



ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

February edition

Vol. 8 No. 2



Inside:
International Women's Day
Events and Free Trade



ASWAC

1987/88 Board members

Luanne Armstrong c/o Edmonton office
 Donna Baines - Calgary
 Nancy Cullen - Calgary
 Jane Haslett - Edmonton
 Deborah Hollins - Calgary
 Joanna Johnson - St. Paul
 Margaret Johnson - Edmonton
 Julie Anne LeGras - Edmonton
 Terri Ann Marco - Lethbridge
 Anne McGrath c/o Calgary office
 Lyn Morelli - Lethbridge
 Deborah Perret - Ponoka
 Valda Roberts - Edmonton
 Marilyn Seelye - Calgary
 Lisa Walter - Edmonton
 Jane Wiley c/o Edmonton office

1987/88 Regional reps

Annette Aarbo - Edmonton
 h. 437-4938 w. 432-3359

Gerry Bailey - Westeros
 h. 586-2983

Elin Harlev Barlem - Innisfail
 h. 227-2927

Lori Crocker - Innisfail
 h. 227-1141 w. 227-3881

Naomi Ehren Lis - Lethbridge
 h. 381-8727

Lois Soderstrom - Westeros
 h. 586-3535

Elaine Spencer - Ponoka
 h. 783-4088 or w. 783-7704

Linda Stoddard - Lethbridge
 h. 328-6206

Denise Wood - Fort MacMurray
 h. 791-4634

Joan White Calf - Camrose
 h. 672-2210

The Alberta Status of Women Action Committee gratefully acknowledges the financial support it receives from the Secretary of State Women's Program.

Donations

Since the last newsletter, donations have been received from the following women; Betty Crown, Jean McBean, Eunice Olsen, Karin Goldberg, Linda Neilson and Jo-ann Kolmes. Thanks!!!

Hug these women!

These women (and many more) deserve hugs and appreciation for the work that they have done for ASWAC in recent weeks, Sheilagh Edington, Sheila Bertram and all the regional reps.

Important dates to remember

All members are welcome to attend the board meetings in their area. Come to the community report session on the Saturday afternoon, or take the plunge and attend the entire meeting as an honorary board member. If you would like to see a board meeting held in your community, contact your nearest regional rep or board member.

This year's board meetings are as follows;
 January 23/24 in Calgary,
 March 5/6 in Edmonton
 April 9/10 in Lethbridge
 May 28/29 in St. Paul
 July 9/10 location to be decided
 August 27/28 in Ponoka
 September 24/25 location to be decided
 Annual General Assembly - October 28/29/30

ASWAC's mailing address is Box 1573, Edmonton Alberta, T5J 2N7. The Edmonton office is currently located at 10826 - 124 St. on the second floor. Phone 455-5777. Office hours are Monday-Friday, 10-4 pm.

ASWAC Lethbridge lives at the Women's Resource Centre on top of Woolworths in downtown Lethbridge - #202, 325 6 St. S. Phone 329-8338 and leave a message if no one answers.

The Calgary ASWAC office is located in the Old Y Centre for Community Organizations, Room 303, 223 12 Ave. S.W. T2R 0G9. The office will be open Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The phone number is 233-0731.

Correction: Lisa Walter was present at the board meeting held in Edmonton in January.

Eighteen hours at a glance

The following is our record of the board meeting held in Calgary, January 23-24.

Present: Valda Roberts, Joanna Johnson, Deborah Perret, Terri Ann Marco, Deborah Hollins, Nancy Cullen, Julie Ann Le Gras, Marilyn Seelye, Margaret Johnson, Anne McGrath, Luanne Armstrong, Lyn Morelli, Jane Haslett, Jane Wiley and Lisa Walter (minute taker for Saturday). Honorary board members: Annette Aarbo, Elaine Spencer, Nancy Miller, Shelley Scott.

Minutes: Issue: What kind of record do we keep of Board meetings? How do we record decisions, reasons, commitments and follow-up required? Do we want to publish full notes, just decisions or what in the newsletter?

Reasons: The more information we can keep the better for reference, herstory, and to keep each other reminded of what we've done and why. We should publish as much of the record as possible because members have full rights to information - we are accountable to the membership. What about space limitations in the newsletter? A standardized format for minutes makes it easier for the recorder and the reader.

Consensus: We agreed to record a description of the Issue, Reasoning, or highlights of the discussion, the consensus decision reached, the tasks assigned, and the follow-up action we commit ourselves to do as a group. Minutes will take this form when written by a Board member at each meeting. The minutes will be sent to the Edmonton office, mailed out to all board members and regional reps, and published in the newsletter. Minutes will be reviewed at the beginning of the following meeting.

Task: Minutes will be kept this way starting immediately.

Follow-up: We will seek membership opinion about the expanded published notes, review the amount of newsletter space taken up, and

discuss these points briefly at the next meeting.

More than a label:

Issue: At present we have a completed ad for tv, copies available for radio, pre-production materials for T-shirts and buttons, a general model for operating the campaign, some budget estimates, and a strong positive response to the idea from members at the Assembly. So where do we go next?

Reasons: The campaign has broad benefits for women; ASWAC can use it, but it's tailored for use by lots of groups. We may want to market it nationally, perhaps at the NAC conference. Expenses incurred, but not yet paid, to date amount to about \$800. To produce all the other materials that would complete the kit would cost roughly another \$5000 (see Terri Ann's report to the board, Dec. 87) It would be a lot of labour to complete the kit materials and co-ordinate the campaign activity across the province. We could fund it from the general account money, but will seek funding from alternate sources, like a project grant with Sec State, or UI Section 38 grant.

Consensus: A committee was created to: a) arrange for some launching of the campaign on or by March 8, with media coverage, and b) generate an implementation plan for the entire campaign, including labour requirements and obtaining funds.

