

ASWAC

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee



May-June Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 4

Inside

Peace Pledge Campaign
and

Women and Poverty
update



ASWAC

Alberta Status of Women Action Committee

1987/88 Board Members

Luanne Armstrong c/o Edmonton office
Donna Baines - 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 - Westeros
h. 586-2983

Elin Harlev Barlem - Innisfail
h. 227-2927

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

Naomi Ehren Lis - Lethbridge
h. 381-8727

Lois Soderstrom - Westeros
h. 586-3535

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

Linda Stoddard - Lethbridge
h. 328-6206

Denise Wood - Fort MacMurray
h. 791-4634

Joan White Galf - 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.

Hug these women!

These wonderful women deserve huge hugs for the work that they have done for the cause in recent weeks: Marg Koep, Mandy Berglund, Joan King, Anne Dobbie, Doreen Healy, Joan Fowler, Addie Miron, Brooke Morelli, Karen Lee Cox, Sheila Bertam, Mair, Sheilagh Edington, Avril Armstrong, Nancy Miller, Anna Pellatt, Cathy Davies and Annette Aarbo for being born and continuing to feed herself so she can be as wonderful as she is!

Donations

Donations have been most gratefully received from these women: L. Keating, Ida Horn, Linda Costello, Aura Rose, Vi Sykes, Gloria Filax, B. Abbott, Angela Blatt and MA Smith.

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.

The upcoming board meeting date has been tentatively re-scheduled to June 3-5 in Calgary. Phone the office to confirm date and place.

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 held in Lethbridge, April 8, 9, 10. Those Lethbridge women sure know how to show us a good time! Thanks to them for all their hard work.

Present: Luanne, Valda, Marilyn, Deb. H., Marg, Lisa, Anne McG, Lyn, Jane, Donna. Visitors and honorary board members: Joan, Nancy Miller, Terri Ann, Mair, Annette Aarbo, Naomi Lis and Joyce Green.

Sec State: As a committee of board members had met with representatives from Sec state since the last board meeting, those committee members each shared their personal impressions of the meeting. We discussed and clarified ASWAC's relationship with the Secretary of State Women's Program, and discussed ASWAC's accountability to Sec State as our major funder. We also discussed previous attempts to evaluate ASWAC and Sec State and we were all referred to the extension evaluation that was done by Renate Shearer in 1986. We discussed in general women's groups and government funding and we were also referred to a paper by Katherine Cram titled, Volunteer-based Women's Organizations and State funding: Ideology and Practice.

Responses to Sec State concerns were tossed around and most felt that we must respond to these recently expressed concerns in our own way through our own agenda.

It was suggested that once again ASWAC look at self funding to end this 'tiring dance' with Sec State as a long term project and it was suggested that a study group begin to look towards routes of passage toward such a manouver.

A committee was struck - to review Renate Shearer's report and come to the next board with a summary of the report, write a letter to Sec State stating our interest in pursuing further discussions using Renate's report as

a guideleine, and to come up with recommendations re: issues raised by Sec State and our reponse to them.

Committee members are: Anne, Luanne, Deborah, Marg and Lyn.

The idea of a study group to look at state funding and self-sufficiency and to make some sort of presentation/workshop/discussion group at the Annual Assembly.

Community Reports:

The Executive Director of the YWCA in Lethbridge came and made an interesting presentation of their programs and services. She began with a history of the Y's formation in the community in response to community needs for low-cost shelter for women.

Since its beginning, the Y has branched out into the following program areas: Residential services providing low cost accomodation and support and referral services, Harbour House which is there 21 bed battered women's shelter and 24 hour crisis line which in 1987 saw 605 residents, and their community involvement programs including Women of Distinction Awards, Seniors Xmas dinner and concert, Information Library, Drop in Day-Care. They are looking towards future programs as well, including work with Teens and Health issues for women. The Y also provides extensive recreation facilities for women.

It was suggested that ASWAC Lethbridge and the Y could work together on the annual Take Back the Night march and could consider working together on certain aspects of the Women and Poverty campaign.

Lee MacVicar, the acting President of the Crowsnest Pass Women's Resource Centre also made a presentation about the centre's goals and activities. The centre is now four years old and its main function is to operate a crisis line. However, it also operates a clothing bank, information and referral services and is a place for women to drop

in an visit. It has a core of 18 active volunteers. The centre also has regular issue presentation meetings, and Anne McG has agreed to go speak with them about ASWAC's work and women and poverty.

Women and Poverty:

We discussed a draft of the year-long campaign plan and everyone generally approved of the document that was put together by Donna.

The Lethbridge women expressed a lack of response to the idea of povertas although thought that networking with residents of the Y might be a good idea. Much discussion was had around the concept of "povertas" and class expectations that may be evoked by the term. We had a general discussion about the target group of the campaign.

Lethbridge is planning high profile hearings as part of their campaign. Material will be compiled in oral, written, and video taped form, and the media will be as involved as possible.

We discussed how best to facilitate hearings in the regions and their was concern expressed regarding their interests in hosting and planning hearings. Anne agreed to be a contact with the reps and will act as a liason between them and the resource group.

