



ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

December 1986

Vol. 8 No. 1



**Inside this newsletter:
Abortion crisis continues, and
Assembly reports.
See raised eyebrows on page 16**

ASWAC



1986/87 Board members

Darlene Abreu Ferreira - Edmonton
Sheryl Ackerman - Edmonton
Frances Adams (staff member)
Luanne Armstrong (staff member)
Anne Dobbie - Edmonton
Helen Greaves - Edmonton
Karin Goldberg - Edmonton
Sally Isenman - Edmonton
Terri-Ann Marco - Lethbridge
Lorraine Mitchell (staff member)
Suzn Morgan - Calgary
Deborah Perret - Calgary
Shelley Scott - Lethbridge
Jane Wiley (staff member)
Kathy Willis - Lethbridge

1986/87 Regional Reps

Annette Aarbo - Edmonton
Home 437-4938 Work 432-3359

Gerry Bailey - Westeros
Home 5862983

Joan White Calf - Camrose
Home 672-2210

Lavera Creasy - Hanna
Home 854-3216

Lori Crocker - Innisfail
Home 227-1141 Work 227-3881

Naomi Lis - Lethbridge
Home 381-8727

All members and interested women are invited to attend any or all of our board meetings. Come to the one nearest you! If you would like to see a board meeting held in your community, phone the office or your nearest regional rep and let them know.

Our next board meeting will be in Edmonton, January 17, 18, 19.

If you have any articles, comments, artwork or features, you would like to see in the ASWAC Newsletter, send them in! Letters should be marked, NOT FOR REPRINT, if you don't want them in the Newsletter. The deadline for the next issue is January 21.

ASWAC's mailing address is Box 1573, Edmonton, AB, T5J 2N7. Telephone 424-3073.

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Donations

Donations have been most gratefully received from; Jill Konkin, Dr. Lanice Jones, Sheilagh Edington, Duanne Burton, James McKay, Sharon Lee, Rita Jandrey, Olivia Belcour, Ade Wiebe, B. Mann, ?Mann, ?Johnson, M. McLean, M. Assheton Smith, W. Butler, A. Miron, Kathryn P. Buchanan, P. Woodward, Marie Plaizier, Doris P. Robbins, Beverley Ross, Debra Carnat, Shelby J. MacLleod, Catherine Bowen, Barbara Johnston, J. Templeman, D. Anthony, ? Hooper, Anna Pellat, Val Bervais, ? Chase, Paul Gronnerud, Anne Dobbie, Janser Janitorial Services, Tanya Russell, Cathy Bray, Norma Pelkie, Rebecca Coulter, Jean Crozier, Susan Sharpe, B.L. Tachit, Margaret Hall, Agnes Wiley, Diana Chown, D. Cherie Mears. (Apologies to anywoman whose name got lost in the shuffle of bookkeeping).

Hug these women!

These wonderfully wild women gave of their time and energy to further ASWAC's work in the last little while. While it is impossible to recognize all of us, we would like to thank these women; Mary T. Hughes, Linda Rowe, Linda Fontaine, Kathy Willis, Sheilagh Edington, Karin Golberg, Elaine Miklos, Susan Sharpe, The Abortion Caucus Memebers, Erin Graham, Leslie Stewart, Amanda Le R., Janet Beebe, Janice Kaleta, Jude Majors, Diana Chown.

Our board meeting minutes

Eighteen hours at a glance

The following is our record of the board meeting held December 6 and 7 in Lethbridge. The meeting was held in the brand new women's resource centre in Lethbridge!

Present Jane, Luanne, Frances, Lorraine, Shelley, Sheryl, Terri Ann, Suzn, Darlene, Sally, Kathy, Karin, Helen, Anne, Deborah, Naomi Lis (regional rep), and visitors; Jean Kuijt, Erin Graham, Dana Daniels, Joyce Green.

Assembly Review

The new board reviewed the 1986 Assembly and came up with the following recommendations;

- maintain a lower fee for women who pre-register. We felt that this could partly account for the vast numbers of women who pre-registered this year.
- next year we decided to make the situation regarding accomodation arrangements more clear since some women complained that they weren't aware they had to share a room.
- a special orientation process should be in place on Friday night to help women new to ASWAC feel more at home.
- there were some problems with the business meeting. Some women thought that they couldn't attend because they weren't on the board. Perhaps this is because of the traditional format of these meetings. We considered changing the name to: The Heart of the Assembly.
- We strongly suggested that we have a massage workshop.

Overall, the conference was deemed a smashing success. The workshops were well attended and the selection of board members and regional reps went a lot smoother this year. Quote of the Assembly, "Some year, every woman in this room is going to stand up for the position of regional rep."

