I wonder if such funding isn't a luxury we can no longer afford.

"This does not imply a lack of interest in the goals of these groups. Perhaps there are other ways that government can assist, not necessarily through direct grants. For example, are there ways to assist groups in their own fundraising programs, putting the onus for group support on the communities which they serve? We might also consider some type of dollar-for-dollar matching scheme, or something based on size of membership so government is assured it is fun-

ding groups which have the most support from within their own communities.

"I would be interested in your thoughts about finding equitable ways of keeping government expenditures in check in the funding of non-governmental agencies.

Other responses have been more positive and we are actually wondering whether our letters were responsible for our receiving an interim grant because Alberta Secretary of State does not consider ASWAC or any other women's group for "operational funding". Lots more on this in the next issue.

Frances Adams



Gov't. Close-mouthed

Issues of "open government" seem to be popping up all over this spring. ASWAC has just discovered three more examples of government's response to its public. The first department of the provincial government to tie dollars to silence was Alberta Social Services. The contract this department uses to provide dollars to shelter Boards of Directors contains a clause that prohibits public criticism of the Minister or department. The clause specifies that this silence must be held by everyone involved in the shelter. Not surprisingly, some shelter Boards in the province refused to sign the contract. Others had the clause removed, while still others signed it and informed the officials they would

not be bound by the "gag" clause.

On the federal scene, we find that the Departments of Secretary of State and Canada Employment and Immigration are also fostering silence. But, this time, the silence comes from the other side of the fence. Staff working for the two departments are withholding information on the processing of applications for grants and job and training programs. Local or regional offices will no longer inform applying groups about the status of their application, the amount recommended or the expected time of response. All announcements and information apparently will be available from Ottawa only.

This doesn't help groups much. Financial arrangements are tricky at best but without information, budgeting, spending and planning with any degree of certainty are virtually impossible. These agencies have been getting tighter and slower in the past months, and putting a freeze on information will cause greater havoc.

Open government and access to publicly funded programs are matters the voting public get hot about. This kind of poor service smacks of the ills that make bureaucracies famous. The Mulroney and Getty governments should be taken to task, again.

Lisa Walter

Organizing For Power:

REPORT ON THE 1986 NAC A.G.M.,
Carleton University, Ottawa
May 30 - June 2nd, 1986

by Amanda Le Rougetel
ASWAC delegate to the conference

Personal impressions -----

What a lot of women all in one place!! There were line-ups everywhere for everything and it was always only women lining up!

All of these women had gathered in Ottawa at Carleton University to participate in the 1986 annual general meeting of the country's biggest women's lobby group.

It was my first national women's conference and, at first, I was quite overwhelmed by the notion that women had travelled from as far away as Victoria, BC, St. John's, Newfoundland and Whitehorse in the Yukon to attend this conference. The sense of being overwhelmed quickly gave way to the usual fears of inadequacy, inferiority and just plain shyness. I worked hard to overcome these inhibiting feelings and by late Saturday afternoon I was beginning to feel at ease amongst this national gathering of my sisters.

I stayed in Carleton residence and I must say that my heart goes out to all the students who spend 8 months of their year sleeping in a small room with baby blue concrete walls and eating uninspired, institutional food. I am happy to say that I survived this part of the weekend having developed a healthy respect for travelling salespeople who must spend half their lives staying in places that have lousy coffee and rubbery eggs for breakfast!

O.K., so the food wasn't great but the energy, the networking, the information given and received, the plans made and strategies developed certainly were! At the risk of sounding trivial, let me say that the very best thing about the NAC conference for me was the incredible sense of excitement I felt at simply being a participant in this national gathering of feminists; there was such power and commitment in the air that my inner woman could feed off the feeling of strength and vitality, this making up for the lack of quality food!

Women whose names only were familiar to me suddenly became recognizable, warm faces. Our diversity was gratifying and encouraging to witness - more visible and vocal than ever before at a NAC conference were francophone, disabled,

immigrant and visible minority women. Political differences exist in any group of women, and the A.G.M. was certainly no different in this respect, however, those differences did not become insurmountable hurdles in our work.

