

ASWAC

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee



photo by Andrea Waywanko

March Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 3

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International Women's
Day events around
the province

Special Feature by
the Abortion Caucus



1987/88 Board Members

Luanne Armstrong c/o Edmonton office
 Donna Baines - Calgary
 Nancy Cullen - Calgary
 Jane Haslett - Edmonton
 Deborah Hollins - Calgary
 Margaret Johnson - Edmonton
 Anne McGrath c/o Calgary office
 Lyn Morelli - Lethbridge
 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 - Westerose
 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 - Westerose
 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

Donations have been most gratefully received from these women: Bernice Neal, Diana Chown, Rose Tarnowski, N.J. Moore, K. Ivany, C. Bray, E. Filax, M.A. Smith.

Hug these women!

These wonderful women deserve huge hugs for the work that they have done for the cause in recent weeks: Ruth Miller, Sheila Bertram, Sheilagh Edington, Shelley Scott, Joan King, and all the women who helped make IWD such a success all across the province.

Big hugs must also go to the sisters of the Abortion Caucus, and finally, many mushy hugs must go to Donna Anthony for numerous reasons including the fact that she participated in the entire IWD march even after she broke her nose. Happy healing, Donna!

Remember these dates

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 meeting dates:

April 9/10 in Lethbridge
 May 28/29 location TBA
 July 9/10 location TBA
 August 27/28 in Ponoka
 September 24/25 location TBA
 Annual General Assembly - October 28/29/30

ASWAC's mailing address is Box 1573, Edmonton Alberta, T5J 2N7. The Edmonton office has moved to its new home at 9930 - 106 St., lower floor with the rest of the Edmonton Women's Building. Phone 421-0306. Office hours are Monday-Friday, 10-4.

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.

EIGHTEEN HOURS AT A GLANCE

The following is our record of the board meeting that was held in Edmonton, March 4-6.

Present: Terri-Ann, Donna B., Joanna, Valda, Jane W., Luanne, Deborah H., Marilyn, Lyn, Deborah P., Lisa W, Marg, Julie Ann, Jane H. Visitors: Rebecca Coulter, Trudy Richardson, Elaine Miklos.

Four board members submitted their resignations at the beginning of the meeting: Julie Ann, Terri Ann, Joanna and Deborah Perret. All resigning board members expressed personal reasons for resigning, and some expressed dissatisfaction with the priorities and processes of the organization as well.

The resignations sparked a fairly thorough discussion of ASWAC's mandate regarding types of activities we undertake, the issues and our annual events. We also had a general discussion about ASWAC's structure, roles, responsibilities and membership involvement in ASWAC. It was agreed that many of these concerns will be addressed by a membership questionnaire that the membership development committee has drafted and is launching. We also discussed NAC's activities and how ASWAC's work does or doesn't fit in with NAC's priorities. It was stated that groups, the media and government contacts NAC for information and direction on lobbying in Alberta whereas some women felt that ASWAC isn't doing enough lobbying-type of work in Alberta.

Sec State: Carmen Sylvain, the Secretary of State representative that deals with ASWAC's funding was present at a portion of the meeting and she expressed some concerns regarding community feedback she has been receiving regarding ASWAC's activities. She expressed the perception that other groups see us as politically narrow and inaccessible. We agreed to continue gathering information and discussing these issues further in the future.

Abortion Caucus: Anne Dobbie, member of the Abortion Caucus came to give an update on the Caucus's activities. The caucus has been doing a lot of work with the media and Jane Templeman was sent

as an Alberta representative to a national press conference in Toronto. The caucus is continuing to discuss its long term objectives, and hopes to attend the CARAL (Canadian Abortion Rights Action League) Annual General Meeting in Ottawa, April 28.

The board agreed to donate the remaining funds in the general account's abortion emergency fund (\$363) to the caucus.

NAC: Rebecca Coulter, the Alberta regional representative of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women also gave an update of her activities. Planned Parenthood has printed a post card regarding the abortion issue and it is being distributed. Rebecca is also working on the campaign to save the rural post offices, custody, and Childcare. NAC has launched a national lobby criticising the National Child Care Strategy with a picture book campaign, April 5-12.

IWD: The International Women's Day Coordinating committee asked for a loan from our general account of \$1200. We agreed to loan the committee the funds. The Calgary IWD committee has been denied a parade permit because the group doesn't have \$2 million in liability insurance. The Calgary Civil Liberties Association wants to seek an Application for Judgment with the courts and requested that ASWAC act as the sponsor. Clayton Rice will seek the application for costs (\$200). We agreed that ASWAC and the Council of Canadians will be co-named on the petition and that any costs will be paid by groups in Calgary other than ASWAC.

Women and Poverty:

We divided our discussion of our priority campaign into two sections: Update; and Future plans.

Update: The Edmonton staff have agreed to participate in two workshops on Women and Poverty: one in Edmonton and one in Valleyview. Issues of women and poverty will be addressed in the schools presentations to take place the week of IWD. Luanne has done two public speaks on women and poverty and has initiated work with the research committee. Jane and Luanne are working on a

fact sheet to be printed April 15. A group of community members have also expressed interest in forming a Women and Poverty working group in Edmonton.

The Calgary board members have been extremely busy and have called a group "Women Against Poverty" that has been meeting. They have done a mailout to members and friends regarding the group and have organized a series of events and have brainstormed a year long time-line of activities. A series of twelve Pover-teas has been scheduled for neighbourhoods in Calgary. A leaflet and an invitation has been drafted and a post card for an initial lobbying campaign is being printed. Other work related to the campaign includes: anti-free trade work, anti-cutbacks coalition work, CUPW pickets at privatized post offices, etc.