Tasks: Nancy Miller, Anne McG, Terri Ann, Deborah P. Deborah H. Lyn Morelli, and Marilyn S. formed the committee. The committee will exist over the year, and will report to the next meeting.

Follow-up: This is an ongoing commitment to be reviewed at each meeting.

Women and Poverty:

Issue: How do we want to be active on these issues this year? What are the issues, methods, strategies we want for a campaign?

Reasons: We brainstormed and generated pages of issues, including:

continued on next page

valuing homemaking, wages and benefits for part-time workers, unemployment, minimum wage rates, welfare policies, free trade, pensions, groups over-represented among poor women, female victims of violence, deregulation and others. We also came up with lots of strategies, including: preparing briefs and pamphlets, organizing educational forums, petitions, task force hearings, lobbying, working in coalitions, and others. We decided that this was a huge part of our year's work and that to hope to plan it all in one sitting was beyond us. We found some similarities and differences in our analysis of why women are so poor, and more frequently in poverty. A commitment to speak to poor women before we spoke of them/us was made.

Consensus: We decided to begin with generating knowledge and information on the breadth of issues in two ways: 1) to organize hearings across the province to hear from women of their experiences, to educate all of us and the public on the issues through media coverage, to solicit a provincial base of support, and 2) to read, collect and organize data from written documents, books, reports and other publications.

We then agreed that the next step would be to combine the wisdom generated from these activities into a report which we could release in September with action oriented events planned for the fall.

Tasks: The committee established to organize the hearings was: Joanna Johnson, Julie Ann, Marg J, Marilyn S, Jane W, and Valda R. The committee was mandated to identify an operating plan for the hearings including: timelines, format, locations, and media strategy. The hearings should be complete by the end of May. The committee will compile all the presentations heard.

The committee established to organize and collect existing written material was: Nancy Cullen, Luanne, Julie Ann, Jane H, Anne McG and Jane W. This committee was also mandated to collect materials for

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the education of Board members, and to compile all collected materials by the end of May.

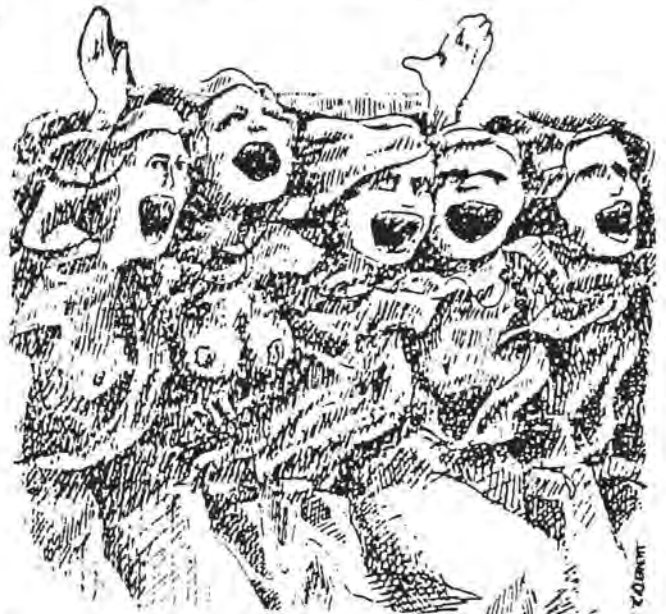
Follow-up: The campaign committees will report at each Board meeting.

Decision Making:

Issue: How do we make decisions between board meetings (for example: The Women's Building in Edmonton, or letter in response to sexist newspaper reporting in Ponoka, etc)?

Reasons: In the past, ASWAC has not generated policies to address issues as they arise, but we have published position papers on a broad range of topics. When decisions are required, women consulted informally with other Board members and then went ahead and reported at the next meeting. This process has never been something very formal, and in general, if someone felt confident in speaking or deciding something, they did it. If not, the matter was left to the next meeting. We should publish an updated list of our publications and position papers for the orientation of new Board members and regional reps. There are lots of matters that are small (media responses to the abortion issue) and some that are bigger (like, do we join Coalition X, or what do we think of Bill C-54) and cannot wait.

Consensus: We decided that on everyday matters or small issues,



the old method of confidence and informal consultation would continue. On larger issues, we agreed to contact by phone a Board member in each of the Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge regions. Those members then consult with others in the region and phone concerns back to the 1st caller. If the 1st caller has heard nothing in 2 days, she may proceed as planned.

Budget:

Background: The Sec. State application should be completed by mid-February.

Discussion: Lisa Walter described the Sec. State application process, based on her preparation for the meeting of the finance working group, which met the night before the Board meeting.

Decision: The recommendations from the finance working group were accepted. We agreed to establish a budget committee whose first task will be to prepare the Sec. State grant application. Members of the committee are: Luanne Armstrong, Marg Johnson, Julie Anne Le Gras, Lisa Walter.

Tasks: The committee will seek out the activity plans from the regional reps after their January meeting. Luanne agreed to send out proposed Finance Committee mandate to all board members.

Joyce Green:

Background: Joyce Green, an ASWAC member from Lethbridge, presented an ASWAC brief about cuts in education, addressing pay equity and gender parity. A local union felt insulted and thought Joyce was presenting on behalf of the New Democrats. The union wants the NDP to apologize.

Discussion: It was requested that ASWAC support Joyce.

Decision: we agreed to write to NDP and to the union, clarifying that Joyce presented a brief on behalf of ASWAC.

Task: Terri Ann will provide the specifics to the Calgary and Edmonton offices and Jane and Terri Ann will write the letters.

Work Planning Cttee:

Background: a wp cttee was not yet in place, but was urgently requested by staff.