The dance on Saturday evening was wonderful: what a sight it was to see the young and the not so young all enjoy ourselves freely on the dance floor! Women in wheel chairs rolled themselves around to the music, some women danced the limbo (apparently this is a regular event at Ottawa women's dances!) while others simply lost themselves in the mood and the music. Sunday morning came all too early for many of us . . .

Friendships were forged, addresses were exchanged and good-byes were said. The annual general meeting of the National Action Committee brings women from all over Canada together for a brief weekend and in that short space of time it becomes crystal clear that the women's movement in this country is alive and well and forging ahead into a better, more just world for everyone to share. I highly recommend the experience to everyone!!



Business Items

Lots of business was done at the A.G.M. in the two large plenary sessions held on Saturday and Sunday. Candidates running for election to the executive of NAC were introduced and given a chance to speak to the delegates on Saturday morning; the convention voted on constitutional amendments which had been proposed by the outgoing executive:

- *amendments making NAC an incorporated, non-profit organization and absolving individual members of the executive from personal liability for any debts NAC might incur were passed;
- *some changes were made in some of the administrative committees and staff was given representation on the personnel committee;

- *a resolution giving Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and also the North West Territories each their own regional rep on the executive was passed with resounding support; this resolution will add 3 more positions to the exec and in so doing will vastly increase the first-hand representation of the regions which up until now have been valiantly though inadequately represented by reps responsible for too vast a region.

Sunday saw the conference delegates vote for the new executive and also begin to tackle the huge number of resolutions (regular and emergency ones) which had been submitted by member groups.

The regular resolutions (used to help formulate policy for the organization) covered the following wide range of topics: the economy (minimum wage, free trade), employment (Employment Equity bill), health (hazards in the workplace), international affairs (a call for serious sanctions to be imposed against South Africa), the media (regarding sex and race stereo-typing in the media), native women (enforcement of Bill C-31), nuclear issues and peace (development and use of nuclear power); resolutions concerning social services, violence against women and visible minority and immigrant women's issues were not able to be dealt with due to serious time constraints. This was, of course, a major problem ... too much work and far too little time to do it all! Those resolutions not dealt with have been referred to the executive for discussion and action. The information given here about the resolutions provides only the very briefest outline of the contents and intent of the resolutions - please do not hesitate to contact me through the office if you would like a copy of any or all of the resolutions in their final form.

Emergency resolutions were dealt with on Sunday afternoon; these are resolutions submitted by member groups about an issue or an event which has arisen within the previous 60 days and which needs NAC's immediate attention (rather than waiting for the next executive meeting to deal with it). I will only mention two of these resolutions here, ASWAC submitted one asking for NAC's support in urging the Alberta government to amend the Women's Secretariat Act in such a way as to provide the women of this province with a strong and independent Women's Advisory Council;

Amanda Goes to Ottawa

I spoke briefly to this resolution talking a little bit about the mandate of the current council and also mentioned the whole "strong male" story -- the resolution passed with unanimity!

The other resolution I want to mention here caused a great deal of debate and discussion: it was submitted by the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORPS) and it calls on the women's movement in Canada to work for the defeat of the recently introduced Bill C-49; it also calls on feminists to support prostitutes in their struggle to free their work from the fear and violence which currently dominates it. From the discussion which ensued from this resolution it was obvious that a lot more education needs to be done on the connections between the feminist struggle and struggle of our sisters on the street.

Workshops

I attended only two of a total possible of four workshops; the first session had been scheduled for Friday afternoon and I did not arrive in Ottawa until 3pm and didn't make it onto the Carleton campus until 4pm - too bad, I would have liked to have had the opportunity to participate in the session on the New Right. The two sessions I did attend took place Saturday afternoon and were described as being workshops geared towards discussion of action and strategies around a specific issue. It sounded great, however, in practice and in the only 1½ hour time slot scheduled for each session it didn't work. The pay equity/equal pay for work of equal value session dealt largely with Bill 105 introduced in Ontario and time constraints did not allow us to move from analysis to action and strategy planning. The second workshop was billed as being a session on how to bring more women and support into the struggle for lesbian rights. It turned out to be a more experiential session than I had anticipated - we spent the time 'sharing' with each other and did not talk a whole lot about strategies or actions. I did, however, meet some very nice women!

