

ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

AUGUST 1996



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TAKE BACK THE NIGHT 1996

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

DATE: September 20, 1996

TIME: 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Sir Winston Churchill
Square

Women will take back the night on September 20, 1996, at 8:00 pm by taking to the streets of downtown Edmonton.

On this night, women will march unescorted and without fear. "In essence, this is the only night of the year that many women are able to feel safe on the streets after dark."

There will be a rally prior to the march, with speakers and entertainment. Afterwards, women will proceed to march unescorted to Beaver Hill Park where a candle light vigil will be held (please bring a candle). The march will then return to Sir Winston Churchill Square. The evening will end with a circle dance.

The slogan "Take Back The Night" was first used in the United States as a theme for a national protest march down San Francisco's pornography strip. This was done in conjunction to similar events held internationally. Since then, thousands of women around the

world have gathered on a day, traditionally in the third week of September, to protest violence against women.

Men are encouraged to offer their support by selling T-shirts and by providing transportation, and childcare. They are asked to refrain from marching to express that women are the main targets of violence. Organizers thank men for their understanding of this symbolism.

Violence against women manifests itself in many ways. The most obvious ways are: sexual harassment in the work place, abuse of women in intimate relationships, assault, rape and murder. Take Back The Night protests all aspects of violence against women.

Free childcare will be supervised by a qualified person; organizers encourage the use of this service during the march.

For further information or to interview call:

Susan Logan, Chair
Take Back The Night Committee
Phone: 423-9922 EXT. 231
Fax: 425 - 7467

ASWAC REPORT AUGUST 1996

by Dorothy Mandy, Office Coordinator

ASWAC is 20 years old this year. Will the 20th year be the last? Read on and plan to be part of the decision.

October is Women's History Month and ASWAC is not only observing the occasion it may well be making history.

The work of ASWAC has always been a struggle. In spite of that we have done good work, we have accomplished much and we deserve to celebrate.

To ensure that the work we have done in the past is not lost, the Department of Extension, Women's Studies, at the U of A will house our library and resource files in a reading room. This will be a place where women research our history. They will not be lost in the backlash. Issue papers written by women for ASWAC and the women of Alberta will continue to be available and will eventually go to the reading room.

The Northern Alberta Women Archives Association will take our records and will ensure our archives are safe. We are encouraged that women in the future will not have to dig as deep as we had to to find our history.

The 2nd Edition of the Women Against Poverty report is out and available and as much in demand as ever. Requests have come from across Canada for this report.

A more recent project called "Women on the Move", funded by the Alberta Wild Rose Foundation puts ASWAC into the electronic age in an exciting way. We will have a poster for our 20th celebration and a new brochure.

Is this enough? Is ASWAC's work done? Because of a record number of rumours, attacks, conflicts and interruptions in funding in the past year ASWAC is at a crossroads and you must help decide our future.

We have been instructed to hold a strategic planning session by Status of Women Canada (formerly Women's Program and our main source of funds), this fall, to determine if ASWAC has the support and interest of women in the province to continue and to decide what her work will be. We have reason to believe that we will receive three months funding to carry out this conference in order to make a plan which we will submit for ongoing funding.

An advisory committee is being struck to manage ASWAC and organize the conference until a new board is elected at the Annual General Meeting. The AGM will be held in conjunction with the planning conference. Plan to join.

This is an invitation to women across Alberta to come and participate in this process. In spite of difficulties and obstacles over the years, the struggle continues. You are needed to help decide the future.

If the decision is that ASWAC is to close its doors, that we have done enough, that others have picked up the baton and are doing the work, then so be it. But let the women of Alberta decide what we need. Don't let us decide by default that we have been here long enough. The decision must be ours.

We will need many women to participate and help with this conference. We need you. Please call and leave your name and number if you are interested, if you can volunteer, if you can help with money or billeting for the conference, or if you have expertise in facilitating the planning process or if you simply want to express support. Above all, be sure your membership is current and plan to attend the conference.

