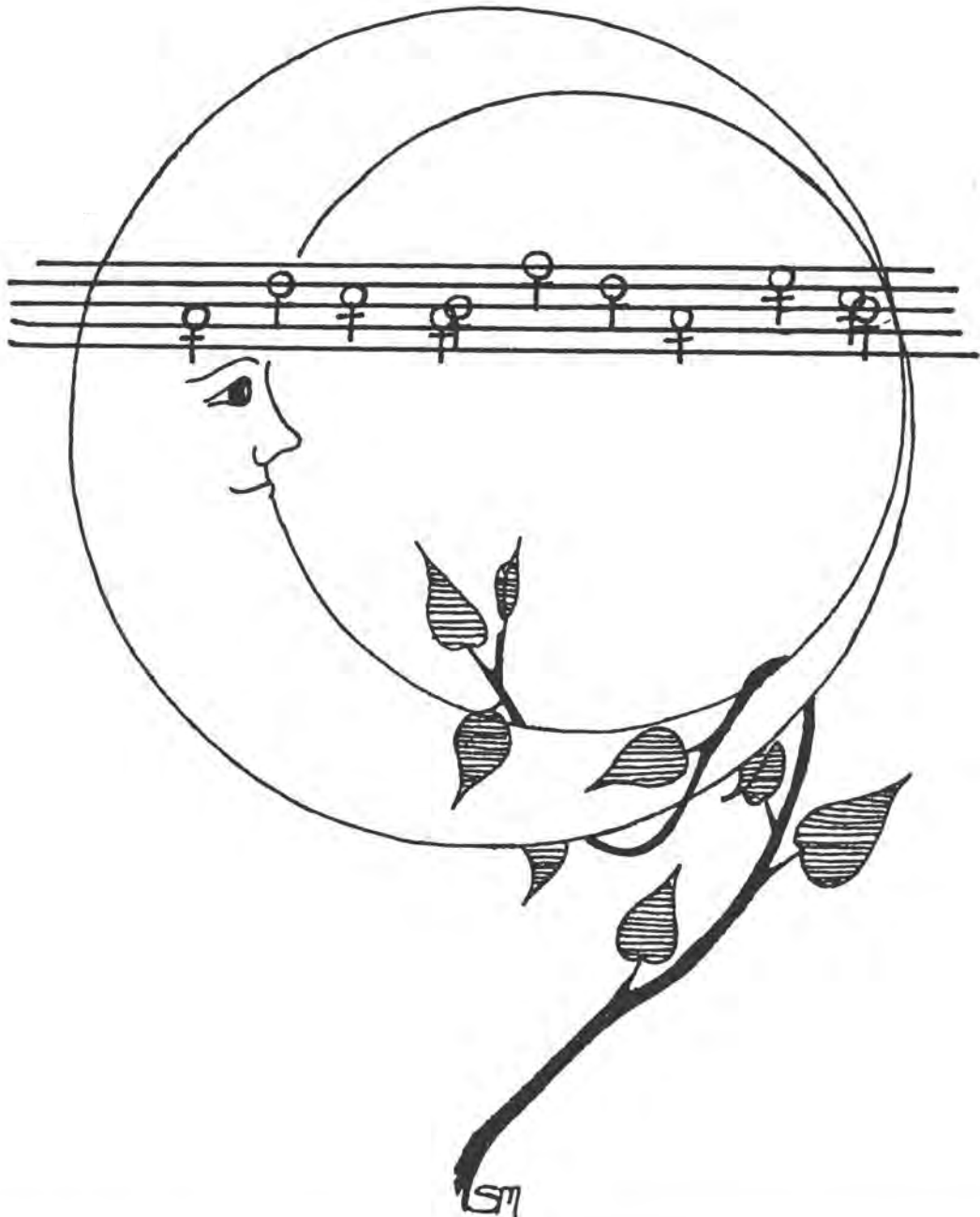




ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE

Vol. 5 No. 34



Our cover ...

The graphic on the front cover was drawn by Sheila MacDonald and was a gift to her sister Shelly.

The music staff with women's symbols through it, signifies women's celebration.

The vine entwined through the moon, signifies women's growth.

The moon is the cycle that women revolve around and the moon showing the full circle signifies the continuation of women's growth and of women's celebration.

Clipping file ...

Among the vast resources available from the ASWAC office is the newspaper clippings file. This file is made possible by Sheilagh Edington who regularly clips and sends articles into our office. The files cover a wide range of women's issues in the news, from advertising to third world women. If you're researching an issue for a paper or needing the facts on a story you heard about recently, the file may be of use to you. And we at ASWAC give our thanks to Sheilagh.

Oops ...

Didn't you love our original page numbering system in the last issue? So did we! It seems the printer (Webco West, Fort Saskatchewan) had been housecleaning and some of their redundant page plans had found their way to the top of the heap. They apologised to us; we apologise to you.

Next meeting ...

The next meeting of the ASWAC Stoard will be in Fort McMurray on June 16 and 17. We've been wanting to meet up there for a long time!

Following the June meeting the line-up is as follows:

July 28/29
September 8/9
October 20/21 and
November 2/3/4 Assembly.

And donations

We have received \$130.00 in donations since our last newsletter. Thanks so much to Olga Anderson, Frances Hoy, Ruth Watson, Laurie Ankenman, Louise Swift, Joanne Kalvaitis, Linda Lee Nicholls, Planned Parenthood Alberta and Linda Huebscher.

MAY 5-6 STOARD MEETING

17 HOURS SATURDAY

- Opening Round** We decided this should be kept short as there was LOTS of work to be done and we were generally raring to go.
- Secretary of State Funding** Karen Schwartz from Sec State, Women's Program came to report on the status of our application for funding. They are recommending that we receive \$50,000 as a base grant for 1984/85. \$10,000 is being recommended to be put toward a 'third party' evaluation of ASWAC and a further \$15,000 may be forthcoming depending on the outcome of the evaluation.
- Budget/Final Report** Donna Gibbons will take care of getting a completed financial report ready by May 11 for submission to Sec State with our annual report. The preparation of the report is being shared and an additional meeting time was set working on this.
- Women's Secretariat** Meaghan wrote an excellent information package for the stoard about the secretariat and about the relationship between our organizations. We had a discussion about various aspects of the secretariat and government committees, their politics, their image of us, etc.
- Newsletter** Initially we sat down to do a critique of the last issue. The general consensus seemed to be that it was a pretty good issue; we received a lot of good feedback from members about the positive tone, the variety of issues covered, the poetry, etc. We discussed the difference between active and passive participation in the production of the newsletter.
- Peace Conference** Donna Gibbons gave us information on the Voice of Women peace conference in Edmonton on June 8-10 at the Knox Met Church. Several stoard members offered to help with the remaining organizational needs.
- ASWAC Brochure** Diana brought our attention to the need for a new general information brochure about ASWAC. We decided to each write our own version of a brochure to bring to the June meeting.
- Annual Assembly** We discussed various possible formats: an assembly along the lines of last year's which focussed on business; a more traditional one with workshops, etc. The Assembly should grow out of our work this year.
- Computers and Women** Valerie Deacon (Meaghan's sister from Vancouver) gave a fascinating speak about how she got involved with computers and then let us play around with her own MacIntosh - truly an eye-opening experience!
- Hiring Recommendation** The hiring committee to replace Frances (office manager) for two and a half months presented its recommendation to hire Meaghan. An interesting discussion then developed about the process through which the committee went, about Meaghan's having been on the board, the fact that all five applicants were really well qualified women and well known in the women's movement ... this ended the session for Saturday

AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY

- Stoard Retreat** Marilyn Guille suggested a retreat this summer that would give us time to talk to each other without an agenda. A tentative date was struck - July 7 & 8.
- Native Women** Marilyn Guille talked about her meeting with an Indian woman at the NAC conference who is making beaded pins and selling them to publicize Section 12B of the Indian Act that discriminates against women.
- Falling From Grace** Marilyn asked someone to review a new book, published by Press Gang in Vancouver about a mastectomy. Almira will take care of this.
- The Last Best West** Debra told us about a new book about prairie women between 1880 and 1930 that has been written by Elian Leslau Silverman, a Calgary woman.
- Solidarity Alberta** We discussed whether or not we should officially join Solidarity and came to no decision. We would like to build a liaison, possibly through some of our members who are also involved with Solidarity.
- Correspondence** Suzn had gone through the correspondence file and pulled the outstanding correspondence. Requests that we discussed involved membership in CARAL, Transport Canada info request, the Grande Prairie Pornography Action Committee (display by-laws etc), Tools For Peace, etc. Much of the correspondence is handled by the office staff and Marilyn Guille has taken responsibility for going through the file regularly.
- Report from NAC** Trudy Richardson, our new Alberta/NWT rep to NAC talked to us about her impressions of this national organization. Very simply put there seems to be a lack of understanding of the west within the organization that is made up and run primarily by women in southern Ontario. They tend to have different priorities than we do (ie. they put a lot of emphasis on partisan federal politics). Trudy will be focussing her efforts on health/medicare.
- Charter of Rights** Nancy Jackman from The Charter of Rights Coalition in Toronto will be in Edmonton May 13 for a meeting with women. The Coalition is trying to spearhead conferences in every major Canadian city for Oct. 19/20/21 to focus on the charter of rights.
- Media Watch** Samantha Sanderson, a legal counsel and volunteer for Media Watch (and a friend of Diana's) talked to us about the organization and showed us their video on 'Images of Women' that they use for public education and lobbying. We discussed the need to put forth positive images of women rather than looking at the sexist, pornographic images. Media Watch would like to have a representative from Edmonton. Are you interested?
- Staff Reports** Frances and Mair both spoke about their work since the last meeting. We decided to schedule this item earlier at the next meeting so that there is enough time for a satisfying report that can include discussion by other stoard members about their work as well.
- Next Meeting** We made some plans for our next meeting in Fort McMurray. Judy will look after most of the details.

Feminist techies?

My sister, Val Deacon, flew in from Vancouver for the last ASWAC stoard meeting. Besides her basic survival goodies (toothbrush, sweaters, deodorant, etc.) she also brought along her new Macintosh computer.

After getting over my initial amazement and delight at the fact a computer is now as portable as my typewriter, I settled into the luxury of having access to a computer in a safe space. No three-piece-suited, peach-fuzzed super-techie buzzing around my ears like an ego-starved mosquito, waiting hungrily for a bare patch in my knowledge to show itself. I could indulge in some unpestered, unjudged play...

And it has been fun. I drew pictures mostly--some "made sense" others didn't, but it didn't matter because I knew it was all an important way of learning the feel of it--of finding out all the different ways I can create using this marvellous tool called a computer.

There is lots I could say about what it was like to play with Macintosh, but the fact that I got confident enough to decide to tell you about it in an article done on the computer says most of it. Also, my sister's plane is leaving shortly and the computer has to go back into its carrying case...

Meaghan Dean

Welcome Meaghan

Meaghan Dean has been hired as ASWAC's office manager for the next few months.

Frances Adams, our regular office manager, is taking a two-and-a-half-month leave of absence to bask in the sunny climes of Greece. (They say Greece is the cradle of modern civilisation--maybe she'll be able to come up with some details on just exactly where it went wrong).

Meaghan, a former ASWAC stoard member and one of the founders of Webspinner, will be working in the office from May 22 to Aug. 15 (with breaks, of course, for meals, sleep and statutory holidays).

Bon Voyage Frances

Some basic information ...

WHAT

The Women's Secretariat, the Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues and the Interdepartmental Committee on Women's Issues came officially into existence on April 1, 1984. The Secretariat was created through executive decree (established within executive council) not through legislation. However, secretariat director Sheila Wynn says a Women's Secretariat Act is expected to be introduced to the Fall '84 Legislature. She is assisting with the lawyers and government staff on the formulation of this act.

WHO AND WHERE

Women's Secretariat

- Director: Sheila Wynn
.....422- 4927
8th Floor, Devonian Bldg. E.
1160 Jasper Ave. Edmonton
T5K 0L1
- Receptionist/Secretary:
Catherine MacDonald
- Communication Division
Director: Phyllis Ellis
... 427-2470
(formerly Alta. Women's Bureau)
1910 Capitol Square
10065 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3B1
- Jennifer Leonard, information
officer
- Joan Kotuza, secretary

Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues

- Les Young, minister of labour
- Neil Webber, social services
- Neil Crawford, attorney general
- Dave King, education
- Ernie Isley, manpower
- Jim Horseman, intergovernmental
affairs
- Milt Pahl, native affairs
- Greg Stevens, personnel admin-
istration

Chairperson: Dick Johnston,
minister of advanced education
and minister responsible for
the status of women

Sheila says she doesn't expect
this committee to really get
rolling until around September
because the Leg. is us to its
ears in this session and then
will break for the summer.

Interdepartmental Committee on Women's Issues

- To be comprised of senior
management officials. It has not
been formed yet as Sheila says
she wants to take the time to
make sure "the right people are

on it -- I don't want the mini-
sters to just go and start
appointing anyone willy nilly".
- Chairperson: Sheila Wynn,
secretariat director

FUNCTIONS

-The purpose of the Secretariat,
says Dick Johnston, is to "pro-
vide a focal point for identifi-
ing and assessing government
policies, programs and legisla-
tion which impact on women."

The major functions of the Secre-
tariat will be:

- to provide enhanced co-ordination
between and liaison with other
government departments to ensure
that women's concerns are reflec-
ted in policy and program devel-
opment;
- to analyze and review Alberta
legislation, policies and programs
having special relevance to
women;
- to provide advice to the minister
responsible for the status of
women and to other government
departments on matters related to
women; and
- to provide a link to the commu-
nity by collecting and dissemina-
ting information of interest to
women, providing grants for
research and educational events,
and consulting with women in the
province. Many of these func-
tions have been performed in the
past by the Alberta Women's
Bureau.

Functions of the Secretariat

Communication Division will
include:

- information and referral
- monitoring of women's concerns
- all letters, briefs etc. on
matters concerning women should
be sent to this division
- to stimulate an exchange of
information between the Secre-
tariat and Alberta women

Because the range of issues
affecting women extends beyond
the limits of any one depart-
ment, the Women's Secretariat
will be expected to provide the
co-operative, approach and
co-ordination required to ensure
issues affecting women are dealt
with effectively.

Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues

- to "ensure that the impact on
women of government policies and
programs is taken into consider-
ation at the ministerial level"

Interdepartmental Committee on Women's Issues

- to "provide interdepartmental
liaison and be responsible for
identifying issues impacting on
women which require action or
policy development"

Relationship of Secretariat and Two Committees

The Secretariat and the two new
committees are separate bodies.
For instance, the two committees

cont'd p. 13

ASWAC to learn more about Women's Secretariat

ASWAC intends to continue to
maintain contact with the new
Alberta Women's Secretariat.
While the exact nature of ASWAC's
relationship with the Secretariat
is still unclear, the general
feeling at the last ASWAC stoard
meeting was to exchange some
basic information with the Secre-
tariat and to talk more with its
director about any possible future
relationship between the two
organizations.

So far, the ASWAC stoard has done
some basic information gathering
about the Secretariat and com-
piled a fact sheet containing
contacts, phone numbers, func-
tions etc. (see article this

issue). A stoard member has also
met with Sheila Wynn, Secretariat
director, and Phyllis Ellis,
Secretariat Communication Division
director. Further meetings
between ASWAC and the Secretariat
are expected to be held through-
out the summer.

At this point, the stoard feels
it does not have enough informa-
tion about the workings of the
Secretariat to make any final
decisions around what the
relationship between ASWAC and
the Secretariat could be. How-
ever, it feels it is very impor-
tant that the Secretariat be as
informed as possible about ASWAC.

