

May 1977

MANIFESTO

WE WILL BEAR THE CHILDREN WE CHOOSE TO BEAR: MANIFESTO FOR FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND (translation)

This manifesto, was read to a rally of 1,000 in Montreal, at the conclusion of a demonstration. It was prompted by the attack on abortion rights by the State.

We understand that since the 13th of December, 1976, we have returned to a situation similar to the one which prevailed before 1973, that is to say before the Morgentaler trials began.

It took three years of judicial proceedings, three different trials, three "not-guilty" verdicts for us to realize that Federal Law was not being applied to Quebec....."

We, the women supporting this Manifesto, have had enough of "moral victories". We want concrete victories which will lead women to the power to exercise their right to free abortion on demand.

It is in this spirit that a large number of Quebec Feminist groups are rallied around this Manifesto. And together we intend to carry this struggle to its logical conclusion."

1. Association des Femmes de Radio Canada signed

- 2. A bas de l'Echelle
- 3. Centre d'aide aux victimes de viol de Montreal
- 4. Centre d'Auto Sante pour femmes
- 5. Centre de documentation feministe de Montreal
- 6. Centre de Sante de femmes de quartier
- 7. Comite de Condition feminine de la CSN
- 8. Comite provincial Laure-Gaudreau CFO
- 9. Comite des femmes du Cegep Bois-de-Boulogne
- 10. Comite des femmes du Cegep Maisonneuve
- 11. Comite de lute pour l'avortement libre et gratuit
- 12. Co-op femmes de Montreal
- 13. Les Editions de la Pleine Lune
- 14. Les Editions du Remue-Menage
- 15. Journal Les Tetes de Poiche
- 16. Libraire des Femmes d'Ici
- 17. Maison des femmes de Montreal
- 18. Maison des femmes de Quebec
- 19. New Woman Center (Centre de la Femme nouvelle)
- 20. Services juridiques Coup de pouce pour elles Inc.
- 21. Sir George Women's Union
- 22. Theatre des Cuisines



Montreal, March 1977

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL THE WOMEN OF QUEBEC WHO WISH TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO FREELY AND WITHOUT COST, IN THEIR MILIEU, IN THEIR LANGUAGE, UNDER GOOD MEDICAL CONDITIONS, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION OF CLASS, NATIONALITY, RACE OR AGE.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO ABORT MAY DO SO FREELY: ... because the present law forbids us to have abortions except in exceptional case and on conditions that we obtain permission from the "Therapeutic Committees", these "Mini-tribunals" whose role is to prevent us from making our own decisions about abortion.

WE DEMAND FREE ABORTION BECAUSE IT IS OUR RIGHT TO REFUSE UNWANTED PREGNANCIES. WE DENOUNCE THE EXISTENCE OF THESE COMMITTEES BECAUSE WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH!

- ... of having to beg for permission to abort legally, ie to have to prove that our health is in danger, that we are too weak, too sick, too crazy or too poor to have a child.
- ... of having to queue up before the doors of the rare hospitals that have "therapeutic committees" to beg them to take our "cases into consideration.
- ... of having to prove, one to one, alone and isolated, that we are an exception and that we merit the privilege of a therapeutic abortion, when in fact, we are amongst 10,000 to 25,000 who have abortions each year.
- ... of having to struggle alone and isolated against the hospital bureaucracies, of dealing with refusals, delays, sermons, inquiries, being treated like ignorant, irresponsible, egotistical, easy women, if not criminals; and for the majority of us, to be forced to endure back street abortions, taking all the risks, at the cost of our time, our money our health and our lives.
- ... of our shame, our fear, and our humiliation.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO WITHOUT COST.: BECAUSE WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH .....

- ... OF A SITUATION WHERE ONLY THOSE AMONGST US WITH MONEY CAN GET ABORTIONS EASILY.
- ... of getting into debt to pay for an abortion
- ... of putting out money for abortions even though we pay for medical insurance



...of our money being pocketed under the table by agencies and charlatans profiting from the situation.

WE DEMAND FREE ABORTION BECAUSE WE CANNOT ABORT ON DEMAND AND WE MUST PAY FOR IT.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO INTERRUPT A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO IN THEIR MILIEU

...because the situation now obliges those amongst us who come from the Gaspé, Lac St. Jean, Abitibi etc., to leave their homes and travel many hours on a bus and have their abortions alone in a strange city like Montreal, or even to leave their country and go to the United States.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO INTERRUPT A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.

...because presently in Quebec, Francophone hospitals do less than 5% of the abortions, while 80% of the population is Francophone.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO INTERRUPT A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO IN GOOD MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

...BECAUSE WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH of risking hemorrhage, infection, incomplete abortion, sterility and even death because of the present law.

...BECAUSE WE REFUSE TO ACCEPT that those amongst us whose lives are threatened by an unwanted pregnancy may not get them because of partiality, inefficiency, or simply the absence of Therapeutic Committees in Quebec.

...BECAUSE WE WANT NO MORE of those amongst us who succeed in getting legal abortions being uselessly confined in hospitals. We refuse this as long as the shortage of beds, personnel, competent doctors becomes a pretext used by hospital administrations for not performing abortions, or limiting their numbers.

...because we have had enough of being obliged to abort at lucrative American agencies, with all the risks of negligence that this implies; of illegal abortions in doctors' offices where no one is responsible to anyone; of putting our lives in the hands of incompetent and unscrupulous charlatans, or to be reduced to induce our own abortions because of poverty.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL THOSE QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION OF CLASS, RACE OR AGE.

...because we reject that those who have the least money, resources and access to information must pay more or bring unwanted children into the world.

WE ARE STRUGGLING SO THAT ALL THOSE QUEBECOIS WOMEN WHO WISH TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY MAY DO SO WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION.

...because in 1973, for example, under the same federal law, in B.C. for a population of 2.3 million people, 9,176 therapeutic abortions; in Ontario, population 7.3 million there were 22,603 abortions. In Quebec, for a population of 6 millions there were 3,141 therapeutic abortions obtained.

...because in 1975, in the 14 hospitals in Quebec which perform abortions, only 6 are Francophone, and these six hospitals performed a total of 239 abortions out of a total of 5,657.

AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS SITUATION

WE DEMAND OF THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

1. To force the federal government to repeal the Canadian abortion law; ie REMOVE ARTICLES 251 and 252 FROM THE CRIMINAL CODE.
2. TO IMMEDIATELY SET UP services so that women can have access to abortion on demand.
3. To make abortions payable by Quebec Medical Insurance IMMEDIATELY

For us the struggle of women for free abortion on demand is part of a larger struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation which we experience daily. Since we are fighting not only for the fight to refuse unwanted pregnancies, but also for the right to bring all the children we wish into the world without being forced to have abortions because of our jobs or living conditions.

WE DEMAND OF THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT THAT IT TAKE STEPS TO ASSURE

1. The creation of clinics which are easily accessible, and community controlled, clinics which dispense free information on sexuality, contraception and abortion ALL OVER QUEBEC.
  2. Information on sexuality and birth control be distributed in all schools
  3. Free contraception for the entire population
- FINALLY that they take steps to improve the conditions under which we decide to have children ie. amongst others
1. Paid maternity leaves for at least 20 weeks, without loss of seniority or benefits.
  2. Free daycare--controlled by the users--in the neighborhoods and at the workplace.
  3. Equal pay for work of equal value.