

status of women



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THE FEMALE OFFENDER

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STATUS OF WOMEN

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NEWS

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Cover: Entrance to the Prison for Women, Kingston, Ontario. The only federal institution for female offenders. In March 1976, its population was 120, a decrease of 22 since the previous year. By December 1976 the total had increased to 150, of these nine were serving life sentences. Average length of sentence 1971 to 1975 varied from 1303 to 3843 days.

NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS:

A check of NAC's files shows that many subscriptions to **Status of Women News** have not been renewed for some time. While NAC receives some federal funding, we require financial support for the publication from readers.

To simplify our records we have set April 1st of each year as the date when all subscriptions become due. All subscriptions will expire on March 31st of the following year.

Unless your subscription has been paid for a period covering all or part of April 1st, 1977 to March 31st, 1978, it is now due.

Organizations will receive five **Status of Women News** subscriptions, which are given with each group affiliation. These will be sent to the address of the organization as listed in our files. Distribution to individuals will be the responsibility of the organization.

If you are not certain when your subscription was last paid, please contact the NAC office, specifying whether your subscription is on an individual or group basis.

All subscriptions are due April 1st of each year.

Individual subscription: \$3.00 per year or part year.

Thanks to those of you who have already paid their renewals.

National Action Committee

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor,
STATUS OF WOMEN NEWS,
40 St. Clair Ave. East,
Toronto, Ont.

Congratulations on an expected fine issue in May.

However, may I register my disappointment at the lack of any reference to two areas of women's issues, which are the gravest in the land, and consequently deserving of more attention from concerned women.

I am referring to the status and steadily deteriorating conditions of our Native, Inuit and Métis women, and to the brutal prison environment shared by women.

In the first instance I would recommend the maximum of patience and humility in approaching the problem of working with our Native sisters, keeping in mind our collective role in their colonized state.

In the second instance I would recommend that the isolated instances of progress being made in what is euphemistically referred to as the "Correctional" departments, be seen as just that, very isolated instances. In the interim, too many women are suffering incredible humiliations, physical and mental abuse, and the long condemned practice of "solitary confinement" — even as we write about it.

I hope you will be able to feature this request in a Letters-to-the-Editor column, and wishing you all the best.

Warm regards,
Claire Culhane
PRISONERS' RIGHTS GROUP (P.R.G.)
3965 Pandora Street
Burnaby, B.C. V5C 2A8

This issue of **STATUS OF WOMEN NEWS** features excerpts from **The Female Offender** the report of the National Advisory Council on the Female Offender. Also featured is work of women writers published in **Tightwire** and **Women's Pen** printed by the Tightwire Press in the Prison for Women, Kingston.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FEMALE OFFENDER

SELECTIONS FROM THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FEMALE OFFENDER SPRING 1977

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Halifax

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Published by the Public Affairs Division of the Canadian Penitentiary Service and the National Parole Service under the authority of the Honorable Francis Fox Solicitor General of Canada

The National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender was appointed by the Solicitor General of Canada in September 1974, with the following terms of reference.

"To study the needs of federal female offenders, and to make specific recommendations to the Commissioner of Penitentiaries and the Executive Director of the National Parole Service regarding the development of a comprehensive plan to provide adequate institutional and community services appropriate to her unique program and security needs."

In dealing with this task we found it necessary to look beyond the federal female offender to all female offenders in the criminal justice system throughout Canada. In doing so it became very clear that joint jurisdictional planning and sharing; flexibility in legislation and in use of facilities; and an ongoing process for integrating and updating correctional planning were paramount to positive changes regarding meeting the needs of the female offender. With such small numbers of female offenders comes the need for a very high degree of flexibility and cooperation on the part of government in policy and program.

No short term advisory committee, or even well established task force, can do justice to the above terms of reference in view of the rapid change and complexity of our society, and the multiplicity of those involved in the total correctional process who need to plan together but have little opportunity to do so.