The Calgary group proposed that a set of six demands become the focus of the campaign including; End to the discriminatory aspects of the Widows Pension Act, Access to Health Care, Doubling the minimum wage, Improvements to Day Care and the raising of the welfare rates to the poverty line level.

Future Plans: We ended the Saturday portion of the board meeting discussing future plans. We discussed the fact that many other groups seem to be working on the issue of Women and Poverty and that we should try to stay up to date with their activities.

We reviewed the materials that will be generated by the first stage of the campaign: a pamphlet outlining the campaign, a lobbying postcard, a fact sheet.

We also reviewed our previous plans for a travelling task force for the summer and agreed to organize a series of public hearings following some preliminary committee development work and followed by a - now what can we do - workshop. Who and how these events will unfold was discussed on Sunday.

Sunday Morning:

The beginning of the Sunday board meeting was spent discussing and responding to some of the concerns expressed by some of the resigned board members and visitors at the Saturday morning session. We did a round and each member expressed their impressions. Many members felt that community concerns expressed were very

important and worth investigating, although everyone recognized that unless groups or women came to ASWAC with specific concerns than it was difficult to address the real issues. The ongoing question as to whether ASWAC should make grassroots organizing/ or provincial lobbying a priority was also expressed. All expressed concerns regarding membership involvement and connection to the board and office's work, and the membership survey was also cited as a preliminary step in addressing many of these issues. The Lethbridge voices expressed that the work that is done in Lethbridge is quite different than what ASWAC is supposed to be doing in Edmonton and the Lethbridge board members expressed feeling somewhat invisible, even though they are doing a lot of work.

Many important issues were laid out and the following decisions were made. The board agreed to call a meeting with NAC representatives in Alberta to discuss NAC's relationship with ASWAC. We also agreed to try to set up a meeting with Sec State representatives in Edmonton. We agreed to discuss the formulation of issue/lobby committees. The staff was given the go ahead to investigate a process of re-defining the job descriptions. We agreed to read Renate Shearer's evaluation of Sec State and ASWAC that was done in 1986. Donna Baines agreed to do a summary of ASWAC's publications and briefs.

Marg, Jane, Jane and Luanne agreed to meeting with Sec State. Donna, Deborah, Jane and Anne agreed to meet with Anne. Deb, Valda, Marilyn and Marg will meet at Deb's in Calgary on March 26 to discuss the formation of a lobby committee.

Funding:

Marg agreed to do some research regarding funding sources and make a presentation at the next board meeting.

NAC:

Both Jane W. and Anne have expressed the desire to attend the NAC Annual General Meeting in Ottawa in May. A flip of the coin chose Jane to be the rep but Anne and Jane can discuss it between themselves.

Women's Building:

The collective of the Edmonton Women's Building is searching for a new home

and has focussed on a house rather than commercial space.

Finances: The budget committee has done a great job of preparing next year's budget. The financial statements for the month of January were reviewed.

Work Planning Committee: The WPC is basically a staff-support group. The staff is facing some difficulty taking overtime off and keeping the office open at the same time. The need to orient new and more volunteers was reiterated.

Joyce Green and the NDP: TerriAnn and Joyce met with the NDP in Lethbridge to clear up some confusion regarding a brief that Joyce presented on pay equity on behalf of ASWAC. The misunderstanding is settled.

Ending of Meetings: The board agreed that it is important to close board meetings in a positive way. Singing a song was suggested.

Membership Pamphlet: The membership development committee was given the go ahead to complete the work on a new membership pamphlet.

Women and Poverty: Continued from Saturday. A working group to undertake the work of organizing the series of public meetings across the province was struck including: Marilyn, Anne, Luanne, Deborah, Marg, Donna and Jane. Deborah and Valda agreed to do some research regarding the specific needs of farm and rural women and make recommendations to include their needs in our set of demands.

Timeline: By April most of the materials will be completed. We will have material from the research committees. In April we will set a timeline for the hearings to take place in June. Jane H agreed to make connections with the regional reps and ask them to come to the next board meeting to discuss the campaign timeline.

More Than a Label: Some work has been done to investigate sources of funding for this project. Although Terri Ann has left the board she agreed to continue to act as a resource person to the

More Than a Label Committee. Terri Ann expressed how important it is that the vision behind the campaign be passed on to new women who had the interest to work on it. The membership development committee in Edmonton agreed to facilitate the rejuvenation of the committee and Valda agreed to become involved in the campaign.

Lethbridge: The regional reps and group in Lethbridge expressed their needs for more support regarding: lobbying skills, women and poverty campaign planning in Lethbridge etc. The group has faced a lot of negative feedback from far right and pro-life groups in Lethbridge, particularly at the Women's Advisory Council meeting in Lethbridge. The Calgary Women Against Poverty committee agreed to go down to Lethbridge to share their model of organizing with the Lethbridge group.

Comment: The board expressed disappointment and concern that neither of the Edmonton staff members were present at the end of the meeting and that the bookkeeper was not present, because the board had previously expressed a wish to meet the bookkeeper. There was also a lack of signing authorities present to issues expense cheques. The groups also expressed disappointment that the community reports session (where groups come to share news and views) was attended by only two groups.

Animal Rights is a Feminist issue!

There will be a meeting to plan
an April protest:
April 13 — 7:30 p.m.
at 9930 - 106 Street

Topic: *Animals in Research*

Please come out and support us.
For further information, phone:
**Albertans for the Ethical Treatment
of Animals**
477-7635

Two views of the last board meeting

Once there was a board...

Once upon a time there was an ASWAC board. It was not the first board, to be sure, nor was it the last - it was somewhere along the way. This board was formed at the assembly in Camrose, last fall.