The Resource group will make a presentation to the reps at their next meeting which will be held sometime around the first of May.

We reviewed the six demands of the campaign and it was agreed that pay equity legislation should be specifically mentioned as a demand.

We thought for future projects we should develop fact sheets for each demand. We agreed though, that the demands are not the sole focus of the campaign which also involves increasing public awareness and public discussion of the issues surrounding women and poverty.

Job Descriptions:

We discussed the fact that the two Edmonton staff will be leaving their positions soon, Jane at the end of May and Luanne at the end of June. We agreed that before hiring for these positions, we should look at the job descriptions and the fact that there may be some funding delays over the summer.

We decided to strike a committee including all three staff and Jane H, Lisa and Deb to do an evaluation of the current work load done by staff and to come up with a few possible scenarios for hiring for the future given the fact that money will be tight over the summer. We agreed to ask the committee to present proposed job descriptions to the next meeting and to advertise and hire for one of the staff positions in time for ratification by the board at the July meeting. The hiring committee will be struck at the next board meeting.

Next

Meeting: We agreed that the next board meeting should be held in Red Deer, May 28/29.

Lawsuit: We agreed that the Calgary board members should take on the task of dealing with the lawyers regarding the lawsuit. Luanne agreed to dismiss our Edmonton lawyer and Jane agreed to inform Deborah Perret of this change.

New

Members: We agreed to discuss how and if new board members will come on to the board at the next meeting, given that some women have expressed interest in doing so.

Women's

Building: The Edmonton Women's building has moved to its new space at 9930 - 106 St. and ASWAC has very nice offices there. Annette Aarbo expressed the desire for the collective of the Women's Building to re-do their written collective agreement and for all the groups to continue to express their commitment to the collective.

Health collective in session

It may have been a while since anyone has received an update from the Calgary Women's Health Collective, but the lack of correspondence is in no way associated with a lack of activity. The collective has been busy moving, fundraising, and the most exciting news is that they are now offering the services of three feminist therapists: Debbie Bruckner MSW, Michele Butot BSW, and Joan Hollenberg MSc. An arrangement has been made with the Women's Resource Centre at the YWCA to accept calls and contact the therapist "on call" so that women wishing to make an appointment don't have to wait until their message is picked up from our answering machine. Appointments are kept at our office, and while

kept at our office, so if there is an "In Session" sign on the door, just return to the office at a later date. The fees charged are based on a sliding scale and an ability to pay. We are very pleased to be offering feminist therapy and the requests for therapy time have supported our assessment that this is a much needed service.

A feminist therapy study group is meeting twice a month to discuss the application of feminist therapy, and to provide professional and personal support to feminist therapists. If you are interested in participating in such a study group, call the office and one of the members of the Collective

back to you with more information.

The Collective is maintaining its connections with other women's health organizations. In January, the Collective was involved in an education program on Women and AIDS. They are also currently the Alberta chapter of the DES Action Canada, and is continuing to collect current information on Depo Provera and the Dalkon Shield. Efforts are ongoing to form a Canadian Women's Health Network, and the Collective will continue to be involved in that process.

For more information about the Calgary Women's Health Collective, contact them at #316, 223 12 Ave. SW, Calgary, AB. T2R 0G9. phone 265-9590.

A one-woman success

After a year and a half long campaign, an Edmonton ASWAC member has succeeded in winning a pay raise for herself and her sister employees. It took diligence and letter writing by the mile, but Claudette Beauchamp's employer, a local hospital, has reclassified her job and given her a pay raise.

Using the principle of pay equity, Claudette noticed that aides 1 were paid 89¢ an hour less than the attendants 1 (the aides were women, the attendants primarily men). The jobs they were doing were at least of equal value.

Although it took over a year for any action to be taken, the inconsistencies in pay scale and job description became obvious to the employer immediately

after Claudette's letter writing began.

With a lot of determination and patience, one woman can make a change. This story goes to show that even the most conscientious employer can fall into old patterns of sex discrimination - old ideas of men's and women's roles.

One final note must be added to this success story. Although the job done by the women will be rewarded with an increase in wages, the wages of the men's jobs may be frozen by the employer. The principle of pay equity calls for no resulting decrease in wages of jobs done by primarily by men.

It is clear that we need a system of pay equity legislation in the private and public sector that will guarantee against such setbacks.



Graphic by Brenda Kenyon

The facts tell the story

The increasing numbers of women who are slipping into poverty in this country is in sharp and startling contrast to the myths Government leaders, and the popular media would like us to believe ie: that women increasingly "have made it" economically. A recent issue of Chatelaine magazine, for example, purported to have done a "survey" of Canadian women. They reported that we are doing better and better in every way. Not a word about the increase in the numbers of single parent families headed by women who are living in poverty, not a word about the increasing poverty of elderly women, not a word about the growing wage gap between men and women in this country. Because so many of us have gone to work, and some of us are doing well, it is presumed by the

powers that be, that therefore, all of us could do well. We believe this is a fallacy, that many of the causes of women's poverty are structural, are built into our system of employment, labour laws, and the ways in which we value the work that women have always done, ie: caring for other, caring for children, serving food. This is not, in any way to take away from the tremendous

gap between men and women increased in Canada

- In 1985, women were the majority of the labour force participants in the following occupational groups, : clerical, (79.7%) medicine and health, (78.2%) teaching, (60.7%) and service work, (56.3%)

- In 1985, women employed for the full year (either part time or full time,) received on average 59.6% of men's wages. Women employed full time received 64.9% of men's average earnings.