Regional Caucus

We met as a regional caucus (Alberta and North West Territories groups) during Saturday lunch. Representatives attended from the Business and Professional Women's Club in Yellowknife, the Women's Secretariat of

the NWT and the Society Against Family Abuse from Yellowknife; Alberta groups represented included ASWAC, Wellspring Women's Resource Centre in Whitecourt, Calgary SWAC and the NDP Women's Section, Edmonton. It was good to all get together and the short time we spent together only served to heighten the need for us to communicate more often with each as member groups of NAC. Rebecca Coulter, our new regional rep, will undoubtedly keep us all well informed and serve our interests admirably. (A future issue of the Newsletter will provide more detailed information about Rebecca and her hopes and plans as regional rep.)

The NAC Lobby

As has become an annual tradition, all those delegates who were able to stay the extra day trooped up to Parliament Hill on Monday morning to spend time meeting with the caucuses of the three major parties. Preparations for this lobby took place until well into Sunday night with the questions to be asked being reworded and refined in order to ask the maximum with a minimum of words.

I must admit that I was somewhat disappointed with the lobby - far from being full of excitement and heated exchange, the event was remarkable only for the familiarity of the politicians' responses to our questions! The Liberals, the New Democrats and Conservatives (not an Alberta MP among them!) responded to our questions in predictable manner ... after all, when 17 questions are to be asked and then answered in only 50 minutes (we met with each caucus for just one hour) what kind of innovative ideas can be discussed or invigorating discussion can be developed?

It was fun, though, to see John Turner in the flesh, to see Flora MacDonald in her purple, leather suit and to have the opportunity to talk with Pauline Jewett and Lynn MacDonald. And while the answers given by the politicians may not have been very surprising, it was obvious that the National Action Committee on the Status of Women is a force to be reckoned with on Parliament Hill! The sense of power and political understanding amongst all the NAC delegates was encouraging and exciting. If NAC is the political forum through which many active feminists choose to gain experience with and understanding of the political power structure in this country, then I think there is real potential for change through the political party system in Canada!



Making
Things
Happen
in 1986

In conclusion, let me urge all groups not yet members of NAC to join the organization and all of those groups with out-of-date memberships to renew. NAC is truly a strong and respected national voice for Canadian women.

NAC 1986/87 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The NAC Executive consists of 22 hard working, committed women who will meet in Toronto every six weeks to plan actions, strategies and policies. GOOD LUCK SISTERS!

Past-President
Chaviva Hosek - Toronto, Ontario

President
Louise DuLude - Vanier, Ontario

Vice-Presidents
Marjorie Cohen - Toronto, Ontario
Jon Leah Hopkins - Whitehorse, Yukon
Wendy Williams - St. John's, Newfoundland

Secretary
Trudy Richardson - Edmonton, Alberta

Treasurer
Donna Stephania - Winnipeg, Manitoba

Regional Representatives
Alberta:
Rebecca Coulter - Edmonton, Alberta
(every region's rep was acclaimed, full list available from ASWAC office)

Members At Large
Barbara Cameron - Toronto, Ontario
Lorraine Greaves - London, Ontario
Pat Israel - Scarborough, Ontario
Fleurette Osborne - Regina, Saskatchewan
Noelle-Dominique Willems - Montreal, Que

ASWAC Meets Counterparts

The theme this year of the Saskatchewan Action Committee (SAC) conference was "Saskatchewan Women: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". It was the subtitle, however, which really caught my eye: "Developing Collective Strategies for the Women's Movement in the 90's". Where have the 80's gone?!

Three ASWAC members attended this conference, held in Saskatoon May 30-June 1: Irene McRae (Board Member), Gerry Bailey (West Central Regional Rep), and myself (member). We were well-received, met a great many active Saskatchewan women, and among us were able to experience the conference more fully than one alone could have done.

I should mention first the Saskatchewan Women's Art Celebration which ran concurrent to the conference and added a festive touch to the weekend. The fair included musicians, craftswomen, informational exhibits, films and art displays. There was also a psychic arts room and children's entertainment (in addition to children) throughout the weekend.

For me, the "Yesterday" portion of the conference theme was by far the most inspiring part of the weekend, although in this case "Yesterday" was really inseparable from "Today" - for a very substantial number of women at the conference were older women, perhaps a quarter of those present. One featured speaker, Sophie Dixon, gave a very interesting and at times humorous account of her involvement in feminism and other progressive causes over the past sixty years.