Discussion: the question was raised whether Edmonton and Calgary should have separate committees. Anne McG reported that the Calgary board member's function as a work planning cttee in reality. We agreed that wpc meetings should not replace staff meetings.

Tasks: we agreed to reconsider wp cttee item after Regional offices discussion.

Childcare:

Background: a concern was expressed regarding lack of childcare for people coming to a Board meeting. These included: Board and staff, regional reps, visitors, etc.

Decision: because there is money available in the short term, childcare for the above people was approved, at \$10 for a half day and \$25 for a full day/ per child, for the March board meeting only. This item will be re-discussed at the next meeting.

Personnel Policy:

Background: Last year's board prepared a draft personnel policy and other personnel-related documents. This agenda item was carried over from the December board meeting.

Decision: we established a personnel committee: Luanne, Cathy Bray (ASWAC member), Deborah H, Marg J, Anne McG, Jane W. They will review the draft policy, and staff evaluations (confidential).

UNA:

Decision: It was decided that ASWAC would support the United Nurses of Alberta if they go on strike, and to extend this support as actively and as vocally as possible.

Board Reports:

Background: Most board members had not submitted reports on their activities in-between board meetings.

Discussion: It was acknowledged and made clear that a report was expected from each Board member.

Decision: Each board member and working group will prepare a report for the next meeting.

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January edition**

Before our roses wilt

Free trade has become the issue of the decade, yet few ordinary Canadians are taking the time and effort to find out what it's all about. Too many of us are adopting a "wait and see" attitude. As women, we are particularly wary of diving into economics and speaking out on complex economic policy decisions. Yet we must. The direction that the Mulroney government is pushing Canadian trade policy will affect our economic and social lives drastically, for a long time into the future.

March 8 sends us all humming "Bread and Roses" and yea! it's International Women's Day! Yet, the advances women have made since the 1910 strike for Bread and Roses will all be negatively affected by free trade with the US. Our fore-sisters demanded better pay, humane working conditions,

by Isa Bakker
reprinted from NAC's FEMINIST ACTION

In a paper prepared for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ann Porter and Barbara Cameron warn that free trade will have an adverse affect on women in manufacturing, potentially resulting in an increase in the rate of unemployment among women, widening the disparity between men and women, and the erosion of critical social programs for women and their families. Marjorie Cohen, a familiar writer on economic issues of special concern to women in her recent book, Free Trade and Future of Women's Work: Manufacturing and Service Industries (Garamond Press, Toronto) focuses on the vulnerability of women's jobs under free trade conditions. She believes that given "the current structure of the Canadian economy, and the industries which will be adversely affected by free trade, women will be the major losers in a bilateral free trade deal with the United States."

In her study, Cohen identifies five manufacturing industries (textiles, clothing, food processing, electrical and electronic products, leather products) with over 60 per cent women workers. She argues that while only 25 per cent of all workers in manufacturing are women, it is the industries in which they are most heavily concentrated that will experience the most restructuring and job losses under free trade. In studies conducted for the Macdonald Commission, these same industries were also most commonly identified as the likely losers under free trade as they need protectionism in order to survive. As Porter and Cameron show "What is notable about women's position in the manufacturing sector is that they are concentrated in the industries that were the first to shift production to the Third

care for their children, and the right to participate in democracy via the vote. Our roses are in danger of wilting, our bread is showing the first sign of mold. Free trade will bring loss of jobs; lower wages; a decrease in the quality of our worklives; privatization and thereby erosion of our health, social and day care services. Furthermore, we are not (as yet) being given the opportunity to voice our opinions at the ballot box. Our cry for Bread and Roses rings out once more.

In this section of the newsletter, we are presenting some basic information about the free trade issue. We have much more available, so if you would like to read more, contact your nearest ASWAC office.

"Like any less powerful group in society, women need the modifying influence of public policy on the discriminatory and unjust features of the free market system. The free market does not work for us, and we have been fighting it for a long time."

Marjorie Cohen

World and that continue to face the most pressure from low-cost imports." The vast majority of women working in these industries are located in Quebec and Ontario; an exception is food processing which also employs women in BC and the Maritimes.

According to Cohen, it has been the women in these industries who have suffered when jobs have been lost. The women workers who are most likely to be displaced because of import competition are also the least likely to get new jobs, being older than the average female worker, and having less education and they are likely to be immigrants. Where job loss does not occur it is likely that increasing competition will oblige firms to reduce costs by cutting wages, and this will lead to poorer working conditions and even fewer occupations available to women.

The impact of trade liberalization on services is especially important for women because it is a rapidly expanding sector employing approximately 83 per cent of working women and accounting for



"This is essentially a policy of macho economics, where you are leaving everything to the market. It is a kind of slash and burn technique, where you can get rid of social programs and inconvenient labour legislation because you can say, well, the market did it, we in the government did not do it."

— Marjorie Cohen

ing as a right to national treatment. This may affect the provision of such services as health and day care.

Women have made major advances in employment in the last few years through equal pay for equal value (pay equity) legislation, but the increased competition of free trade will force firms to cut costs, thereby putting pressure on equal pay legislation.

In the public sector, American pressure on Canada to "harmonize" its social programs with those of the US may affect the delivery of social services and lead to job losses. Efforts to bring Canadian tax programs in line with American ones may mean reduced revenues for government and may signal public sector spending cuts in response to deficits. This political strategy neatly dovetails with the Meech Lake Accord's reduction in federal power over social programs and the moves towards privatization of the post office.