Many thanks to all the conference workers whose hard work made the assembly a success. Special thanks to Linda and Linda who took on the task of registration and carried out their duties with good humour and cheer. Yeh!

This year's meetings

The following are the dates and locations of this year's board meetings. Some of the locations

have been left open, so put in your bid now if you want a board meeting near you.

January 16-18 in Edmonton, February 20-22, Fort McMurray, April 3-5 in Calgary, May 22-24, June 26-28, August 14-16, September 18-20, October 16-18. Next year's Assembly will be held Nov. 6-8.

Priority Campaigns

We began this long discussion with the identification of two goals of membership development;

- 1) To reach women not widely represented in our current membership; (poor women, women of colour, native women, women on welfare), and try to open up new ways of communicating and working together.
- 2) To involve our current membership in the on-going work of ASWAC.

After some discussion on how to achieve these two goals, we decided to discuss them in the context of our other two priority campaigns (pay equity and childcare), to give us something concrete to focus on.

Childcare: The discussion here focussed on two areas:

- 1) Provision of childcare within ASWAC. This ties in with membership development as the lack of adequate childcare will exclude many women from full involvement in ASWAC. It was also discussed that ASWAC must provide quality childcare from a feminist perspective, not just babysitting services. This is connected to our "political" campaigns, as we should practice what we preach in recommending quality childcare.

- 2) Pressuring government to fund high quality, non-profit, accessible childcare. Here, the board discussed provincial cuts in childcare and the possible recommendations of the federal Parliamentary Task Force Report on Childcare. There seems to be a push towards individual solutions for a social issue. It is

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feared that government might move to give parents small sums of money rather than funding childcare centres, etc. ASWAC must be prepared to respond to these threats. But we must also broaden our campaign to include the specific needs of rural women, women working in the home and native women.

To include the members of ASWAC in the childcare campaign, we tentatively decided to hold a Working Weekend on Childcare February 6, 7, 8. Lorraine and Sally will work on organizing the childcare facilities for the weekend. Karin, Frances and Sheryl will set the agenda for the meeting and Luanne and Darlene will contact other groups.

Pay Equity: Discussion about this issue focussed on how all women's work is so undervalued. From no pay to low pay seem to be the only options for women. Pay Equity legislation is just one way to address this problem. Two specific approaches were agreed on.

1) Valuing Women's Work - a series on profiles of women, (waitresses, childcare workers, women working in the home) both to educate others about the challenging nature of women's work and to "re-confirm" for ourselves that we make a valuable contribution. These profiles could be used to publicize women's concerns. They could also be used to draw women into meetings at central locations where women doing different types of "women's work" can recognize their common interests and concerns. We could also use these profiles as "Kitchen Table Papers" to stimulate discussions by women in their home. Regional reps and board members could use them as resource tools for these kitchen table meetings. These papers should be as "localized" as possible so that women in each area can relate to them.

2) Endorsements and Lobbying - Last year ASWAC had some success in this area. It was agreed to continue to do this work. We decided to focus on making connections with groups who we feel may seriously support our lobbying efforts. This will include giving these groups regular updates of our campaign, attending their meetings, and possibly calling for a coalition. Karin

and Lorraine and Jane will work on the kitchen table papers. Frances will be sending an update to the groups that have already endorsed our campaign.

Abortion

ASWAC's abortion caucus has done a great deal of work. They set up an abortion fund and organized a demonstration against the provincial government and the AMA concerning their inaction on the issue. There were many problems with providing money to women and these were communicated to the members of the abortion caucus. This group will be meeting again soon to discuss its role. Overall, however, we can be proud of the way our members responded to this crisis, both with money and by putting pressure on the powers that be. Further action (perhaps some kind of province-wide protest) will be discussed by the caucus.

Pensions

This is a very complex issue but one we should do more work on as it is crucial to older women, who are the poorest members of society. Frances spoke a bit about the new legislation and what it does and doesn't do for older women.

Budget and Finances

Overall we are pretty much in line with this year's budget. A budget working group was established to put together a proposal for next year. Anne, Frances, Luanne, Helen, and Sheryl agreed to be on this working group.

Lesbian Caucus

The caucus wants to organize a large meeting in January. They also have an article for the newsletter that lays out their plans for the year. They have submitted two budgets for their activities. One for 86/87 of \$560. and one for 87/88. (together totalling \$1740.) The board discussed the caucus and how it could interact with the board. The 86/87 budget was approved and the budget for next year will be taken into account by the budget working group who will be making a proposal for next year.