The board members met once, twice, three times. First, to get a sense of what an ASWAC board is, and to begin looking at the work to be done. Second, to begin doing that work. Third, to report progress and carry on working.

But lo, at the third meeting, a number of events occurred! We all met - fourteen board members (two were ill) plus several ASWAC general members attending the Saturday portion of the meeting. During the first half hour, 4 board members resigned. After the lunch break, 3 of the resigning members and the visiting general members, left. The following day, another 3 board members disappeared - two for other commitments and one away ill. We were reduced from 16 to 8 (one resigning board member stayed for the entire meeting) in just one day!

It was an unnerving experience! Are we to be known as the board that shrank until it vanished, like the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland?... "Once upon a time there was an ASWAC board, but one by one its members disappeared, until there was no one left at all..."

Well, illness and other commitments do occur, and those women will be back at the next meeting, and will do much work in the meantime. The resigning members has various reasons: Terri-Ann felt that time constraints in her life at present mean that she cannot do ASWAC board work in between meetings. She will be present at the next board meet-

ing in Lethbridge, and maybe, if we are lucky...??? Deborah Perret is planning a move to the west coast. Joanna is seeking an NDP nomination. Julie Anne feels that she is unable to work with the objectives and processes of the present board. All are leaving for different reasons, and all, for very different reasons, will be missed.

And then there was the work. At this last board meeting, it was very apparent that work had been done, and that excitement was building. Women's creativity is something quite magic in action, and that magic definitely happened. The ASWAC women and poverty campaign, like flowers in spring, began to take shape - first, only a hint, then a few small shoots, then a full-blown rainbow of form and colour.

Now we have all dispersed, taking various pieces of the work with us, back to our regions. There is much to do, and much fun to be had doing it - if any of you women reading this want to help with the work, read the minutes for more specifics and call the office to add your name to the work group (s) for your choice. Want to help make decisions? Come on the board! Some of our members have gone, but we know others will come to carry on the work. Nothing in life is static, and neither is this board. It is definitely on the move, and in very positive directions.

"Once upon a time there was an ASWAC board, and like the boards that came before it, and the boards to come after it, it was a very special board...."
Signed, Jane Haslett, Marg Johnson, Valda Roberts

Sharing some impressions

A fine way to start a Board meeting is with "good morning" or "hello". It recognizes everyone present and to some small degree assists in the desirable goal of some equality for board members.

I see different reasons for members to be on the board. These are turbulent political times for women. There are attacks on women, the women's movement and feminism in general. It is urgent that the passionate are empowered and able to work. We want to struggle to overcome prevalent myths regarding women, our livelihood and what constitutes well being. Other members want to develop women's culture, the theory and practise... perhaps to reinforce and remember what we have known. At times, there will be clashes, but clashes can provide opportunity to define, grow and resolve. These "interests" are not mutually exclusive. Respect for

differences is essential. We can streamline operations where and if necessary.

Goodwork has been done by committees (membership, women and



Advisory Council goes south

by Shelley Scott

The third public meeting held by the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues took place in Lethbridge on Thursday, February 25. About 100 people, mostly women, attended the meeting; Council chairperson Margaret Leahey commented that it was the biggest turnout they have had so far.

After an introduction by Leahey and by Lethbridge Council members Leah Waters and Lori Andrea-chuk, in which they stressed their desire to be "more grass-roots", the presentations began.

Seventeen presentations were heard, including ten by individuals. The first presentation was made by Karen Lea-Cox on behalf of the ASWAC-Lethbridge. The brief, entitled, Health Care in Crisis, was prepared by Karen, myself, and Naomi Ehren-Lis, and addressed deinsuring of medical services, access to abortion services,

continued

poverty). Saturday afternoon at this board meeting saw an excellent definition and organization of the women and poverty campaign. Other good work was accomplished when we set up committees to meet with NAC, lobby, proposed the Povertas, organized hearings and agreed to write a policy manual book.

Sunday was a sail for zipping through work. We had several high quality, concentrated discussions with creative breakthroughs.

Since I started this "impression" with "hellos", I'll end it with "till we meet again, and the hope that I have provided some illumination of the March 5,6, board meeting.

best wishes, Marilyn.

government spending priorities, and access to mental health services. It included four recommendations: 1) that medicare funding be resumed for birth control counselling, IUD insertion, and tubal ligations, 2) that sexuality education be made mandatory in all schools beginning at the elementary level, 3) that medicare cover the cost of an abortion and that the government establish a network of government funded reproductive health care centres across the province, and 4) that access to mental health care counsellors with adequate qualifications be improved, particularly for rural women.

Other presentations included one by Sheryl Masters-Mrazek of the YWCA, expressing concern about the lack of funding for women in residence at Harbour House, the women's shelter that the Y operates. Some women are even going hungry because they can't afford both food and rent, she said. Rosemary George presented on behalf of the Lethbridge Immigrant women's Association. Ms. George clearly outlined the many obstacles facing immigrant women and stressed the need for improved services, such as access to quality day care and language training; she also stressed that research and recommendations should come from immigrant women themselves. Ms. George noted that immigrant women must frequently battle, not only sexism and a traditional husband, but also "this conservative Lethbridge community."

Ironically, the conservative Lethbridge community was out in force. All of the remaining presentations were of a decidedly conservative slant, coming from groups such as Lethbridge and District Pro-life, the

Alberta Federation of Women United for Families (AFWUF), Kids First (an anti-day care group) and Teen Aid (a pro-life affiliate which advocates teenage abstinence). All of these presenters stressed the importance of the family unit and vehemently condemned the forces which they saw as threats to the family, namely abortion, child care, and sexuality education.

