

CANADIAN ABORTION RIGHTS ACTION LEAGUE (CARAL)

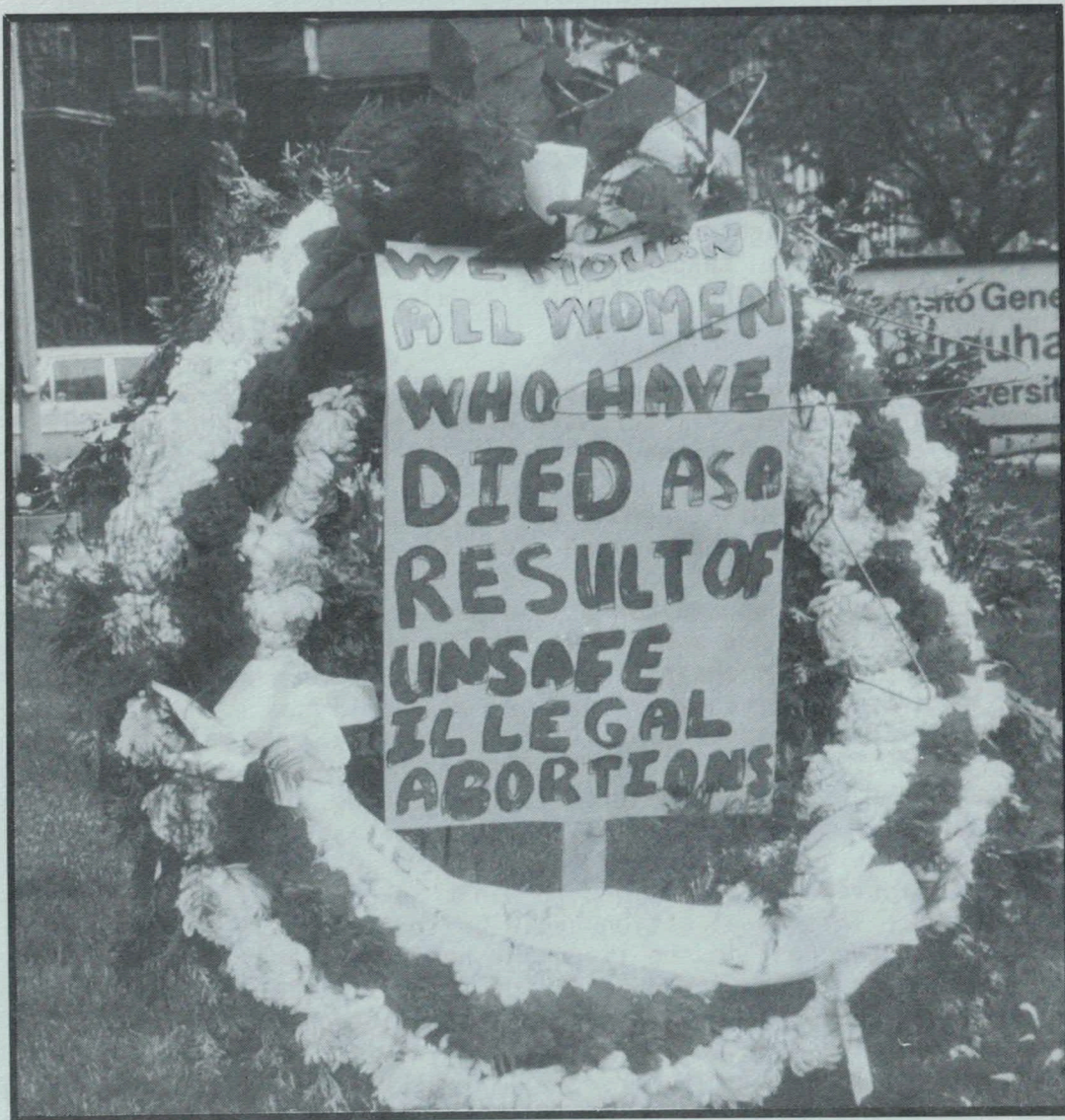
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LE DROIT A L'AVORTEMENT (ACDA)

NEWSLETTER

WINTER

1982

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The legal right to abortion is currently under its most serious attack since the inception of the current law in 1969. In a 7 to 2 decision, the Supreme Court of Canada has granted Joseph Borowski, an avowed opponent of a woman's right to choose abortion, legal standing to contest the law. This means that he has been given the right to argue his point of view on abortion in the courts.

