

ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

June 1987

Volume 8, Number 5



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and a special report on
child custody on page 10**



ASWAC

1986/87 Board members

Darlene Abreu Fereira - Edmonton
 Luanne Armstrong - Edmonton office
 Sheryl Ackerman - Edmonton
 Michele Butot - Calgary
 Anne Dobbie - Edmonton
 Helen Greaves - Edmonton
 Karin Goldberg - Edmonton
 Sally Isenman - Edmonton
 Terri-Ann Marco - Lethbridge
 Deborah Perret - Calgary
 Shelley Scott - Lethbridge
 Jane Wiley - Edmonton office
 Anne Magrath - Calgary office

1986/87 Regional Reps

Annete Aarbo - Edmonton
 home 437-4938 office 432-3359

Gerry Bailey - Westeros
 home 586-2983

Joan White Calf - Camrose
 home 672-2210

Lavera Creasy - Calgary

Lori Crocker - Innisfail
 home 227-1141 office 227-3881

Naomi Lis - Lethbridge
 home 381-8727

Important dates to remember

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 let your nearest regional representative know.

The next board meeting will be July 4,5 at Gerry Bailey's farm near Pigeon Lake. Following that meeting will be one in Camrose (?) August 22,23 and then Calgary October 3,4. This year's Assembly is tentatively planned for November 13,14 somewhere in Alberta. We will keep you posted.

The deadline for the next issue of the ASWAC Newsletter is July 8.

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Front photo: Waiting for a rally by Sheryl Ackerman

Donations

Monies have been most gratefully received from the following persons; Leslie Ayre-Jaschke, Campus Pro-Choice, Evelyn Stymest, Kirsten Clausen, Dianne Oberg, Mae Cox, Donna Anthony.

Hug these women!

These women deserve hugs and praise for their continued support for ASWAC's numerous undertakings; Leslie Stewart, Leslie Ayre-Jaschke, Trudy Hucik, Jude Major, Christine Macken, Jocelyn Brown, Valda Roberts, Gerry Bailey, Sheila Bertram, Sheilagh Edington, Cathy Bray, and all the wonderful women who showed the board such a good time at the last board meeting!

Call for submissions

If you have any articles, comments, art work or features you would like to see in the ASWAC newsletter, send them in! Letters should be marked, NOT FOR PRINT, if you don't want them in the newsletter. Any submissions will be screened for racist, sexist or homophobic content, and we think we are subtle enough to know satire when we see it.

ASWAC's mailing address is Box 1573, Edmonton, AB. T5J 2N7. Telephone 455-5777. ASWAC's Edmonton office is at 10826 124 St.

ASWAC Lethbridge resides in the Women's Resource Centre, on top of Woolworth's in downtown Lethbridge. Phone 329-8338.

As soon as we have a new Calgary office and phone number, we will let you know.

Our board meeting minutes

Eighteen hours at a glance

The following is our record of the board meeting held in Lethbridge, May 29, 30 at the wonderful Women's Resource Centre and ASWAC Lethbridge office.

Present: Deborah Perret, Lyn Morelli, (Lethbridge member) Shelley Scott, Terri Ann Marco, Luanne Armstrong, Anne Dobbie, Karin Goldberg, Linda Stoddard (Lethbridge member) Linda Nadworny (Lethbridge Member) Jane Wiley, Valda Roberts, (Edmonton member) Sally Issenman, Darlene Abreu Fereira, Helen Greaves.

Honorary Members:

Luanne welcomed our honorary board members. Honorary board members are women who are interested in attending a board meeting in its eighteen hour totality.

Women with Men:

Terri Ann wanted it to go on the record that women who are in relationships with men need and want support for themselves and the fact that they are working on their relationships. The women in Lethbridge are aware of this and are trying to give these women support. Often women who are involved with men feel that they are in the minority, but in Lethbridge they are the majority.

Judging Judges:

We have received the transcripts of a rape trial (cost: \$317) in Lethbridge. The transcripts were requested because there are women who are not content with the proceedings of the trial. We will be looking in to this situation, and planning something or other in the future.

Personnel Committee:

This committee has been doing work to update ASWAC's archaic personnel policy, and the policy proposal is just about ready. It will be presented to the board at the next meeting for approval. Ideally it was felt that all three staff women should sit on the committee with other board members. It was felt that there should be ongoing work done by the personnel committee, including evaluations of staff,

and other related stuff. Karin expressed interest in sitting on the committee. After the personnel policy is completed, we might expand the committee's work to help the women in Lethbridge and Calgary. Hopefully, the policy will be one that can serve as an example for other women's groups as well. In any case, we will all work closely and the board will be presented with the committee's recommendations. The committee will also deal with the new job descriptions for the Edmonton office staff.

Jane is being hired full time to do her old half time job and part of Luanne's old job description. Luanne will be doing part of her old job and all of Lorraine's research half time position.

It was important for women in the group to be clear on how/why this hiring happened. Jane is being hired under the seniority clause of ASWAC which entitles the board to offer a new position to a woman who is already on staff. Luanne's new job description more closely relates to her interests and skills as a writer/researcher. We had a long discussion about this and we cleared issues up and it was worth taking the time. We reiterated the discussion held at the last board meeting, regarding the difficulties associated with part-time movement work.