Meaghan Dean

Big changes around info-sharing

I've been thinking a lot lately about the Telephone Tree ASWAC used to have for her Edmonton members. Some of you may remember it - in fact, some of you have been asking what happened to it, and when its going to be activated again. This gives me a good opportunity to write about some significant changes in our thinking about information sharing. It also gives us the opportunity to reactivate the Telephone Tree if we want to.

The Edmonton Telephone Tree was born in 1980, when I was working as ASWAC's coordinator. I set it up, alone, and kept the information about it at the ASWAC office. As far as I can remember, all information sent out over the Telephone Tree originated in the office - I chose which information was relevant and which was not - even though I put it out to members that the Telephone Tree was there for them use too. This is a very centralized model; it gave me a lot of power, and put me in isolation; it was dependent upon a staff person and an office in order to function at all. This was the first problem. The second

was that it was based on the assumption that all Edmonton ASWAC members were avid to hear whatever tidbits of information I thought they should hear, and that the people who had taken the responsibility to pass on information to five other women would have that as a high priority. There was no real attempt to find out whether individual members really wanted to be phoned, how often, and about what.

So, the Edmonton Telephone Tree died, and maybe that was no bad thing! But, one of my goals as organiser is to help us talk to each other as often as we want, and in as many ways as we want, without taking power away from you by imposing a structure on you.

I've thus been thinking about reviving a telephone tree? bush? grapevine? web? which would serve those of us who wanted it, and over which we would all have control. I don't yet know how it would work or what it would look like because my hope is that those of us who want it will design it.

If you fill out and return the form, I'll call you soon and we'll talk about setting up this

link. If you live outside Edmonton obviously we'll have to figure out ways of keeping in touch as cheaply as possible but don't let that discourage you from sending in the form. Or, if you hate filling in forms why don't you call me? Let's talk to each other!

So, I need to know

Are you interested?

Would you like to share up-to-date info about women in Alberta over the 'phone?

Do you sometimes feel 'guilty' because you don't have time to go to meetings, and feel you are irrelevant to what's happening in the women's movement?

 -----
Name

Phone-home (best times to call?)

-work (if o.k. to use it and best times to call)

WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CRISIS

Exciting workshop in Peace R.

I was at an exciting workshop in Peace River on May 11th. Its title was "A Regional Approach For Women and Children in Crisis" and it was jointly sponsored by Odyssey House (battered women's shelter) in Grande Prairie and Community Services in Peace River. There were seventy people present from twenty-four communities, many from really small communities in the Peace River region.

We were there to look at ways in which we could maximise our resources for working with women and children in crisis. A map of Alberta with shelters marked on it showed that the North West region of the province has fewer shelters (one) than any other region, though there are groups working on establishing shelters in Whitcourt and Hinton. The

people at the workshop - agency people, volunteers and "just plain folks" had experienced some frustration at the lack of coordination of services when they tried to help women and children in crisis.



We worked hard in two small group sessions: firstly, to identify the most crucial areas of concern and, secondly, to develop approaches to the identified problems. Different groups dealt with these subjects: counselling and treatment for victims, offenders

and children; safe accommodation, public education, and training for professionals and volunteers, interagency liaison; a regional crisis network - with a crisis phone number and a safe transportation network; legal concerns and the possible establishment of a crisis centre in Peace River.

I found this workshop quite remarkable in its multifaceted approach and I'm excited by the breadth of response and the level of commitment from all kinds of people from the north west region. I believe we can all learn from the approach taken by Odyssey House and Community Services, and I will gladly share with any of you the materials which came out of the workshop. Please contact me if you would like this.

Mair Smith

The wifebeater bats — what also happened

You may have missed it if you were on your annual retreat in the Antarctic, but it's likely that you heard about a successful "action" taken by two ASWAC members to get an offensive toy removed from the downtown Woodward's Store in Edmonton.

As one of those people, I'm going to use this opportunity to tell it like we saw it and also to do some analysis on why it was so successful and so high profile.

Contrary to media impressions, Meaghan and I did not spot the wife-beater bats first. A man from CBC's A.M. called and told us about them and wanted to interview us at Woodward's and then to go with us to protest to the manager. Well, it was a quiet day, so...

We found the bats in the new Impulse section of the store. That's the trendy place--stickers, party favors, cards, etc. We found some other things too that were removed from the shelves--a fact largely ignored by the media. A card with a photograph of a sheriff's badge supposedly pinned on a naked female breast. A whole rack of jokey drawing/coloring/dot-to-dot books. For example, the Adult Connect-A-Dot book "moral majority edition, 50 percent less filth" which contained a mixture of "fairy tale" scenes (eg. Snow White being held, legs spread, by some of the seven dwarfs, while others gleefully open a jar of petroleum jelly) and male fantasy cartoons depicting bestiality, sexual harassment, bondage, etc. The other book was "How to Draw Dirty Pictures", that included a blank face with the caption "draw in the virgin's scared face". Meaghan and I found the books as disturbing as the wife-beater bats--cheap yellow foam rubber with "wife beater" and "love whacker" in large letters on them. Although we carried them around the store to show to various levels of managers, the focus was on the bats.

Then we started the process of finding a person who cared to listen to our concerns and who

was in a position to make decisions. We finally ended up in the cool 5th floor office of Phil Horne, a merchandising manager. He was very cool while we were there, but he turned up in the Impulse department with two other men, including the store manager, less than five minutes after we left his office. He called CBC and us later that afternoon to tell us the bats and other items had been withdrawn. Well, we expected a short local blurb on Edmonton A.M. and were amazed to find we were on the CBC national news and the whole thing was being treated as a big deal. It was neat to be able to say some of the things we wanted to say and to be heard, but we were left feeling quite weird about the disproportionate amount of interest the incident received.

Why, when we women protesting pornography have been ignored over and over and over again, does this action get so much media attention? Why was the focus on the bats and not the books or cards? Why such a swift action on the part of Woodward's? I think the answers have to do with the role of CBC and the presence of the reporter. He was young and enthusiastic (and male) and very excited by the prospect of doing some "social action". (He told me next day--"I feel like Eddie Keehn. I think I'm going bald!") His presence, with his tape recorder lent an air of urgency to the discussions we had with the guys (a good strategy point for future actions?) And we were not protesting pornography, which is really hard for the media to handle because censorship always lurks around the corners of that one and the media are scared shitless of censorship. No wonder the books didn't get much attention. And, of course, Woodward's works hard to maintain its "family" image--it's magazine section is the cleanest in town, so the presence of CBC at such an embarrassing moment would serve to cause some action immediately.

And, of course, it's a simple clear message that we were putting across--loved by the media who often find our stuff too complex.

Mair

It has various names - the Fiscal Autonomy Project, the Survival Project, Thinktanking, Hearings (reclaiming the word to denote a situation in which we actually hear each other) but it's the concept behind ASWAC's major project this year that I want to try and explain here.

It's coming from two places - from the need we see when looking around us for women to break through the cage of poverty; to use all the resources we have to join together to do our essential work - and from the need you express often, but never more clearly than at the ASWAC assembly in November, for more of us to be involved in the ongoing work that ASWAC is doing to carve out a place for women in Alberta. And it's happening within the context of shared work, decentralization and valuing each woman's choices which has characterized the work of this store and the last.

If all goes according to plan; most of our members living in Alberta will be invited to a "think tank" session in her area to discuss the relationship between the work we do as feminists, and money. So far such meetings have happened in Calgary, Grande Prairie and Red Deer; one is planned for Lethbridge on June 6th. This is a preliminary round - we hope the sessions will be open ended and broadly based - during which we are trusting that our creativity and commitment will produce some trends, some common threads in our thinking. Then, when we have all 'heard' each other, the store will attempt to bring those trends into the foreground and take them on the road again for more sharing, refinement and, hopefully, some action and strategies which will help us all in our women's work.