Borowski contends Section 251 of the Criminal Code, which allows abortions to be performed under certain circumstances, should be declared invalid because it contravenes the Diefenbaker Bill of Rights. In his arguments, Borowski maintains that fetuses are entitled to the legal status of persons and are thus protected by the Bill of Rights.

The court also granted Borowski his legal costs, some \$70,000 to date, which were awarded against the federal government. The irony of this is that Canadian taxpayers (you and I) are paying to allow this man to challenge in the courts what is already a limited right to abortion.

This granting of standing represents a marked departure from previous decisions in the area. If Borowski wins his battle, abortion will become illegal again in Canada.

While it is unthinkable that one man could undermine legal access to safe abortion (however limited under the present law), the possibility that he might win is a very frightening one. His recognition by the Supreme Court as a person with a right to be heard on this issue was a major victory in his fight to make abortion illegal once again.

The Board of Directors of CARAL has decided to take legal action to counter Borowski's case. At this writing there are several options open to us and we are in the process of deciding, in conjunction with legal counsel, which course will be the most viable.

Borowski is obviously determined to win. We are equally determined to stop him. This legal action could be long and will definitely be costly. But the cost in the lives and health of Canadian women will be even greater if he wins. We cannot afford to sit idly by and merely await the outcome of this blatant attack on our rights. If this battle is lost, even the small gains we made with the 1969 amendments will be gone.

Karen Hammond

AGM

April 24 TORONTO

This year's AGM is taking place in the midst of a serious challenge to our abortion laws by opponents of freedom of choice. Our AGM program will focus on this threat, and speakers have been chosen who can give us more insight and ammunition in our fight. We hope that many of you will be able to attend and become closely involved with the case.

Costs have forced us to raise registration fees, for the first time in five years, but we hope the slight increase won't keep anyone away.

We have planned a special fund-raising event in conjunction with the AGM so that out-of-towners can also have the opportunity to see Right Out of History, the very exciting film about the making of Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party.

Hope we'll see you on April 23rd and 24th. See the enclosed brochure for program and registration details.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FORM LETTER

This issue the form letter is directed to the Hon. Jean Chrétien, Minister of Justice. The theme of the letter is based on the Supreme Court decision to allow Borowski standing (see Editorial) to challenge the abortion law. We want the government to know that it is important for them to vigorously defend the legislation (inadequate as it may be).

Send the enclosed letter or use it as a guide to write your own. Copy it and send it to the Prime Minister and your M.P. as well. Just add c.c. P.E. Trudeau, P.M. and _____ M.P. Give copies to friends and family to sign and send. Let's make sure that Jean Chretien knows we are concerned!

If you wish a reply, remember to put your return address on the letter.

Remember, you do not need a stamp on any letter you send to a Federal Member of Parliament !!

FUNDRAISING DRIVE

We know you support our efforts to grow and expand. Exchanging mailing lists with other organizations that are trying to grow and raise funds is an effective and cost-efficient method of reaching prospective supporters.

We control confidentiality by addressing another organization's mailing ourselves; our mailing list is not actually given to any other group. Of course, we are selective about the organizations with which we cooperate.

Thanks for your cooperation.

***** SPECIAL SPECIAL *****

Have you renewed your membership yet? It is that time of year again. Your renewal is very important to CARAL since it is our main source of income. As operating costs (stamps, printing, etc.) increase and new emergencies arise (such as the Borowski case) that income becomes critical. Renew your commitment to the cause by sending in this year's fee. Remember it has not gone up with inflation and stays at a low \$10 for an individual! If there is an '82 on your label, you are already up-to-date.

CARAL REVISES AND UPDATES ABORTION IN LAW AND HISTORY

At last! - a brand new edition of Abortion in Law and History, and we will send one to you if you renew in '82. Just check the appropriate box on the enclosed renewal form. If you have already renewed, or if you have recently joined, you will receive one too.

Keep Abortion in Law and History on file. Show it to friends. Use it when discussing the issue. Additional copies can be had for a small fee to cover cost of mailing. Is there a library or school in your town or city which should have a copy? Let us know. We'll send it.

ILLEGAL ABORTIONS ON TRIAL - BRUSSELS (London Observer)

13 doctors and 15 women accused of performing and having abortions, illegal in Belgium since 1867, are involved in a series of test cases in the Brussels High Court.

The trials end 10 years of tolerance toward doctors who made no secret of the fact they would terminate unwanted pregnancies.