The free trade agreement raises serious questions about the long-term economic and political direction of Canada. Economically, we have restricted ourselves to a bilateral agreement with the US that will not ensure "secure market access" and which gives the US more (since tariff reductions disproportionately benefit the US due to higher average Canadian tariffs). In return, we have further constrained our ability to make economic decisions without undue US influence. We have also modelled ourselves on the declining Reagan/Thatcher economies instead of developing an industrial strategy that makes us competitive with the dynamic economies of countries such as Japan and Germany. Canadians have been excluded from this secretive and un-democratic decision making. De-emphasizing the economic role of government and the resulting preference for the "free market" have negative implications for women as the public sector has historically been the most responsive to equality concerns in the labour market and in the provision of social programs and services. Free trade calls into question all aspects of Canadian society and we must demand an open, democratic discussion about our future.

one third of our world trade. The draft-agreement allows for an open, competitive market for trade in services. What this will mean practically is not yet clear given the difficulty of defining what constitutes a service, the problem of the right of foreign firms to receive the same treatment as Canadian firms, and the scarcity of government (and other) studies of the impact of freer trade on the service sector. We do know, however, that Canada is not a significant exporter of services (here we are running a deficit with the US), and it seems unlikely that this deal will lead to major gains.

While some firms servicing a small local market such as dry cleaners and auto repair shops enjoy a form of 'natural' protection from increased competition, others subject to competition from outside the country, such as data-processing, finance, insurance, and culture, will suffer from the elimination of protective barriers. Canadian data-processing, in particular, has been vulnerable to US firms; there has been a tendency for US-based multinationals like IBM to consolidate administrative and management functions in the US. Even this has had a significant impact on Canadian employment levels. As Paul Stothart writes in *Policy Option Politiques* (Jan. 87); "If IBM Canada employed Canadians at the same job-intensity (employment divided by sales revenue) as its parent employs Americans in the US, it would provide 6100 more jobs in Canada." This is one of the many examples of the poor performance of US subsidiaries when few restrictions on "re-investing" in Canada are placed on them. Another major problem affecting service delivery in Canada has to do with accepting the principle of "right to national treatment", which means that US service firms operating in Canada may challenge Canadian practices that inhibit their ability to compete here. So when JS private firms compete with publicly supported services in Canada, they may be able to claim equal access to public Canadian fund-

Bold words from cowards' mouths

BALANCE OF TRADE - the amount by which a country's exports differ from its imports. If a country's exports are worth more than its imports, the country has a positive trade balance, which is good for its economy. If imports are worth more than exports, then money is draining out of the economy, and the country has a negative trade balance. The US is the world's largest debtor nation, and the US trade deficit runs in excess of \$150 billion per year. This means that in the end the US is interested in decreasing their imports from the rest of the world, including Canada.

BILATERAL AGREEMENT - an agreement between two countries. In effect, bilateral agreements act to discriminate against all other countries. Multilateral agreements are between a number of countries. see **GATT**

BRANCH PLANT ECONOMY - what we have in Canada. Most of the trade between Canada and the US is between Canadian branch plants and their US counterparts. It has been tariffs at the border that have made it necessary for US firms to set up shop in Canada. Once tariffs are removed, US firms will invest where the highest profits can be made ie: Mississippi and South Carolina where there are terrible labour laws, low or no minimum wage, few unions, and low safety standards.

COUNTERVAILING DUTY - a tax imposed against a good imported at an unfairly low price.

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT MECHANISM - supposedly, the trade agreement's "binding" dispute settlement mechanism would protect Canada from US protectionism. A panel made up of representatives from both countries would have the power to over-rule the decisions of national trade bodies on disputes involving dumping and countervailing duties.

In practice, these panels will be next to useless, since they can only rule on whether the importing country's laws have been correctly applied, according to the procedures and precedents of that country. Thus, if the US enacts protectionist legislation, the panel can only rule on whether the law has been followed; not on whether the law is fair or in keeping with the free trade agreement.

FREE TRADE - complete freedom to move goods and services across national borders. (Hence freer or enhanced trade - the reduction of

barriers to the movement of goods and services). Supporters of free trade claim that it creates wealth, by allowing international specialization based on comparative advantage. Opponents of free trade, often called protectionists, believe some trade restrictions are necessary to allow industry to develop, to decrease the power of international monopolies, and to enhance national sovereignty.

GATT - the General Agreement on Tarriffs and Trade - a multilateral agreement designed to gradually reduce barriers to international trade.

HARMONIZATION - singing together, as when Brian and Ronnie share a rendition of "When Irish Eyes are Smiling", and - the tendency of policy (social, foreign) of free-trading nations to become identical. This means, in real terms, the lowering of Canadian social policy and the militarization of foreign policies to US standards. It is health care, the CBC, UIC and the NFB that makes Canada a friendlier place to be in than the US. Under free trade, the differences would disappear.

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD - a smooth ground where US based-multinationals can make their own rules thank you very much.

LEAP OF FAITH - What Donald Macdonald claimed Canada should make regarding a free trade agreement with the US. The Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women has been heard to call this the LEAP INTO THE ABYSS.

NON-TARRIFF BARRIERS - any barrier to international trade other than a direct tax. Non-tariff barriers include import quotas; boycotts; restrictive regulations such as Canadian content rules; environmental protection regulations, and health standards; government procurement policies favouring local producers and subsidies to domestic producers. Even consumer preference can be a non-tariff barrier - so that campaigns like the "Buy Alberta" promotion falls into this category. Non-tariff barriers are as important to the whole discussion of free trade as are tariffs. (credit for some of these

definitions, goes to Rici Lake.)





International Women's Day

March 8 is our day of the year to celebrate our successes in our struggle to make the world a better place to live. International Women's Day has its roots in socialist organizing for working class women's rights, and the campaign for the vote. The turn of the century was an extremely busy period for women activists. The work continues, but now's the time to celebrate in:

Edmonton

The International Women's Day Co-ordinating Committee is sponsoring an IWD Parade and Potluck Dinner on Saturday March 12, at the YWCA downtown. Other groups will be publicizing their events through the Co-ordinating Committee's poster which will be out soon. For more information contact Mair at 432-3093 or ASWAC at 455-5777.