Luanne will meet with the caucus to determine: 1) pathways of communication, 2) scheduling of meetings (whether it makes sense to have board meetings and caucus meetings on the same weekend.) Our January

Lethbridge centre opens!

by Lorraine Mitchell

As a feminist, formerly from Lethbridge, I was overjoyed to attend the Dec. 6 opening of ASWAC Lethbridge new women's centre. It was thrilling to see all those people (over seventy five!) thronging around a room full of feminist posters, literature and books. What a step forward from the days when women were either alone or got together in very small groups. The opening of this centre means women in Lethbridge now have a place to congregate, agitate, and recreate. (There is also a great place for a party.)

The afternoon was full of speeches and best wishes for the future. Terri Ann Marco, a founding member of ASWAC Lethbridge, outlined the process that the group went through; starting from a small group meeting to discuss the situation of women and grew in strength and sisterhood to the point where they were able to establish the Women's Resource Centre. Terri Ann then introduced Estelle Bottfield, President

of the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce. She raised concerns about ASWAC's pay equity campaign, stating she felt that women had to achieve these gains without government intervention. Her points were later refuted by Frances Adams who said that both education and legislation are necessary to make these changes. Frances also said how proud we all were of the women in Lethbridge.

Lori Andreachuk, a Lethbridge representative on the Citizen's Advisory Council, spoke in glowing terms of the contri-

butions ASWAC has made in pressuring government to establish the Council in the way that it has.

Overall, the day was very successful. In the evening, a great party happened in the pub room just down the hall from the women's centre. Women came to talk, laugh and dance. Some were even seen doing the two-step. Lethbridge will never be the same!

The women's centre is located on top of Woolworths in downtown Lethbridge. Their phone number is 329-8338.



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

more board meeting minutes ... whew!

board meeting as currently set, corresponds with the prospective date of the caucus, and if this is a problem, something could be done.

Immigrant Women

Frances reported on a national conference in Winnipeg for Immigrant women and Women of Colour.

We agreed to ask one of the women who attended the conference to do write up for the newsletter.

NDP Consultation

Karin, Jane and Frances attended this meeting of many different women's groups and the Women MLA's. The meeting consisted of a comprehensive critique of NDP

policy on women and recommending improvements. Generally, it was a good thing to have happen, although there were some problems. The worst mistake that was made was that no provision was made for childcare at the event. The most positive aspect was the continued mention of Immigrant Women's concerns. A good attempt was also made by the women in attendance to make the party accountable to its pro-choice policy. We can only wait and see.

Regional Reps

Board members agreed to help the regional reps organize their first meeting. Regular contact should be maintained. Luanne, Terri Ann, Anne and Deborah will be responsible for liason with the reps.



Caught between our legislator's inertia and the doctor's wallets

by Luanne Armstrong (research by Darlene Abreu Ferreira)

Lack of access to therapeutic abortion continues to be a crisis for Alberta women despite denials and deafness on the part of the Alberta Government and Alberta doctors. Since women's lives are on the line, only women who are suffering, the government seems to find it easy to go on waffling and ignoring the problem. Meanwhile, groups like the Alberta Status of Women, Planned Parenthood, and Abortion by Choice, continue to lobby for a solution to the problem even while they provide band-aid help to the women who come to them in need.

Since extra-billing was banned in Alberta in September, doctors are paid \$84.50 for a therapeutic abortion. Doctors who think this is too little, are also charging women \$75 for a referral letter, to the Therapeutic Abortion Committees in hospitals. Since October, eight out of eleven doctors in Edmonton, who were accepting referrals for abortions, have stopped. Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai the new President-elect of the AMA, has suggested that because she thinks that some women are "using abortion as a contraceptive," it should be taken out of the Alberta Health care plan altogether.

What is clear in all this is, access to therapeutic abortion is under attack in Alberta,

and, as usual, women are bearing the brunt of that attack. It is self-righteously, and obscenely easy to condemn a woman for getting pregnant, and not wanting a child, until one finds oneself in the same position as, for example, a woman on welfare with not enough money or energy to care for the children she has, or a woman who has been raped, or is sick. Unfortunately, male doctors will never find themselves in such a position and seem to find it impossibly difficult to understand the despair and agony of a woman forced to carry and bear a child she doesn't want, and can't care for.

Time has become the enemy of many women needing abortions in Alberta. Many of them go to Planned Parenthood, which gives them counselling and referrals, but Planned Parenthood's waiting list is growing.

"The numbers of women are growing who have been denied access since October 1," said Heather Crocker, of Edmonton's Planned Parenthood, "We had 60 TA referrals in the first two weeks of October. Thirty four were able to get through in Edmonton; 26 had to go to the US."