After 1973, when hospitals in Brussels started to openly perform abortions, deaths from back-street abortions fell from an estimated 300 a year to less than six.

A Conservative vs. The Radical Right (Ms./November 1981)

"We tried Prohibition in this country and made the biggest generation of drunks in the history of this country. I know. I was in that generation....I don't care how many laws we pass, how we amend the Constitution, if a woman wants to get an abortion... Now, what the Right-to-Lifers contend is that life starts at the moment the seed is planted. I don't buy that. I don't think life starts until that baby is delivered. ...I will resist...a religious outfit or any other outfit, and I don't think they can call themselves conservatives when they're really taking more of a fascist line than a conservative line... Yes, (I mean) the Moral Majority."

- Senator Barry Goldwater,
WDVM - TV interview, 1981

SURVEY SUPPORTS LEGAL ABORTION

A recent survey of 1,400 adult Canadians found that only a small majority rejects the availability of legal abortion.

An article in the Ottawa Citizen (January 22, 1982) reported that most of the people surveyed by University of Lethbridge sociologist Reg Bibby agreed that abortion "should be available when the mother's health is endangered or there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby or the woman has been raped".

The survey of Canadian attitudes and concerns, done in 1980 and 1981, also found that more than 90 per cent of respondents believed birth control information should be available to teenagers who want it.

Toronto - International Women's Day - March 6th

Once again women will be celebrating International Women's Day. The rally and march will begin at 11 am. There will be a fair at 1:30 at Harbord Collegiate. CARAL will be sending a contingent under our own banner. Come celebrate with us. Phone for further information.

OFL BACKS LEGAL ABORTION

At the Ontario Federation of Labour's annual policy-making convention held in November 1981, a resolution was passed in favour of legal abortion. The resolution was supported by an overwhelming majority of the approximately 1,500 delegates. The federation resolution also pledged to ask the Ontario government to create abortion clinics similar to those currently operating in Quebec.

TTC REJECTS THE TOY SOLDIER - A VICTORY!

The Toronto Transit Commission ruled on November 17, 1981 that the advertisement by the Toronto chapter of the Right to Life Association was inappropriate for Christmas time. The ad features a toy soldier with a tear in his eye and the caption:

"Some toys will have less children to play with this year
- some 65,000 aborted children less".

The Toronto chapter of CARAL worked vigorously to stop the appearance of the ad on the subway cars. Members of the commission were swamped with letters of protest and telephone calls. A number of other women's organizations rallied around the protest campaign and supported our cause.

It was an uplifting victory for us and we were gratified by the amount of unsolicited support from the general public.

Our national office at 40 St. Clair Ave E. Suite 310 is wheelchair accessible.

ottawa

If you have been following the constitutional debate, you will remember the introduction of an amendment by David Crombie (P.C. Rosedale) on Friday November 27, 1981, ostensibly aimed at ensuring Parliament's right to legislate in the matter of abortion.

Perhaps you wondered why the Conservatives and, in particular, David Crombie would introduce such an amendment in the dying hours of the debate. In fact, it was an attempt by the Conservatives to appease the strong anti-choice lobby within their own caucus, as well as the orchestrated last-ditch attempt by abortion foes to have fetal rights enshrined in the constitution.

Perhaps David Crombie sincerely believed that his amendment would satisfy all parties, pro- and anti- choice. However no pro-choice organizations were consulted on this surprise amendment and, in fact, the women in the Conservative party were unaware of its introduction.

Both the Prime Minister and Jim Fulton for the NDP, in their responses to the proposed amendment, described it as redundant and unnecessary.

In spite of Crombie's protestations concerning the neutrality of his motion, one has only to look at the breakdown of the vote to see that every abortion foe in the House (except Cabinet Ministers) voted for it. Liberals like Stan Hudecki (who claims to have been elected to protect the unborn) and Garnet Bloomfield and NDPers like Bob Ogle, Vern Lewycky and Doug Anquish voted with the Tories. Other Liberals voting with the Conservatives were George Baker, Bob Bockstael, Paul McRae and Peter Lang. (Are any of these your M.P.s? If so, why not write them and tell them what you think of their vote.)

CARAL became aware of the surprise motion before it was introduced and sent telegrams to the Prime Minister, Joe Clark and Ed Broadbent. The amendment was defeated 129 to 60.