Assembly:

The Assembly, ASWAC Annual Conference and general meeting of the membership will take place on November 13, '14, 15. It is the time of year to begin planning for this event. Our theme ideas for this year could be: Here, There and Everywhere; Feminism in the 80's or... we brainstormed ideas. We struck a number of committees to do different work.

- 1) Space search committee: Valda and Sally agreed to research and book a beautiful place that could hold up to 300 women.

- 2) Finance/Grant: Luanne and Anne agreed to work on this - drafting

a budget for the Assembly and planning for grant proposals

3) Workshop Committee - Shelley, Deborah, Linda S. and Lyn M. to come up with a list of suggested workshops

4) Childcare - Darlene and Jane will work on arrangements

5) Orientation Committee - Anne and Helen will be in charge to ensure that everyone has a good time at the Assembly!

We also did a brainstorm of possible keynote speakers.

Community Reports:

This part of the agenda is where women from the community are asked to come to a meeting and let us know what their communities' concerns are and to find out about what ASWAC is doing. We had five Lethbridge women attend this part of the meeting. Questions that were posed are:

What is ASWAC's response to the Meech Lake talks? Especially in view of the fact that any province could opt out of any national cost-sharing program - that could mean that Alberta could opt out of a national child care program.

Have we thought of looking at an area of fighting: women on welfare and especially single women on welfare who are expected to be back at work by the time that the child is four months old. With the impending cuts to operating grants to infant day care centres what does Connie Osterman expect mothers to do? Lots of anger was expressed because first the access to abortion is made difficult, then the deinsuring of birth control counselling and the insertion of IUD's, and now cuts to infant day care centres. It is clear to us that the government wants women in the kitchen or the bedroom. Is this all a ploy to deal with the high unemployment? Keep women out of the workforce?

Abortion Caucus:

The report consisted of information about the talk and workshop that took place on April 11, 12. 150 people attended. Most of the anti-choice people seemed to be young, lunatic looking men. It would have been nice to see more support from the pro-choice women.

It was suggested that it may be again time from ASWAC to also consider taking a higher profile in the area of promoting contraceptives.



photo by Trudy Hucik

Child Custody:

Luanne was sent by ASWAC, to the Don't Blame Mother Women in Therapy conference in Toronto. The three keynote speakers were excellent, especially Phyllis Chesler (who has written a book called, Mothers on Trial, Luanne thinks that this is a must-read). The basic assumption in custody cases is that fathers actually own their children - paternal ownership. And mothers, of course, are imperfect. Talking about child abuse in the courts is almost impossible because it is believed that children are lying when they say that they have been abused. This type of evidence is simply considered untrue. Nonetheless it's being used against women all of the time. Hopefully we will have a speak out on child custody in Edmonton in the near future.

The Lesbian Mother's Defense Fund groups have been active for the past few months and need support so that they can become more visible to women who need the LMDF. Mothers and children facing custody battles really need an incredible amount of support. It was felt that we really have to break down the prevailing silence and the myths that surround child custody cases. We are going to start now by collecting stories, documenting trials and sharing stories.

Lethbridge: Lethbridge Women's Resource Centre has applied for a number of staff positions, including a child care worker, from the

Canadian Job Strategies program. The childcare worker will develop a picture of what non-sexist child care is.

Childcare: The childcare committee has been doing some incredible work. See the following pages of the newsletter for more information. Karin will be taking a break from the committee to do reproductive labour, as well as other things. We need another board member who is interested in the issue of child care, to take Karin's place.

NAC/ASWAC in Medicine Hat: We are looking into the possibility of hosting a regional conference in Medicine Hat, with a possible theme of Feminism and the family. We will be meeting with NAC and will continue discussions on the possibilities. We do not intend, however, to out-family R.E.A.L. women. We are clear about why we want to use the word family as a starting point for interesting discussions.

Outreach: We had a short discussion about how we can expand our membership. A board member attended the Free Leonard Pelletier/Nelson Mandela rally in Edmonton and realized there are many ways to organize a rally, and there are different ways that we could reach native women and women of colour besides asking them to attend our events. We talked about attending their events and supporting their issues as ways to reach out to them and make connections.

Membership Development Committee:

The purpose of this committee is to design an ongoing, broad based campaign to reach out to women who would call themselves feminists if the media hadn't distorted the word and defined it to be something negative. The campaign would not be just to recruit members but to do some general PR work for feminism. There is a whole package of stuff that they want to put together, including buttons, t-shirts, and a tv commercial. Lots more details will be outcoming on this at a later date.

Health Cuts: Although we were all concerned about the attacks on our Medicare system it was felt that we cannot spend much time working on this issue.

Court Case: Two of our board members went to the examinations for discovery; the first step in the lawsuit case. We will have to do some major fundraising for this case as it could go on for some time. We discussed ASWAC's need for a legal defense fund and also the need of all women for some kind of fund to help them while dealing with legal issues.



photo by Jane Wiley

Budget: We have yet to hear about our Secretary of State money for this year, and things will become very critical for the organization if we don't receive our funds soon. We encouraged all the board and members to phone David Crombie's office to inquire after the status of our grant proposal.