Figures from Planned Parenthood show that, previous to the end of extra billing, 30 percent of their referrals

were being sent to the US. This figure has now jumped to 60 percent. Sixty percent of women asking for abortions had been using some method of birth control, and in 1984, only 16 percent of women having abortions were having their second one. Overall, since the end of extra billing 141 Alberta women have had to go to the U.S. for a medical procedure which should be available to them here.

For women in desperate need, going to an abortion clinic in the U.S. is a final resort. But it is expensive. There are travelling costs, motel and meal costs, as well as the cost of the operation itself, up to \$350. U.S., (\$487.Can.) For many women, finding this amount of money is almost impossible. So once again, as usual, the lack of access to services is hitting particularly hard at poor women, rural women, and other disadvantaged women.

Doctors feel they should be paid more money for doing an abortion. The Alberta government disagrees. In the meantime, doctors are testing the legality of the \$75 referral letter in court. It is interesting to note that while doctors get \$84.50 for an abortion, they get \$130 for a vasectomy, which can be done in the doctor's office in a very short amount of time.

Continued on page 7

ASWAC women fight back

The crisis situation surrounding access to abortion was a very important issue for many women at the Annual Assembly, November 14, 15, and 16. During the Organizing for Abortion Rights in Alberta workshop, the idea of forming an ASWAC Abortion Caucus was supported by many women at the workshop. A meeting was held late that Saturday afternoon, and the caucus was struck.

Two immediate goals for the caucus appeared. The first was to make public a clear statement that women were not going to stand for their bodies being used as tools in a political game between the doctors of Alberta and the Government. The second was to come up with some concrete help for the women who were without money to travel out of province for abortions.

The caucus wrote a statement and presented it to the Sunday business meeting of the Assembly. Discussion followed, and the women in the room expressed a real need to do something immediate, such as set up an emergency fund. Another meeting of the caucus was called for Sunday at lunch at which time the fund was set up.

Abortion continued

ASWAC has helped some women through our Emergency Abortion fund, but this is only a short term solution. We can't allow ourselves to be forced by an indifferent government into paying for services that should be available to women in Alberta. Instead, we must continue to write, phone and otherwise pressure the government to let them know that this is a service which must be available, here, and now.



Coathanger vigil at the Leg

photo by Andrea Waywanko

The caucus has sent a letter to all ASWAC members, asking for donations for the fund. A press release was also written to publicize it. Money has been coming into the office regularly, and approximately \$1500. has been collected and disseminated.

The caucus also organized a "Coat Hanger Vigil" for Friday, November 21, to coincide with a meeting of the Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Although that meeting was postponed, the vigil went ahead and was a great success. Approximately 30 women gathered outside the Legislature bearing coat hangers and signs that read, "NEVER AGAIN". The vigil then moved to the office of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and hung its hangers on the front of the building. It was a very clear statement about who will be responsible should a woman be forced to use such desperate methods.

The caucus met again November 26 to discuss the details of the fund, and to write a letter to other groups asking for their support in fund-raising and lobbying.

At the most recent meeting of the caucus, December 10, discussion focussed on the fund and long range plans for the caucus.

Helping women on a one-to-one basis, giving them money, information and support has proven to be an overwhelming and emotionally draining task. The caucus has realized that when the fund was struck it had no clear idea of the work that was involved. As well, it has become clear that if the caucus spends all of its energy on the fund alone, there will be no one left to do the political action and lobbying that is necessary to change the situation. The amount of media work done alone is staggering. ASWAC members and the caucus should be inspired by our ability to respond quickly to women's needs and get the work done.

We all are hoping that this crisis will soon be over. However, it could continue for months, and if it does, we have to be prepared to hang in for the long haul.

Our new board; big,



Karin Goldberg



Lorraine Mitchell



Kathy Willis



Suzn Morgan



Jane Wiley



Deborah Perret



Sally Issenman



Darlene Abreu Fereira

bold, and beautiful



Anne Dobbie



Shelley Scott



Sheryl Ackerman



Frances Adams



Terri Ann Marco



Luanne Armstrong



Helen Greaves



graphic by Marg Reece

“changing ways to change the world”

The Assembly this year was a wonderful menage of both collective working together, and individual enjoyment. Women left with warm memories of intense conversations, shared recollections and ideas, memorable workshops, projects continued, and new activities begun.

Events got off to a rousing start Friday night with an introductory speech by Marilyn Asseton Smith. Part of this speech, the story of Sophie, a young native woman abducted and raped by white men, became, the next day, a very moving song by Peggy Ward, who sang it to the whole Assembly Saturday evening.

The workshops were well attended and the business meeting, in particular, turned into a

heartfelt discussion about how to address the problem of women who don't, or can't, make it to the Assembly...or to other feminist events: poor women, native women, immigrant women, and other women whose needs are ignored by our society.