Thirteen presentations were made on the topic of child care, including all ten of the individual presentations, and every one opposed universal child care on the basis that it encourages women to work outside the home instead of taking responsibility as the primary caregiver to their children and family. Presenters spoke of "sacrificing" a second income because they preferred to raise their children; some tearfully recounted the damage done to small children left in day cares. A few did acknowledge that child care might be a necessity for a single parent, but that the cost should not come from other taxpayers.

One of the most venomous of the presentations came from a woman who spoke against civil rights being extended to lesbians and homosexuals. She began her talk by claiming that a survey of ASWAC literature clearly reveals their "lesbian connection" and went on to insist that she did not want lesbians or homosexuals "teaching in the schools or preaching as clergy." The audience, which was made up overwhelmingly by anti-choice people, many from the surrounding communities of Cardston, Raymond, and

continued

The Calgary connection

by Anne McGrath

Calgary women continue to explore racism and the development of a multi-racial women's movement. The International Women's Day Committee was organized within the network of Women Looking Forward and combined celebratory events with opportunities to analyze our strengths and weaknesses and strategize to move forward. Building on the previous years' work the theme this year was, "Continuing A Dialogue Towards A Multi-Racial Women's Movement."

A coffeehouse to celebrate International Women's Day was held on the evening of March 8. Featured entertainers were blues singer Faith Nolan and Calgary poet, Claire Harris. The poetry was read to a silent crowd of 150 participants. This was followed by an inspiring evening of political song with heavy audience participation. We were disappointed that Arlene Mantel, originally scheduled to perform, was unable to attend for health reasons.

A speaker's panel on the theme began the conference on Friday evening, March 11, and workshops on Race, Class and the New Right took place on the Saturday. The events all concentrated on ways that the women's movement could actively work to include women of colour, immigrant women, disabled women, working class women and poor women. The focus was on the issues of race and class with a commitment to building a strong, united women's movement.

The Annual IWD rally took place at City Hall on Saturday with speakers that brought home the importance of race and class for the women of Alberta. Rosemary Brown, from the Committee Against Racism, spoke of the importance of providing active support for the struggle of the

Lubicon Lake Indians in their fight to settle their land claim. She emphasized the lessons that have been learned in the support group for the Lubicons in coming to terms with racism and the role of the media in confusing the issues and the progress being made. No matter what the media says, the issue is not settled until the Lubicons say that it is settled.

The United Nurses of Alberta also provided a speaker to discuss the recent nurses' strike. Laurie Coates spoke eloquently of the experience of nursing in Alberta's health care system in its current state. It was obvious that Alberta's nurses had an impressive commitment to improving health care for all Albertans and that their strike was a tribute to the strength and solidarity of women.

Free Trade - is a \$450 lunch

A seminar sponsored by the Financial Post on business opportunities under the free trade deal was held at the Palliser Hotel on March 10. Keynote speakers were Peter Lougheed and Simon Reisman. The cost for the seminar was \$450 (including lunch)... Those of us who can't afford \$450 lunches don't get to have the deal explained to us by the negotiators. ASWAC joined together with the Council of Canadians, the Voice of Women, the Calgary Labour Council, Farmers for Peace, ACTRA and the Calgary Peace Council to protest this exclusive engagement. Since a \$450 lunch was outside our price range, we had a 45¢ bean plate lunch made with only Canadian ingredients. Over 250 Californians expressed their opposition to the trade deal. ASWAC highlighted the threat to women's jobs and social pro-



photo by Andrea Waywanko

Edmonton IWD march

grams. The impact of the trade deal on the feminization of poverty as well as the loss of control over Canada's foreign policy were major points raised at the rally. There was a strong commitment among the groups involved to continue the pressure to stop this deal and to prevent Canada from becoming a cultural and political backwater.

Women Against Poverty

Women Against Poverty continues to work hard to deal with

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Magrath, applauded and cheered each of the conservative presenters. When ASWAC-Lethbridge members stood to answer questions from Council members, they were booed and hissed.

About twelve ASWAC members were in attendance at the meeting, including Calgary staff member Anne McGrath. During the break, they were surrounded by anti-choice audience members who wanted to discuss the viability of the fetus. Clearly outnumbered, many left shortly afterwards.

AROUND THE CIRCLE AROUND THE CIRCLE

New ways bring new rewards

ASWAC in Edmonton chose to mark International Women's Day in two ways this year: a presentation to high school students, and organizing, as part of the IWD co-ordinating committee, a day-long celebration on March 12 at the YWCA.

The vision behind both of these events was to share, with new groups of women, the excitement and sense of history that IWD events bring to women in the movement.

The schools presentation, (co-sponsored by ASWAC and the Edmonton Learner Centre) brought feminism's history of struggle and our current issues to high school women. We brought Bread and Roses, and showed excerpts of a new NFB film titled, "No way, not me!" Although some parts of the presentation seemed to

Calgary continued

the issues around women's poverty. We will be holding our first Pover-'tea' on Wednesday, March 30, at 7:30 pm at 2029 - 40 St. S.E. The pover'teas' are neighbourhood tea parties for women to come together to discuss their experiences and their friends experiences with poverty or the threat of poverty. We will be asking the women who attend to send a postcard to the Alberta Government which expresses our concerns and suggests appropriate government action on some key issues. The demands are centred around minimum wage laws, welfare levels, part-time and casual benefits, pensions, health care and child care. There has been a significant amount of interest in this campaign and we are expecting a high level of participation. Anyone interested in participating in any way with this campaign is strongly encouraged to call the Calgary office at 233-0731.



photo by Andrea Waywanko

Classical Indian dancer at Edmonton IWD

be worlds away from the reality of a sixteen year old, other sections of our presentation sparked questions about feminism, men and language. And all of the young women asked why the young men weren't present. We told them that we thought they might have felt more comfortable talking in an all-female environment. None of them were impressed. Looking back, perhaps more discussion would have been generated by the gender-gap in responses that our presentation may have evoked. If it is done again, it would definitely be worth the experiment.