By the time you read this I will be on my way to return to my home on Vancouver Island. I wish all the best to those of you, taking up the challenge, and thank the women who have helped and supported me during my time in Alberta and at ASWAC. All the best. Dorothy

As part of the 20 year celebration, and to raise money, we will hold a silent auction. On sale will be T-shirts collected over many years, women's art and women's movement memorabilia. If you have items that would be of interest, hidden away or cluttering up your cupboards, please plan to donate them. Don't forget one woman's junk is another woman's treasure. Call 421-0306

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Women! Know Your Rights. Come to the launch of the 3rd edition of Edmonton Working Women's labour legislation handbook for women. **Friday, Sept. 6th, 1996, 5 pm to 8 pm, at the Howard Johnson Plaza-Hotel, 10010 - 104 St., Edmonton.**

Prevention of Violence Against Young Women: Invites young women to participate in peer educator training designed to empower young, immigrant and visible minority women in dealing with problems of abuse and violence. **Sept. 13th-15th.** For more information call Ayesha at 490-0477.

Asimuth Theatre Presents: Armour: a play about Dating Violence. Armour is available from **Sept. 13th to Dec. 15th, 1996.** To book a performance call Jayne at (403) 448-9165.

Healing Legacies –Sept. 14th to Dec. 8th. at the Glenbow Museum, Calgary. This powerful exhibition of art and writing by women with breast cancer introduces visitors to the human face of the disease and creates a realistic portrait of the experience. For more information call (403) 268-4100.

Take Back The Night:

Edmonton: Sept. 20th --March begins at Sir Winston Churchill Square at 8 pm. For further information call Susan Logan or Sacha McNaughton at (403) 496-5996.

Medicine Hat: Sept. 20th--First Ever!! Right on Medicine Hat ! (Sponsored by the Beyond Survival Society of Medicine Hat) March begins at Riverside Park at 7:30 pm. For further information call (403) 528-1651.

Lethbridge: Sept. 20th--Rally begins at 7 pm at Galt Gardens--free food childcare and entertainment. For further information call Dorothy at 329-8338.

Calgary: Sept. 21st--Location still to be decided at time of printing. For further information please call Women Looking Forward at (403) 269-1144.

Aids Walk--Sept. 29th, 1996, Kinsmen Park Edmonton, Alberta. For further information contact the Aids Walk Office at (403) 488-5742.

YWCA Week Without Violence '96. Oct. 6th - 12th, 1996. The week will start with thousands of people coming together around the world for hundreds of memorial services in **A Day of Remembrance.** Then each of the subsequent days will be tied to a different theme. Organizers kits are available by calling the National Office at (416) 593-9886.

Art Exhibition : Heroines of Art; Celebrating Women in the Arts –Oct. 7th - Nov. 15th, 1996. The Centre Gallery 2nd Flr, 924 - 6th Ave S.W. Calgary, AB. Call Barbara Bickel at 243-4615.

The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, in Collaboration with the University of Calgary Presents two Workshops that may be of interest. **1) Getting Information (For Fun and Profit):** learn how to use the "freedom of information act". **Oct. 19th 9 am to 1 pm.** **2) Sexual Harassment in the Workplace:** workshop provides current legal developments as well as information on what employers must do to discourage improper behavior. **Nov. 22nd 8:30 am to 4 pm.** For more information call (403) 220-2877.

Canadian Research Institute for The Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) celebrates 20 Years! A Gala will be held **Oct. 26th in Ottawa.** For more information call (613) 563-0681.

The Life Quilt For Breast Cancer will be on display at the **Glenbow Museum Oct. 26th from 2 pm to 4 pm.** The Life Quilt is a work in progress, founded by Vancouver's Judy Reimer. Visitors are invited to add their own stitches, assisted by members of Calgary's quilting community. For more information call (403) 268-4100.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Now Available

1) **The Support Network** is pleased to offer **The 1996 Tough Times Handbook**. This is a guide to services and information for unemployed and low-income people. It is free of charge. For more information call (403) 482-0196.

2) **It's Not Part Of The Job!** The first intervention book on **Sexual Harassment**. This book is available in French and English at a cost of \$19.95 per unit. You can order a copy by calling (514) 526-0789.

3) **Women Against Poverty** 2nd Edition. A report by the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee. Suggested Donation: \$10.00 individuals, \$20.00 groups, companies, gov. departments. To order call **ASWAC** at (403) 421-0306 or Fax at (403) 425-3293.

Up coming programs being offered by the U of A Faculty of Extension, Women's Program

This list of courses is just a sample—call the Faculty of Extension for a complete calendar:
492-2847

The Arts and Writing:

Making Words Selling Words: A Conference on Women in Writing and Publishing (C6115)
Mon. to Fri. Sept. 16 to 20, 9 am to 4 pm
Fee: \$250 full week or \$75 per day/ Students and Seniors: \$175 full week or \$55 per day.