Furthermore, information and communication systems do not exist in an integrated or comprehensive form, and this detracts from the degree of accuracy and fullness of study possible in the total field. Current, uniform data was difficult, if not impossible to obtain at times. Also, so many studies touching on matters related to the Committee's work were under way without the means to discover exactly what was being done. Surprisingly some of these groups were allotted far more extensive resources and funds for more limited tasks. Within such limitations the Advisory Committee formulated a number of recommendations.

Background Information

FACTORS WHICH MADE STUDY ESSENTIAL

1. The small numbers of women involved in the criminal justice system and, in particular, those who are in custodial settings.
2. The special needs of these women.

Relevant statistics

The following general statistics show the number of women in federal and provincial institutions compared with men charged, convicted, and in custody.

Charged in 1973	Men	Women
Criminal Code Offences	206,388	32,716
Offences under Narcotic Control Act	34,220	4,578
Found guilty in 1972*		
Indictable Criminal Code Offences	38,236	7,581
Federal Statutes	4,200	430
In custody December 31, 1973		
Federal institutions	9,042	166
Provincial institutions	8,446	413

*Excludes Quebec and Alberta (figures not available); totals not available for 1973

The following statistics give pertinent information on 154 women in custody December 31, 1974, at the federal Prison for Women, Kingston, Ontario.

Age on Admission

Under 30 years —	93	(58 of the 93 were under 25 years, 12 of the 58 were under 20 years)
Over 30 years	61	
Total	154	

SPECIAL NEEDS

The following factors give rise to special needs for women in custody, and are relevant to women at any stage of apprehension in the criminal justice system.

1. Low self image: increased by society's strong condemnation of women offenders.
2. Weak family ties and few friends, making for a vulnerable situation of exploitation.
3. Tendency toward self mutilation and depreciation instead of outward aggressive behavior.
4. Women do not usually receive prison sentences until they have had a number of offences. During this period of collision with the law there are very limited community-based alternatives for women in difficulty, such as hostels, residences, accessible support services and financial help. By the time they receive prison sentences, a great number are severely damaged.
5. Because of the small number of women in custody, segregation has been viewed as impractical. This has resulted in a heterogeneous and problematic composition of inmate population, including those who are:

- (a) serving varying lengths of sentences including very long sentences
- (b) mentally ill
- (c) mentally retarded
- (d) violent and disruptive
- (e) totally institutionalized
- (f) from a culture and/or using a language which differs from the majority in the institution

FEMALE CRIMINALITY TRENDS

There is a significant increase in the number of women charged with criminal offences, as shown in the following nine indicators. A statistical report prepared for the National Advisory Committee on the Female Offender is available from the Ministry of the Solicitor General, Ottawa.

1. The most obvious trend is the increase in offenses against property without violence.
 - (a) Women charged with theft offences in the course of a year, between 1964 and 1973, increased from 4,210 to 14,000.
 - (b) Women charged annually with fraud offences increased from 938 to 3,348 in the same 10-year period, probably due mainly to increased use of credit cards.
2. Convictions under the Narcotic Control Act increased from 127 in 1971 to 357 in 1972. Proposed changes in legislation may have a marked influence on this trend.
3. There is a trend toward greater involvement of younger persons in criminal activity. In 1968, 18.5 per cent of females convicted of indictable offences were 16 to 19 years of age. By 1972 there were 23.4 per cent. A revised age for juvenile offenders could alter this considerably.
4. Decriminalization of certain offences and the implementation of pretrial diversionary programs could change sentencing for all ages of offenders.



WOMEN'S PEN

Women's Pen, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1977.

This is the first issue of what we hope will become a continuing journal of writing by women about their prison experiences.

The poems, stories and illustrations in this issue grew out of a Creative Writing Workshop which met Sunday evenings for many months at the Kingston Prison for Women.

We explored new and old forms. We read and discussed our own poems. We wrote, rewrote, revised, revised, revised.

Women's Pen invites submissions from women with prison experience. In particular, we need poems, short stories (max. 1500 words), and illustrations.