Pieces by Women - come show others pieces by women - a piece of news, a piece of cake, a piece of your mind. Come to a relaxed evening of sharing women's experience. March 8 7-10 pm at the KIVA Education North 2-103, U of A. This event is sponsored by the Women's Program, Dept. of Extension, U of A. Call 432-3093

In Edmonton, ASWAC and the Edmonton Learner Centre are co-sponsoring an I.W.D. presentation for high school students. Call Marg at 424-4371 or call the ASWAC office at 455-5777.

Calgary

The theme of International Women's Day in Calgary is, "Continuing the Dialogue Towards a Multi-racial Women's Movement. There will be a coffeehouse, March 8 at the Carpenter's Hall, 11-10 St. N.W. 8 pm. Arlene Mantle and Faith Nolan (to be confirmed) will be present at a weekend conference, Friday the 11 and Saturday the 12. There will be discussions on race and political ideologies and a march on Saturday at noon.

For more information call Women Looking Forward at 269-1144 or Anne at ASWAC at 233-0731.

Lethbridge

International Women's Day Celebrations will be held on March 5 in Lethbridge. There will be a day-long series of workshops and an evening celebration. For information call Lethbridge ASWAC at 329-8338.

Central Alberta

There will be a "Celebration of Women" in Innisfail, Wednesday, March 9. All women from central Alberta are invited to attend a dinner with entertainment by a Calgary theatre group, "Sisters of Sistren", and presentations by local women's groups. There will be free, on-site childcare. Tickets are \$8. The entire evening will take place at the Innisfail United Church, 48 Ave. and 46 St. Call Elin at 227-2927 or Lori at 227-3881 for more information.

Fort MacMurray

"Women and Political Power" is the theme of this fundraising dinner for the Ft. Mac Women's Resource Society, March 5. Tickets are \$35 for dinner and speakers at the MacKenzie Park Inn. Call 742-3080.

March 8 come to the Jubilee City Centre for displays, a film showing and fun for the kids. 11:30 - 2:30. Call Denise at 791-4634 for info.

A "Celebration of Learning" will be held March 8, over lunch time at Keyano Theatre for high school students in Fort MacMurray. There will be a film showing and speakers on non-traditional occupations for women. This event is co-sponsored by the Business and Professional Women's Club, and the business administration department at Keyano College.

Medicine Hat

Tuesday, March 8 Sylvia Waller will do a noon-hour presentation at the Medicine Hat College on Women and the International peace movement. Sylvia will show her slides from the World Congress of Women in Moscow.

There will be a dinner with Arlene Mantle, folk singer and feminist activist, Wednesday March 8 for International Women's Day. Location to be announced, call Unisphere at 529-2656 for details.

Our choice is beyond debate

by Anna Pellatt

Though I waited anxiously for the Morgentaler decision, I was not prepared for the wave of feelings it evoked.

I was standing in the Salt Lake City airport at the time - I wonder if we will be telling each other stories about where we were and what we were doing when we heard "the news", years from now - and I threw a comment and absolute fit of joy. I jumped up and down, threw my mitts in the air, screamed, and started to yell about abortion rights and how we had actually and finally done it. We'd won. Those of you who've never travelled to Utah may not know this, but women are not encouraged to make spectacles of themselves in airports anywhere within state boundaries. It



therefore gave me particular pleasure to do just that, and to gloat as visibly as I possibly could.

The joy I felt then and still feel now has been eclipsed by other, darker feelings. I feel pure rage when I think of the nature and intent of that law and others like it that seek to bind us to our

wombs, that seek to restrict our integrity by taking away our right to choose. And then I think about how this battle was fought, and won, and I get even more angry. The struggle for choice took place in a venue not of our choosing. Women have never done well entrusting our rights and our vision of equality to the courts. It is not where we would have chosen to fight this fight.

At the very edges of my anger there is a feeling of bitterness and frustration about having to fight this fight at all. About all of the work and the struggle that goes into getting the legislatures, the courts and the churches off of our backs.

What we want seems so basic and so right to me, and so far beyond debate.

The time is now!

Since the Supreme Court ruled that Canada's abortion law is unconstitutional, all three levels of government have been trying to pass the buck and deny women control over our bodies and our futures.

It's time to let them know:

- we need reproductive health clinics covered under medicare
- all Alberta women deserve adequate health care including access to abortion

Write to:

- Marv Moore, provincial health minister
- Ray Hnatyshyn, federal justice minister
- Elaine McCoy, provincial minister responsible for women's issues

For more information, contact the Abortion Caucus, c/o ASWAC Edmonton, 455-5777.

Extras: These items were not dealt with at this meeting and will come up at the next: Legal Defense in Lethbridge, Assembly review, Media strategy, division of labour - board and staff functions, Regional offices, Lubicon band, Bill C-54, Rural Post offices, new image for ASWAC, Childcare policy at meetings, personnel policy, and interim decision-making between board meetings.

Lawsuit: We agreed not to print any more information regarding the lawsuit. For information call the Edmonton office.

Tired of too much TV?

Come to an ASWAC meeting and join the real show
Watch for upcoming meetings in:
Lethbridge 329-8338 Calgary 233-0731
Edmonton 455-5777

Brave, brave sisters on strike

by Marg Bail

The United Nurses of Alberta, 99% women and 10,000 members strong, took to the streets January 25 in violation of Bill 44 which prohibits them from striking. While Hospital Minister Marvin Moore declared their strike an act of terrorism, it has become apparent that support for the nurses from labour, women's and community organizations, doctor's and other health care professionals and the public as a whole far outweighs the Tory minister's outrage.