How are we going to share in this work as it proceeds? Do you have thoughts to share? One way to start would be to send for Marilyn Guille's discussion paper 'To Fund or Not to Fund' which she introduced in the last newsletter - send for it, read it, discuss it, give us some feedback. Another is to take part in one of the 'think tank' sessions - besides those mentioned, Edmonton and Fort McMurray will also be having them, but if you want such a discussion to happen in your own community, or around your kitchen table, or whatever - let us know! Call us or write us - Box 1573, Edmonton, or 424-3073. \$1 will cover costs of copying and mailing the discussion paper.

Mair Smith

Some thoughts around our power

Dear ASWAC

I was moved by Monica Albanese's letter about the abortion issue in the last issue of the newsletter - moved by what she said but even more moved by her courage in having said it. Monica has given me the courage to try to write some of my complex and ambivalent thoughts about abortion.

It's scary for me, because I'm an employee, a founding mother and an active member of an organization which has a clear, official, 'pro-choice' stand. I voted for that stand back in 1978, and I stand behind my decision to do so, but that isn't all that I have to say on the matter!

I've been thinking a lot about that word, 'choice'. It's a beautiful word, and its extension, the rallying cry 'A woman's right to choose' probably encapsulates all about feminism which motivates me and drives me to total commitment. I want real choice for women, and I want women to take the 'right' to choose and turn it into the 'power' to choose, and the action of choosing. I don't believe that the polarized 'pro-life pro-choice' debate allows for the breadth of choice I'm working for.

The decision about unwanted pregnancy seems at present to rest between 3 points - the bearing of an unwanted child, the use of ugly and dangerous birth-control methods, and abortion - legal or illegal, with all its implications. Realizing this, we talk about the need for more and better sex-education, which too often seems to be limited to information about the ugly and dangerous birth control methods, and the 'dangers' of sex, - VD and unwanted pregnancy.

A whole new season ...

Dear Stoard

A sunny, spring day. Am sitting here at my work table, looking out the window at the fields and the baby leaves who are thinking it's finally safe to peek out into the world. Am also reading the most recent newsletter, for a second or third time. To jot down dates, read about the Stoard and her work. All the newsletters are great and this one is the same.

If we believe that wanted children are a blessing; that bearing and raising them is probably some of the most important work in the world; that the bearing of an unwanted child is a tragedy for the child, the mother and society; that lovemaking is a healing act in a hating world; that women, men and children must have the right and the power to choose their destiny - there have to be some more options. I want to briefly describe some starting points, and hope that you will add to them.

One of the choices we have is to become more in tune with our bodies; to learn the signs that tell us we are fertile. This is a vital piece of information in the quest for the bearing of wanted children only. Some women have this knowledge today; most of us do not, but I believe that it can be gained through awareness of ourselves. I'm not talking about relying on a thermometer only - that's a tool - but on relying on ourselves and our deepening knowledge of ourselves. The wholistic, preventive health movement has much to offer in this quest, and there are healers in growing numbers to help us do this.

Irregular cycles are a serious setback in this kind of work. I believe we can learn from our ancient foremothers, who it appears, menstruated in unison, and according to the phases of the moon. The practice of lunaception is an attempt to recreate the conditions for a regular 28 day cycle in a world where the moon is blocked by our streetlights and our houselights.

But, the biggest piece of taking the power to choose is in taking the power to understand and value our own sexuality. A friend who

had conceived the night she knew she was fertile, and who felt sad and guilty about her subsequent abortion, said "but I was drunk and horny: what else could I do?" We talked about the fact that she, like all of us, knows full well what else she could have done, but that we have so limited our range of sexual behaviour that heterosexual intercourse is seen as the only 'real' sexual activity, and must happen on each occasion, fertile, protected or not. I believe that we women can choose other, satisfying forms of sexual expression, and must take the power to insist on those choices if we know we are fertile and don't wish to become pregnant.

It's scary, isn't it? I believe that very few of us are actually taking that power with our husbands and lovers, good feminists that we are. Maybe, like my friend, we don't even know that we have that power. We have been given some very strong messages about sex; about how we are supposed to be; about what sexual behaviours are 'right'; about men's needs. We haven't given equal time to our own needs, or the needs of our wanted and unwanted children. For many of us, learning about those new needs in close proximity to a lover will be almost impossible - the old lessons will be reinforced so strongly. We have some choices about what to do with this situation, too.

Our fights against rape and incest are part of the struggle to gain power over our own sexuality. However, if we focus entirely on the 'victim' as someone outside ourselves we are missing the main point - that patriarchy has decided that men own women's sexuality and that we are not supposed to question that.

Likewise, our fights for safe, legal abortions often focus on the needs of women other than ourselves. Some of us have had personal experience with abortion which brings us into the fight; for many others it seems to be a question of 'justice', 'rights' in the abstract. Nothing wrong with that, but I believe that we also must 'live' the power that those rights give us - visibly, so we can model a powerful breed of women who will be genuinely 'pro-life'.

Mair Smith

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New twist in ASWAC budget saga

The past two months have been "budget time" again for ASWAC -- the time when we make a grant application to Secretary of State Women's Program to help with our operating expenses for the 1984-85 fiscal year. This year we have requested \$84,839.

ASWAC received verbal notification at the May 5/6 stoard meeting that Women's Program is considering granting ASWAC \$75,000 of which \$50,000 is basic operational grant and \$25,000 is supplementary grant. However, there is a condition attached to receiving the additional \$25,000 that puts ASWAC in a position unprecedented for Alberta women's groups.

The condition is that \$10,000 of the supplementary \$25,000 must be used to carry out a third party evaluation of ASWAC. The results of this evaluation--what Women's Program calls a "social audit"--will determine whether ASWAC receives the remaining supplementary \$15,000. It is unclear at this point whether the results of the evaluation would have an effect on ASWAC's getting the entire \$50,000 operating grant.

Karen Schwartz, Secretary of State Women's Program field worker for Northern Alberta, attended the May 5-6 stoard meeting to explain the proposal, field questions and listen to stoard feedback on it.

Exactly how the evaluation is to be done is still very much open to negotiation, says Karen. However, it must be done by a third party which is neither Secretary of State or ASWAC. Its general purpose, she adds, is to give Women's Program a clearer idea of what ASWAC does. "...We're not sure what ASWAC is doing and we're not sure of the value for our dollar." she says. "There's a lot of positive feedback in the community and there's a lot of negative feedback in the community." Women's Program wants to know what, if anything, has changed for ASWAC over the eight years the Women's Program has been providing funding.

From its beginnings in 1976, ASWAC has received the bulk of its funding from Women's Program. In 1979 there was a significant increase in the funding in order to provide for an office and

salariated staff.

The demand by Women's Program for an evaluation of an Alberta women's group is unprecedented. The decision to seek an evaluation was made during a 10-minute discussion of the ASWAC grant application at a recent meeting of Women's Program directors and staff. The meeting included Karen, the former regional director and his replacement, Mark Arnell. Details around how, when and why the evaluation is to take place are still to be worked out in consultation with ASWAC, says Karen, but the general decision is that there must be an evaluation before ASWAC can receive the supplementary funding.

The bulk of the ASWAC stoard's comments focused on the implications of demanding an evaluation and the implications of who makes the decisions about ASWAC based on the evaluation results. The general feeling is that Secretary of State Women's Programs demands for an evaluation at this time is not a politically simple situation.

"I'm pretty responsive to an evaluation and I think it could be pretty useful to ASWAC, depending on what kind of an evaluation is done," says stoard member Debra Carnat. "But I guess I do want to know before we start whether the bottom line is 'you do what we, Secretary of State thinks you should be doing or you get your funding cut regardless of whether your membership supports what you're doing'."

"There is a danger in freezing it (ASWAC) in time," points out an ASWAC member who attended the meeting. "Certainly there are members of ASWAC right now who do not agree--three years ago there were members of ASWAC who did not agree" but now they do because they've changed, their lives have changed, ASWAC has changed. "Who gets to decide what is a fair evaluation? Is there any way

that you could get any kind of feminist analysis into an evaluation, because there is no way ... women will win if government does the normal kind of evaluation that it does."