We hope you enjoy our journal and that you will share your own writings with our readers.

Subscriptions \$1.50 payable to: TIGHTWIRE PRESS,
P.O. Box 515,
Kingston, Ontario,
K7L 4W7

5. There is a significant increase in the number of "Offences against the person" committed by women. In 1972 these offences represented only 4 per cent to the total criminal code offences for which women were convicted.

6. The ratio of males to females convicted of indictable offences is slowly decreasing, but still remains at 5-1. It was 7-1 in 1966. The ratio of imprisonment on conviction of an indictable offence in 1972 was 15

cent for women compared with 39 per cent for men.

With the pressure for equality for the sexes is coming reduced paternalism on the part of police and judiciary. This could lead to increased charges against women and longer sentences if convicted.

8. With the increased number of women entering and remaining in the labour force comes increased opportunities for involvement by women in a wider range and number of criminal pursuits. This fact, linked with generally increasing criminality in our society, indicates an area needing closer scrutiny.

9. A more recent phenomenon of criminality involves females who break the law in support of political and social beliefs and ideologies.

Within the context of these general trends are the problems faced by women in the criminal justice system. Some of these concerns will correspond to those of men but are heightened by factors noted under SPECIAL NEEDS (page 14), which complicate the prison experience for women.

ARREST TO TRIAL

If it is assumed the criminal justice system is designed to protect the public and to consider the best planning for the offender, including the female offender, then it is necessary to view her within the context of the total criminal justice process. This chapter looks at the female offender's early entry into the system from first contact with police to disposition of charges in court, and the problems which exist for women at this stage. Also, all her needs or problems, not just those which may be exclusive from those of the male offender. The needs of men are far from met, even though it is generally considered otherwise. The following eight points are of vital importance to the above comments:

1. When apprehended and arrested by police, women have charged there has been brutality, sexual advances, insulting personal

remarks, intimidation, and lack of understanding on the part of the arresting officer. Conversely, complaints are registered by police about the behaviour of women resisting arrests; physical acting out, verbal abuse, false accusations including accusations of a sexual nature.

2. Many female lock-up facilities are unsatisfactory:

(a) poor quality and overcrowded accommodation inflict a distressing and demeaning beginning to the process of justice, particularly for a first offender;

(b) toilet and wash basin facilities are frequently inadequate and too public;

(c) there is a lack of back-up services to provide support for health and social needs.

(d) there is a lack of adequate female staff. This can create an embarrassing and a demoralizing atmosphere for women.

3. Body searches can be a traumatic experience for women. Insufficient attention is given to a selective use of this practice and the quality of personnel performing such searches.

4. Problems faced by women and men at the court level include:

(a) inadequate legal aid in some regions;

(b) lack of availability of interpreter and court-worker;

(c) delays in hearing cases;

(d) the too frequent removal of a non-dangerous person to a jail or mental hospital for psychiatric assessment.

5. Housing women on remand and women under sentence in the same facility creates serious problems especially if the person has had no previous record:

(a) the person who had been deeply involved in criminal activities can have a detrimental effect on a naive and younger woman;

(b) the ongoing established program for sentenced women can be disrupted by those on remand; creating difficulties for inmates and staff.

TIGHTWIRE PRESS FLASHES

— reprinted from *Tightwire, Prison for Women, Kingston, Ontario.*

\$20,000 a mere farce!!! Give me that money and I will make good use of it — I will live decently in jail like a well-balanced human being! It costs the taxpayer \$20,000 a year to keep us in here . . . and we hardly get the necessary!

I decided to write this article after an argument with one of the staff working on the releasing of "monthly issue". I was told when I asked for toothpaste: "I don't have to give you any — we are only obliged to give toothpaste to you once a month." O.K. I say, "Give it to me once a month only, but give me enough to last a month." Is it not logical and reasonable? I inquired amongst other inmates and everyone agrees that 25ml of toothpaste does not last a month. Really, it is the smallest tube you can buy on the market. We have the same problem with soap — one bar is not enough for one month.