A strong feeling of community was sustained throughout the weekend. Other highlights; Sue McGowan singing, Moving Stage Theatre from Calgary, Mair Smith telling stories from ten year's involvement with ASWAC, and the presentation of a lifetime membership to hard working staff person, Francis Adams.

Getting down to Business

The Annual Business Meeting at the Assembly accomplished, as usual, too much and not enough. Compared to last year, there was good attendance and therefore some high quality discussion, although there just wasn't enough time to come to many concrete conclusions. The business meeting is a very important part of ASWAC's yearly work, and this year Marilyn Assheton-Smith again deftly facilitated the process.

The meeting was divided into four sections; the Annual Report, Recommendations from this year's board, Discussion of recommendations and Other Business.

Annual Report

The annual report, as printed in the Stories of the Year was presented and explained. The financial report was also presented, and Aura Rose explained to the meeting ASWAC's three financial accounts. Julie Anne LeGras congratulated this year's board for their good management, financial and otherwise for the year.

ASWAC Newsletter

Recommendations

Pay Equity: A successful launching this year of the pay equity issue has brought the issue to the media and public's attention. The background work for a coalition has also been done. The recommendations for further action on pay equity are divided into three areas.

1) linkages - make connections with women in unions, other women's groups and possible inter-provincially through the NAC mid-year meeting. ASWAC could possibly host next year's NAC mid year meeting, in which case we could organize it as a national conference on pay equity.

2) lobbying - more work can be done lobbying both the government and the opposition in the legislature.

3) Putting the "value" back into Pay Equity. We should broaden the issue to include women's work in the home and other unpaid labour. What

is the real value of women's work? Kits could be made of what we learn.

Childcare: Frances Adams presented the Child-care recommendations to the meeting. She began with a brief herstory of the childcare campaign to date. There has been quite a lot of lobbying accomplished, as well as work with the Edmonton Coalition for Quality Child-care.

The recommendations that came out of the child-care workshop at the Assembly included the idea that a working/planning weekend should be held to allow interested members to have time to brainstorm a strategy for the campaign. The long term goal of the campaign is clear: universally accessible, non-profit, quality childcare.

Membership Development: "ASWAC is all of us," said Luanne Armstrong as she presented the recommendations for membership development. Luanne presented the ideas that were laid out in the Stories of the Year. Membership development seemed to be a very important issue for many of the women at the Assembly, and the discussion portion of the meeting continued to focus on involving our present members and encouraging new women to become involved.

Regional representatives: Irene McRae, one of last year's regional representatives presented an outline of who regional reps are, what they do, and how they can work within ASWAC. Membership development was laid out as a concrete task for the reps to work on. The reps could help keep the membership up to date, orient new members as well as work locally with the membership on ASWAC's priority campaigns. Specific recommendations include; a budget for the regional reps work, 2 to 3 regional rep meetings a year, that a Board member be chosen to act as the link between the board and the reps, and that 'criteria for successful fulfillment of the regional representatives duties' be developed for this year.

Message from the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee:

"We at the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee wish to extend our congratulations to you on your tenth anniversary. We also urge ASWAC to address issues that are relevant to women of colour and to incorporate workshops on racism in next year's conference so that we may continue to improve and upgrade the links of communication, solidarity and sisterhood among all Canadian women in struggle.



Singing at the Assembly photo by Sheryl Ackerman

Discussion of Recommendations

The Saturday portion of the discussion was totally taken up by debate over the pay equity issue. Specifically, the possibility of hosting the NAC mid-year meeting as a National Conference on Pay Equity was compared to the possibility of using pay equity as a catalyst for membership development and grassroots organizing.

The Sunday portion of the discussion was devoted to childcare and membership development.

Discussion about childcare came home really quickly when the state of childcare at the Assembly itself came up. The attempts to provide the kind of childcare that women wanted at the Assembly were noble, but in the end unacceptable. We need high quality choices for women and children. We need to envision what feminist childcare will look like.

Some women said that they don't really like being around children, but other women talked about integrating children into feminist events. In general, the idea of hosting a brainstorm weekend on childcare was supported.

Membership development, pay equity, and childcare all were synthesized in the end, into a discussion of grassroots involvement in ASWAC. Poor women, native women, and women of colour are all notably absent from the membership of ASWAC and at ASWAC events such as the Assembly. Many women were concerned about the middle-class nature of the women's movement, and everyone seemed to agree that much hard work will have to be done to include disenfranchised women in ASWAC.

Other business

The two major items dealt with under other business were the abortion crisis, and the lawsuit. The discussion about abortion was led by the newly formed ASWAC Abortion Caucus. Details of the caucus's work are in a separate article in the newsletter.