The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) are attempting to negotiate a collective agreement with the Alberta Hospitals Association (AHA), which is seen by most to be nothing more than a front for the Conservative government. Rather than negotiate in good faith, the AHA had refused to budge on their demands of concessions in the areas of seniority, lay-offs and parental leave and have offered a wage increase which is pathetic in its inadequacy to simply maintain the nurses' purchasing power with inflation, never mind an increase. The AHA has been allowed the freedom to "not negotiate" with the assurance that any strike would be illegal and that the courts would be swift in disciplining the UNA should one occur.

And swift the courts have been! Before the strike began, the Alberta Labour Relations Board ruled that the UNA could not even hold a vote on whether or not to strike. The nurses voted anyway, despite that ruling, and, 10 days into their strike were found guilty of contempt. The UNA was fined \$25,000 per day for a total of one quarter of a million



Luanne, Jane & Cathy at a nurses' demo

photo by Andrea Waywanko

dollars, the highest fine known to have even been levied against a union in this country. Rather than drive the nurses to their knees, this outrageous fine has rallied the labour movement across the country to their support. The Alberta Federation of Labour has created a legally chartered society, "Friends of Alberta Nurses Society" (FANS) to receive donations to mount a campaign of support. In the first two days of its formation, FANS has received well over \$25,000 with pledges for thousands more coming in from across the nation.

The responsibility for this strike clearly lies with the Alberta Conservative government. The law which forbids nurses the right to strike and which leans heavily in the employer's favour by stipulating hospital budgets must be taken into account when negotiations are entered, is a travesty and must be defeated. It is clearly a law to uphold the rights of the government with no concern for fair, good-faith, collective bargaining. Dave Werlin, president of the 118,000 member Alberta Federation of Labour, stated, "Our position is that, even with the limited funding available

to them, the AHA has no business relegating nurses and other hospital employees to the bottom of the list. Instead of acting responsibly to settle this strike, the Government is resorting to outlandish, provocative statements and the most extreme actions in the courts, designed to intimidate our nurses," he said adding, "it just won't work - this attack is not just against nurses, it's against all working people in this province. The labour laws which permit employers to respond this way must be changed."

One of the best indications of the commitment of the nurses to fighting Bill 44 was found during the first day of court appearances. Hundreds of nurses entered the court carrying slips of paper with the following quotation by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

"In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law. .. that would lead to anarchy. An individual who breaks the law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law."

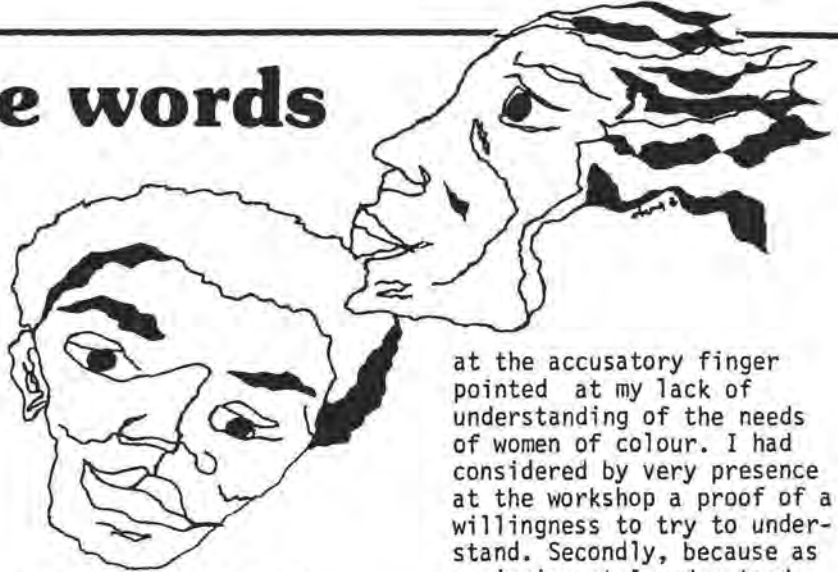
Sharing some words

by Anna Mioduchowska

Three months have passed since ASWAC's Annual Assembly. It seems a long time, and yet the feeling of warmth with which I came away from it persists. I would like to share it with you, along with some of my thoughts sparked by the workshop on Racism and Class.

I belong to the vast army of private feminists. By this I mean that although I am committed to the ideals of feminism I am not active in any feminist organization. Whether this stems from my mistrust of organizations or from shyness, I am not certain. I went to the Assembly in Camrose to overcome that mistrust and shyness. The week-end was truly wonderful. We shared so much joy and sorrow together in an atmosphere of trust, shedding tears without embarrassment, that at the end I felt as if I had found a long lost family. I feel stronger now and ready to continue the struggle to make the world a better place.

Those of you who have attended the workshop on Racism and Class will remember the atmosphere of unease that developed as the workshop progressed and that was not resolved before we parted. Racism is such a difficult topic to deal with. Most of us, no matter what our skin colour or national background have had some experience with it. We have been either its victims, have witnessed it in action or have thought racist thoughts ourselves sometime during our lives. Given the kind of world we have grown up in, that is almost inevitable, I think. Feminism and racism do not : I attended the workshc : ause I wanted



to learn about what can be done to combat racism.

I saw the group as a loving one that disregards race and class, that excludes no woman. What a shock to learn that non-white women, or women of colour, do not regard white feminists as such; that they have formed their own group in order to give one another the understanding and support that they could not find among white women.

Does this mean that women of colour consider white feminists to be part of the oppressive system? Unfortunately, the question was not answered during the workshop, and this was partly the reason for my unease. The other part was the blunt way in which the guest speaker told the workshop participants that if we - all of us were white - were interested in finding out the problems facing women of colour, we should do our own research, without imposing our questions on the women themselves, as it hurts them too much to speak of it.