The staff working in the area say: "Buy it from canteen" (the money you make inside). I am making the maximum wage which is \$9.50 every two weeks and it took me a year to get there. With that amount I have just enough for my cigarettes and coffee. Inflation affects the inmate too in that canteen prices are going up all the time. When a woman has no visits or no personal money; what can she do?

To the public, \$20,000 looks like a lot to be spent on people who are "not worth it" to their way of thinking. Actually this money is going to our keepers. They need us for their bread and butter. Prison creates jobs; people need jobs. If this was not the case, they would not be sending so many people to jail for "minor offenses". In the U.S. of A., the crime rate per capita is much higher than in Canada, yet, there are less people per capita in jail. Canada has the highest rate of prisoners in the world.

Again, I would like to remind you that we are not getting much. We are poorly dressed, just basics: 2 shirts, 2 T-shirts, 1 wool sweater, one pair of jeans, are the most important things that we get yearly. That means, that the girl who is doing a long term or life must count on outside family and friends to help her out.

I do not want to extend this too much, but I will go on with two more subjects.

Food — the quality is questionable. It is fattening and non-nourishing because it is prepared hours in advance, boiled for lengthy periods so that the minerals and vitamins are gone by the time you eat it. From week to week you have the same menu.

We can see the effects of this kind of food in the faces and bodies of the women. Most of them develop acne and other kinds of skin problems, their skin color becomes a yellowish-green and almost all of them put on weight because of the starch.

Recreation — there is no equipment for the gymnastic programs and no outdoor sports at all during the winter.

In the summer, you get baseball. No track and field equipment. There is volleyball, basketball, badminton and ping pong.

A swimming program started two weeks ago for people eligible for passes. This is not much in the way of variety for the personalities and characters that are in an institution like this. Just like outside, you see different levels, different wave lines, different intelligences, but here we all have to live together regardless of education, background, personality. There is one thing which we all have in common and that is we have committed an offense.

The fact that we are locked up and deprived of major needs such as love, affection, sex, freedom is ENOUGH. Why not give us the ordinary things that people have outside like enough soap to last a month. It might sound silly . . . but details get very big here, especially when you encounter them everyday.

I am in jail in Canada, not in Korea or Chile or some other deprived country. It is normal for me to expect more from this government of modern society.

But, as it is due to a lack of organization and the long due process things that we need now, we might get 10 years from now . . . with luck . . . and a lot of talking and pushing.



PREPARATION FOR NOSTALGIA: OR, IS THERE LIFE AFTER PRISON?

My hand . . . reaches, almost touches: my son hovers at impossible distances . . . almost touching . . .

7:45 BREAKFAST! The call echoes down the sleeping hallway. The vision fades and my body stiffens into tense wakefulness. My mind scrambles to sort information. What day is it? What time? What will made today important? Later . . . those things can wait 'til later.

Shuffle to the bathroom. Stand in the company of bleary-eyed women, washing faces, cleaning teeth. Row of porcelain sinks. Stoop to peep beneath the toilet door. No feet in sight indicate vacancy. Green steel no-lock toilet cabins. Prison ritual. Peeping beneath toilet doors.

8:00 Clinking-clanking fluorescent-lit dining room. Soapy sloshings of the dish-washing machine. Conversation? Superhuman effort to be heard above the daily din. Cups of coffee, smoke a ciggy, offer a nicotine-laden prayer. Re-count our dreams.

8:30 The work day begins NOW. Laundry, kitchen, beauty parlour, sewing room, cleaner or School. Stepping lightly off the stereo type merry-go-round I go to the School. The man with the count book calls my name. I answer "present" and my existence is ticked. Confirmed. Thank God.

Latin, drawing, reading, learning? Not today. Spend the hours writing mental stories, watching the movie in my mind. Tripping in the constellations of my fertile imagination.

Meanwhile: the tree outside the window, on the other side of the bars, buds, sheds, buds and sheds again as I sit watching and waiting. Purposeful patience. Work with passion until I become mesmerized with the dizzily falling snow.