The day long celebration, hosted by the co-ordinating committee for IWD '88 was a smash hit and brought together many different women to parade, share food, and dance. A potluck dinner for 200 is a scary proposition to risk, but there was more than enough fantastic food for everyone. We ate Greek dolmades, and Indian somosas and gulab jamun, and white-North American style blueberry pie.

The committee succeeded in doing what IWD committees in Edmonton have wanted to do for years. They opened up

all sorts of possibilities for new and diverse women's groups to come together and share in the spirit of IWD that for so long has been the pleasure of the largely homogenous, white, middle class feminist community in Edmonton.

We have a lot to learn about how to share the support, information and privilege that the white, largely 25-45, middle class women's movement has at our disposal. The two projects that ASWAC co-sponsored for IWD in Edmonton however, were important first steps. And as first steps always are, they were both exhilarating and inspiring.

Time on your hands?

Come wipe it off on the new Edmonton Women's Building.

We need help with wiring, beautifying and visiting.

Call 421-0306 or 429-3370.

THE FIGHT FOR

Federal lobby is urgent

The timing is critical ---the federal government is trying to push through new legislation, before the Easter break, that will impose restrictions on abortion. A major concern is that a sixteen week limit will be set on all abortions with possible criminal penalties for later abortions. This would require very early confirmation of pregnancy and would make women extremely vulnerable to prosecution, especially teens, women with irregular menses, and women in rural areas that lack adequate health care services. The need for consultation in this province right now imposes delays that would make all women who seek an abortion vulnerable to restrictive laws and possible prosecution.

Mulroney has suggested there will be a free vote by MP's on the proposed legislation ie. they will not be bound by party rules. This could work to our advantage: lobbying your MP to vote against any new criminal law regarding abortion is crucial because individual MP's will be forced to identify their position and will need your support to vote against re-criminalizing abortion. For example, anti-choice activists have publically targetted MLA Elaine McCoy for defeat in the next election due to her public support of the Supreme Court decision.

The Attorneys General of all provinces are meeting in Saskatoon this month. We think legislation has been drafted for review by them. Contact Attorney General Jim Horsman and let him know that it is unacceptable to rush ahead with inadequate and punitive legislation. We feel that there is a need for input from concerned feminist groups before any such legislation is even attempted. Our position, at this point, is that no legislation be written which re-criminalizes abortion, so that women are liable to criminal prosecution because of their reproductive capacity.

In Alberta, Hospitals Minister Marvin Moore is demanding consultation between two doctors before abortions are performed, and has threatened hospitals who do not comply with fines up to \$500 a day. The University Hospital and Charles Camshell General Hospital in Edmonton have complied and the Royal Alexandra Hospital will "review", on March 28, its previous decision to ignore the regulation. These are the only three hospitals in Edmonton which currently do perform abortions. Worse yet, hospitals in Drumheller, High Prairie, Lloydminster, Provost, and Wetaskwin, are still using Therapeutic Abortion Committees. The last two communities have no access to abortion services.



An update from

Since our last report, the Abortion Caucus has been involved in a variety of activities.

- first and foremost, a celebration! A victory party, following the Supreme Court decision, was organized by the Alberta Coalition for Access to Abortion. Held in Edmonton on Feb. 6, the celebration generated 350 letters to politicians at both the provincial and federal level.

- The Caucus has spent a great deal of time responding to media requests following the Supreme Court decision. As a member of the coalition, the caucus has worked closely with other groups. Jane Templeman represented the caucus at a national strategy meeting and press conference in Toronto organized by the Ontario Coalition of Abortion Clinics.(OCAC) Activists from B.C., Ontario, CARAL were present. Plans were made to form a national network of coalitions and pro-choice groups to co-ordinate action strategies and national efforts to establish free-standing reproductive health care clinics.

-A brief is being prepared to present at the Advisory Council on Women's Issues' next

THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Doctors in Alberta who do not abide by Mr. Moore's regulation will be penalized by withholding the measly \$84.75 they are paid by Alberta Health Care for performing abortions.

Elaine McCoy and the Alberta Medical Association maintains that the Alberta's regulation contravenes the Supreme Court ruling. The regulation creates dangerous delays to women who seek abortion. In Alberta, the number of second trimester abortions has increased since the regulation was imposed.

If Marvin Moore is prepared to defy the law, he must feel he has enough support to be re-elected anyway. It is up to us to shake his confidence.

Premier VanderZalm of BC defied the Supreme Court ruling and refused to publicly fund abortions. Happily, the BC court of Appeals ruled against his policy in a case mounted by the BC Civil Liberties Association. VanderZalm has said he will find other means to prevent public funds being used to pay for abortions.

Across Canada, the status varies greatly. Ontario has abolished TAC's and doctors receive \$100 from health care for abortions. Quebec has gone one

step further and will cover the cost of abortion services provided in women's health centres. The Atlantic provinces have abolished TAC's. PEI will pay for abortions but no hospitals will perform them. We are unaware of New Brunswick's position. The NDP is in trouble in Manitoba. Conservative leader Gary Filmon said he will immediately shut down the recently re-opened Morgentaler Clinic in Winnipeg. Watch your newspaper. The situation changes daily.

Currently in Alberta

Planned Parenthood Associations in Alberta report that access to abortion is no better than before the Supreme Court ruling. Lethbridge and area is referring to Calgary and Montana in about equal numbers. In the North and Central area most abortions are performed in Edmonton. Fort McMurray is still without abortion services despite public support. Women in rural areas and small communities do not have abortion services available. Hospitals that did not have therapeutic abortion committees prior to the Supreme Court ruling are still not performing abortions.

the Abortion Caucus

public meeting in Edmonton, May 12.