Darlene agreed to write our year end report for the Secretary of State grant that we received last year.

Newsletter: Sally agreed to help proof-read the newsletter before it goes to print and Donna Anthony's name came up as a possible copy editor. The challenge of the year is to find a new name for the newsletter. And this challenge is now officially out to all of our members!

Lethbridge update

Money on the brain

by Shelley Scott

The common theme of conversation down here in Lethbridge these days seems to be MONEY.. at least that 's how it appears to me, or maybe that's just because I haven't got any! Out at the University of Lethbridge it's certainly on everyone's mind, as the education cutbacks continue to take their toll in terms of positions lost, services diminished, etc.

At our ASWAC Lethbridge Women's Resource Centre, money has become something of an obsession. First, in discussing the possibility of a job development project with a very pleasant government rep, we've gotten our hopes up and the stars firmly embedded in our eyes and we're working on the possibility of hiring a project co-ordinator and three "trainees" to staff the Resource Centre. This, of course, is taking a fair pile of work to get organized, but the rationale is that it will broaden our horizons and our possibilities for next year immeasurably.

Next, we met with our Secretary of State funding officer, and explained where our money went last year and how much we'd like to have some more for next year. She didn't think much of our "air conditioner and pool installation" proposal, but other than that our meeting went well. A small group of us met in Linda B's kitchen to put together our funding proposal on Victoria Day...a good learning experience for those of us who are mathematically impaired!

The third in our ASWAC Lethbridge Film Forums was presented on Thursday, April 23. I want to thank the women all over the province who I phoned about providing a speaker... although no one was able to



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

make it, it was interesting to tap into that network. Luckily, we found the perfect speaker right under our noses, and Terri Ann gave a short talk on reproductive rights following the NFB film "Abortion Stories North and South."

There was a small group of women from the local Anti-choice association in attendance, and a fairly intense debate resulted. It was generally productive, though, as some common ground was reached: for example, they agreed that "sex education" and "birth control options" are important, (but, of course, our definitions of those things might be somewhat different.)

Tying into my theme of money...the Anti-Choice group has recently launched what must be a very expensive campaign: four colour glossy pamphlets on abortion and euthanasia were delivered to every door in Lethbridge, (including the Women's Resource Centre!), complete with photos of a fetus and some questionable facts on

development. In addition, they have started airing television commercials with much the same substance and the slogan: "When a woman and her doctor choose abortion, there's someone they are forgetting about." One wonders, of course, if all that money couldn't have been spent on something a bit more worthwhile.

The University of Lethbridge was host to an international symposium entitled "Girls, Women and Giftedness" on May 25, 26, and 27. About 160 people from across Canada and the US attended, and all reports sounded positive (this is where money comes in...I couldn't afford to go!)

I was, however, fortunate enough to be in a one-act play written by local ASWAC member Debby Letourneau and performed at the symposium. The play is called "An Interview with Emily Carr," and is about a woman dealing with the demands of the outside world, when what she really

New staff person in Calgary

As part of a move towards decentralization, and extending its regional outreach, ASWAC will have a full time staff person working in Calgary beginning July 2.

We welcome Ann McGrath to this position. Ann's position with ASWAC is that of Project Co-ordinator. She will be working primarily on ASWAC's provincial priority campaigns of pay equity, child care and membership development. Her job will also involve travelling, doing outreach to communities around the province, and providing information about ASWAC to the vital and active Calgary women's community.

Ann is very well qualified to carry out these demanding tasks. A resident of Calgary for the past year, she was previously involved in the women's movement in Edmonton, and before that, in Ottawa.

Ann has been an active member of the women's movement for years. As a student at the University of Ottawa, she was involved in setting up a women's centre there, and was also active in the women's centre's subsequent campaign against violence against women.

Lethbridge update continued from last page

wants to be doing is paying attention to her inner self/voices/creativity. It was also intended to present an alternative way of expressing ideas, other than the usual speeches. We will also be presenting the play at the ASWAC board meeting in Lethbridge.

Other things have been happening lately, too... an NDP wine and cheese on April 24 that featured local feminist folksinger Karen Howe, the office continuing to be staffed by some wonderful women, discussion evenings

In Edmonton, she worked for the University of Alberta Women's Centre and for Hecate's Players, a feminist theatre group, as a development officer. As a volunteer, Anne worked with the Edmonton Women's Building Collective, The IWD Committee, Friends of Medicare, the Summer School for Women Organizing, and the Edmonton Learner Centre.

Ann has an active interest in women's theatre, and is a member of the Alberta Writer's Guild. She was also a founding member of Edmonton Working Women, a group that is still very active in Edmonton. She gained valuable experience and background in the field of pay equity, and worked with women organizing in unions around this issue.

Ann also has a new and "rather loud" interest in the childcare issue, her son Brendan, born June 4. Ann is married and has two step children.

Ann will be setting up an office in Calgary soon, and she can be reached through the Calgary board members of through the Edmonton office.

and business meetings, and the ordering of our F.A.K.E. women sweatshirts. These are destined to become the fashion sensation of the season, with a unique sweatshirt design, pink or white with navy blue lettering. Sound like something you can't live without?...phone the Resource Centre at 329-8338 to place your order.