- The number of children living in Canada rose by over 23% between 1980 and 1985.

- Seventy two percent of all part time workers are women. Twenty six percent of all employed women work part time.

- In almost every occupational grouping, women's unemployment rates are higher than men's.

- In 1985, there were no occupational categories where the average earnings of women exceeded those of men. Women's average earnings as a percentage of men's earnings decreased markedly in the sales and farming groups between 1984-85.

- After divorce, women's income drops by thirty to forty percent, while a man's increases by up to seventy percent.

(Sources include, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Statistics Canada, Labour Canada, and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)).

Contrary to popular belief, women have not 'made it'

strides that women have made and are making, even in the face of these obstacles. Women's voices are being heard in all walks of life, women are making enormous efforts to get better educated, to get into non-traditional work, into politics, and they are being successful. But is it enough?

Looking at the figures on women and poverty tells us a different, and infuriating story. ASWAC, in the process of doing research on women and poverty issues, has begun to put together some figures. We will be putting these into a fact sheet which will be made available to our members. The pamphlet will contain figures on a cross section of issues related to women and poverty. Here are some examples:

- Between 1975 and 1985, the female labour force grew by 46.3 %

- 1987 was the second year in a row in which the wage

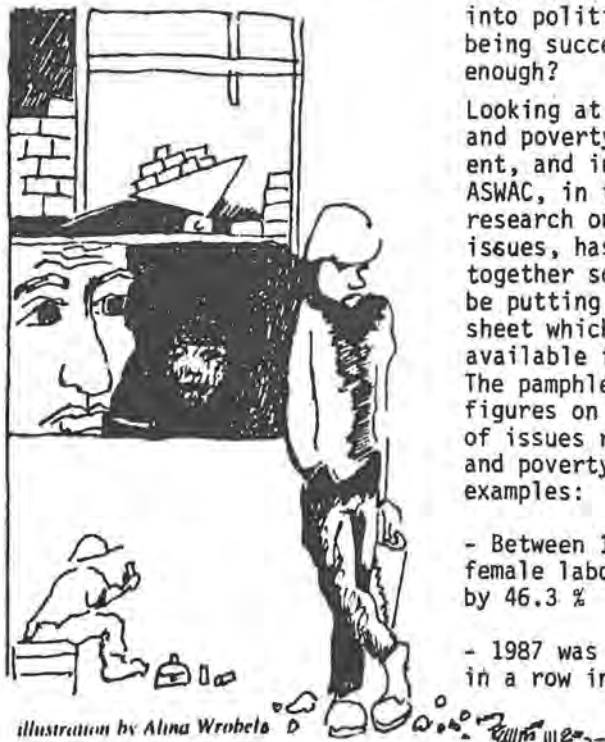


illustration by Alina Wroblewska

Falling through the cracks

We know that women are the majority of our poor. We also know that women are still primarily responsible for the economic and social well being of children. Put these two pieces of information together and a new reality emerges.

Out from the shadows of statistical invisibility emerges yet another class of poor people - children. In 1985 more than 1.1 million children, one out of every five - were living in poverty in Canada. A group in Toronto, "The Child Poverty Action Group" has found this chilling statistic as well as many other, equally frightening facts.

The Child Poverty Action Group believes that their is a growing cultural and political bias against families (read women) raising children that is seen in many ways including:

- "not enough affordable and appropriate family housing,
- not enough regulated child care spaces for working families,
- not enough alternative work arrangements to offset the competing pressures of work and family life."

"Finally, the incomes of many parents are too low to support children adequately." A two parent family with two children where both parents are working at minimum wage fall \$4000 short of the official poverty line.

Little of this information is new to those of us who are aware of economic inequality in Canada, but what is new and exciting is what the Child Poverty Action Group is proposing to do about the situation.

They are proposing that the federal government initiate a set of national programs that would lend support to families with dependent children.

Their first program is a Universal Child Income Credit (UCIC) - similar to family allowances whereby parents would receive \$3500 a year for their first child and \$3000 a year for each subsequent child. Parents could chose to receive the benefit as either a cash credit or a tax credit.

The second component of their proposal is called the Parental Employment Income Guarantee. (PEIG) The Child Poverty Action Group suggests that the PEIG be around 60% of the average industrial wage or \$13,200. The PEIG would do two things: 1) it compensates for the absence of adequate and suitable employment for parents, and 2) it gives parents a choice about whether they want to stay at home for a period of time when their children are young (under 2) A further 12 months of the guarantee would be available to either parent of a child aged 2-12 for a parent choosing to temporarily leave the workforce.