-The caucus hopes to obtain delegate status at the CARAL Annual Convention in Toronto. The caucus feels it is important for us to be involved in national organizing, as abortion is a federal issue.

-A meeting is being arranged between the Coalition for Access to Abortion, and Elaine McCoy and Ruth Collins-Nakai.

-The Coalition is also co-ordinating a lobbying campaign. The coalition prepared an insert for the last ASWAC newsletter to inform ASWAC members of the key issues and urging them to lobby government. The caucus phoned a number of Edmonton and area members to generate a phone-in campaign to federal ministers.

-Finally, the caucus wrote to the College of Physicians and Surgeons objecting to Roy le Riche's comments concerning abortion that were published in the local press.

Statistics

	Number of Clients	Therapeutic Abortion Committee Referrals	Therapeutic Abortions in Edmonton	Referrals to U.S.	Referrals to elsewhere
DEC. 87	117	109	31	40	38
JAN. 88	115	100	45	41	10
FEB. 88	125	122	33	82	7
(FEB. 87)		116	56	54	6

It is difficult to determine the meaning behind these statistics because the Supreme Court ruling coincided with the government's attempt to bring the nurses to heel, hence services were reduced.

Calgary reports an increase in the number of women seeking abortion services from out of town, especially the North and Lethbridge area. Hospitals may be putting a ceiling on the number of abortions performed. There is inconsistency from hospital to hospital as they set individual policy. This situation directly contravenes the Canada Health Act that was intended to insure an equal standard of health care to all Canadians.

GOES ON AND ON



Legislation not the answer

Since the Supreme Court decision, the anti-choice faction has used the scare tactic of presenting a scenario where irresponsible women have late abortions with no restrictions or thought. Much of the political rhetoric around this issue now centres around at what point women should no longer be allowed to have an abortion.

Currently, only one half of one percent of all abortions are performed after the twentieth week of pregnancy. Women can and do make responsible

"...we can get all the rights in the world — the right to vote, the right to go to school — and none of them means a doggone thing if we don't own the flesh we stand in, if we can't control what happens to us, if the whole course of our lives can be changed by somebody else.... The right to elective abortion... is the cornerstone of the women's movement.... If you can't control your own body, you can't control your future..."

(from Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood by Kristie Luker)

decisions regarding whether or not and when to terminate a pregnancy. When we argue against legislation, we are not advocating no reasonable limits. What we are working towards are preventative measures, ie: a series of reproductive health care services, including non judgemental counselling, education about and increased availability of birth control methods, and universal access to early abortion services. When such measures are in place, the need for late abortions would be drastically reduced. If the need for a late abortion does arise, (due to problems with access, lack of knowledgs, fear of disclosure, or increased health risk to the women), medical and ethical guidelines already exist to help women and their doctors make an informed decision. Women are responsible, caring individuals, with enormous respect for our ability to give life. While we recognize the need for medical and ethical limits, we do not recognize the need for criminal legislation. Governments must provide adequate services, but they do not have the right to arbitrarily decide that

after a certain point in pregnancy, a woman is a criminal for wishing to end it. Nor should government have the right to penalize a woman for its own failure to provide those reproductive services which would prevent the need for later abortions.

The crucial issue is the right of women to make decisions concerning our bodies, to have the right to privacy of our persons. We must guard against legislation which lessens or appears to lessen women's rights over our own bodies. Cases have already occurred, both within the USA and Canada, where women have been punished, sent to jail, or had their human rights infringed on, by the state supposedly acting in the best interests of the fetus. When we hear the views of men like Yvon Lefebvre of Coalition for Life say, "What's this about women not having children? It's their only function. Nature demands of them that they be mothers twelve times a year," (Edmonton Journal), we know we have to on guard against an extremist lobby that would appear to welcome or attempt to shape legislation that would bind us solely to our reproductive function. Tory backbenchers have also made statements in the press, when commenting about the abortion issue, indicating that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was a mistake.

We need continued discussion and dialogue on the above issues. We need to be able to counter right wing prejudices against women with intelligent and reasoned arguments. These are not easy or comfortable issues to deal with, but they are essential. We must not let hastily drated legislation be pushed through to once again restrict women's rights over our own bodies.

What can you do!?

-write, write write,!!!

-phone, phone, phone,!!! the Prime Minister, the Premier, the provincial and federal - health ministers, justice ministers, ministers responsible for women's issues, attorneys general, your MP, your MLA, the Women's Advisory Council, and encourage others to do so.

-make it an election issue: know where the candidates for MP in your constituency stand on the issue.

-attend meetings of pro-choice groups in your area.

FAR OUT FEMINISTS

Fun and games in Innisfail

by Elin Barlem

The fun and games of being a rural feminist in Alberta is forever bringing a bit of spice into my life. People's reaction at the gas station when they first spotted my "Feminist - More Than a Label" button suddenly turned the whole task of getting gas into some bizarre battle -- I of course being a pacifist wasn't armed with anything but my friendly neighbourhood smile - which by the way carried me calmly through!!!

The Assembly in Camrose was my first real experience with ASWAC. As I saw the need for reaching rural women, my interest in doing so grew, so now I find myself talking, drinking tea and most of all listening to what rural women want.

As it turns out, Innisfail did at one time have what still exists in many smaller communities: A Woman's Rest Room. As my contact told me, it was a place that women came to share ideas and thoughts, while the men would be doing his shopping. The rest room also gave mothers a chance to nurse their youngest and the older children usually played amongst themselves. This was all back when women could not drive, nor did they have money for themselves... So what happened? Where do the women go now?? The shopping malls took some and others went to work outside the home... but I believe there is a clear need for Centres and/ houses that would exist mainly to meet the needs of rural women.