Lesbians organize at Assembly

More than 45 women gathered at the Lesbian visibility workshop held Sunday afternoon at the Assembly. As the topic of the workshop was how to organize lesbians within ASWAC, we divided into two groups: the large group of lesbians to discuss organizing, and a small group of women who wanted to discuss more generally lesbian within ASWAC and the women's movement.

The large group started with a round where women shared their thoughts and feelings on their participation as lesbians in ASWAC and their preferred version of the future for lesbians within ASWAC. The consensus of the group was that the need for an established caucus is clear. The basic model for this caucus was discussed and three things were cited as essential:

- 1) That the caucus meet at least 3 or 4 times a year,
- 2) that there be funding to provide for childcare and travel subsidies to attend these meetings.
- 3) that the caucus be able to respond to issues with its own voice (with co-operation with the board) as well as take on education, networking and action oriented projects.

The discussions about the function of the caucus included agreement that provincial networking, educating, supporting, taking action on issues and lobbying, playing and attending to our safety were important things to do. Five ways to accomplish these things were discussed. These included meetings on provincial and regional scales, regular newsletter articles, media work, workshops and liaison with other lesbian and gay groups.

Finally, we talked about what we wanted to do in the coming year. We decided to start submitting regular newsletter articles of which

Business meeting cont'd

The lawsuit that has been brought against ASWAC, was the final item discussed at the Business Meeting. It was decided that the media should not be briefed yet on the issue, and that we should consider starting a fund to pay for the possible legal costs we might incur. It was also made clear that no one person should take any personal responsibility for the lawsuit.

At the very end of the meeting, a member raised the fact that ASWAC has not dealt with anti-semitism as an issue and has not made any public statements about the growth of the Aryan Nations in Alberta. There was some support for the concerns raised, but because the item was not raised earlier there was no time left and the meeting was adjourned.

this is the first. We also decided to approach the Board at their December meeting with a request for funding and support of meetings and other activity.

Meetings of the caucus were set for the third week in January, amid-year meeting in April in Calgary in conjunction with the second Lesbian Conference there, and a third meeting of some type (maybe several regional meetings instead of one provincial meeting) in the summer. At next year's Assembly, we will meet again and the topic for a workshop was discussed: Building Bridges between Lesbian and Straight women in the movement.



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

At the end of the workshop, we brought both groups together for quick reports to each other. The small group spent the time discussing basic rights of lesbians to exist free of harassment and discrimination, and the rightful place of lesbian issues on the feminist agenda.

Some members of the small group were open about their conviction that lesbianism was not acceptable; this belief and its expression made it impossible for the full participation of women attending to speak without fear of re-primation and harassment after the Assembly. It was hard to accept that at an ASWAC conference, even at a Lesbian workshop, that we were not free to speak without fear. The excitement of the large group's planning was dampened by this reminder that lesbians are not always safe, even at feminist conferences.

The first meeting has been set for January 16, and 17 at the Women's building in Edmonton, 10055 110 St. Women who want to go and need childcare, travel subsidy or billeting can write to ASWAC c/o Lesbian Caucus or phone 424-8158 during the day.

The weekend has been loosely structured, so far, to include a wine and cheese do on Friday evening, with meeting time and fun on Saturday. Saturday a good time can be had by all at the Womospace dance. More details will be coming by mail or phone. All lesbians are invited!

Women in politics

Infiltrating the halls of the powerful

Part three of our three part series on women and politics is, an interview with Bettie Hewes, Hospitals, Social Services, Community and Occupational Health, Municipal affairs, Culture, and Advanced Education critic for the Liberal Caucus in the Legislature. She represents the Constituency of Edmonton Gold Bar.

Bettie was interviewed by ASWAC member, Aura Rose.

Aura: What is your background?

Bettie: "Politically I have never been extraordinarily active; I haven't held office in the Liberal party but simply worked with them on a variety of things. While I was in municipal politics I was a member of URGE - so I experienced a 'caucus' in a sense. I have been an active supporter of the women's movement for 25 years. To try to improve the circumstances of women I was involved in the establishment of the women's shelter in the city, developing standards for daycare, an issue of primary interest to women. I tried to get a program of Affirmative Action in the city but that was not too successful - no one in power really wanted it to go - they didn't want to lose power.

I have a lot of admiration for women who lead the movement. I believe in the "Big Swindle". There's a tremendous amount of support (for feminism) but underneath it crumbles whenever you really sit on it or attack it. I have perceived that, it's

there, I'm aware of it. I achieved, but not without a lot of push and shove - it would have been easier to be a man. Things move so slow. We cannot wait for the market place - we've got to have affirmative action programs, we need legislation and penalties where necessary - otherwise it won't happen."