Things coming up... another Film Night, meetings, and more meetings, a social event, spring and sunshine and who knows, maybe we will win the lottery?



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

A still-pregnant Anne at a recent board meeting.

The spring line has arrived

It's spring again. The robins have returned, the leaves are out on the trees and Common Woman Books 8210 104 St. in Edmonton has received hundreds of new books from their publishers.

Spring is a very exciting and busy time of the year for bookstores. Most publishing houses have two seasons during which they release new titles - the spring and the fall.

This spring publishing season has been a very good one for books for, by and about women. Common Woman has pulled together a book list with some of its most interesting new titles.

If you would be interested in getting a copy of the booklist phone 432-9344 or write to 8210-104 Street, Edmonton.



June edition

Rallying for our children

by Jane Wiley

ASWAC's highly motivated and extremely capable child care committee, in conjunction with other Child care advocacy groups, organized one of Edmonton's best public rallies, June 9 at the Legislature. 500 children, parents and day care workers came with balloons, noisemakers, and pickets, to tell the government what they think about the state of child care in Alberta.

Alberta's day care system needs more funds - not cutbacks. The monitoring and licensing officers employed by the provincial government are run off their feet, and poor quality - sometimes abysmal centres, are the result. Alberta has the lowest staff training standards of any province, and the standards that are in place; staff-child ratios, space and equipment requirements, are not adhered to.

In a parent-led survey of 25 day care centres in Edmonton, 11 were found abominable.

The provincial government is considering two major changes to the child care system. The first is a cut to the operating allowances given to all centres. It is rumoured that the infant centres will be losing all of their operating allowances, and that cuts to the other centres will happen more gradually. These cutbacks would result in much higher fees for parents in both private for-profit and non-profit centres.

The second rumoured measure is the implementation of a means test. All parents using day care will be required to declare all their income and assets to claim for subsidy. Apart from the miles of red tape that would result, the means test would disqualify lower middle income people from subsidy; people with a house or two cars that cannot be sold but are considered assets.

If the province implements the means test, it may be able to gain access to more federal funds for subsidized care, through the Canada Assistance Plan. (CAP) CAP funds are designated for non-profit centres but CAP funds may be given to profit centres if

the means test is used. This measure would be yet another example of the provincial government's eroding concern and commitment to day care.

As far as can be seen, the Alberta government's belief is that private investment and the profit motive should be the motivators behind the development of a child care system. And in accordance with the idea that government interference is bad, high standards are too much to ask for.

A group of parents in Edmonton recently did an informal survey of 25 day care centres and found 11 they described as "abominable". All of the centres they viewed are licensed and monitored by the provincial government and all of them receive operating funds. Our day care system is yet another example of handing over money to the private sector without demanding accountability from the private sector.

The real reason that for-profit centres aren't asked to live up to high standards of care is simple. Profits and high quality care are incompatible concepts. High quality care means well trained staff, good facilities and sufficient equipment and supplies. Private centres will not maintain a profit and provide the care that our children need. The reality of the situation today, is that 80% of the centres operating in Alberta are private for-profit day cares. Obviously we can't close all these centres down tomorrow. What we can do is provide support for non-profit community and parent-based centres, and demand higher standards for licensing. Good day care is only one component of a feminist vision of how to care for our children in today's society. We need maternity benefits, paternity benefits and we must be able to provide support for parents who are staying at home with their children. However, thousands of Alberta children are now in substandard day care centres, and we must provide for them as well.



L. Stewart



photos by
Sheryl Ackerman



Scenes from a rally



National campaign a success

Just prior to the June 9 rally, Jan Reimer, Edmonton city councillor, officially signed the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, the National Action Committee, and the Canadian Labour Congress's petition on child care. This petition was distributed across the country and was a response to the Federal Special Committee on Child Care's report that was released last month.

ASWAC helped to collect the petitions, and the campaign was very successful. Thousands of Canadians showed their support. The petition read: We the undersigned, call upon the federal government to provide the Provinces and Territories with immediate short-term funding to strengthen and expand non-profit child care while a new cost-sharing agreement is being negotiated; and...We further call upon the federal government to take this measure as a first step toward the public funding needed to create a system of quality, non-profit child care, accessible to all parents who wish to use it.

Jake Epp, Health and Welfare Minister is due to announce the federal government's proposal

for a child care policy soon. In all probability, the policy will not come close to fulfilling the needs of Canadian children.

The Meech Lake Accord may also have drastic effects on the development of a federal child-care policy. Under the proposed constitutional amendment, the provinces will be able to opt

out of any new cost-sharing social program with the federal government, and still obtain the federal funds if a "compatible system" is in place. Should the Accord be ratified, it may mean that the Alberta government will be able to free itself from federal expectations for a high quality child care system, and still get federal monies to hand out to the private sector who will continue to provide insufficient and sometimes dangerous care.

Public hearings may be held in your area concerning the Meech Lake Accord. Let your feelings be known, if you have the opportunity. For more information about where, when, and what ASWAC's position is, contact the office in Edmonton at 455-5777.