I could go on about what we need, but I would really rather tell you about what

is being done in Innisfail.

A small group of women have established a satellite day home system. Innisfail also has a fairly good recreation program that includes anything from yoga to weaving, orienteering, clay workshops, etc. The town also just recently got a

“

*...now I find myself talking,
drinking tea and most of all
listening to what
rural women want.*

”

brand new pool, and there is a very good facility that we can rent, for any occasion or workshop, through the town of Innisfail.

Lori and I decided to do our bit in raising the community's awareness of women's issues and concerns. Over the last few months we have been busy organizing an evening to celebrate International Women's Day on March 9.

Celebrate and Educate.

Since both Lori and I like food, and the togetherness a meal brings in a group, we decided on starting the evening with food. We rented a room in the United Church along with an excellent catering team. (I don't know what it is, but the ladies from the church sure know how to put up a good meal.)

During phase 2, we drew up posters, tickets and phoned

around to Community Services related to women, regarding their participation in a panel presentation. We discovered great interest from Social Services, The Women's Shelter in Red Deer, Big Sisters from Innisfail, and we finally also connected up with the Red Deer Status of Women. Lori also did a promo on tv to promote International Women's Day (IWD).

The agenda slowly put itself together; "Food for the stomach first followed by Food for the mind."

As I now write, the day after, I do dare say that last night was a great success. There was a crowd of 36 women and 7 children, and as I already said, the food was really good.

Red Deer Emergency Shelter Coordinator, Mary Boyd, talked about their never ending fight for money. Mary also told us about the in-house services and their 24 hour phone line with information and counselling. She invited each and every one of us to a tour and a chat at the Shelter -but phone first.

Big Sisters is a fairly new program to Innisfail. The Coordinator, however, has done an amazing amount of work for both little and big sisters. The program was begun when the Red Deer office could not meet the demand, especially from the single mothers. Lucille, the co-ordinator, told us about their volunteer program which has its youngest member at 6 years and the oldest at 79 years.

The Red Deer Status of Women put up a display and Trudy Black explained how she is

continued

FAR OUT FEMINISTS

A sister is a sister

I've been thinking about what it means to me being a feminist in a small town in Central Alberta. It means...

- ...feeling lonely sometimes
- ...feeling ecstasy meeting another woman who has similar ideas, thoughts and wishes
- ...needing to talk, talk, talk, to women in the feminist movement in other areas to keep my thought churning and my energy recharging
- ...being happy with small successes and stifling impatience with women's fears and concerns with "the label feminist"
- ...feeling defensive much of the time.

Organizing with other feminist women in my small town has been interesting and often amusing. It seems that many of these women are in other progressive groups in the town and I end up talking to the same women. I remember this phenomena in the big city

Elin continued

just getting started in the position as Office Co-ordinator and Researcher for RDSW. She has also put together a questionnaire for all of us to fill in, asking what women need in the rural areas and finding out what we find the hardest to deal with. (The isolation??)

Two other women from the community, Sunny and Rita Dillon gave speeches about two different subjects. Sunny spoke about PMS, and we hope that a support group will sprout from her talk.

Rita Dillon spoke on Women's Sexuality and she had us all laughing within 5 minutes. No more "down there", and she told us that words such as frigid and impotence are out. Rita, as a student of sexuality stressed how little women

too, it's just much more obvious here!

Some great things have happened in this centre, such as bringing Barb Evans to town to show her NFB film, "Prairie Women". (What a rejuvenating evening that was!)

A small group of us responded to the local paper's anti-choice editorials. No suprisingly, many readers wrote a choice response to our letter. (I'm learning not to be suprised by this.) What was great, was that wonderful, supportive responses cropped up from women we didn't know at all. Reading one supportive letter in the local rag gave me a warm feeling and spread a smile across my face thinking about other women supporting our rights from their little corner of small town Alberta.

Speaking about delights: I attended IWD events in three cen-

really know our bodies. We all know about THE PENIS and what comes along with it, but really have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror, (down there, haha). She gave out a hand-out picture of our genitals, reproduced from Barbach, Lonnie Garfield, For yourself: The fulfillment of female sexuality. Rita recommended the book for every woman.

The evening ended with a period of mingling, and women started to discuss what they just heard. Lori made a few announcements and as far as I could tell, everyone left with a smile on their face. I do dare say that IWD in Innisfail had the best start...everything went just right - so it will be for us to do the follow-up of something good.

tres: Innisfail, Ponoka and Calgary. Elin has written about Innisfail, but I have to say how excited I was to see so many women and children from Innisfail, Red Deer and area. We had a great dinner, met some neat women, and heard about the resources for women in Innisfail. The evening was highlighted by two speaks on women, one on women's sexuality and sensuality, and one on PMS. The event was informative, enjoyable, and extremely well organized. Lori Crocker and Elin did a wonderful job!

The next day, IWD moved to Ponoka to Deborah Perret's place. More munchies, music and merriment! The week of celebrating ended in Calgary at the IWD conference and rally. I really enjoyed the rally on the steps of the new and ostentatious City Hall. We heard representatives of the brave United Nurses of Alberta, and Rosemary Brown spoke about the Lubicon Lake peoples land claim struggle on behalf of the Committee Against Racism. Both speakers generated strong feelings about women's struggles in Alberta - words like struggling, militant, poor, brave, talented, persistant, caring and strong come to mind.

Driving home from Calgary, I remembered my initial thoughts about what it means to me being a feminist in a small town in Central Alberta and realized that they are probably quite similar to other feminists from Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton, Grand Prairie, Lethbridge, Westeros, Taber, Camrose, etc.