Writing As Spiritual Practice (C6143)
Shirley A. Serviss, instructor
6 Sundays, starting Oct. 20, 2-4 pm
Fee: \$125

Finding the Words (C6159)
Ruth Krahn, instructor
6 Thursdays, starting Oct. 17
(excluding Oct. 31), 7-9:30 pm
Fee: \$125

Feasting On Story (C6157)
Adele Fontaine, instructor
3 Thursdays, starting Oct. 10, 6:30-9:30 pm
Fee: \$80

Healing Words: A Life Writing Workshop on Memory and Meaning (C6158)
Eunice Scarfe, instructor
Sat. and Sun., Nov. 16 and 17, 9 am-4 pm
Fee: \$125

Star of the North Writing Retreat
Eunice Scarfe and June Gould, instructors
Oct. 11-13 at The Star of the North, St. Albert.
Fee: \$225 full retreat or \$175 workshops only

Rediscovering Your Creative Self (C6146)
Janet Hinton, instructor
4 Saturdays, starting Oct. 26, 9:30 am-12:30 pm
Fee: \$125

Crossing the Great Divide: Turning Stumbling Blocks into Stepping Stones (C6155)
Noreen Crone-Findlay, instructor
Sat. Oct. 19, 10 am-5 pm
Fee: \$80

Women and Business:

Are You Emotionally Ready for Entrepreneurship? (C6138)
Oct. 8-10, 6:30 pm-9:30 pm
Fee: \$45

Basic Bookkeeping (C6139)
Bev Campbell, instructor
2 Tuesdays, Oct. 15 and 22, 6:30-9:30 pm
Fee: \$45

Marketing and Promotional Strategies (C6140)
Fran Ross, instructor
2 Thursdays, Oct. 17 and 24, 6:30-9:30 pm
Fee: \$45

Business Planning (C6142)
Yvette Waddell, instructor
2 Thursdays, Nov. 7 and 14, 6:30-9:30 pm
Fee: \$45

Dollar Sense: Take Control of Your Money (C6264)
Orlene Lacy, instructor
6 Mondays, starting Sept. 30 (excluding Oct. 14 and Nov. 11) 7-9 pm
Fee: \$100

**Chinese Refugee Women
Need Our Help!
Time To Put Your Pen To Paper**

In 1993, eighteen women fled the Peoples Republic of China in order to escape China's coercive one-child population control policies. The women fled to the U.S. on a boat that went aground off the coast of Long Island. They hoped to gain asylum in America but were rejected after the Clinton Administration changed the definition of persecution for refugees. The U.S. decided that submitting to forced abortions and sterilizations does not constitute persecution. The Chinese refugee women were immediately detained in a Bakersfield, CA detention centre to await deportation. Since that time, the Vatican has intervened and was able to get an offer of asylum for twelve of the women from Ecuador. This left six women. One has already been deported to China which leaves five still incarcerated.

These five women have now been incarcerated for over three years. Recent reports out of the Bakersfield Detention Centre suggest that life for these women has become increasingly unbearable. The women were recently sent to solitary confinement for using a make shift pencil sharpener rather than purchasing one from the institution.

All five women have submitted applications for immigration to Canada under the Women at Risk programme. Unfortunately, Ottawa has been dragging their feet claiming that they are afraid to offer immigration to the women after the U.S. refuses because it may be seen as diplomatic criticism.

Perhaps Ottawa needs to be reminded that diplomacy at the expense of these women's human rights is not acceptable. If these women are returned to the Peoples Republic of China they face horrendous persecution. They will be forcibly sterilized, they will face imprisonment in forced labour camps, beatings (for embarrassing the Chinese government). Any future pregnancies will be forcibly aborted, plus these women will face fines many times the yearly per-capita income. It will take decades for their families to pay.

Human rights advocate and Chinese dissident, Harry Wu, has recently become

involved in the case and has agreed to appeal to Canada's Minister of Immigration to accept the five Chinese women. However these women need all the help that we can give them.