June edition

Custody cases: the hidden war

by Luanne Armstrong

A recent Toronto conference called Don't Blame Mother, held on May 23, 24 and 25 although not specifically about child custody, highlighted this issue as one we all need more information on. Stories of women who had lost custody of their children were told at a speakout on child custody, held as part of the conference. Speakers at the conference included Judith Arcana (Mothers and Sons), Paula Kaplan, (The Myth of Women's Masochism) and Phyllis Chesler, author of a new book just released in paperback in Canada, called, Mothers on Trial. This book documents the astonishing increase in the number of fathers who are contesting and winning child custody cases. Estimates are now that in contested custody cases, fathers win about 65 per cent of the time. Where there are allegations of sexual abuse by the mother against the father, the statistics rise to an astonishing 75 per cent. Allegations of sexual abuse on the part of the mother are now viewed by many judges and lawyers as vengeful, and a sign of an unfit mother who is trying to turn children against their father. In the US, for example, in many states, police will no longer pursue cases of sexual abuse where there is a divorce or custody hearing in the offing.

About ten women came to the Speak Out: women who had lost custody, and were prepared to speak and tell their stories. However, the speak out was delayed when three men in the audience, one a father's rights activist who refused to identify himself, and another who was later identified as the ex-husband of one of the women present, refused



to turn off a tape recorder. The police finally evicted the men, but in the meantime three of the women, terrified, had left.

However, the women who did speak had grim and atrocious stories to tell. One woman had lost custody of two of her children, despite the fact that she had, "thrown herself into mothering as a profession."

After she had left her first husband, she had begun living with another man and become pregnant with twins by him. The man subsequently became unemployed despite a steady employment history, when the mill where he worked was shut down. A psychologist stated that he believed that because the man that she was living with was unemployed and because she was

pregnant with twins, he thought she couldn't give care to six children. So two of them were given to a father who was allegedly abusive and whom the children stated they were afraid of. There were many similar stories, including one from a woman who had been given into her father's violent custody when she was a young child. She had finally escaped, and after years of blaming her mother for not rescuing her, was now reunited with her, and trying to help her younger brothers and sisters escape.

Phyllis Chesler's book, (available from Common Woman Books in Edmonton), details many other terrifying stories. It also contains an analysis of how mothering is seen (or not seen) by our twentieth century court system, and how it is influenced by the patriarchal tradition of viewing children as male property.

Many women, when confronted with what is really happening in child custody cases around the country are astounded. A myth still exists that children are routinely allowed to stay with their mothers. In the approximately 80% of cases where men do not apply for custody, this is of course true. But in disputed cases, it is women, and mothering, who are on trial.

Any woman who has lost custody of her children, or who is being presently custodyally challenged, is asked to document those stories with ASWAC. All material will be held in the strictest confidence. Before we can speak out further on this issue, we need facts and information. Please call 455-5777 for more information.

Members lobby hard and fast

Hilltop House gets the axe

by Jane Wiley

Recently, a letter was sent to the Edmonton ASWAC members regarding the provincial governments proposed closing of Hilltop House, a home for women in need. Members were asked to write to the Minister of Social Services to protest this mindless and dangerous budget cutback.

The good news is that the women of Edmonton have launched a very successful letter writing lobby to have the decision to close the house reversed. It is difficult to say whether the



government will respond to its constituents or not, but we certainly have given it a good try.

Hilltop House has been open in Edmonton for over twenty years. It has saved the lives of thousands of women. It provides 24 hour counselling to women who are dealing with drug abuse, violence, poverty, and street life, and who need a place to go. The homelike, supportive environment that Hilltop has provided has given women the time and security they need to begin to take care of themselves and live their lives again.

The fact that the provincial government could even consider cutting such an important service is evidence of its lack of concern for the needs of women, and an inability to perceive the reality of life for poor and destitute people. Times of economic down turn are when services such as Hilltop House are most needed. Women who would once have been able to find a home at Hilltop will be forced back on to the vicious life of the street. And likely, many of them will find themselves in jail, in the hospital or the mental institutions, where services are extremely expensive to provide, and dignity is impossible to find.

Reaganomics reigns and people are starving in Alberta's cities. We have heard the horrors of the effects of cutbacks in other provinces, and now we are beginning to see them in our own. This year is the International Year of the Homeless. I wonder what that means to the women on skid row in Edmonton who are turning tricks for their dinner? I wonder if the Minister of Social Services ever wonders.

Health cuts protested

On May 19, the Getty Government announced extensive cuts to medicare coverage in Alberta. In response, the ALBERTA COALITION FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE has formed with these specific goals;

- to ensure continuation of universal, cost-effective health care for Albertans.
- to reverse the May 19, 1987 decision regarding cuts to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.
- to mobilize citizens of Alberta towards active involvement in policy decisions affecting health care.

Last week over fifty angry and frustrated members of the public, some representing large organizations, met to organize opposition to the Getty government's unacceptable attempt to undermine our universal health care system.

Reversal of the cutbacks is an immediate goal. However, the long term objective is to insist on public participation and consultation in the development of provincial

health care policies.