Aura: How can political parties encourage their involvement?

Bettie: "Our party has a policy where a specific percentage of delegates must be women. We have a Women's Section that works on issues of concern to women. I think all political parties are discovering that women vote, make decisions and have power."

Aura: How can the women's movement assist and/or encourage women's involvement in politics?

Bettie: "For a long time I have gone out and beat the bushes of women's organizations saying: get your people into places of power. It's infiltration - but women must get into the places of power where they are influencing and in fact making, the decisions that affect society. You have to have what I call a 'firebrand' - it isn't easy to stand up and be counted, but it's essential. You are seeing men who are firebrands in the women's movement and I think that it is a real trend."

Aura: Do you feel women make a different type of politician than men?

Bettie: "Probably, but essentially due to our variety of



Ears have Walls.....
Angela Martin

life experiences - in the community, church and/or family. We bring great skills in conflict management, seeing details and decision making."

Aura: Do you feel that more women should get involved in politics?

Bettie: "Yes. In past years, women involved in politics were delegated to raising money and serving coffee. In current year, certainly in our party, they are in the front lines and running in increasing numbers."

Aura: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Bettie: "We are talking about power here. A lot of people, particularly men, believe that when you share power you lose power. I disagree. When power is shared you will find a tremendous difference in the quality of activity and decision making in political life. I do not feel pessimistic about the women's movement - when the numbers are more balanced in business, politics and other major institutions, women will get people to start thinking about issues of a wider sense - peace, a safe environment. These are the things that women have pursued. When we have equality, the force of female thinking can put their mind to solving these problems - as opposed to simply struggling to gain equality. But we have to achieve equality first."

Women Studies get a boost

by erin graham

Women's Studies is an academically legitimate field of inquiry, and a necessary part of any university's offerings.

We know that.

However, university administrators have been rather slow in accepting this fact.

This spring though, a good thing happened for prairie univer-

sities. The Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba were appointed as the joint home of one of five Chairs of Women's Studies. The chair is to serve the prairie universities, to make university administrators, faculty and students aware of the viability of Women's studies and the availability of funding. Representatives from the U of W and the U of M are touring prairie universities.

Dr. Ross McCormack, VP Academic, of the University of Winnipeg, visited the University of Lethbridge, October 24 and 25. He

met with administrators, members of the ad hoc committee on Women Studies (set up in 1983) and spoke to students at a noon hour forum on October 25.

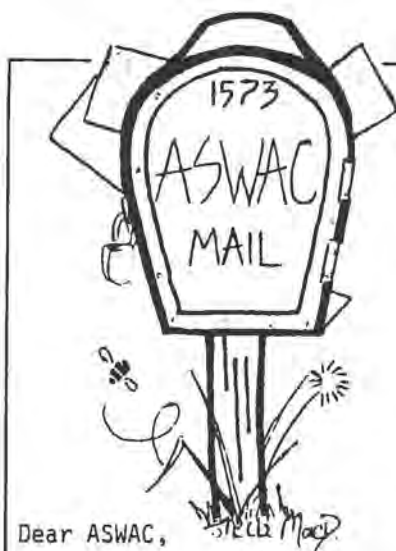
McCormack made several useful suggestions regarding fundraising for Women's Studies, and his visit put pressure on the University administration to get government funding before other universities do. McCormack suggested approaching Sec. State as well as corporate sponsors. His rather unlikely suggestion as to possible corporate sponsors, was Revlon Canada.

"There are a lot of companies that are doing things that aren't that respectable", he said.

Dr. Dana Daniels of the Phys. Ed. Faculty said that while McCormack's specific suggestion was not great, the idea of corporate sponsorship was a good one. "What we want are endowments, and corporations are looking for tax write offs, they won't necessarily want input into the program." She added that the University would not in all likelihood accept conditional monies.

McCormack's visit, and parallel visits by his colleagues to other universities are valuable as a profile-raising for Women's Studies here in the feminist-phobic prairies. It is somewhat disquieting to think that it takes a man to legitimize a field of study that women have been doggedly pursuing for years. These women will remain largely anonymous.

However, if it means we get the courses that will help us rediscover where we came from and who we are, I suppose we can use spokesmen who can convince administrators that courses about women, our experience and problems, are sorely needed.



Dear ASWAC,

I feel I must say thank you for the special gift bestowed upon me the November 14 weekend conference of ASWAC. I met some of the most intelligent, inspiring, loving and caring women I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Wherever I turned, there was a wink or a smile. Hugs were given liberally. Each person I had a few moments conversation with closed by saying, "Glad you're here!" I was to here this sincerely said many times throughout the weekend. "We understand", was also a welcomed phrase. Together we danced, sang, ate, shared worries, offered support, laughed and cried. I felt heart warmly welcomed. They made me feel like a real person again.