A single unemployed mother of two children would receive \$19,800 - \$13,200 from the PEIG and another \$6,500 from the UCIC. This would place her well above the poverty line.

Neither of these two programs directly address the lack of well-paying employment opportunities for women, or the lack of high quality, affordable child care, but they would go a long way towards taking the grinding edge off the

unemployment and poverty that many women and children are facing in Canada. Assuring parents the opportunity to stay at home with their children for a period of time also addresses the wishes of parents who would love to spend some time at home with children when they are young without condemning themselves to starvation.

"We are creating a permanent underclass of citizens."

Women are joining the workforce and children still need to be taken care of. Both government and industry have to face these two realities soon if they want to maintain a citizenry and a workforce. Women and children cannot be allowed to fall through the cracks much longer before the system cracks apart. The number of children living in poverty in Canada rose 23% between 1980 and 1985. The Child Poverty Action Group says, "...if we allow child poverty to continue unchallenged, we are creating a permanent underclass of Canadian citizens for generations.

Creative solutions such as the PEIG and UCIC for poverty may be called unrealistic and economically unfeasible by supporters of the right-wing economic theories, but the question has become one of not being able to afford the alternative.

(For more information about The Child Poverty Action Group or for copies of their research contact: 950 Yonge St. Suite 1000, Toronto, ON. M4W2J4. (416) 961-9831



The courts and child custody

by Luanne Armstrong

My experience in dealing personally with custody issues, in counselling women who are involved in custody battles, and in doing on-going research on feminist analysis of custody, has convinced me of two things.

First, when women become involved in a custody battle, and it is often a battle, they are often ill-prepared for it, unwilling and uneasy with the stark necessity to fight, still stuck in trying to appease their husbands, and/or the courts. Secondly, custody battles often illustrate clearly, but also ignore, the basic issue of power, who has it, who doesn't and how it is used.

Not enough work has been done to study custody issues in Canada or the US. Women are often shocked when they do end up going to court, by what they see as a male biased and unequal system which ignores their knowledge and their needs.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has recently released a paper on Joint Custody and Mediation, which does an excellent job of analyzing why these two methods of settling custody disputes, may not work for women.

The authors, Mary Lou Fassel, and Diana Majury, point out that there is a lack of primary research in Canada, on mediation and joint custody. Most of the work has been done in the United States, where some legislation has already been enacted. They believe, "there is a strong possibility that within the next few years, we will have legislation in Canada that directs courts to consider joint custody as the preferred disposition in a custody dispute and that requires separated couples to pursue mediation before they are entitled to go to court over custody, support, or any property issues."

They add that, "these trends in family law are having a devastating impact on women. Women are losing control over the process and outcome of their separation from their husbands."

Although there is not space here to summarize the paper in detail, some of the main objections to joint custody and mediation can be outlined. In terms of joint custody, the primary concerns about such legislation are that, "joint custody often results in lower support payments and lower financial settlements ... such an order would be based on the assumption that the child resides with each

parent." However, US studies show that women still do the bulk of care for children under such arrangements; but the father still has control over decision making.

Joint physical custody is very costly, since two households must be maintained for the child or children. Thus it is really only feasible for middle and upper class families.

Joint custody situations tends to increase re-litigation, since parents often find themselves going to court to settle decisions on things like school and medical care.

Finally and most importantly, under joint custody, "women are subjected to continued control by their former spouse ... a joint custody arrangement provides the father with a vehicle to continue to exercise control not only over the children but over his former spouse as well."

There are also problems with mediation as it is presently being used. The NAC paper outlines some problems with mediation. For example, mediators lack legal training and may not always inform women properly of their legal rights. Mediation's goal is agreement; whether it is fair or just is irrelevant. Women often feel pres-

New legislation proposed

The revenge of the father

Lobbying by father's rights activists has resulted in a Bill 211, a Children's Access Rights Enforcement Act, being placed before the Alberta Legislative Assembly. According to MLA Marie Laing, this bill is a punitive one for women. She points out that the bill could "work real hardship on women who suffer a serious reduction in economic status at the time of divorce." The bill allows a father who

thinks he has been denied access to go to court to get "compensatory access", and for the person who allegedly denied access to have to pay the bills.

Laing also points out that because the bill requires "a respondent to give security for the performance of any obligation imposed by the order," or in other words, a mother would have to post the equivalent of bail to ensure that she complied with the

court order, she could easily lose this money if she was for some reason, unable to give the access she has been ordered to do.

The bill is punitive and in our opinion, gives lots of opportunity for continued harassment of women by controlling, or vengeful men. Women concerned with this bill should contact Marie Laing, at 427-2236, or call the ASWAC office at 421-0306.

Custody continued

sured into making agreements, and then feel they can't back out of them.

There is a strong gender bias in mediation. "Mediators tend to either ignore or be unaware of societal disempowerment of women generally, and of such specifics as the corresponding economic disadvantages of women. Mediators claim to be objective and assume that both parties are equal. When a woman has been in a battering situation, confronting her former spouse can be very traumatic."