There cannot be a fair, accurate, constructive evaluation if ASWAC's surface structure is taken and dealt with as it's evaluated, says stoard member Marilyn Assheton-Smith. Whether it is done through feminist analysis or whatever, the underlying factors must be addressed when the evaluation is set up. Negotiation around this is crucial, she says.

"The cards are stacked and I think it's really important to be honest and say the cards are stacked," says Ardelle Dudley, another ASWAC member attending the meeting. "And if we can possibly work within that reality, then maybe something can come out of it. But I believe that as a member of this organization it will take me a little while to think about how I feel about working within that reality of a stacked deck. And I would certainly not be going into any kind of negotiating process where that wasn't acknowledged right from the beginning. And let's not play any games with each other and let's not pretend that this is just some simple little process."

Karen emphasized that there is a lot of room for negotiation and that the new Women's Program regional director is open to listening to women's concerns.

The stoard discussion was a lengthy and far-reaching one. However, the basic decision was to hold off on any further work around the matter until Women's Program had notified ASWAC of its decision in writing. Because this is a precedent it was felt it is very important there be very clear official notification from Women's Program to ASWAC, so ASWAC can make a clear response

cont'd p. 13



Nick Hollander

Taking issue with issues

The following is an excerpt from our report to the Secretary of State, Women's Program for the 1983/84 fiscal year. The report was written by several members of the board but this particular part was written by Marilyn Assheton-Smith.

There is, as our name implies, one issue which concerns us: the status of women in Alberta (and by implication Canada and other societies). We consider it an issue because we believe that status is problematic and can be changed. Although there is infinite variety in our exact position on the issue, we generally accept feminist theory as explaining the present status of women and we generally believe that current relations of power and dominance between men and women need to change dramatically to resolve "the issue". By implication, we accept a socio-cultural or socio-structural analysis and a change-focus oriented to socio-cultural factors - beyond these basic arguments we diverge on many specifics, both analytical and strategic. As feminists we seek to keep our diverse orientation working on changing the status of women, and not simply disappearing in factional disputes. But like any social change group we are not always successful.

All other "issues", as phenomena or events which we believe are problematic and can be changed, are tied to our larger issue, the status of women. In fact, in discussion we may come to the conclusion that they are inextricably tied, that this issue cannot be changed until the relations of dominance are changed, so that a great deal of time and energy addressing that issue is futile. Or we may decide that they probably can't be changed but that the pain of particular women in the situation is too great for us to ignore. Or we may decide that they can be changed but not with the resources at our disposal, or not now, and so on. But we do "know" that this linkage to the overall structural problems means we cannot address each issue as if it stood alone, as if it involved "merely" changing a law or a store-keeper's behaviour for example. Whatever the issue, whatever the action, we must contextualize it in the whole.

Add to this complexity the fact that "issues" may well not be defined by us at all, but by media-hype, or by various agencies and institutions. These "issues" may have long-lasting implications, or they may just be the hot topic of the day. Do we respond, react, take on that issues as our own? Our basic answer is no, or usually no, for many reasons. First, such issues bombard us, demand that we have the attention span of a child flying from problem to problem. Secondly, our approach to issue-work is to ground that work in our knowledge and analysis - we cannot do that at the drop of a hat and if we spend time understanding the current hot issue it will be out of style by the time we have a clear grasp of it. Finally, such reactive work takes our energy and attention from the issues we have identified, leaving vital work unattended. However, we do occasionally take on such issues, especially if we are already working on them or if our work through the years makes it possible to develop a fairly quick response to them. Otherwise, they are ignored, but not as a hostile act. They are ignored as a pragmatic and logical necessity. If the pragmatic and logic of the situation permits us to address an issue related to the status of women but raised elsewhere, we will of course address it.

It follows from the above discussion that our action may not be demonstrations or presentations of briefs or any "act" which focusses media and public attention on us.

Actions may be the hard talking that goes into understanding a women's issue and its relationship to other women's issues and the overall issue of the status of women. It may be meeting and talking to share our understanding with other women. It may be refusing to act on this issue, so time is free for other issues. It may also, of course, be a public demonstration or presentation of a brief, but the question applied to any particular action or "tactic" is - will this likely contribute toward change? toward change in directions we consider appropriate? toward change in the status of women? The pragmatic question of whether or not we have the resources to carry out the action occurs only if the answer to the above question is yes, but even

then we may realize, regretfully, we do not have the resources for particular action and to do it partially would create a worse situation. So, the action is forfeited.

Well, it is a brief discussion, but given this context what specific issues did we address and act upon this past year? The time period involved covers part of the terms of two boards and there are changes from board to board, but we will highlight a few issues from each board. If we were to take a single phrase to cover most issues it would likely be violence against women; symbolic violence in pornography, institutional violence in the judicial and medical systems, interpersonal violence in rape and battery and war, and a less sharply defined structural violence which applies financial pressure to single mothers who are students, or women on welfare, or older women on pensions, or simply women in the labour force. Our actions have sometimes been supportive of action taken against such violence, such as women's peace camps, protesting First Choice TV, protesting judicial decisions which blame the women as victim (eg. Judge McGillivray), protesting medical inattention to rape victims, or supporting women who seek freedom for women on the abortion issue...

...Out of the efforts and actions has also come an analysis of structural violence and our attempts to create an internal ASWAC structure which will not recreate in a new form the problem of the larger social situation. At the end of the 1983/84 fiscal year we have started to meet with women in the province to discuss the resource-base of women's groups, the structure problems of hierarchy as they relate to that, and the strengthening of our support to each other. Perhaps the most widespread structural violence is the loneliness women express throughout Alberta; addressing that is not simply taking action but slowly building relations which will enable actions to be accomplished. It is a task we share with many women's groups from one end of Alberta to the other, but it is a task which always seems just begun!

ABOUT NICARAGUA

United Church representatives were proud to present Ligia Vigil with \$5,000 and a great big pink paper mache piggy to help develop a hog co-operative in Nicaragua. Vigil, representative for the Nicaraguan foreign aid organization, Fundacion Augusto Cesar Sandino, also received \$18,000 to build a school in Solentiname and \$5,000 for a health clinic in Dario. Both presentations were raised in the community by Alberta Change for Children. The fundraising is part of growing

support across Canada for peaceful development in Nicaragua. More and more Canadians are questioning U.S. President Ronald Reagan's rationale for supporting the CIA-backed war against Nicaragua. Instead of a "communist threat", they see a poor people, struggling to establish land reform, housing, health programs, educational opportunities. Nicaragua has organized elections for this November a year ahead of its original date. They will not be getting the \$10 million the United States gave El Salvador for its "elections".



WE CAN DO MORE: Tools For Peace

A major organization, Tools For Peace, Coalition for Aid to Nicaragua (CAN), has been set up in Edmonton to solicit the many items and supplies Nicaragua needs for development. Since Reagan took office, the country has been cut off from American aid. Last year Tools For Peace sent \$1 million worth of material by ship from Vancouver. The Edmonton committee is aiming at contributing \$75,000. Vigil informed us that priority items needed are:

- * Tools
- * School Supplies - pencils, pens, paper, chalk, desks, blackboards, stationery, etc.
- * Medical Supplies - hospital beds, x-ray machines, bandages, money to buy medications ...
- * Office Supplies - furniture, typewriters, filing cabinets, staplers, etc.
- * Farm Equipment
- * Audio-visual Equipment - betamax tapes, videotape recorders, TVs, radios, etc.
- * Toys

In fact 12 Alberta farmers believe enough in what is happening in Nicaragua to visit the country in January and spend two months there teaching farmers machinery repair. If the boat leaves this November, says Vigil, it will get to Nicaragua with toys before Christmas. She points out that in some day-cares there is one toy for 90 children, and it is kept on a shelf for them to look at only.

Tax Deductible

The Edmonton committee has use of the Fransiscan Friary for storage and is still looking for warehouse space to store larger donations, such as tractors, vehicles, etc. Donations will be assessed for monetary value and donators will be issued tax receipts through OXFAM for tax deductions. Monetary donations are also very welcome. The committee will organize pick-ups of any items people wish to donate.

