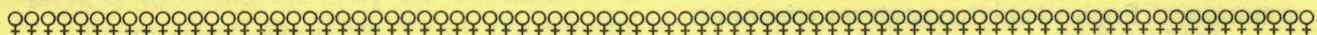


# FREEDOM OF CHOICE



Canadian Association for Repeal of the Abortion Law  
L'Association Canadienne pour l'Abrogation de la Loi sur l'avortement



a quick reading summary on **THE PURPOSE OF CARAL** — from our Constitution

The purpose of CARAL is to ensure that no woman in Canada is denied access to safe, legal abortion. Our aim is the repeal of all sections of the Criminal Code dealing with abortion, and the establishment of comprehensive contraceptive and abortion services, including appropriate counselling, across the country.

**"We regard the right to safe, legal abortion as a fundamental human right."**

## IS CARAL PRO-ABORTION?

No. CARAL stands for *Freedom of Choice* on abortion.

We recognize that unwanted pregnancy causes women to *seek* abortion.

The need for abortion arises from failure of birth-control methods, lack of availability of, or education in the proper use of those methods, or human error.

A woman faced with the problem of an unwanted pregnancy must have *the freedom to choose* whether to continue the pregnancy or to have a safe, legal abortion. She may choose to seek assistance and advice from her partner, her family, her physician or her church, but she shouldn't have to worry about politicians, or the criminal law.

## WHAT IS THE ABORTION LAW?

Section 251 of the Criminal Code forbids abortion, except when performed in an approved or accredited hospital, after approval by a Therapeutic Abortion Committee of at least three doctors (none of whom may perform the abortion), who certify *that continuation of the pregnancy would, or would be likely to endanger the life or health of the woman.*

## THIS LAW SOUNDS LIBERAL AND FAIR — WHY REPEAL IT?

A recent survey (1976, by the *Doctors for Repeal of the Abortion Law*) shows that:

1. *Canada's Abortion Law is unfairly and unequally applied and tends to discriminate against low-income and rural women; and*
2. *Universal access to safe, legal abortion will remain unavailable to most women until abortion is removed from the Criminal Code.*

Statistics Canada lists 258 hospitals (out of 1,359, technically equipped to perform abortions), as having Therapeutic Abortion Committees. But the DRAL Survey also found that 21 of the 258 hospitals did no abortions, and that 16 hospitals performed five or fewer abortions during 1974.

The *World Health Organization* definition of health has been accepted by the Canadian Medical Association: **"Health is a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."** Unfortunately, most Canadian hospitals do not apply the W.H.O. definition. Some hospitals and doctors, trying to serve the public within the law, have been picketed and intimidated by pressure groups who believe in compulsory pregnancy and are against abortion under *any* circumstances. Remember that hospitals are publicly financed — women pay for them with taxes.

## **WON'T REPEALING THE LAW LEAD TO INDISCRIMINATE ABORTION?**

No, it won't. Most advanced countries now permit abortions, and some have fewer abortions than we do. England has safe, legal abortions, but its abortion rate remains one of the lowest in the world. England also has good sex education and birth-control programs, whereas the use of birth-control is still opposed by many in Canada. France and Austria, both Catholic countries, have legalized early abortion. Illegal abortion is still the chief method of birth-control in Italy, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. While the Church still bans *all* artificial methods of birth-control, the World Health Organization estimated *1½ million illegal abortions in Italy in 1974*. Thousands of Italian women die annually as a result of botched abortions. Few Canadians would wish to follow this example of callous disregard for women.

## **IS REPEAL OF THE ABORTION LAW A RELIGIOUS ISSUE?**

Religious, yes — denominational, no. For the last 100 years, Popes have been taking a strong stand against birth-control and abortion under any circumstances, but many Catholics do not agree. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Unitarians, Humanists, Agnostics and Atheists are working together for repeal. No woman should be pressured into either undergoing an abortion, or carrying a pregnancy to term because of the beliefs and attitudes of others.

## **IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE?**

Very much so. CARAL believes that the present law, because it is unevenly applied, violates the Canadian Bill of Rights by denying Canadian women equal access to a legal medical procedure.

In a pluralistic society, one where respect for differing views and attitudes is encouraged, it is

unacceptable that the religious or moral convictions of one group be imposed by law upon all. Removal of abortion from the Criminal Code would permit all Canadians to act according to personal conscience.

## **IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A WOMEN'S ISSUE?**

Certainly. Many women resent the fact that laws telling them what they may do with their lives are written and enforced largely by men. However, many men favour repeal, and have joined the campaign to remove the abortion law from the Criminal Code.