The report concludes that "mediation and joint custody are not the panaceas that their proponents claim them to be. They are fraught with difficulties of enormous significance to women. Until such time as these practices can be more critically reviewed, we must resist the movement towards legislative enactment of joint custody and mediation."

Women wishing copies of the report can write to NAC at 344 Bloor St. West, Suite 505, Toronto, ON. M5S 1W9

Women and Poverty

Fact sheets filled with statistics to support what we know about the issues are now available at all three ASWAC offices.

If you would like to help distribute fact sheets to your friends, or want to work on Women and Poverty issues, call us at:

Edmonton
421-0306

Calgary
233-0371

Lethbridge
329-8338



Lesbian writers!

Fiction
Non-fiction
Erotica
Poetry
Prose
Experimental Work

Women's Press is looking for manuscripts for a second anthology of writing by Lesbians about Lesbian experience

Send to: Women's Press
Lesbian Manuscript Group
229 College Street
Toronto M5T 1R4

The Peace Pledge Campaign

Our fight to save our planet

Fear and threats of violence are controlling the world's social systems today. This is what promotes the arms race. The nuclear and new conventional weapons now being built destroy the illusion that we can be defended or feel secure.

Canadian women, like women the world over, are deeply disturbed that human kind may not survive. Women want genuine disarmament talks that result in an immediate freeze and reversal of the arms race. We want the removal of threat as the means of dealing with conflict. We want the reduction of all forms of violence including nuclear and conventional war, starvation, violation of human rights and violence in our communities. Women know that our security is not brought about through the power of military force.

Since the first demonstration of nuclear destruction itself - the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, women have been at the forefront of the anti-nuclear movement. Women have been

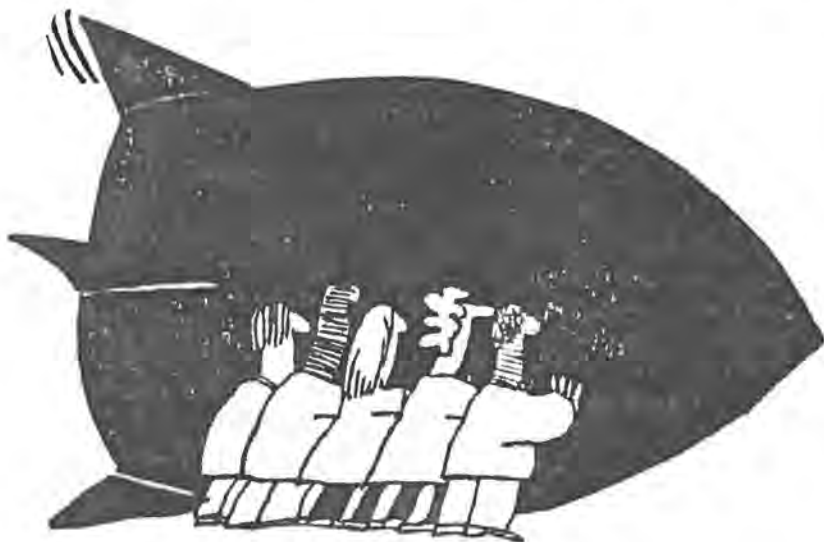
taking this action not only through individual and community-based actions but also through political action. Historically women have been systematically excluded from the political arena in terms of government positions. Today, women are running for political office and are also supporting political candidates who condemn militarism and the threat of nuclear war.

A world without nuclear arms is a dream that every Canadian can be part of. Canadians have a unique opportunity to work toward this goal and toward global security because of our physical proximity to the world's superpowers. In the past, Canada has been heralded as an important international peacekeeper. However, our growing ties to the US defense and foreign policies are eroding Canada's credibility in the area. In the past Canada has spent nearly \$10 billion a year on the military and over \$1 billion on arms production. Now our government has plans to increase its defense budget

and spend a minimum on nuclear powered submarines. Meanwhile, social services are being cut.

Therefore, it is imperative that every Canadian voter take responsibility for Canada's present role in the arms race and in particular, our role as a key player in the military strategic support system for the United States. We must regain control of our identity as an independent nation with our own defense and foreign policies. This means that we must start by voting Canada out of the nuclear arms race and strive instead to become a world leader for peace.

The recent signing of the free-trade agreement with the US, will draw our countries closer together through arms contracts. The government's White Paper on defense is committed to a nuclear war-fighting strategy. These two events have given the peace movement (of which 75% is women) renewed energy in its work for nuclear disarmament. While recognizing that Canada's continued support for the build-up of nuclear weapons makes us part of the problem instead of part of the solution, the peace-supporting community will undertake its largest and most ambitious project: the Canadian Peace Pledge Campaign.