Although white, I am an immigrant, and because my mother tongue is not English, an ethnic. Ah, labels... I came away from the workshop feeling frustrated for two reasons. First of all, because I am white, I winced

at the accusatory finger pointed at my lack of understanding of the needs of women of colour. I had considered by very presence at the workshop a proof of a willingness to try to understand. Secondly, because as an immigrant I understand some of the problems faced by women of colour, I winced at the refusal of some women in the workshop to admit that these problems exist even within feminist organizations. I tried to speak of the feelings of loneliness with which I have to grapple often, loneliness which results from being displaced. I mentioned my dislike of being labeled "ethnic" when I wanted to be known simply as "Canadian". One response was that maybe I would prefer the melting pot of the US. I interpreted this comment to mean that I do not fully appreciate my new country.

And yet I was only trying to share one of the problems that I, as an immigrant, face. Leaving the country of birth, one loses the right to call it home. On the other hand, at what point does one acquire the right to call the new country home? The defensive reaction to my remarks, I am sure, only deepened the sense of alienation of which I spoke. After all, by questioning my right to criticise, I am excluded from your circle. Feminists criticise the system we live in.

Still, because I belong at least to the racial, if not ethnic, majority here, it is easier for me to shrug my shoulders and keep on with my efforts to find a home for

Rural post offices

Closing the wickets

by Luanne Armstrong

The massive privatization of the Canadian postal system now underway has many implications for women, but the plan to close rural post offices all over Canada cuts bitterly at women's employment and at the life and heart of small rural communities.

Canada Post has decided to "phase out" rural post offices over the next ten years. Canada has 5221 rural post offices. Over the next 10 years, 1700 of the smaller post offices are to be replaced by supermailboxes. The 3500 larger offices are to be privatized: the post office would be closed, retail services would be provided in the local grocery store, drug store or service stations. A decent living wage would be reduced to minimum wage. The employees would not be properly trained, experienced, and sworn in postmasters, but poorly paid store clerks with high turnover rates.

Anna continued

my soul. Because I am a feminist, my ethnic community, with its patriarchal base, centered around a church in which I no longer believe, cannot offer me that home. Ethnic communities can be stifling and usually are. I do not reject my roots; I simply cannot live in an emotional ghetto.

To summarize my thoughts then, let me say what I would like to have heard at the conclusion of the workshop. As women, all of us carry heavy burdens on our shoulders, burdens that are often similar but sometimes quite different. If we are to work together, we must understand each other's burdens, and

Eighty two percent of rural postmasters are women. They regularly help their customers with government forms, call to say that awaited letter or parcel has arrived, and serve as an informal resource centre for a small community. Most rural economies are resource based on either fishing, farming, mining, or lumber. Closing post offices removes one of the few decently paid jobs available to rural women, as well as further eroding the sense of community and closeness that is often so apparent in such communities.

Privatization of post offices in the country is being handled differently by Canada Post, than privatization in the city. A rural post(master) (sic) will be offered a contract to run a sub post office where her income is based on a percentage of the business. Under such a contract, she would receive about one-fifth of her present income, or about \$2000 to \$2400 a year. This amounts to a salary of between 47 and 83 cents an hour. Canada Post will be

if we are to understand those burdens, we must be able to talk about them in an atmosphere of trust, without having to feel defensive about what we say. Because of the nature of our needs, some of us require separate support groups, but let us remember that those needs will be taken care of only if we teach other women about them. I agree that the process of education is often painful, but how are we to change anything without it? My jaws hurt as I write because it is very difficult to bring out and condense emotions of twenty six years into a few paragraphs. I can write however, because the weekend in Camrose has given me the courage to do so. And for that I thank you.

saving money by taking it away from rural women, and by taking vital services away from rural communities.

In order to fight this plan, a group called Rural Dignity has begun to organize across Canada. A national public meeting was held on December 14, 1986 with over 600 postmasters, mayors, and citizens from BC to Newfoundland. This group launched a national campaign in 1987 to condemn this plan, with petitions, resolutions, and letters to MP's. However, in response, Canada Post issued a "gag" order to its employees, postmasters, and assistants, who are not allowed to speak publicly about the loss of their careers and Post Offices. Those who do so are reprimanded and suspended.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations has recommended that "no closure of Rural Post offices, or change in postal service be undertaken without meaningful consultation and the consent of the community affected. This consultation period should be at least 90 days." However, the Minister responsible, Harvie Andre, has not yet acknowledged the recommendation concerning community consent. Many closures have already taken place across Canada despite protests from local community members.

As a rural woman by birth and inclination, I find myself deeply angered by this plan. I know by experience that it strikes at the quality of women's lives in small communities in many subtle ways. Not only does it directly remove income and job opportunities from these communities, it will also, I believe, add to the alienation, frustration and isolation already experienced by many rural communities: that sense that government, and society at large, neither knows, understands or cares about what makes rural life different and special.



Dear Sisters,

Thank you for the coverage you gave the NAC mid-year meeting in the last newsletter. A couple of small errors crept into the story, however. The play, Macphail, was the work of an Ontario group rather than the one from Newfoundland and was performed by Diane Gordon from Grapevine Theatre. The name of the presenter at the workshop on privatization and the writer of many fine NAC position papers is Joan Hannant. This may seem a bit nit-picky but when women do great jobs I feel we should make sure their work is given proper credit.

I also want to comment on Jane's observations that "poor, non-academic women were not to be seen in large numbers at the NAC event", that grassroots feminists were not there,

etc. While this may have been Jane's perception, the registration information does not support this claim and it is unfortunate that a feminist publication would feed into the stereotypic image of NAC that the New Right is trying to create. Of course, the level of analysis in the workshops and other sessions was generally very high and this may have led Jane to the conclusion that most of the women had "letters behind their names" but that's an assumption rather than disparaging to women's abilities. As we all know, some of the best feminist work comes from "common" women sharing their experiences with one another and then trying to make sense of those individual experiences by looking at them within a broader context and seeing how personal troubles are really social issues which can be resolved through carefully planned actions.