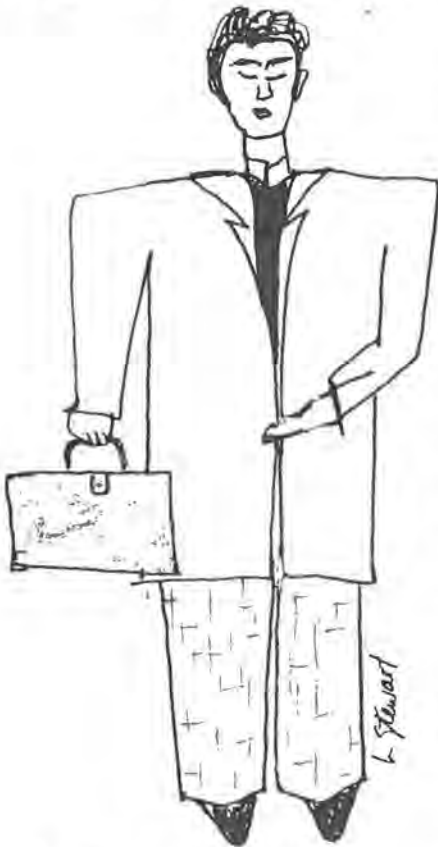
The coalition is circulating a petition that reads: We the undersigned CANNOT and WILL NOT accept the cuts made to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. We believe that health care must be affordable and accessible to ALL Albertans. Deinsuring: - contraceptive and premarital counselling, -tubal ligation and vasectomies, -eye care for anyone over 18 and under 65, - IUD insertion and follow up visits, and reducing benefits for: - physical therapy, -chiropractic treatment, - podiatry, -dental services, is intolerable, creating a two tiered health care system, and reducing preventive health measures. It will result in skyrocketing treatment costs in the near future. This decision must be reversed.

For copies of this petition, contact the ASWAC office in Edmonton or Elaine Husband at 284-0205 in Calgary.

the poet's corner

by Luanne Armstrong

I heard an item on my car radio the other day and I got quite excited listening to it.. started leaping around in the car and getting queer looks from other drivers, but since that happens a lot... but wait. I'm getting diverted. The item was an interview with a very nice man named Michael Kauffman, who has edited a book called, Beyond Patriarchy. Well, well, I thought to myself...and about time too, a book about men, by men, saying all the things feminists have been shouting at them for a while but which somehow they either can't understand or hear or something...I mean, who knows what the problem is. Anyway, I was very glad to hear from



I am responsible,
I have a briefcase

this man, because I have been thinking to myself for really quite some time that men will just have to get it together for themselves one of these days and try and find out just why they are so mennish. And while I don't spend a lot of time and energy thinking about men in general, I do think, having raised sons in this system, and seen them go through school and sports, that men's conditioning is just as powerful and awful, as women's is, in fact, that men are taught to be violently oppressive to one another and keep each other in line, obedient to patriarchal authority. But you'd think after a while they'd get tired of it, and do something else. Wouldn't you?

Well, I have rather naively thought so for a while. So I have been waiting, (impatiently, I might add,) for men to get it together, figure things out and start liberating one another. And they do try. But my goodness, it does seem to be a slow process. Or am I just very very impatient?

But one other thing men do that scares me... well two things (among the many) they do that scare me, is, that men, even very nice men, trivialize feminism by simply not hearing it: its something women do for women, and therefore, its very nice and all, but not something they have to pay attention to...or, in my bitterer moments, I think that what is happening is that women will go on doing all the work and all the liberating and all that social justice stuff and fix up relationships and figure out what they want and men will reap the benefits of finally having a just, equal and free society full of reasonable happy women (at last) and they won't have to do anything. We might even get around eventually to creating world peace, and they could



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

all relax at last because they wouldn't be faced with the possibility of having to go and kill one another yet again, a prospect that surely must keep some of them awake nights, eh??

But then again, I have this rather peculiar nightmare/fantasy, that somewhere just down the road, some trendy new male writer is going to announce that he has discovered, ahhh, think of it, that male problems are caused, by ... yes, indeed, the patriarchy, but just as men have invented it, men will get rid of it, and he will make a great deal of money reinventing all the things feminists could have told them about, only they won't call it feminist, but something else entirely. (As a friend of mine pointed out, someone has already done this, a father of four who is also a scientist called David Suzuki, did a TV show on ecology which managed to incorporate a lot of feminist ideas without ever mentioning that dread word.)

Or am I just being paranoid again, saying things about men which I really shouldn't do? When they try so hard to understand...and so rarely succeed? And they mean well, and I really do hope, quite sincerely, that Mr. Kaufman's book is part of a new wave, a trend for men. I'll even read it when it shows up in the (women's) bookstore.

Joining with sisters

by Janet Beebe

Seeing as our local gay community is a small one, my friend Joan and I jumped at the chance to attend "Just for Us" a provincial conference of lesbians held in Calgary on April 24-25. On the whole, we were glad we went.