The great Peace Pledge

This campaign, facilitated by the Canadian Peace Alliance, intends to make peace a priority issue in the next federal election by convincing politicians there is a peace vote to be

“For hundreds of years we have been told to “keep quiet, we men will take care of you”... but we know we are not being protected and will no longer keep quiet.”

won or lost in their ridings. Both regionally and nationally, the Peace Pledge Campaign has the support of the broad-based community, including women's church, development, environment, labour, peace and youth groups. More than 130 organizations have become campaign sponsors -- from Cape Breton Island to Vancouver Island. In Calgary, the campaign has been endorsed by the Alberta Federation of Labour, the Calgary Chilean Association, Greenpeace, the UWCA, peace groups and others. Nationally, the campaign has been endorsed by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

The timeline for the campaign is as follows:

Phase 1 - Pledge Card Collection - the ongoing collection of "voter pledge cards", which state that individuals will choose "candidates who will actively work for a new peace policy, which will end Canada's support for the arms race, make Canada a nuclear weapons free zone, and make Canada an international voice for peace." During the campaign and until election day, pledge signers will receive mailings to keep them up-to-date on the campaign and the positions of politicians in their riding.

Phase 2 - Political Lobbying -- peace groups and riding committees will meet with MPs regarding the goals of the campaign. This lobbying, which is currently underway on both a local and national level, will be ongoing and intensify at the upcoming CPA convention in Ottawa in June.

Phase 3 - Election Period - all aspects of the campaign will intensify, including rallying of voter support, lobbying of all candidates through forums and debates, surveying all candidates on their positions, advertising and calling for a national TV debate on peace and defense issues.

Canada a peacemaker

The Canadian public and politicians are now searching to define Canada's defense and foreign policy. Canada's role need not be as a silent, gullible partner in the American nuclear arms build-up. Through the Canadian Peace Pledge Campaign, Canadians will be provided with a vision of Canada as a peacemaker.

As a peacemaker, Canada will reject all involvement in the nuclear arms race. Therefore we will be free from complicity in the arms race and can then step

into the international political arena standing up for policies of world peace.

Implicit within the Canadian Peace Pledge Campaign is a vision of Canada taking a stand on the issue of nuclear war-- a stand which could divert millions of dollars from the nuclear arms race to the human race in order to provide food, shelter, and health care.

Nuclear weapons are internationally accepted as the language of militarism. Militarism is a women's issue. For hundreds of years we have been told to "keep quiet, we men will take care of you." We are told that bigger and more expensive weapons are called for. But we know we are not being protected and will no longer keep quiet. We want cooperation that leads to mutually-assured survival, rather than militarism that leads to mutually-assured destruction. We will use the Canadian Peace Pledge Campaign to speak out and to vote Canada out of the arms race.

For further information on the campaign of the Canada Peace Alliance, please call Kerren at 280-9123 or Yvone at 289-7671 in Calgary or call Brian Toole in Edmonton at 436-4315.

Rubber chicken, mushy peas

by Luanne Armstrong

We get lots of mail at the ASWAC office. This morning, we received another notice about yet another women's conference, not one I will be going to. Not a feminist conference. A women's conference. There is, these days, a difference.

Feminist work starts with feminist analysis. That means it is necessary to begin by putting some time and effort into understanding women's place in this society, and in other societies, what the historical roots of that place are, how oppression reverberates in our own lives where it begins and comes around again. Invariably, when we begin to do this kind of analysis, we get angry. Women lead difficult, painful, and frustrating lives in this society. Historically, they have been sold, burned, treated as slaves, chattels, and denied their voices, rights and personhood. We have a right to be angry, but the anger is very frightening. It goes immense and deep. It is frightening to us and society at large. We'd rather not feel it and we'd rather not look at it. But we must.

During the past twenty years, in this current wave of the feminist movement, the movement has pointed out many ways in which women are oppressed in this society. We have pointed out that women are victims of violence; that we are often poor or at risk of being poor; that the health system mistreats and misunderstands women; that women who work lack childcare and other services; that the work women do inside and outside the home is not valued; that all ages and kinds of women suffer from media and other sorts of



photo by Sheryl Ackerman

stereotyping; that pornography lies about women; that young children, most often girls, are often sexually abused; usually but not always, by men, and on and on.

Some of these issues have become in a weird way, "popular", or at least part of our popular language, such as the increasingly trite phrase, "family violence." Language has power eh? This phrase takes a hideous and ugly situation, and makes it one which is somehow naughty and awful, but can easily be fixed with just a little public education and a few women's shelters. This is not only crap but dangerously so. The fact that women are beaten in their relationships by men who supposedly love them is symptomatic of the overall position and economic and social powerlessness of women in our society, of men's and women's crippling social conditioning. Ignoring this deeper issue really means ignoring and covering up the difference in power between men and

women in this society, means pretending we're all the same. It's a lie.

One of the exciting things to me about doing research on women and poverty is the possibility it holds for making connections between all kinds of women. Women are poorer than men in this society and all classes of women are poorer than all classes of men, that is, educated middle class women are still poorer than old men, immigrant women are poorer than immigrant men, native women are poorer than native men, etc. There is a popular myth abounding right now that if women work hard enough, wear the right clothes, don't make waves, get lots and lots and lots of education, we can have it all, career, family, security, and no need to be labelled one of them there "man-hating feminists". Sorry, but statistics turn the whole myth into yet another lie. Women's chances of being poor in this society are, astonishingly enough, very similar to what they were forty years ago. We are still being battered and raped and ending up as single parents, stuck in the social welfare grinder. We still don't have economic power in this society, and given our lovely capitalist system, that means we don't have other kinds of power to make choices either.