Educational Resources

There are several things people can do in their workplace or community:

- . You can join the Coalition For Aid to Nicaragua. We meet regularly and will be working on the project throughout the summer and fall. If interested, phone Tillie at 424-1557.
- . Hold an educational to inform people about what is going on before you ask them to donate. Through the Edmonton Learner Centre, 424-4371, you can request speakers who have been to Nicaragua. The Centre has a supply of excellent films and slide-shows on Nicaragua as well as an abundance of written material.
- . Adopt a project in Nicaragua. Tools For Peace have lists of schools, co-operatives, and other projects and what material goods they need.

For further information on how you can help, or if you have material to donate, phone 424-1557 - or fill out this form.

YES! I can help Nicaragua's people. I can help with:

- material goods
- a financial donation
- my time and energy
- other (space, transport)

Name:
Phone:
Address:
Details of what I can offer

Send to Tools For Peace, c/o
10765 98 St., Edmonton T5H 2P2

... a plea for support



About 100 Edmontonians were treated to a first-hand description of what is happening in Nicaragua by Ligia Vigil at a special meeting May 9 sponsored by Change for Children and the Ukrainian Canadian Committee. Vigil represents the foreign aid organization "Fundacion Augusto Cesar Sandino" and is responsible for all foreign aid from the Americas and Australia. She was visiting Edmonton as part of a cross Canada tour.

Vigil made a plea for moral as well as material support for Nicaragua. This small Central American country has been attempting to build its revolution after ridding the country in 1979 of the military dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. As the Sandinistas claimed victory, Somoza fled Nicaragua, taking with him \$1.6 billion, almost the entire treasury.

The Sandinista government immediately began the task of the revo-

lution which was to direct its resources to the poor, over 50% of the population. Literacy campaigns reduced illiteracy from 50% to 13%. The revolution organized massive land reform, giving land to individuals, co-operatives and state agricultural projects. With meagre funding and supplies the country has been establishing health programs and clinics for rural areas and has launched major housing construction programs.

... anger fuels personal commitment

I joined Tools for Peace, Canadian Aid to Nicaragua primarily out of anger. And everytime I read the newspapers or watch T.V. and hear Ronald Reagan say that all the United States wants is for Nicaragua to stop exporting weapons and violence to Central America my anger is fed.

My anger is fed not only because Ronald Reagan is lying to his people and the world, but also because the United States is doing exactly what it says it abhors in Nicaragua and El Salvador. It has turned one of the poorest countries in Central America, Honduras, into a military camp. And from Honduras it is exporting violence by funding Somoza National Guardsmen to attack Nicaragua. By seeking a military, rather than a political solution in Central America, it is destroying whatever steps toward democracy the poor in these countries are taking. So far there has been not one shred of evidence that Nicaragua has sent any weapons to El Salvador. And it makes sense. Nicaragua has barely enough arms to protect itself from U.S. funded "contra" attacks. The country has been devastated in the last decade by earthquakes, hurricanes, a revolution that took thousands of lives. Where do the Salvadoran guerillas get their weapons? From the U.S., taken from victories won over the Salvadoran army which has been equipped by the U.S. government. We have just heard on the news that the U.S. is pouring \$125 million of military aid into El Salvador this year and \$256 million next year. With all the aid they've given in the past, why isn't the El Salvador army winning? Why didn't the armies of South Vietnam win 10 years ago - with all the napalm, and village burning and U.S. troops? Because armies, which take away civilians in the middle of the night, are

This remarkable progress has been severely interrupted by "contra" attacks. The "contras" are made up of thousands of the Somoza National Guard that the Sandinista government generously released after the revolution and the abolition of the death penalty. Set up in camps throughout Honduras and Costa Rica, countries bordering Nicaragua, the contras are funded, trained and equipped by the CIA in the U.S. "covert" war against Nicaragua.

not supported by the people. Neither are corrupt governments that are controlled by a few families who hoard all the country's wealth.

My anger is fed when I hear Ligia Vigil speak. The woman handles all foreign aid that goes to Nicaragua from the Americas and Australia. Her face is drawn after her cross country tour, but her dark eyes show a quiet fight. A fight that has had to endure months of indignities - the United States mining Nicaraguan ports, "contras" fed, housed and equipped by the United States in Honduras, bombing Nicaragua's oil facilities, kidnapping village men. But in the midst of these attacks, this devastation, the Central American country of only two million people is making a case to the world - not only to government officials, but to ordinary people, teachers, church members, students, civil servants, to help the country grow through peaceful development. The Nicaraguan revolution is a model all right - a mixture of socialism, Christianity, nationalism and private ownership. It is unique to the country, an attempt to better the lives of the majority of the population who are poor. It could be a model of third world development, which, to work, must wrest economic, political and military control over its affairs from the superpowers. The entire Nicaraguan population is now armed against U.S. or U.S.-backed Honduran invasion. Are we to believe that every man, woman and child in Nicaragua must be killed by these forces to save Nicaragua "for democracy". To save Nicaragua from the Cuba or Soviet "threat"? Where is this threat? Vigil spoke of the Cuban doctors that were in Nicaragua and that were sent back to Cuba to appease the United States. "If

In the past six months, the contras have blown up major oil supplies, destroyed daycare centres, sabotaged food harvests, kidnapped and killed people and mined Nicaraguan ports. When the oil tanks were attacked in the port town of Corinto, says Vigil, the country had to spend its precious resources moving 28,000 people. Although France and Canada offered to clean up the mines in the ports, so far it's only Nicaraguans who are doing the work. Lacking sophisticated equipment, they are simply activating the mines, and trying to get away in their small wooden boats before the mines go off.

you are a mother with a dying child and you need that doctor, you don't care what the doctor's politics are."

Nicaragua is accepting aid from any country that will give it, including the United States which according to Vigil is organizing its own Tools for Peace ship this fall. I am happy that there is such an organization in Edmonton, an organization we can support to show our moral and material solidarity with Nicaragua.

Sara Berger



In the question period, Vigil explained the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 for the upcoming November elections. The young people demanded it. They have risked their lives to go out to the border areas near Honduras and help harvest the coffee and the cotton crops. "If they can work and die for the revolution, they have the right to vote." She also discussed the accusation that Nicaragua was exporting revolution. "In my personal opinion", she said, "I think there is nothing wrong with exporting revolution." She explained that she did not mean guns, but the ideas in her country and the example it set. For the first time in 70 years of military rule and U.S. invasions, Nicaragua has been able to enhance the lives of the poor, through peaceful development and self-determination.

Sara Berger

N.W.T women protest ruling

Northwest Territories women would welcome Alberta women's help with their attempts to change the sexist attitudes and lenient sentences being dished out by Territories judges in cases involving violence against women.

The NWT Women's Bureau, the NWT Native Women's Association and other women's groups are deeply concerned about the increasing trend by NWT judges toward giving light sentences to native men charged with crimes involving violence against women and children on the grounds that such behavior is part of the native culture.

The most recent case involved three men being sentenced to one week in jail by Territorial Court Judge Michel Bourassa for raping a 13-year-old girl. The three had been charged with having intercourse with a female under the age of 14--a crime punishable by up to life imprisonment under the Criminal Code. In passing sentence the judge noted the men are "a credit to their community" and while they recognized the illegality of their act, they did not consider it wrong and were "living their lives in a normal acceptable fashion in the way life is lived in the High Arctic".

Sheila Keat, director of the NWT Women's Bureau, says this is not the only case in which this has happened, but that it is part of a trend. Light sentences are also being passed on native men who beat their wives or physically and sexually abuse children, using the justification that it is part of the native culture. Sheila says the courts are institutionalizing crimes that have never been widely accepted in any native community in the north.

The Women's Bureau and other women's groups are making the issue a priority and are organizing action around letting the Territories judiciary know that this trend is not acceptable. So far the department of justice has said it is not going to be influenced by public opinion. One northern judge described the women's concerns around the situation as a "fad", says Sheila.