3:15. Time to return to my living area. The work day over. Taken care of. Counting days to my release. Remember the day in '74 when I received a letter saying: "Your parole eligibility will be considered on January 24th., 1977."

I wondered then if the world would still be turning. Then my vision was a dark tunnel with NO light at the end. Now the light grows brighter by the hour. Four weeks and some days left to do. Thirty-four days. Count them Caro; the moment grows nearer.

I was caught in the bathroom yesterday taking photos. Porcelain sinks, green steel no-lock toilet. My captor shrugged her shoulders and nodded knowingly. She knows I have only a month left to do. All insanity becomes understandable at this point. No blame.

4:00 DINNER! The call, screeched above the sounds of T.V., radios, voices, is barely audible. Dinner is quieter than breakfast. Energy has been dissipated by the day. The dishwashing machine persists. We discuss diverse topics. Day parole; circumcision, five burned bodies in Stratford prison, Chanouka and bla bla. Much discussed, little resolved. Prison inevitability.

Four-thirty 'til six o'clock I closet myself in my room. Gaze at the mess: dust, books, papers, unfinished art work. Remnants of creative intentions. I call my room 'my studio' and ask if I can rent the room next door to house the overflow. They laugh. I don't. Looking round I understand why I was never invited to become anyone's wife. Cool, I never invited anyone to become my husband.

11:10 Rush, hustle, mail-time mayhem. Join the throng of expectant women. Tense. Anticipating. Holding my breath. But the matron shakes her head. "Not today." Oh well, it was nice to have known him, to have had his baby.

My friends who have mail share their news. "My mother sent me money, far out!" "The fucker, I knew he'd do it." "They say it's cold in

6. Many women spend a considerable period of time incarcerated on remand until disposition of their case. Negative feelings are engendered for having served "dead time" once they finally receive a sentence to incarceration.

7. Too many women receive sentences of incarceration.

Many could be diverted out of the criminal justice system, either at the pre or post-trial stage (for instance, those who are neither violent nor deeply involved in crime). Others could receive alternate sanctions such as fines, probation, restitutions.

8. There is no apparent coordination of documentation and files which results in:

- (a) pertinent information and files not moving with women through the criminal justice system;
- (b) multiplicity of files;
- (c) no comprehensive picture of the offender and her situation;
- (d) poor assessment of her needs.

INSTITUTIONS

To plan for the future it is important to look at the present situation.

The only federal penitentiary for female offenders is the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario.

Drawbacks

1. Removes females from home territory, family, and friends.
2. A woman may lose civil rights if outside the province in which civil action is being taken which involves matters such as: divorce, custody of children, property claims, etc.
3. It is difficult to make plans for release which should involve community resources.
4. The prison program is inadequate.
5. The structure of the building is unsuitable and contributes to many of the problems experienced by staff and inmates.
6. No classification for the more criminally sophisticated, and there-

more no protection for the less criminally sophisticated.

7. Prevents French speaking women from communication in their mother tongue.

Staff

1. The building contributes to the inefficient use of staff potential.
2. Correctional staff are not sufficiently recognized as an important and integral part of the staff team.
3. Staff orientation, supervision, evaluation, and development are undefined or, if stated, are ignored.
4. Career opportunities for the most part are limited.

Physical facilities

Many institutions are old, poorly located and depressingly inflexible for the needs they must serve.

Staff (see Appendix B for further statements)

1. The majority of institutions are seriously understaffed.
2. Correctional staff are not sufficiently recognized as an important and integral part of the staff team.
3. Staff orientation, supervision, evaluation, and development are undefined or stated but ignored.
4. Salaries and career opportunities for the most part are limited.

Program

1. Difficult to have effective programs when the number of inmates is small, needs are conflicting, and length of sentence is widely varied, most quite short.
2. Programming tends to be limited by the security needs of those requiring security institutions.
3. Programs vary widely in different institutions, some with full programs involving community resources, others with minimal programs and little or no community involvement.
4. Some female institutions have struggled to overcome many of the foregoing problems with varying degrees of success.