The conference opened up Friday night with a concert by Noelle Hall and Tracey Riley -- both fine performers. The fifteen Saturday workshops ranged widely in content from spirituality to abusive relationships to money management and much more. Unfortunately for late registrants (like us) popular workshops like Legalities Concerning Lesbians filled very quickly, but even so, those workshops we attended were interesting.

One comment I must make is one and a half hours is never enough time for a workshop discussion to really get going - conference organizers, please remember this. Two to three hours with a carefully chosen topic is so much more satisfying than too little time with too big a topic.

Aside from this, I applaud the conference organizer's ability to run things so smoothly and calmly. Seldom have I felt so comfortable at a one-day conference amidst strangers, albeit kindred ones.

The women's dance Saturday night was a little less comfortable due to the dim and crowded hall, and some harassment from partying firefighters across the street,

but it made a nice end to the conference. Calgary women were, again, unfailingly friendly and helpful.

We stayed over for a Sunday meeting of the ASWAC Lesbian Caucus, which was well-attended and constructive. We're only sorry more Edmonton women did not attend. Truly provincial gatherings seem to be hard to achieve.

Nonetheless, I am glad to be part of a community which is so much bigger than "my town" both physically and emotionally. Thank you, sister, for being there.

\$\$\$, please!

Fundraising must begin immediately for a Legal Defense Fund to assist ASWAC in defending itself in a court case in which it, and board member Deborah Perret, have been accused of defamation. The case concerns a statement made in the June edition of the ASWAC newsletter.

It is possible that the trial could continue for some time and be very expensive. Fundraising is therefore essential to cover these costs.

Plans are being considered for a dance and a fund raising letter to the membership. Any other help or ideas to raise money for the legal defense fund would be greatly appreciated. Remember, ASWAC is a collective of its members. We are as strong as our collective strength can make us. Please help! (Mark donations; Legal Defense Fund).

Health collective active

Greetings, from the Calgary Women's Health Collective. As health activists during the past four years, we believe that we have become an integral part of the women's community in Calgary. We have made specific information on women's health issues accessible to a wide spectrum of women. As some of you may know, we have just begun our Wellness for Women series, which is one of our many activities of this past year. Further, in raising awareness on such issues as Depo Provera, D.E.S. and Menopause, we are actively engaged in developing a critical perspective on health and health services in the community.

The issue which is of primary concern to us at present is women and AIDS. We have currently formed a sub-committee with AIDS Calgary to do an in-depth research project and to publish our findings. We are asking the women's community to support this important work and to help us to con-

tinue our work in other areas, such as expanding our successful Menopause program. Since we are now functioning on a limited budget from the Secretary of State, we are fundraising to cover some of our expenses for the next year. Our goal is to raise \$5000. It is possible for you to support us in several ways if you are interested and able to do so. Your donations and memberships (\$10) can be sent directly to the Health Collective at:

2340 1 Ave. NW Calgary, AB
T2N 0B6 phone 270-7478

Join ASWAC and work!

Become a member of

- child care committee ● abortion caucus ● lesbian caucus

participate as a

- regional representative ●

or volunteer in

- Edmonton - 485-5777 ● Calgary - 263-1550 ●
- Lethbridge - 329-8338 ●

A look at child care

Dear ASWAC,

I was disappointed that the issue of the newsletter on child care did not address the concerns of those of us who have chosen to stay home with our children when they are young. This, coupled with a comment in the December newsletter about how some women at the Assembly said they "didn't really like being around children" has made me feel like those of us who have children and who wish to have them near us when they are young are somehow being excluded from ASWAC activities.

A lack of quality on-site day-care has for several years been a deterrent to my attending the annual assembly. For those of us travelling long distances to attend, it is not realistic to expect us to leave our children in an unfamiliar location, miles away, with unfamiliar people, for a weekend. Even if we are comfortable leaving them for the day, we would like to have them with us for the night and have them welcome at some of the evening activities. Am I alone in this concern?

I am enclosing a letter from the Edmonton Journal that expresses some of the same concerns I have about the debate

over child care. I have seen NAC's response to the idea of a tax credit system, but cannot help but feel that there has to be some middle ground where parents have a choice of how to spend this money. I worry that by discouraging parents from providing for their own children, we are desensitizing a generation of parents to the strong attachment needs of their young children. Once government is seen to be encouraging parent-child separation, it becomes a much more acceptable option. If this option is to be sanctioned, the other option, that of parents looking after their own children, must also be officially sanctioned and supported. This is not a popular issue to raise, I realize, but one that many of us have, whether we care to voice it in the feminist press or not. It is also a reason that REAL Women is finding a constituency among homemakers discontent with their treatment by many feminist organizations, NAC's protestation to the contrary or not.

For the information of ASWAC members, there is an alternative to R.E.A.L. women. Mothers are Women (MAW) is an organization formed to support women at home, and it



does this with a feminist perspective. It is funded by Secretary of State and has joined NAC in order to provide a woman-at-home perspective. Memberships/subscriptions are \$7 a year. MAW Box 4104 Station E. Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B1

I realize that ASWAC has many issues to consider, and there seems to be letters in every newsletter imploring it to address this or that issue or group, but since this year is focussing on child care, I would really like to see some acknowledgement of women at home and their concerns about child care options. I am pleased to see the work that ASWAC has done towards providing a model child care at its functions, and hope that this extends to future Assemblies.