An appeal has been filed in the case of the 13-year-old Yellowknife girl. Further details about the appeal will be given as they arise in future newsletters.

It is hoped Alberta women will help by writing letters expressing their concerns, opinions, etc. to:

Minister of Justice
Richard Nerysoo
Department of Justice
Government of NWT

Yellowknife, NWT

With copies to:

-Deputy minister of justice
(same address as above)
-Sheila Keat, director
Women's Bureau
Government of NWT
Yellowknife, NWT

Meaghan Dean
and
Marilyn Guille

Here we go again ...

The Honorable Mark MacGuigan
Minister of Justice
Attorney General of Canada
Ottawa, Ont.

Mr. MacGuigan:

Well, the "judges" out here in the West are at it again! (Not that the "judges" in the East have any better record.)

I refer to the recent rulings on rape and battery passed down by the revered and honorable judges Bourassa and MacGillivray.

I am filled with disgust and contempt for these two men, these two stalwart pillars of our "justice" system, these Protectors of Rights (whose rights, one has to wonder). Bourassa tells us that it is all right for "upstanding" elders in the native community to gang-bang/rape a 13-year-old girl because the "culture" of which they are a part allows it. And MacGillivray (our constant shining light from Alberta) reduces the thirty-day sentence of a batterer and tells him it is all right that he beat his wife because, in the Court's opinion, she was/is a "shrew" anyway: "he did not intend the injury-- he was extremely provoked."

This garbage, this institutional violence against women continues and worsens. The judgements of these two men are grounds for their impeachment, for their forcible removal from the bench. There is no "justice" for girls and women in this stacked system of male authority, morality and privilege. Could anything be clearer when seeing these two cases before us?

Women are sick and tired of the travesty of justice which surrounds us. We are angry and enraged about the violence perpetuated against us through the systems and institutions in which we are told, directed, to place our faith.

When we express, communicate our doubt and disillusionment with these lies, we are met with useless and empty justification, absurd explanation, predictable double-talk and arrogant authority from those "in charge".

Today, writing this letter, I question whether or not it is worth registering my objections-- one more time in a long line of many times! Repetition after repetition of this kind of double-jeopardy violence from rapists, batterers, and the Courts continue. We move closer and closer to that hard place of unyielding cynicism, anger and revenge. We come closer and closer to the realization that we will soon have very little to lose. Then, we will abandon the system's reason, objectivity; we will quit negotiating and begging. And we will fight back, doing what we must.

It is not for the man's violent structure that I write this letter. This letter is written as a memorial and is offered as support to all women. This is a "let's go at it one more time" message for women who, like me, are tired. Are disgusted. Are angry. And are without any faith that we will ever be heard, but by each other. Which, in the end, is enough.
Ardelle Dudley
Women's Counselling
Services of Edmon.

Long overdue for a change

By Minnie Aodla Freeman
Indian Rights for Indian Women

I want to comment very briefly about the events that have taken place concerning non-status women in Canada. Their situation is long overdue for change, especially in this day and age when all the other discriminating laws are being corrected.

While putting aside all the other political bargains of two governments, I would like to express myself in the context of human values and with the view of looking ahead to the future.

The future is always there, it's always coming at us. Therefore, it is only just to normalize the future of the children and grandchildren's futures.

The estimated 60,000 non-status Indians, I'm sure, are not going to gallop back to the reservations. People seem to forget that a lot of these people have made their own roots and have settled where they are. But what happens in

the minds of young children who have to find out sooner or later that their grandmother, grandfather, uncles and aunts have certain rights and they don't? Why should these children be made to feel inferior or different?

The irony of Canada's first citizens remaining outside of the law, the law that guarantees the equality of all Canadians, really puts a lot of questions in the minds of outsiders.

Clear cont'd.

to it. The stoard expects this letter will spell out clearly what Women's Program's decisions are, who exactly is making them, the purpose of the decisions and what it expects to do with the evaluation. Karen says she will pass this request along to the regional director.

If the evaluation does take place, ASWAC's membership will be expected to be very much involved. It is important that everyone keep as well informed as possible as the planning and negotiating around the evaluation unfold. Copies of the full transcript of the discussion between the ASWAC stoard and Karen Schwartz of Women's Program on May 5 are available from the ASWAC office. A \$2 donation to help with copying and postage costs would be appreciated.

Meaghan Dean

Sec. cont'd.

are not "under" or part of the Secretariat itself. They were created at the same time as part of what Johnston says is the government's "two-pronged approach to women's issues...". The two committees are to play a "complementary" role in relation to the Secretariat, ie. facilitate the co-ordinating, co-operative functions of the Secretariat.

For now, the main link between the two committees and the Secretariat is Sheila Wynn.

Meaghan Dean

Health workshops in Fall

As announced in the last newsletter women from the Vancouver Women's Health Collective will be visiting Alberta to present workshops on women's health issues.

We now have dates. They'll be in Calgary on Sept. 15 and 16 and in Edmonton Sept. 18 and 19.

In Calgary they are being hosted by the Calgary Women's Health Collective and will be giving workshops on cervical and vaginal health and DES on Sept. 15. In Edmonton they will be doing a workshop on PMS on Sept. 18 and the ASWAC office is the contact point.

These workshops will give information about the issues, but more

importantly will help women to organize around health issues. Women who have been thinking about the need for a women's health collective in Edmonton are invited to help organize the Edmonton workshop and/or to make themselves known to the ASWAC office.



Excited about cont'd.

One thing strikes me as I read and become a part of your/our process -- in relation to the discussions we used to have last year about "Who and what is the membership of ASWAC?" I am aware that I am relying on all of you - not to do women's work for me (I do all of that for myself and others all the time). Rather, I rely on all of you to be there -- to know that I'm not alone. I know that at any time I can call or write my thoughts (as I am doing now) and that there will be an identifiable group of women, with names, bodies and hearts who I know and who know me as one of your own. You are all very real to me. You provide me with a choice -- the choice to not be isolated, the choice to be a part of a community of women who understand and support each other,

even without constant contact. I don't feel that way right now about Dick Johnston's Women's Secretariat, for example. That is not to be critical of any of the women who are and will be involved in the Secretariat. It means, however, that the government's idea of what women need and want is not the same as mine, at all. The government takes away and limits and controls my choices -- the Stoard does the opposite.

Thanks for being there and for doing our work. Thanks for keeping alive the options and the openness for me and for all women. See you on May 5.

In spirit,
Ardelle Dudley
Edmonton

What it's like to live there

I wish to share with you some thoughts, feelings, and information arising out of an event sponsored by the Women's Disarmament Campaign in Edmonton recently. On March 28 we invited Vye Bouvier, a Metis feminist and journalist from Ile a la Crosse in northern Saskatchewan to speak on "Native Peoples and the Nuclear North". Given her heritage (Cree and French roots) the location of her home, and her feminist perspective, we considered it important for us and others to hear Vye's personal views, and feelings on the Primrose Lake Bombing Range, the uranium mining industry and the impacts of both on her and her community and the land in the surrounding area.

Vye first set the mood of the evening by sharing with her audience slides of her home, her friends and family and that area of Saskatchewan of which she is so much a part, and which has so shaped her life. Once in 'tune' with her visual and cultural environment we then listened as she very casually spoke about her work and her involvement with her people in challenging the injustices inherent in government and industry. She was a key organizer in establishing the Northern Camp for Ecology in January of this year at the Pinehouse turnoff of the Key Lake Uranium Mine. A reservoir of this mine burst and spilled 100 million litres of radium contaminated water in early January.

She is one of a small, but committed group of people in her area who engage in political work in terms of education and action in northern Saskatchewan.

Her work as a journalist (she speaks fluent Cree and English) facilitated an investigation by her into the Metis peoples unrecognized aboriginal rights to the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Testing Range, situated more or less on the doorstep of her community. That investigation appeared as a lengthy feature article last year in the "New Breed Journal" for which she writes feature articles on an ongoing basis.