So those among us who want to maintain the status quo, and talk about "women's issues" without ever mentioning that nasty word, feminist, are in for a surprise once they start to do a little reading and self education. Some of us are doing better than we were ten years ago, but a whole lot of us are not. Its the

What does Bill C-54 mean?

Since the federal government proposed new legislation last fall on pornography, (Bill C-54), debate has been ongoing both over the merits of the bill, as well as the need to regulate sexually explicit materials.

A Toronto group, Resources Against Pornography, (RAP), has produced a fact sheet on Bill C-54, which is one of the clearest analyses we have read so far, of the bill. While it is clearly supportive of the bill, or of some form of regulation of pornography, it also calls for changes to the bill which arts and cultural groups have found threatening.

Many groups, particularly women's groups, have been supportive of the first five clauses of the bill which prohibit visual material which shows children being sexually abused, or used in any sexual context. It also prohibits sexually violent or degrading material, and bestiality, necrophilia, or incest. The final clause in the first section, clause six, is more controversial. It prohibits "anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse, masturbation, or ejaculation."

The fact sheet states that " written material is defined as pornography only if it advocates or promotes activities described in the first five subsections of the bill. Mere description of sexually violent activities is not prohibited. There is no prohibition on describing or advocating sexual intercourse involving adults."

"Defenses of artistic merit, educational purpose, scientific purpose, or medical purpose, are available for all materials except those involving children..."

Bill C-54 also seeks to control "erotica " as well as violent pornography. Erotica is defined as "material which has as a dominant feature, in a sexual context for for the purpose of the sexual stimulation of the viewer, the female breast, the human anal region, or the genitals of either sex. This material could not be sold or rented or exhibited in a theatre, to anyone under 18, unless it has artistic merit, or educational purpose..."

Arts and cultural groups have protested the possibility that

under this bill, some of their material might be censored, and the onus would be upon them to prove that their work has merit.

Other groups which have been working for years to get stronger federal legislation to control pornography, are supportive of the bill, but wish to see some amendments made.

Bill C-54 came up for second reading in the House of Commons in November of 1987. After second reading is completed, it will go to committee. At the committee stage, clauses, and wordings may be modified, added and deleted.

Persons wishing to get more information on the bill can contact ASWAC for a copy of the fact sheet, or they can write to RAP, Box 695, Postal Station "C", Toronto, ON, M6J 3S1.

Persons wishing to express concerns or opinions on the bill, should write to the Honourable Ray Hnatyshyn, Minister of Justice, House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6.

Mushy peas continued

system we live in that needs analysis, understanding and radical change. And trying to pretend that we can keep this system and pay lip service to women's issues at the same time does us all a disservice. It's simply covering up that which makes us uncomfortable, facts that make demands on us, that make us angry, make us question our lives, our own value systems, our own blindness. And all women pay for such a cover up in the long term, no matter how much we'd like to pretend otherwise.

The Changing Family

Breaking the Silence is releasing two special issues on **The Changing Family** in March and June, 1988

\$2 per issue
\$12 individual subscription
\$25 institutional or supporting subscription

Send cheque to *Breaking the Silence*
P.O. Box 4857, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 5J1

Rural Poetics

Greetings Again! This newsletter's column is poetry from a visiting rural feminist and good friend, Melinda Lang.

PROMISES

Think bright thoughts,
Optimism is my daily goal.
I will accomplish all that I
wish,
And try not to stray too far.

I want to be happy,
and confident,
And successful in all my
endeavors.
I will learn all that I can,
Listen carefully

AND

Try -- always try.
I think I would like the world
at my feet.

UNTITLED

In fields I travelled alone,
I listened to the larks and the
sparrows.

I saw pink flowers swaying
softly to the breezes,
I said hello to a curious
groundhog.

I tasted the wild berries
hiding beneath the long
grasses.

I climbed up a hill, that
seemed a mountain,
I looked down, I saw a dirt
road and pretended it was
deserted.

I imagined I was as wild as
the fields and trees and
animals.
Then I dipped my bare,
scratched feet in the crystal
lake I wanted to own.
I heard my little dog panting,
back from her own travels.
We sat, then lie, basking in
the sun and blue sky,
I did all that in one day,
yet...

I have still yet
to hear, see, touch, taste and
smell all the things that life
has to offer.

Women and Poverty Campaign in Edmonton

A Women Against Poverty meeting was held in Edmonton, on April 6, at Jane Haslett's house. About thirty women attended.

Ongoing plans for the Women and Poverty Campaign were outlined by Lisa Walter, and then the members broke into small groups to discuss and give feedback on the campaign.

Women were enthusiastic and impressed with the amount of hard work and thought that has gone into planning the campaign so far.