So, take a little time and put your pen to paper. The Minister responsible for immigration is **The Hon, Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6.** In your letters please name the women individually so that there can be no confusion. They are identified as follows: 1. Dai Bo Mei, DOB: 18/11/61; 2. Qu Ai Yue, DOB: 11/09/54; 3. Li Bao Yu, DOB: 30/05/68; 4. Dia Xui Hua, DOB: 27/11/56; 5. Wang Luan Ying, DOB: 13/02/55. In addition, could you please write your individual MP's c/o:

The House of Commons, Ottawa, ON., K1A 0A6, and ask them to represent the women to Minister Robillard. (No Postage Required)

**A RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF
ALBERTA'S BILL 24: INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS PROTECTION ACT, 1996
SUBMITTED BY THE COALITION ON
HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBERTA**

Against a backdrop of decreasing resource allocation, and increasing political interference with the administration of human rights, the Alberta government has now tabled in the legislature, Bill 24, which contains the long-awaited amendments to Alberta human rights legislation. But they are not the amendments that we needed and asked for. These amendments weaken the Commission.

A new Coalition on Human Rights in Alberta has been formed to oppose this Bill. ASWAC is a member of the Coalition. This is the summary of what is wrong with Bill 24:

**Independence of the Human Rights
Commission:**

- No provision for the Human Rights Commission to be treated as an independent, quasi judicial branch of the government, which should report to the Legislature.
- The Minister will have the ability to decide and approve such things as financial grants

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST TO ASWAC MEMBERS

and by-laws respecting the operation of the Commission without being subject to review by the Legislature.

- No mechanism to control or limit interference by a Minister in the internal operation of the Commission, due to personal or political reasons.
- Does not reflect the Government of Alberta's publicly stated decision made in the fall of 1992 to select persons for Commissions, Boards and Agencies based on merit through open competitions. The Minister continues to make political appointments to the office of Chief Commissioner and also Commissioners which is not supported by the Alberta Human Rights Review Report "Equal in Dignity and Rights." The political patronage must be eliminated.

Human Rights Panels to Replace Boards of Inquiry:

- Bill 24 ignores the recommendations of "Equal in Dignity and Rights" that promoted a standing list of trained specialists to adjudicate upon Human Rights cases. Bill 24 proposes to have current Commissioners act as a panel. The lack of technical knowledge and the political background of some of the current Commissioners creates a lack of confidence in the "Panel" proposals. Knowledgeable Albertans would be preferable to act as a "Panel".

The Creation of the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund:

- The Minister, rather than the Commission or a Committee of the Legislature, will decide who is given grants from this fund. There is no mention of any procedures to ensure that these tax dollars will not be used for the political or personal reasons of the Minister. The scope of the funds' purposes far too vague.

Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination:

- There is no mention in the Bill of prohibiting systemic discrimination or harassment on

any prohibited grounds. Nor is there mention of the duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship.

- Still no protection for Albertans from discrimination in the workplace, accommodation, and public services, on the basis of source of income, political belief, sexual orientation, and pardoned criminal convictions. All of these grounds were recommended changes in "Equal in Dignity and Rights."

Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints:

- Bill 24 adds a prohibition on complaints that are "frivolous or vexatious." This provision is not justified. Not recommended by "Equal in Dignity and Rights."
- No mention on what will happen to a person who lodges a complaint that is frivolous or vexatious.
- No mention on who will decide whether a complaint is frivolous or vexatious.
- Confusion as to why the Bill requires a "malicious intent", which is a criminal standard of law, because human rights proceedings are dealt with under civil standard of law.

Commission Activities Not Subject to the Ombudsman Act:

- Section 37 of the Individual's Rights Protection Act has been deleted which currently makes activities of the Commission **clearly** subject to the Ombudsman Act. The Commission should be subject to the Ombudsman Act to guarantee procedural fairness and propriety to all individuals who come before the Commission.

The Lodging of Complaints:

Bill 24 makes no allowances for the Commission to exercise discretion to accept complaints that are lodged more than six months after the alleged contravention due to

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST TO ASWAC MEMBERS

Bill 24 Cont...

valid and reasonable circumstances. "Equal in Dignity and Rights" recommended a minimum limitation period of one year.

Bill 214 Victims of Domestic Violence Act

On May 15, 1996 Bill 214 received unanimous support of the legislative Assembly. It is the first time in Alberta History that a private member's Bill from the opposition passed second reading in the Legislative Assembly. What is the significance of this?

At the very least it shows that the government recognizes the importance of the fight against family violence.