PRIOR TO AND AT ARREST

1. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the early detection of children facing problems which may contribute to delinquency, and the provision of a better team-work approach to meet the needs of these children.
2. More pre-trial diversionary programs should be instituted on an experimental basis with full evaluation.
3. Alternatives to formal court adversary hearings for minor offences should be investigated.
4. Attention should be paid to women at the time of their arrest to assure them that, if necessary, arrangements will be made to see their children are cared for.

Amsterdam."

11:30 LUNCH! The call is muted through the noisy hallway. I take my hunger to the dining-room and try to still it with food. But it falls again. Futile exercise. For the seven-hundred-and-thirtieth time.

Relax in room? Close my eyes and . . . "Caro, can I borrow your . . . ?" "Caro, will you make me a . . . ?" "Caro, guess what . . . ?"

Escape . . . but where to? Gotta get away! (But that's not even the solution. You see, I really love the company.)

1:00 Back in the School again I try to make the effort. But it's hard to work up the enthusiasm. I'm called to see The Man. He says:

"We notice recently that you're becoming aggressive, selfish, self-centered, not humble enough, losing your femininity, bla bla."

I listen patiently and think . . . 'that's the stuff presidents are made of, not women; prisoners, inmates!'

Back in the School again I drift off into my head. An idea sparks, fires the cells that work the muscles that boost me into action. Get to the typewriter, flex my fingers, crank up my mind, and go . . .

6:00 Wednesday evenings are the best of the week. International Culture Group. We link up with members of the International Centre of the local university. Good people. All men. Makes the week worth living through. The group lasts through 'til 9:45. We bid farewell at that point. They leave. We stay.

10:00 MEDICATION! The call is answered by voices yelling back, "Dope, come and get your dope." Medication for the Nation! For the zillionth time. Strange, it isn't funny any more.

11:00 IT'S THAT TIME, GIRLS . . . LOCK UP! I don't mind locking up, but I do mind being called a 'girl'. I wonder if they call the guys in the men's joints, 'boys'?

It's quiet now. Really still. Hardly a sound. An occasional sleepy moan. I sit at my table, pen in hand and start my night's work. Write down some words. Paint a picture. Design some embroidery. Listen to the classical music on my radio. Relax a while. Try to work it all out.

1:30 Hit the sack. Sleep. The only way to cheat the government. It's like you're not even doing time when you're sleeping.

Caro Walters

—reprinted from *Women's Pen*

5. Except where it is prejudicial to the administration of justice, only female personnel should search women. Internal searches should be carried out by medically trained personnel only.

6. An examination of fitness to stand trial or a pre-sentence psychiatric assessment should take place in the community if possible. If there is a likelihood of a further act of violence, it is expected that examination in the community would properly not be considered.

7. All lock-up facilities should provide decent overnight accommodation with reasonable privacy. Women should always be attended by female staff. There should be medical and social personnel on call for police departments.

ADULTS CHARGED

1964 AND 1974, CANADA

Source: Statistics Canada,

Crime Statistics (85-205)

OFFENCE	1964		1974		% CHANGE 1974/1964	
	Females (No.)	Males (No.)	Females (No.)	Males (No.)	Females (%)	Males (%)
Murder/Manslaughter	22	174	73	417	232	140
Attempted Murder/Wounding	70	495	203	1,219	190	146
Rape/Other Sexual Offences	32	3,101	25	3,763	(-22)	21
Assaults	801	15,711	2,537	28,782	217	83
Robbery	95	2,097	302	4,674	218	123
Breaking & Entering	244	12,914	923	25,978	278	101
Theft	4,373	27,652	16,453	52,296	276	89
Fraud	938	9,199	3,811	14,641	306	59
Prostitution	1,321	647	2,382	630	80	(-3)
Other Criminal Code	4,793	52,685	8,366	84,625	75	61
Total Criminal Code	12,689	124,675	35,075	217,025	176	74
Federal Statutes — Drugs	171	323	4,811	42,822	2,713*	13,158*
Other Federal Statutes	1,232	19,886	1,526	19,171	24	(-4)
Provincial Statutes	16,701	200,541	15,856	240,509	(-5)	20
Municipal By-Laws	2,828	30,050	3,295	25,585	17	(-15)
TOTAL	33,621	375,475	60,560	545,112	80	45

* The dramatic increase in federal statutes — drug offences reflect an increased usage as well as an increase in law enforcement activity and changes in the statistical reporting system.

JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT ON INDIAN WOMEN ANNOUNCED



The Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the National Committee of Indian Rights for Indian Women today announced that they will co-operate in a research study into the extent of discrimination against Indian women.

Under the Indian Act, an Indian woman who married a non-Indian or a non-status Indian man automatically loses her Indian Status and all the special rights to which status Indians are entitled. Indian men who marry non-Indian women do not lose their status.

The National Committee of Indian Rights for Indian Women and the Advisory Council have consistently called for the repeal of this section of the Indian Act and have also urged that the new federal Human Rights Act should not allow this discrimination against Indian women to continue.

Indian Rights for Indian Women, a national association of Indian women, was established to regain for Indian women the equality of rights and privileges which they originally had with Indian men. Specifically, I.R.I.W. wants to ensure that under the new Indian Act, due in 1980, all Indian women are accorded the same rights and privileges as all Indian men.

Although the federal government is consulting with the National Indian Brotherhood in drafting the new act, I.R.I.W. says that enfranchised native women have no voice in these consultations.

Indian Rights for Indian Women is embarking on a three-year research project to document the past and present position of Indian women and their families under the Indian Act. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women will undertake to study the social and economic framework under which present government policy was developed and the implications for the position of Indian women.

The Council says that its participation in this project is in line with its continuing efforts to improve the status of all Canadian women.

For further information contact: Jenny Margetts, President, Indian Rights for Indian Women, Beacon Arms Hotel, Ottawa (613) 235-1413, Edmonton (403) 453-2808

NAC PRESS RELEASE

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has appealed to the Senate Committee presently examining the Human Rights Legislation, to stop discrimination against native women.

The current legislation (Bill C-25) now before the Senate Committee, makes discrimination on the basis of sex unlawful. However, it does not protect native Indian women who marry non-status Indians or white men.

The Indian Act, which is excepted from the current Human Rights Legislation, still prevents these women from having any status or treaty rights if they marry non-status Indians or whites. However, an Indian man who marries a white woman does not lose either his status or his treaty rights.

"Indian women could have been protected by this new bill," NAC President Kay Macpherson said in Toronto. "However, the government has chosen to wait until the Indian Act is revised before considering this conspicuous form of discrimination based on sex."

These non-status Indian women number about 100,000 and really have no recourse under the law. We urge the Senate Committee to provide for their protection against Section 12 of the Indian Act by making the new Human Rights Legislation apply to that Act."

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women is an umbrella organization representing 120 women's groups and over 5 million women in Canada. Among the participating organizations are several native women's groups.



Jenny Margetts with Mary Two Axe Earley at her right addressing politicians in Room 112N, House of Commons, during NAC's Annual Meeting last March.

Caughnawaga
Indian Reserve
Box 614
P. Que.

Dear President Kay:

Please excuse my tardiness in writing you.

First of all I want to thank N.A.C. members in behalf of the Mohawk women of Caughnawaga for speaking out in our behalf while lobbying at the last N.A.C. Conference in Ottawa. You can't imagine how grateful we are to you in knowing that you support our search for justice. This is the first time the Members of Parliament showed any interest in our cause thanks to N.A.C.

The Indian Act is now being revised **hopefully** section 12 B-1 will be amended to give us Native women equality.

I know with your support we will help all the Native women across Canada who are now so oppressed. With women like you helping us we have faith in God and Country.

Yours in Friendship,
Mary Two Axe Earley