Other speakers during the weekend spoke of using our collective power, and of the need to network across cultural and economic differences, while recognizing that we cannot and do not speak for all women.

It would be impossible to summarize every workshop, but I will mention the one I attended - Rural/Urban Bridging.

SAC's membership was originally built on a strong rural base, and I think that strength is still a fact, despite a continuing exodus from farms due to financial pressures. At this workshop, there

was a good mix of urban and rural women, and so the discussion was both enlightening and hopeful.

We talked of the (mis)conceptions rural and urban women have of one another, then listed problems both shared and unique. Some problems, such as isolation, we saw were common to both urban and rural women, but expressed and handled in different ways.

Our recommendations were that a serious dialogue be established between urban and rural women, that we question our assumptions about one another, that urban women be willing to meet rural women halfway (both literally and figuratively), that the organization ensure that urban and rural issues are addressed equally, that we educate ourselves on each other's issues and problems, and that there be more nurturing and sustenance of the rural member

SOCIALIZATION TO EQUALITY ISSUES

What Onus Do

by Anna Pellatt

I came away from the "Socialization of Judges to Equality Issues Conference" held May 22-24 in Banff feeling that something rather basic was missing. Certainly the conference was not lacking in quantity of information or diversity of opinion. Thirty-seven papers were presented over the two days ranging in perspective from Mr. Justice MacGuigan's talk on "Political and Structural Restraints on Judicial Activism" to Professor Kathleen Lahey's presentation, "The Feminist Approach to Legal Equality". The setting? The setting was perfect. There is a certain medieval quality about the Banff Springs Hotel that makes it an oddly appropriate place in which to consider judicial attitudes and behaviour.

Judges. The conference lacked judges. Particularly judicial bodies from Alberta. Of the 200 people who attended the conference, less than 20 were judges, and only 3 were from Alberta. The question is, why did a national conference focusing on the judiciary attract so few judges? Scheduling conflicts clearly accounted for some absences, but not all. What kept judges away in droves, I suspect, was what was said at the conference about the judiciary and the judicial decision-making process. And that is, that judicial neutrality, a concept at the very heart of the judicial worldview, is a myth.

How can there be judicial neutrality, presenters argued, when neither the law, nor the process of interpreting the law is gender

neutral and free of bias? The first point was eloquently made by Louise Mandel, a native rights lawyer. Ms. Mandel stated that the greatest obstacle she faces every time she goes to court is a mountain of legal principles running contrary to Indian interests that come from cases litigated without Indian representation. The law can hardly be said to be even handed in substance and application when those without money and influence have continually been at a disadvantage when it comes to having their concerns raised in courtrooms and legislatures.

The focus of discussion at the conference was on the second point, the neutrality of judicial decision-making. Those supporting the concept of judicial neutrality argued that the process of interpreting the law in relation to a set of facts is inherently neutral. Those who argued compellingly in the negative pointed out the inherent biases in a process that is largely determined by the values and perspective of the decision-maker. Age, race, sex, financial and social status are all factors which shape a personal view of the world, sometimes obscuring a clear vision of it. They are the baggage judges bring to the decision-making process. It is no coincidence, it was suggested, that the majority of judges are white wealthy men and those who continue to be ill-served by the judicial system are not. Judges have had difficulty understanding the reality of lives distant from their own.

There is ample evidence to suggest that the judicial view of equality



in Saskatchewan

base. In addition (since this workshop also discussed women and underdevelopment) we recommended more bridging efforts between native and non-native women.

I believe that SAC members intend to take up this challenge, and I would very much like to see ASWAC members do the same.

The plenary session on Sunday (prior to the business meeting) was the least satisfying part of

the conference, perhaps because there never is enough time to accomplish all we hope to. Though we heard reports from workshops and shared our parting thoughts, I wouldn't say, overall, that we talked much about long-term strategies, ie. the 90's. However, I do see more clearly what I should be doing between now and 1990, and I am glad of that!

Before we left, we extended an invitation to Saskatchewan femin-

ists to attend our next Assembly, and I do hope we will have a return delegation. Meeting members of an organization so similar to ASWAC in numbers and aims gave me a real boost. It reminded me that there are active feminists all over Canada, and made me feel the strength of our cause.