Bill 214 creates a mechanism to meet the immediate needs of a victim of domestic violence at a time of crisis. It allows the Provincial Court or Court of Queen's Bench to grant a protection order for victims. The protection order may give the victim exclusive possession of the home, require the payment of compensation or it might restrain the abuser from contacting the victim at their residence, place of work or school.

In cases of spousal abuse, Bill 214 allows the Court to deal with other important issues such as child custody, access and support payments. The Court may also grant a warrant of entry where there is concern that a person, unable to act on his/her own, is suffering from domestic violence.

The following are important points to remember about Bill 214.

- ⇒ Overall, the Bill is a step forward in providing protection to victims.
- ⇒ The Bill needs to be endorsed full force, as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Members are encouraged to phone the Minister of Justice and the Premier (It appears that phone calls are weighted heavily by the government).
- ⇒ Community participation in the formulation of the regulations is important.

- ⇒ Any concerns should be put forth as enhancements to the Bill.
- ⇒ Members should also write letters to the minister and cc Alice Hanson.
- ⇒ Agencies that have counterparts in other places in the province should ask them to promote support for the Bill.

ASWAC encourages its membership to use this window of opportunity to support this Bill. Take action now....and remember that groups that oppose the Bill are already lobbying the government and campaigning for its defeat.

Originally the Government had made a commitment to support the Bill in principle. However, on August 21 Bill 214 was removed from the order paper. A rare motion was put forth by an MLA from Calgary that resulted in the removal of the Bill from the Order Paper. Bill 214 cannot be introduced again in this sitting; therefore it is more important than ever that we get behind this Bill. We need to present a strong unified voice when and if this Bill is reintroduced.

The following are the pertinent addresses:

Alberta Justice Minister Brian Evans
Room 320 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6
Phone: 427- 2339
Fax: 422 - 6621

Alice Hanson, MLA
Edmonton Highlands-Beverly
Constituency Office
5811 - 118 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5W 1E5
Phone: (403) 4771233
Fax: (403) 479 - 4288

Cathy Cram
Legislative Analyst
Alberta Liberal Opposition

301 Legislative Annex
9718 - 107 Street
Edmonton Alberta T5k 1E4
Tel: (403) 427-2292 Fax: (403) 427-3697

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST TO ASWAC MEMBERS

\$4.2B cost of violence against women

A paper introduced at the federal governments Women's Health Forum estimated the health and economic costs of violence against women is a minimum of \$4.2 Billion a year. This includes medical costs, social services such as welfare, counselling, shelters, days absent from work, lost income and taxes and insurance costs.

Despite this, Health Minister David Dingwall was unclear whether the government would continue financing the Family Violence Initiatives which has handed out 160 million over the last 5 years.

CONSEQUENCES:

60 to 70 per cent of runaways and 98 per cent of child prostitutes have a history of child abuse.

43 per cent of injuries inflicted by spouses required medical attention.

A 1991 Canadian report indicates up to 80 per cent of women who take alcohol and drug treatment have a history of incest, sexual abuse or domestic violence.

19.2 per cent of sexual assault victims have attempted suicide compared with 2.2 per cent of non-victims.

Women from violent relationships were five times more likely to exhibit psychological problems than other women.



ASWAC

I SUPPORT WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ALBERTA

- ENCLOSED IS MY MEMBERSHIP - \$20 (1 YEAR)
 ENCLOSED IS MY MEMBERSHIP - \$40 (2 YEAR)
 ENCLOSED IS MY DONATION OF \$ _____
 I AM UNABLE TO PAY THE ENTIRE FEE AT THIS TIME, ENCLOSED IS \$ _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/TOWN: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

PH (DAY/EVE/FAX): _____

Membership fees are an important source of ASWAC revenue, buy more importantly, your membership means a vote in support of promoting the status of women in Alberta. Whether or not you can afford our suggested fee of \$20.00, it is important to keep your membership up to date (check your address label for renewal month). Don't wait for the membership renewal invoice to send in your fee. All mail, and now our business reply mail, costs ASWAC one dollar which can be put toward programming, lobbying and advocacy work. Due to continuing cutbacks in federal funds ASWAC is having difficulty operating yearly. If we could double or triple our membership we could alleviate this concern. Please sign up new members, buy memberships for your friends and make donations if you can. ASWAC's membership base is our most important resource. SEND IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO ASWAC, BOX 573, EDMONTON, AB, T5J 2NR