I am looking forward to hearing other women's experiences in their communities.

In sisterhood, Elaine

happeningshappeningshappenings



November conference

The twelfth annual conference of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) will be hosted by The University of Laval in Quebec City, November 11-13, 1988.

The theme of this year's conference is Women and Development: Women from Here and Elsewhere. For further information contact: Service des Communications, Faculté des sciences sociales, Bureau 3446, Pavillon Charles-De Koninck, Université Laval, Québec, G1K 7P4. Or phone (418) 656-2832.

Reg rep position

Rebecca Coulter will be stepping down from her position as the Alberta Regional Rep for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women executive. (NAC) If anyone is interested in the position or would like more information, please call Rebecca at 436-9511.

Need woman power

Women interested in working on an action committee to study the Maintenance Enforcement Program and to lobby for some changes, please call the Edmonton office at 455-5777.

We have much of the information but not enough of the woman-power.

Special meeting

The Newsmagazine by Alberta Women is hosting a special meeting to discuss the future and new name for the magazine. Everyone is welcome to attend, Thursday, April 17 at 7:30 at the Women's Program House at 11019- 90 Ave. Call the Newsmag at 429-3570 for info.

Women's research

There will be a meeting of the Women's Research Centre on the U of A campus, Thursday, April 14, 5:30 - 8:30 at 11043 - 90 Ave.

A few grad students will give short presentations on their work. The meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss and envision the future of the Women's Research Centre.

Bring money for an order-in dinner. For more information call Leslie Steward at 432-3093.

Out of school care

A group of professionals involved in care for school aged children are planning the first conference for caregivers of children in Out-of-School Care Programs throughout Alberta. For more info or to register, contact Grant MacEwan - Community Services Outreach 7319-29 Ave. or call Wendy Payne at 462-5553.

Picture book

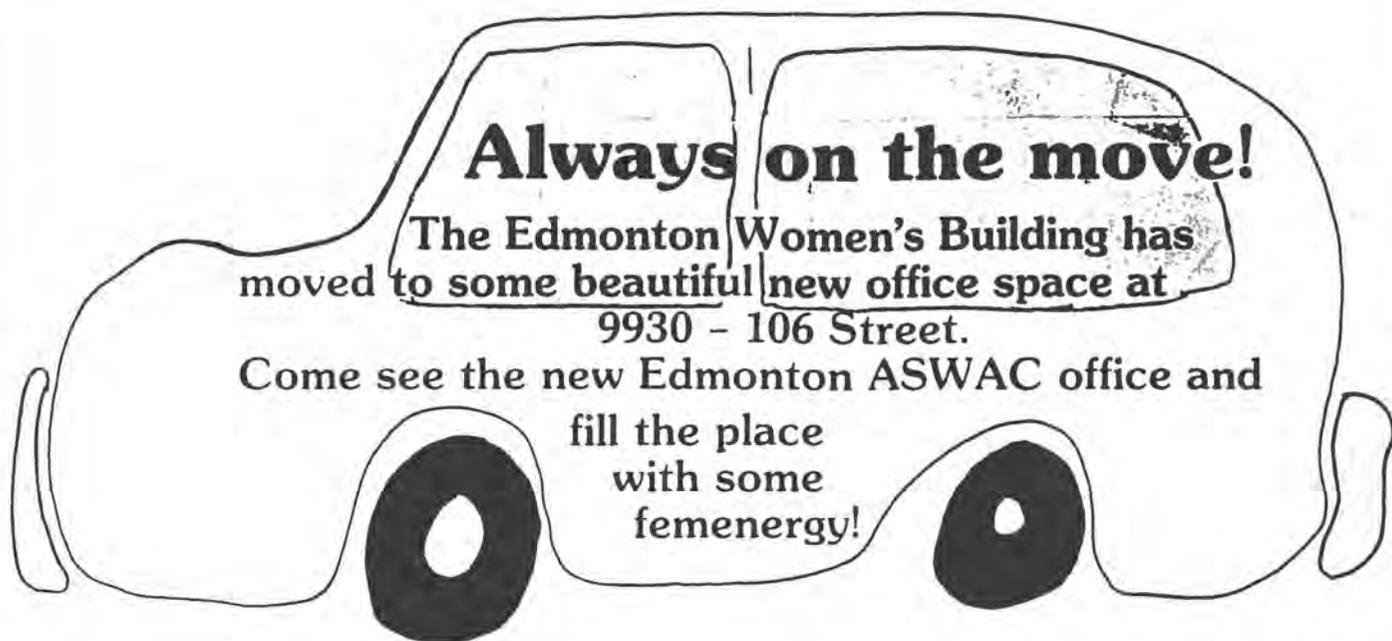
Since the federal government announced its "National Strategy on Child Care" in December, child care advocates, women's groups and others have been protesting the dangerously inadequate provisions for child-care in the "Strategy". The government proposal will not lead to the development of a comprehensive, high quality child care system which is accessible to all families. The Strategy is fundamentally flawed, and after some study, it appears that it will restrict and impede the development of high quality child care rather than promote it. The Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women has launched a major national lobby against the federal proposals. These two groups, in conjunction with regional and local groups is planning a "Child Care Picture Book Campaign" which will travel from province to province collecting the real story behind child care in Canada.

Two large album will travel across the country between February 27 and April 21. At each stop, local groups are organizing events to demonstrate the real picture of child care. Parents, child care staff, and groups will contribute photos of children along with children's testimonials and stories. For more information about the Picture Book Campaign or the Edmonton events please contact Barb Sykes at 423-2033, or Rebecca Coulter at 436-9511.

Support group

For more information about the Edmonton Endometriosis Support Group write to Box 11184, Edmonton, AB. T5J 3K5.

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



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