It should be emphasized that, frequently, groups which favour repressive abortion legislation also oppose contraception and sterilization. We question whether these groups sincerely want to reduce the abortion rate, or whether they are, in fact, opposed to *any and all* measures which allow women to control their fertility and, thereby, their lives.

## **IS ABORTION LAW REPEAL A WORLD ISSUE?**

Yes. The United States, England, France, Austria, Switzerland, Japan, China, the USSR, and many others, allow legal abortions, so that approximately two-thirds of the world's women live in countries where abortion is *safe* and *legal*. Few social changes have swept the world so rapidly. Why should Canada lag behind?

This world movement reflects an increased willingness by governments to face the reality of abortion as a major public health issue. They recognize that legal **prohibition of abortion does not prevent its practice**. Women continue to seek abortions even though illicit and dangerous. In fact, one of every three pregnancies in the world today is terminated by abortion, either legal or illegal. Canadians must convince their legislators not only to decriminalize abortion

by removing it from the Criminal Code, but also to provide the necessary funds for further research into better — and safer — birth-control methods.

We must insist that all levels of government develop educational programs and community services to encourage early sex education and good contraceptive practice. This is the humane and effective way to reduce the number of abortions performed in Canada.

### ARE MOST CANADIANS IN FAVOUR OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE ON ABORTION?

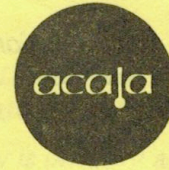
Yes. A Gallup poll survey, October 1974, showed that 62% of adult Canadians believe that the decision whether or not to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician. The *Centre de Recherche sur L'Opinion Publique* found in 1975 that 57% of the Quebec population share this view.

### IS ABORTION SAFE?

Yes. In most cases, first trimester (up to 12 weeks) abortions, by vacuum aspiration, performed by qualified physicians, are ten times safer than actual childbirth.

### WHAT IS THE CARAL PROGRAM?

An educational one. Many Canadians, including Parliamentarians, are not aware that Section 251 is inequitable and unworkable. Canadian women and their families are suffering, as are conscientious physicians who want only to provide the best possible care for their patients. We need help to educate our MP's as well as the electorate.



## What can You do?

### 1 JOIN CARAL

*CARAL is the only coast-to-coast organization working full-time for abortion law repeal. Make your influence felt at this critical time. Get your friends to join.*

**Single Membership: \$10.00 / Family Membership: \$15.00**

**Limited-Income or Student Membership: \$2.00**

**Group Affiliation with Representation on the Board of Directors: \$25.00**

### 2 CONTRIBUTE

*You can join for as little as \$10.00, but if you can afford a larger contribution, remember that we don't have government grants or the support of wealthy religious organizations — this is a grass roots organization.*

**DON'T PUT IT ASIDE — DO IT NOW.**

*Send your membership fee and contribution to:*

**CARAL, Box 527, Station Z, Toronto, Ontario M5N 2Z6**

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## AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS:

Assoc. for Review of Canada's Abortion Law (ARCAL), Ottawa	Lakeshore Unitarian Church, Pointe Claire, P.Q.
ARCAL-CARAL, Hamilton, Ontario	Ntl. Action Committee, Adv. Council, Status of Women, Ottawa
Abortion Contraception Committee of Toronto (ACCT)	Pine Free Clinic, Vancouver, B.C.
Central Abortion Referral and Education Services, Toronto	Planned Parenthood Association, Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Community Health Services, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	Sask. Action Committee, Status of Women, Saskatoon
Courtney Unitarian Fellowship, Courtney, B.C.	Saskatoon Women for Abortion Law Repeal, Saskatoon
Doctors for Repeal of the Abortion Law (DRAL)	Simon Fraser University - Burnaby Women's Centre, B.C.
Feminist Centre, University of Wisconsin, U.S.A.	Social Issues Committee, YWCA, Metropolitan Toronto
Humanist Association of Canada, Ottawa	Twenty-One McGill Street, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario
Ishatar Women's Collective, Aldergrove, B.C.	University of Waterloo Birth Control, Waterloo, Ont.
Keep Abortion Legal, San Francisco, California, U.S.A.	Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre, Tor.
Kelowna Status of Women, B.C.	Women's Place, Waterloo, Ontario
Kingston Women's Centre, Kingston, Ontario	Women for Political Action, Toronto, Ontario
Young Women's Christian Association of Canada (YWCA), Toronto, Ontario	