The campaign is now moving into the next phase. Over the next

two months, a series of Pover-teas, which are kitchen table meetings to discuss economic issues which affect all women will be held. Plans are also being made to follow up these informal meetings with hearings or public forums, to be held in September and October.

Valda Roberts will coordinate the Pover-teas. Women interested in more information can call her at 439-5724.

A coordinating committee is also being formed. Women interested in this committee should call Marg Johnson, at 463-3357.

**bring in,
mail in,
pony express in,
walk in,
courier in,
jog in,
those
membership
questionnaires!**

happeningshappeningshappenings



Partners in literacy

The Alberta Association for Adult Literacy invites you to submit papers for their provincial conference titled, AAAL '88 Partners in Literacy, to be held November 17, 18, 19 in Calgary.

Submit proposals for: papers, (20 minutes) Workshops, seminars, Displays, Panel Discussions etc. The Topics should bear directly on the conference theme indicated above. We are looking for participation from a wide variety of individuals, groups, and institutions from every facet of our society.

Contact: Ms. Joanne Snyder
The Calgary John Howard Soc.
#200, 1010, 1 St. S.W.,
Calgary AB, 266-4566.
Submissions are due July 15.

Change your ways

Interested in change - changing phobias, emotional and mental blocks, compulsive behavior, and physical ailments? You are invited to a Core Belief Engineering Information Night presented by practioner, Sara Berger. We will look at how belief systems are formed, the affect they have on peoples lives and how they can be changed through the core belief engineering process.

June 6, Monday at 7:30 at
10633 - 124 St. Admission is
\$5.

Dumping depo

Women's groups fighting Federal Government Health and Welfare approval of Depo-Provera as a contraceptive have won at least a delay while Health and Welfare examines the results of recent tests in Costa Rica.

"The Minister has been forced to listen to the views of 64 women's groups which have demanded that he exercise caution in approving Depo-Provera for birth control purposes." MP Margaret Mitchell told the House on Feb. 25.

One key group in the fight against approval of the dangerous drug as a contraceptive is the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) which has gathered and presented the evidence from many disabled women given the drug while in institutions - many without informed consent.

The struggle continues. No stamp is required on letters sent to an MP at the House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6.

Depo-Provera still is being used for birth control without full informed consent in some institutions and on some Indian reserves.

(taken from the Canadian Human Rights Advocate, April, 88)

**What's happening
Tell us 421-0306**

CUSO Conference

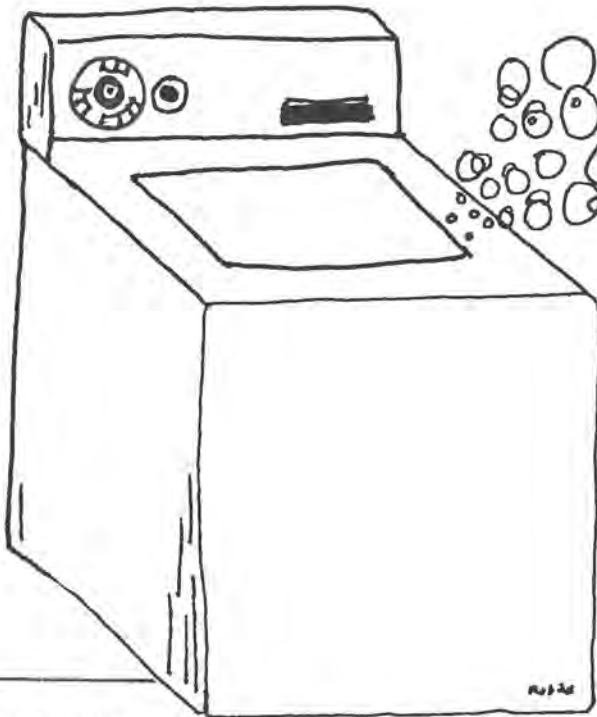
Our socio-economic interdependence, and thus our connectedness with the Third World, call for international solidarity. This theme will be addressed in CUSO Alberta's 1988 conferences in Edmonton and Calgary, by recognizing that and identifying how, our work in Alberta and Canada may help or hinder development in the Third World. CUSO Alberta views A DYNAMIC FOR CHANGE: NETWORKING INTO THE FUTURE as a contribution to the growth of a strong basis for continued development work in Alberta and Canada.

Each conference will have three themes: Environment, Women and Development, and Social Realities: A Community Development Approach. Resource persons and facilitators will encourage participants to move beyond "business as usual" and to let their imagination explode.

CUSO Alberta welcomes as participants people who are already activists in development work and social change, but stresses its interest in involving people whose work brings them in contact with issues of development and social change. We name, for example, health professionals, educators, technical and business groups, labour, youth, government employees, and people who have an interest in development and social change.

The conferences will be held June 10, 11 in Edmonton, and June 17, 18 in Calgary. The registration fee will be \$20.00. For more information, or to reserve a display table, please contact:
Conference Co-ordinator
CUSO Alberta
#206, 10136 - 100 St.
Edmonton, AB T5J 0P1

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



spinning with too
heavy a load?
need help with the
agitating??
why not tell your
sisters to join
ASWAC?

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