Vancouver, B.C. - Protest Rally

The Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion (CCCA) and other groups in B.C. are planning a day of action tentatively scheduled for Saturday, May 8th (the day before Mother's Day). Anyone who is interested in participating should contact CCCA P.O. Box 24617, Station C, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4E1

WINNIPEG

The Mayor of Winnipeg recently proclaimed February 7 - 14 "Respect Life Week". He may not have realized at the time that the slogan was promoted by the anti-choice lobby but since issuing the proclamation, Mayor Bill Norrie has been beseiged by angry citizens insisting that he rescind it. CARAL National wrote to him protesting his decision and urging him to reconsider.

The Manitoba Action Committee and CARAL Winnipeg established an ad hoc committee to try to get the Mayor to change his mind. As we go to press we have not heard the outcome.

NEW CANADIAN BOOK ON ABORTION

ABORTION: Readings and Research, Paul Sachdev, Butterworth, Toronto, 1981.

This book contains up-to-date information on the issue. It is divided into four parts:

- 1) Abortion, an Overview
- 2) Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Abortion
- 3) Women Seeking Abortion
- 4) Options for the Future

A Doctor's View

The worst evil often comes clothed in righteousness. Examples abound - the burning of heretics, the Holy Wars, the anti-semitic massacres, and the contemporary stonings of half-buried Iranian women accused of adultery.

Among the many priceless advantages Canadians enjoy is freedom of belief. It is, therefore, with some dismay and resentment that I view the current attempts of the members of the so-called Pro-Life movement to force their views on others by taking advantage of a badly conceived piece of federal legislation. That various religious groups are now supporting them is equally disquieting. Religious groups all over the world have always had great difficulty in reconciling their beliefs with the complex and varied imperatives of human sexuality: for example, some the Pauline epistles, the Renaissance popes surrounded by their bastards, the aging John Knox and his teenage bride, the divinely "justified" polygamy of the early Mormons, and the human bed warmers of Mahatma Gandhi.

There is, of course, no absolute right or absolute wrong in the abortion issue. Within the medical profession strongly held opinions vary widely. Physicians who refuse to perform abortions are perhaps more respected than those who perform this unpleasant procedure, but there is no consensus. After lengthy debate the Canadian Medical Association believes it should be a matter to be discussed and decided between the doctor and his or her patient. To say that this means "abortion on demand" demeans the efforts of the profession to give good advice after considering all the variables; perhaps the final decision should be made by the woman after all our advice has been given. A fetus is part of her body until it is born. Talk about fetal rights leads only to philosophic absurdity. When do the rights start? Should the unicellular zygote have the vote? If the fetus is old enough to be viable the profession takes every precaution to save it.

Unfortunately, logic no longer influences the abortion issue. Dogmatic emotionalism holds the field. A good friend of mine who has spent many years in an autopsy room wants to take the suburban ladies who lead the Pro-Life movement into the mortuary the next time he is faced with the body of a beautiful young girl hideously disfigured by the stinking sepsis of back-street abortion. It would be useless. Armoured by their righteousness, these ladies would merely hold their lace-trimmed handkerchiefs to their oh so virtuous noses and say "Serves the hussy right". Tolerance and compassion are unrecognized by fanatics. For this is what they are - people who can see only their side of a complex problem and who then force their viewpoint on everybody else. I defend their right to hold their beliefs, but we must all resist their attempts to dictate to others.

Peter J. Banks, M.D.

From CMA Journal, February 1, 1981

POSTER CONTEST

Thanks to everyone who submitted ideas and posters for our contest. We'll announce the results at the AGM.

new affiliates

Our affiliates list keeps on growing..... this issue we would like to welcome: London Status of Women Action Group
Sudbury Women's Centre
Women's Health Clinic, Winnipeg, Manitoba

movinggg ?

We don't want to lose you! Don't forget to send us your change of address. The post office has free cards for this purpose.

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Ottawa, Ont.

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CARAL/UWO
c/o CARAL/London

CARAL/KINGSTON
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Kingston, Ont.
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CHECKLIST

We have asked you to participate in CARAL in many ways in this issue of the newsletter. Here is a checklist you can use to make sure you have covered everything!

- Copy the form letter and give to friends and family to send.
- Send the form letter to Jean Chretien, Minister of Justice, Pierre Trudeau, PM
- Get a friend to join CARAL.
- Renew your membership with CARAL (You'll get our latest piece of literature: "Abortion in Law and History").
- Register for the Annual General Meeting being held in Toronto, April 24th.
- Set aside the evening of April 23rd to come to the showing of the film "Right out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party", at OISE, Toronto. There are two showings 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- Send us local information for the next issue of the newsletter.