I was happy to hear the concerns about low income women being discussed. Being one, I had thought, as many others do, that no one remembered we even exist. Daily dealings with social agencies that leave you feeling that they wish you and your problems would just disappear, are so frustrating. Government doesn't want to face our hunger, our poor living conditions, or our humiliation over our children's bleak futures. They would rather keep us out of sight and out of mind. I have often felt that low income women's voices go unheard or at best are nothing more than annoying insect buzzing in politician's ears. With our financially stronger sisters leading the cry, perhaps there is hope on the horizon that someone will listen. I don't always want to be classified as a welfare bum. Through an organization like ASWAC I can begin to see light at the end of the tunnel. Now I can begin constructive work on my future, as a member of ASWAC. Thank you so much for the gift of "hope for a better life" for me and my children and for all the other women out there like me.

I will spread the word,

Louise Marion

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CLOW in Alberta get's new director

A few months ago, Pat Leginsky who was the previous Alberta Interim Director for the Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women, (CLOW), invited me to replace her. I accepted.

I will be the Interim Director for now, until the 1980 elections, and would like to let my name stand for election.

CLOW is a national, non-profit, voluntary organization which promotes learning opportunities for women. Networks are active in every province and territory.

CLOW purposes and objectives are:

- . to promote feminist education and the empowerment of women.
- . to promote feminist principles in education and training by supporting all kinds of learning opportunities.
- . to advocate for the redress of inequities blocking women's access to and experience of learning.
- . to publicize women's issues are they relate to women's learning.
- . to network and show solidarity with individuals and groups on issues related to learning opportunities for women.
- . to conduct research, develop models and resource materials on women's learning issues.
- . to encourage and develop women's education through local, provincial/territorial, and national activities.

For more information and membership brochures, please contact:

Julie Anne Le Gras
10737 71 Ave.
Edmonton, AB
T6E 0X5 phone 438-8069

Job opportunity

The Calgary Women's Network Steering Committee will be conducting a feasibility study of a network for women's groups in Calgary. They will be hiring someone to do the study on a five month contract. The job will be part-time and the hours will be flexible. Applicants must have good communication skills, experience with report writing, have experience with women's groups and have a knowledge of other cultural groups. Application deadline is Jan.9.

If you are interested, contact Rebbecca Seidel at 271-4920. Send resumes to Box 1390 Station M, Calgary. T2P 2L6. This position will be filled pending receipt of funding.

Take on a project

ASWAC has some specific tasks to be done if you feel like doing some work:

- research software prices, makes and models and uses of a computer for the ASWAC office.
- research into current issues affecting the lives of women in Alberta eg., the Forget Commission recommendations, women and pensions.
- library cataloguing, filing and sorting around the office.
- updating our membership by contacting members whose membership is past due.

LMDF needs help

Edmonton's Lesbian Mother's Defence fund is now accepting donations. Send you money to 10055-110 St. Ed. T5K 1J5

1987 Provincial Lesbian Conference

Plans are well under way for the 1987 Provincial Lesbian Conference to be held in Calgary with a tentative date of April 24,25. An organizing committee has been meeting regularly since October and has received funding for two PEP positions to help with the logistics of organizing a provincial conference.

Some tentative workshops include; Coming Out, Spirituality, Aging Lesbians, Parenting, Couple Relationships, Legal issues, Addictions, Abusive Relationships, Religion, Sexuality and more Sexuality. A massage workshop is optional.

There will also be some great lesbian entertainment and a major dance to close the conference. Billeting will be available with advance registration. Please watch for our brochures, to be 'out' in February or March. You can reach the organizing committee c/o Calgary SWAC Rm. 124 320-5 Ave. S.E. Calgary.

New Year's do

Womonspace, Edmonton's lesbian organization is hosting a New Year's Dine and Dance. Cocktails at 6:30, dinner starts at 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$25. The event is taking place at 6204 Fulton Rd. Tickets are available from Womonspace members and at the office at 10055-110 St, Edmonton.

Are you raising eyebrows?



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

You're kidding! You haven't renewed your membership yet?
Well, now is the time, and here is the place. If your label reads '85 in the corner, this will be your last newsletter. If your label has a little '86 in the corner you are raising a few eyebrows!

NAME

New _____ or Renewal _____

ADDRESS

Donation: _____

PHONE-home
work

Where did you come
across the Newsletter?

*suggested membership fee is \$10 but we will of course, accept whatever you can afford.

Please make cheque out to:
ASWAC, Box 1573, Edmon-
ton, AB T5J 2N7