Janet Beebe

Business &

Professional Women

The Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Alberta held their provincial conference in Grande Prairie recently. Margaret Jackson, the national BPW President and Marion Dewar, President of the NDP were featured speakers and workshops on the economic status of women by Frances Adams (ASWAC) and women's spirituality by Bernadette Gasslein of Grande Prairie were held.

During the business portion of the conference, participants chose a provincial project for the next year. All clubs will participate in building a talent bank to promote women's employment and appointments to government committees and boards. Women who are interested in submitting their resumes should contact a local BPW club. The representatives also passed a motion asking Dennis Anderson, new Minister Responsible for Women's Issues to revise Bill 7, the Women's Secretariat Act to make the 'citizen's advisory body or women's council' stronger and more independent.

The new provincial council was elected and is as follows:

- President, Mary Pattie Camrose
- 1st Vice-Pres., Ira MacInnis Calgary
- 2nd Vice-Pres., Janice Woodcock Medicine Hat
- Treasurer, Lauraine Howatt Grande Prairie
- Secretary, Marjorie Garnett Camrose

There are six active clubs in Alberta, in Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Calgary, Camrose, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray. The Business and Professional Women's Clubs are primarily oriented to improving the economic status of women and have an impressive history of involvement in women's issues throughout Canada and the world.

Judges Bear?

is disconnected from the reality of women's lives. Professor Freda Steele discussed how women are being financially hurt in divorce settlements by judicial attempts to arrive at an "equal" rather than "equitable" division of assets and income. For example, judges are tending to award maintenance to older women on a time-limited basis, expecting these

women to retrain, re-enter the workforce and become self-supporting despite years and in some cases decades of working exclusively in the home. Clearly, judges have failed to appreciate certain economic realities older women face: high unemployment, low wages, the difficulty of re-entering the workforce after long absences.

The key question posed at the conference was what to do about the fact that the judiciary is out of step with certain aspects of social reality. There were a number of suggestions. Those who continued to doggedly support the neutrality of the judicial decision-making process suggested that all that is required is better preparation on the part of counsel. Judges will make equitable decisions, it was argued, when counsel provides them with all the pertinent facts. This suggestion presupposes that litigants can know the mindset of the judges they are appearing before. Will judges co-operate by preparing dossiers on themselves honestly cataloguing their level of knowledge and biases? It also places an excessively heavy and inequitable burden on one of the litigants. One side is required to produce sufficient information to enlighten the judge before

even tackling the issues in dispute.

A second recommendation made was that more women, native people and members of ethnic minority groups be appointed to the bench. The injection of new blood and different perspectives is certainly needed. The question is, will these appointments provide what is lacking? Can we expect women judges to appreciate the needs and concerns women share. The question is difficult to answer in the affirmative in light of Mdm Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's performance on the U.S. Supreme Court bench. Mdm Justice O'Connor came down on the dissenting side in a recent decision upholding a woman's right to an abortion.

A third and very popular recommendation made at the conference was that training programs be developed for judges to keep them in touch with social reality.

The question is, what onus do judges bear to keep themselves apprised of what is going on around them? Doesn't the duty to know the law, a responsibility all judges bear, include a duty to know the law in practice and impact as well as in theory?

To turn an old legal maxim inside out and on its ear, if ignorance of the law is no excuse, is ignorance of the consequences it brings any less culpable?

Anna Pellatt is a member of the Ontario bar. Her immediate goals include remaining one. She is also a new ASWAC member.

ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE
PO BOX 1573, EDMONTON, Alberta T5J 2N7

Are you out of date? Read on!

ASWAC's membership runs from conference to conference, November to November (with a "generosity" period beginning in September).

This means the following:

if you bought or renewed your membership on or after September 1st, 1985 you are up to date and ok and you will have a little 86 in the top right corner of your address label. HOWEVER, if your membership dates from BEFORE September 1st, 1985 you will have a little 85 or even 84 in the top right corner of your address label AND YOU NEED DESPERATELY TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!!

SO. . . if you and your membership are out of date, please take a minute and send in your renewal to the office. We suggest a membership fee of \$10.00 but will of course accept less. Donations of any variety are always received with squeals of delight!



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In your opinion, what are the three most important women's issues of today?

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