Leslie Ayre-Jaschke

Respect for life... or authority?

Musing through the entrails of morality on the abortion issue, *The Humanist* in a recent issue sought to pin down the type of person (in the US) who is against abortion. Although such people often call themselves "pro-life", the evidence that emerged from US Senators' voting patterns appears to show the reverse. Voting patterns in the Senate on bills supporting abortion, capital punishment, support of the Viet Nam war, support of "no knock" legislation (police not needing a court

order to break into a private home) were all analysed. Findings included:

- * a 71% relationship between supporting capital punishment and being against abortion
- * a 72% valid relationship between supporting the Viet Nam War and being against abortion
- * a 71% valid relationship between opposing handgun controls and being against abortion
- * a 65% relationship between supporting the "no knock"

law and being opposed to abortion.

The conclusion from this was that anti-abortion ideology did not reflect respect and concern about human life but instead, an ideology of authoritarian control over the lives of individuals including violent means of oppression...a long way from being "pro-life".

From *The Humanist*, PO Box 146
Amherst, N.Y. 14226, USA.

happeningshappeningshappenings



New day care

In January, 1988, The Canada Place Child Care Society proposes to open the first federal government-supported Western Canadian day care centre.

The volunteer run, non-profit society has elected an 11 person Board of Directors and is working towards obtaining municipal and provincial licenses. Part of this as a goal is to raise \$50,000 to purchase toys, books, furnishings, equipment, resource materials, etc, needed to outfit the Centre. If these items are not in place, the Centre cannot open.

The society is undertaking to raise funds by holding a garage sale, a bake sale, raffle, and by appealing to charitable organizations. We ask that anyone able to donate contact Ms. Carol Buchanan at 459-7519. Donations will bear the name of the donating body. Watch for advertisements of our sales! Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Childcare concerns? — Come to a meeting

The ASWAC Childcare Committee will be meeting regularly throughout the year. If working towards non-profit, accessible childcare interests you, then phone 455-5777 for meet-times. Free childcare is provided.

About alcoholics

Submissions for an anthology of writing by and about daughters of alcoholics are currently being solicited. Writings may cover the following issues: recollections of being a daughter of alcoholic parents; present day issues, such as struggles with personal addiction, relationships and healing. Poetry, interviews, short stories, diary excerpts, are encouraged. Send Material to Natalie Zlodre, 303A Melita Ave., Toronto, ON. M6G 3X1



Come meet with the Abortion Caucus

The Abortion Caucus will be meeting regularly in Edmonton. If you are concerned about women's eroding reproductive rights in Alberta, get involved. For times and location phone 455-5777.

Reclaim the night

It is the time of year to begin thinking about the year's Take Back the Night Walk. This year may be the host to the ninth Take Back the Night walk in Edmonton.

If you are interested in working on the ad-hoc Take Back the Night Committee, please call 455-5777.

Hate does hurt

EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) has launched a campaign called HATE HURTS, to pressure the government into taking some action on discrimination against gays and lesbians.

In October 1985, an all-party committee unanimously recommended "...that the Canadian Human Rights Act be amended to add sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination to the other grounds, which are race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability, and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted".

The government of Prime Minister Mulroney has made a commitment to introduce legislation. The government has not acted to fulfill this commitment. Are they hoping that Canadians won't notice, that they will be allowed to hold back on their promise until it's too late to do anything for a long, long time?

It is now clear that the government needs to be pushed even harder to ensure that equality rights for lesbians and gay men is followed through to become a legislated reality. Time is running out. Canadian men and women need our support.

EGALE is asking for people to write letters to their MP's and the Prime Minister expressing support for the equality right amendment regarding sexual orientation.

For more information about EGALE write to P.O. Box 2891, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario. K1P 5W9. EGALE is a coalition of concerned individuals and organizations.

**What's happening?
Tell us: 455-5777**

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



CAN COMPUTERS HELP ME BECOME A
BETTER FEMINIST?
WELL, I DON'T KNOW. I KNOW TWO
THINGS MY COMPUTER WON'T DO;
IT WON'T DO THE DISHES,
AND IT WON'T RENEW MY ASWAC
MEMBERSHIP. ONLY I CAN DO THAT.

P.S. MY COMPUTER COULD REMIND ME THAT ASWAC MEMBERSHIPS RUN FROM
SEPTEMBER TO SEPTEMBER, WITH A GRACE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER UNTIL
THE ASSEMBLY - BUT ONLY IF I REMEMBER TO TELL IT TO TELL ME. I GUESS I
SHOULD JUST RENEW NOW, INSTEAD.

P.P.S. STAY TUNED FOR EXCITING NEWS ABOUT THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY AND
CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 13, 14 AND 15. WORKSHOPS, FEMINIST ON-SITE
CHILD-CARE, AND LOADS OF SISTERHOOD - BUT NO COMPUTERS.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE-home
work

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

New _____ **or Renewal** _____

Donation: _____

**Where did you come
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**Please make cheque out to:
ASWAC, Box 1573, Edmon-
ton, AB T5J 2N7**