For those of us who met at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre to hear Vye that evening, I believe her warm, and very personable presentation helped to further our understanding of the implications that the land use and



PHOTO CREDIT Lotne Cardinal, AMNISA

activities of the military and the nuclear mining industry have not only for the local residents, but for those of us in the province next door, and the millions of us who share this planet together.

I perceive the feminist analysis as a very holistic approach bringing together both the personal and political elements of our lives. I found Vye's presentation to be very holistic oriented and as such, it gave me strength, through knowledge and understanding, and I left feeling challenged, a tiny bit overwhelmed, but nonetheless hopeful. Vye shared much of herself - her positive energy, her skills of communication and analysis, and I was once again glad to experience another woman empowered by her talents and skills, committed to social and economic justice, active in her community, and a feminist!

Laurie Ankenman

Cleaning up their acts

On April 17, 1985, Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms comes into effect. This section deals with equality rights and was delayed because the provincial and federal governments said they required three years to review and clean up their laws.

If the changes that women want made in legislation are made prior to April 17 much money can be saved. Although we will surely have to fight some major battles in the courts (ie. equal pay for work of equal worth), court challenges are tremendously expensive.

Nancy Jackman, a Toronto member of the Charter of Rights Coalition, addressed these issues to representatives of women's groups recently when she was in Edmonton and Calgary. The Coalition is urging women across the country to monitor their governments' 'audit and clean-up' and put pressure on the governments for real change. The coalition would like to see a conference on the Charter held in every major Canadian city on the October 19/20/21 weekend which is the anniversary of the famous persons case. The conferences would increase the profile of women's

legal in/equality and lend strength to a government lobby effort.

A slide-tape show is available that does a very good job of covering our current status with the Charter as well as the battle that women fought to get equality rights included in the first place. The package is available in Edmonton from Sandy Susut, U. of A. Women's Program, 432-3093. ASWAC is seriously considering purchasing a copy to "take on the road". The package costs \$400 to buy, \$20 to rent.

At the Edmonton meeting we were unsure what the outcome of the meeting in Calgary would be so, with the possibility of building a provincial coalition, organizing a central conference, a series of conferences/workshops around the province (or many other possibilities), we set a date for another meeting. If you're interested in following up on this, get in touch with Sandy Susut or Ardelle Dudley, 998-1740,

Stay tuned for more information about this in the next newsletter - it really IS interesting and important stuff!

Frances Adams

Native women and justice

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies is presenting a conference on "THE PROBLEMS OF NATIVE WOMEN IN SOCIETY". It will be held Friday, June 8 at the Main Library in Edmonton from 9 a.m. to noon, with a luncheon provided.

Several panelists will be addressing the unique problems facing Native women involved in the justice system. They are:

Joan Evans: Director, Women's Overnight Emergency Accommodation
Marilyn Kane: V.P., Nat'l Native Women's Assn.; Board Member, Elizabeth Fry of Ottawa
Carolyn Newell: Community Facilitator, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto; past Chair, Native Sisterhood, Kingston Prison

Rose Yellowfeet: Instructor in Native Studies at U. of Lethbridge; Elder; former Native alcoholism counsellor and court worker

Chester Cunningham (moderator): Director, Native Counselling Services of Alberta

To register (by June 1) contact: Joyce Tutt, 157 Lynley Ridge, 52010 Range Rd 233, Sherwood Park T8B 1C4, phone 467-4092.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies is a federation of 16 autonomous member societies who are concerned with women and girls in conflict with the law.

Provincial hearings on pensions

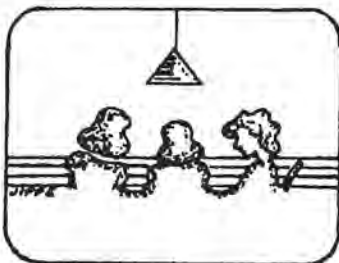
Les Young, Minister of Labour, has recently distributed a publication, 'Proposals For Improving The Effectiveness of The Private Pension Plan System in Alberta', that looks at a series of issues and makes recommendations. A schedule of hearings has been set whereat the public can comment on the government's proposals. The schedule is as follows:

- Edmonton- June 13, 2 pm, Four Seasons Hotel
- Calgary- June 14, 8:30 am, Convention Centre
- Lethbridge- June 14, 3 pm, El Rancho Motor Hotel
- Red Deer- June 20, 1 pm, Capri Centre
- Grande Prairie- June 28, 10:30 am, G.P. Motor Inn

Written comments may be mailed

to: Superintendent of Pensions Pension Benefits Branch Alberta Labour Rm 401, 10808 99 Avenue Edmonton T5K 0G2

If you or your group is intending to make a submission, ASWAC would appreciate hearing from you as well as receiving a copy of any submissions.



Women gathering for peace

A weekend conference for women affirming our desires and abilities to work for peace. This gathering will facilitate our local response to a major International Women's forum to be held in Canada in early 1985, and co-sponsored by women and women's organizations across Canada.

When - June 8, 9, 10, 1984
Where - Knox Metropolitan United Church, Edmonton
Registration - free
Contact - Doris Malcolm
3104 67A Street, Edm.
461-2025
- Donna Gibbons

12245 89 Street, Edm.
479-4684

Participants will be billeted; reimbursements for transportation costs probable (provided our funding comes through!)

Weekend to include:

Friday Eve: registration; sharing of herstories; promoting more effective communication skills.

Saturday: plenary session involving drama; workshops including such topics as: women supporting one another, women as victims of militarization, women in

Healing images

Linda Lee Nicholls, an Edmonton ASWAC member and keen amateur photographer wants to take the "Healing Images of Women" concept a stage further. Her idea is to spend the summer photographing women of all kinds - with the intention of using the photographs later to promote positive images of women. She wants to have a leaflet with her to give the women she photographs which will explain what she's doing and why.

The idea needs more developing so if you are interested in being a part of this, you're invited to a brainstorm session in Linda Lee's basement, at 10825 125 St., at 7 pm on Wednesday, June 20th.

We'll be trying to answer some of these questions: How do we present our pictures, why, to whom, in what form, and who wants to work on this.

As well as brainstorming ideas, we would like you to bring pictures which fit your image of women who are strong, powerful; sexy, active, intelligent, working, enlightened, or joyful (Add your own adjectives to this list too!). It will be interesting to see what different images we all have.

If you can't come but want to send pictures, please do! If you need them returned, please enclosed a self-addressed envelope. Send them to Linda Lee at the above address, or to the ASWAC office.

For more information call Linda Lee at 451-2424 in the evenings or ASWAC during the day.

Latin America, women as peacemakers historically, women as peacemakers cross-culturally today, and women and co-existence in the Middle East.

Saturday Eve: showing of film, 'Testament', and discussion.

Sunday: a day of connecting and strategy planning for resolving conflict non-violently, to incorporate our visions of a peaceful future.

Come join us with your strengths, your ideas and your hope so that we may empower one another in our peacemaking ventures.

WHAT IS THAT DOING ON MY LABEL?



Jeni

ASWAC's membership year runs from conference to conference, with a grace period starting from September 1 for new memberships.

This means that if you bought or renewed your membership before September 1, 1983, you are on our records as needing to renew your membership, and will see a star on your mailing label.

Our policy is to send newsletters to current members, and to members as far back as two years. Therefore we are still mailing to those women who took out a 1981/82 membership. We do this generous act because we know that many people find it very hard to remember to renew and we don't want to lose contact with old friends. But, it would be a great help to the office staff if you would either renew or let us know if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter. We could use the money as well.

We suggest \$10 per year for a membership but will, of course, accept less from those who cannot afford \$10. Donations are greatly welcomed as well.

SUPPORTIVE MEMBERSHIP/DONATION*

Name

Membership

Address

Donation

Apt. No.

Street

City

Postal Code

Phone

Home

Office

Make cheque payable to Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, P.O. Box 1573, Edmonton, T5J 2N7 Telephone 424-3073

* We suggest \$10.00 membership per year.

ALBERTA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION COMMITTEE