On the other hand, it concerns me that some community activists adopt a them-us attitude which often shades into anti-intellectualism when it comes to talking about academic women. Yet without academics such as Marjorie Cohen, the women's movement in Canada would not be as effective as it is.

That at least some academics are willing to use their knowledge and training in socially responsible ways, often at great costs to their individual lives and careers, needs to be recognized. Indeed, I think Jane creates a false dichotomy when she implies that academic women aren't and can't be grassroots women.

In sisterhood,
Rebecca Coulter, Alberta
Regional Representative
for NAC.

FAR OUT FEMINISTS

WANTED: Far out Feminists. Two lonely, forelorn but dynamic Ponoka feminists seeking same for endless political discussions, potluck dinners and mutual support. If you are isolated, or bored of "ladies quilting bees" and frantic for some frenzied feminist fun write to Elaine and Deborah (Dear E.D.) c/o Box 1000 Ponoka, AB. We look forward to hearing of your rural rantings and ravings. We will come to your place if you come to ours.

Welcome to the first far-out feminists column. At the January 30 regional rep meeting of ASWAC we agreed that feminists in rural Alberta need a way to find each other. We hope that this column will be a beginning. Out of the column we plan to:

- 1) learn about rural events,
- 2) introduce ASWAC's regional reps to the women in our rural communities
- 3) share our stories of life as a rural feminist.

Your input is needed to make this column come alive. Send your stories, pictures, dates of events and letters to:
Far Out Feminists c/o ASWAC Newsletter.

In sisterhood,
Elaine 783-4088, Deb 783-6021

AN URGENT APPEAL TO SUPPORTERS OF *the Newsmagazine* by alberta women

THE NEWSMAGAZINE BY ALBERTA WOMEN is entering a critical period in its development and we need your valuable input -- your ideas on what kind of magazine we need and how you can get involved in its production and distribution -- to keep *the Newsmagazine* a viable, vibrant publication.

Get involved in the restructuring of *the Newsmagazine* from the bottom up!

This process will begin at a special meeting open to all women on Sat. Feb. 20th from 1 pm to 5 pm at the Women's Resource Centre, 11019-90 Ave.

Childcare is available by pre-registration by Feb. 17th (state number & age of children). A limited number of billets and at least a partial travel subsidy are also available through pre-registration. Call us at 429-3570

happeningshappeningshappenings



There's still time left

There are still openings in the following courses offered by the Women's Program, Dept. of Extension, U of A: Financial Planning for Women; Post Partum: Mothering the Mother; Understanding Prenatal Changes and Assertiveness Workshops for Women. All of these courses will run in March. To register call the Women's Program for more information at 432-3093.

Childcare conference

We have brochures available for the "Childcare: Meet the Challenge" national conference on child care at the Edmonton ASWAC office. This is the annual conference of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association. Workshop topics fall into four categories: Policy, Strategy, Skill Building, and General Information. For more information contact CDCAA 323 Chapel St. Ottawa, ON. K1N 7Z2

Women Against Poverty

There will be a meeting of Women Against Poverty in Calgary, Feb. 22 at 7:30 in the Common room of the Old Y at 223 12 Ave. SW. Women Against Poverty is the working group in Calgary of ASWAC's campaign on women and poverty. For more information call Anne at 233-0731.

Have work need women

The Alberta Coalition Against Pornography is facing a crisis situation and is looking for volunteers for a variety of positions. Board positions will be opening up in March 1987 and volunteers are also needed for office work, speakers' bureau and production of kits on sexist language and the language of pornography (as well as other projects). We need your skills and commitment and can promise you a supportive and challenging environment with many learning opportunities.

Please call Janet (in Calgary) at 263-1550 local 346 for information. "Pornography is an Equality Issue."

House to share

Looking for a non-smoking feminist to share house in Strathcona area in Edmonton. Rent is \$300 a month including utilities. Call Aura Rose at 438-5969 or leave message at 482-0961.

Whose technology?

The Canadian Coalition on New Reproductive Technologies believes we are seeing a revolution in reproduction and that science is moving faster than our ability to grapple with the social implications these new technologies present. It has been formed to convince the federal government to appoint a Royal Commission on the social implications of new reproductive technologies. The group has adopted a First Draft of Principles for the use of New Reproductive Technologies, which can be obtained at the address below.

A list of supporters is being built up and contributions towards printing and mailing costs are also sought. Contact Canadian Coalition on New Reproductive Technologies, c/o Margrit Eichler, Dept. of Sociology, 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, ON. M5S 1V6.

Cinemaswac

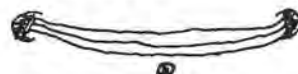
Cinema SWAC in Calgary is sponsoring a film series at Arusha - 233 10 St. NW, Saturdays at 7:30 pm. Upcoming films include:

Firewords - March 5
To a Safer Place - March 19
The Next Step - April 2

These films are NFB productions with a feminist bent. For more info call Calgary SWAC at 262-1873.

**The NEW Calgary office needs
a desk, a worktable, a file cabinet &
a coffee maker.**

Phone Anne



at 233-0731

The Alberta Status of Women
Action Committee
Box 1573
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2N7

Don't wait!

**for love, for the revolution,
for spring, for the election,
for old age, for retirement,
more money, more time,
for flowers...**

RENEW NOW!

(or join if you missed the pack on
its last run through town.)



ASWAC memberships run from September to September with a grace period until the Assembly in November. That means that 1988 memberships are now due.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ (home) / _____ (work)

Membership: \$ _____

New Renewal

Donation: \$ _____

Legal Defence
Fund: \$ _____

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

Please make cheque out to: ASWAC, Box 1573, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2N7