

# The International Women's Day Committee



## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 1978**

In 1977, they said that the women's movement was dead. On March 11, 1978, 2,000 women took to the streets of Toronto to prove them wrong. Here, as well as across the Canadian West and in Quebec, women from feminist and political groups, unions and community organizations, women's services and campuses, organized protests for International Women's Day. Since 1908, International Women's Day, March 8, has marked women's struggles for political and social equality in the workplace, in the community and in the home.

In Toronto we united in support of a statement of issues and demands for:

- **Control of Our Bodies** — We need safe, reliable contraception, freely available abortions covered by government health insurance, an end to enforced sterilizations.
- **Childcare** — There are childcare facilities for only 8% of children of working mothers between the ages of infancy and 5 years. We need increased funding for good childcare facilities to meet the present need.
- **Cutbacks in Social Services & Education** — Roll back the cutbacks in both areas. Women are most severely affected by them, both as service workers and as consumers, particularly those on welfare and old age benefits, whose real income increasingly drops below the poverty line. Cutbacks in education mean fewer women can use this avenue to escape job ghettos and wageless housework.
- **Employment** — We demand a stop to the propaganda campaign against women, blaming us for unemployment. 40% of Canadian women, over 15 work for wages. We need equal pay for work of equal value, adequate job training programs, and recognition of work in the home as essential work in our society.
- **Lesbian Rights** — Lesbian women needs basic protection in the Human Rights Code. We demand an end to harassment discrimination on the job, in housing and in the courts.
- **Native, Immigrant and Black Women** — Minority women suffer most from legal, employment, educational, social and sexual discrimination. We need full Native rights for Native women, an end to discrimination in all these areas, and the enactment of non-sexist, non-racist immigration laws and services.
- **Violence Against Women** — Violence against women pervades all areas of our society. While impossible to eradicate overnight, it is possible to help victims now. We need more government-funded hostels and transition houses, an end to unjust rape laws and legal procedures. We demand an end to the victimization of poor women in psychiatric hospitals and prisons. We demand an end to the victimization of prostitutes, body rub parlour workers and topless waitresses.

## We didn't stop there — we continued the fight!

Since March, the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) has continued to meet and discuss how we can best contribute to building a women's movement united in struggle for the needs of the majority of women. Part of our work has been to support women engaged in specific struggles; part to carry on political education and strategic debate about issues vital to the liberation of women.

- **Abortion:** We held a public meeting on the growing attack on women's already limited access to abortion, and on the successful campaign in Montreal for women's health clinics. A women's health collective was established. Recently we picketed against a now defunct bill in the Ontario legislature that would have forced humiliating and stressful lectures and movies on fetal development as a precondition to obtaining an abortion.
- **Strike support:** Strikes by mainly women workers at Fleck and York University (YUSA) have defended women's rights as workers and the right to organize. We helped organize benefits, pickets and rallies in support of these strikes.
- **Unemployment:** We have given support to the Full Employment Coalition's campaign.

## IWDC today — focus on economic issues

In the present cycle of recession, unemployment and inflation in the capitalist economies of the West, women are among those who suffer most. Unemployment rates are higher for women than men and proposed changes in UIC regulations will make it more difficult for women as part-timers and workers in marginal industries to receive benefits. The gap between women's and men's wages was further increased by federal wage controls and has not recovered. In addition, cutbacks in social services mean not just fewer jobs in one of the main women's employment ghettos, but that women must take on the additional burdens imposed on the family by lack of childcare, hospital services and old age care. Even the new networks of women's services — rape crisis centres, hostels for battered women and counselling services — have been slashed, just when women need them most.

All of this, coupled with a whispering campaign to blame working women for causing general unemployment, conspire to push women out of the workforce, into the home, and forced to carry major social burdens.



For all these reasons, the IWDC has decided to focus in the short term on economic issues. Our latest activity has been to throw our energies into building this rally in support of Women Fighting Inco. Their activity shows the unity of women's struggles in the workplace, the community and the home. We think that it also demonstrates how the support of women — as wives and as militants — is crucial to trade union struggles and we hope that the trade unions will be convinced of the necessity of supporting women's struggles in turn.

### **International Women's Day, March 8, 1979**

The IWDC is planning to work with other groups and individuals to build another mass action for the coming International Women's Day.

*We invite all of you interested in our work and/or in helping to organize for this important event to join us in our first meeting of the new year. Come help us create an even larger protest than last year's!*

*Our next meeting is January 3, 1979, 7:30 pm, at University Settlement House, 23 Grange Road (just south of the Art Gallery of Ontario).*

*For more information write to:*

**IWDC  
c/o Fitzgerald  
15 Washington Ave.  
Toronto**

## WOMEN FIGHTING INCO

Wives and families of Sudbury Local 6500 have begun to mobilize in support of the Inco strike. A women's support group, Wives Supporting the Strike, was formed in September to keep up morale among strikers' wives who are faced with the financial and emotional stress of surviving on \$30 in food vouchers per week.

The 12,000 strikers, now into their tenth week, must face a long, cold winter on the picket line. Current Inco stockpiles mean that management will probably not be forced to negotiate until spring when nickel supplies have been reduced. The company's empty contract offer directly attacked previously-won rights. This reality plus probable layoffs in 1979 offered the workers no choice but to go on strike.

The Wive's Committee say it is their strike too. To ease the pressures that the strike causes, the group plans activities such as babysitting co-operatives, car pools, buying food for groups of families, potluck suppers, and neighbourhood entertainment. Committee members have organized these activities by neighbourhood so that every woman can have input into the group and keep informed. Recently, a successful family day on the picket line was organized.

The strikers' wives are not the only Sudbury women affected by the strike. In 1975, Inco hired 100 women in a token gesture to International Women's Year. After last year's layoffs, only 40 women are left and their jobs will be gone in the next layoff.

Sudbury women don't want a repeat of the 1958 strike when church leaders and politicians brought thousands of strikers' wives to a back-to-work rally. Within a month, the strike had ended in humiliating defeat for the union just before Christmas.

Strikers and their families now face the prospect of a bleak Christmas. To express solidarity with the strikers and their families, and to help raise money for their Christmas fund, a benefit rally has been planned for Dec. 8. in O.I.S.E. auditorium, 252 Bloor St. W., at 8 p.m. There will be a \$2 admission charge to cover expenses.

Linda Obonsawain, of the Wives Supporting the Strike Committee, Joan Kuyek, a leader of the Citizens' Strike Support Committee, and Kathy Duhaime, a union member on strike, will speak about the Sudbury situation. There will also be entertainment and a party with a cash bar afterwards.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT:

COME TO THE SOLIDARITY BENEFIT

If you can't come, please send donations to: United Steelworkers Local 6500  
92 Froid Rd. W.  
Sudbury.

Sponsored by Organized Working Women, The International Women's Day Committee, the Ontario Federation of Labour, United Steelworkers Local 6500, and the Ontario New Democratic Party.