

ONTARIO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

NEWSLETTER

February 1977.

P. O. Box 188, Station Q,
Toronto, Ont. M4T 2M1

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The Ontario Committee on the Status of Women will meet on Tuesday, March 8, at 8 p.m. in the Travelers Tower, 400 University Avenue, rooms 508-9. This building is on the southwest corner of University Avenue, one block south of Dundas St. and the TTC St. Patrick station.

People interested in joining our Committee are cordially invited, and OCSW members are encouraged to bring a friend to meet us. Karen Fejer will chair.

(Please note the choice of a Tuesday evening this time, instead of our usual day.)

CURRENT ISSUES

FAMILY LAW REFORM

On December 6, 1976, Irma Melville presented the Ontario Committee's brief on Bill 140 to the Justice Committee of the Ontario Legislature. While supporting the concept of reform of our family law, the brief suggested amendments as follows:

- 1) Inclusion of the principle that child care, household management and financial provision be viewed as the joint and equal legal responsibilities of husbands & wives.
- 2) Removal of "conduct" as a factor in determining the amount of support, on grounds that appeals to "conduct" will:

- a) prevent reconciliation, contribute to bitterness on divorce, and prove a hindrance to making decent arrangements for children.
- b) perpetuate the legal sanction of one spouse's economic power over the other.
- c) offend one's sense of justice.

The brief argued that the purpose of the support obligation should be to aid the economic rehabilitation of a dependent spouse, and not to inflict financial punishment.

Unfortunately, Bill 140 died on the order paper when the Legislature prorogued. Changes in the proposed legislation are being made, apparently. Other aspects to family law reform include equalizing the status of children born in and out of wedlock in matters of estates, and establishing a unified family court system. An experimental unified court will begin operating in Hamilton in July.

The Ontario Committee urges members and all other interested people to write letters stressing the need for quick passage of family law reform with the above amendments. Write to your local MPP c/o Queen's Park, Toronto, and to the Hon. Roy McMurtry, Attorney-General, 18 King St. E., 17th floor, Toronto M5C 1G4.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Last year, federal and provincial officials proposed an amendment to the CPP, the so-called "drop-out clause", to allow contributors who leave the labour force for child-rearing to drop out those months of low or zero earnings from the calculation of their average lifetime earnings for benefit purposes. It would apply for only those years when a parent is caring for a child under 7, and would likely apply mainly to women.

Ontario has opposed the amendment, and this stand in effect vetoes the proposal. The National Action Committee prepared a position paper critical of Ontario's actions. At its January meeting, the Ontario Status of Women Council heard Brigid Munsche present NAC's case for this pension reform, while Wendy Lawrence added support from the Ontario Committee. The provincial Council later called on the Ontario Government to accept the drop-out amendment, calling it "the first opportunity we have had to give economic recognition to women's contribution to the productive output of the country".

DAY CARE

The Ontario Committee continues to be very concerned about the lack of affordable child care services. A 1975 Labour Force Survey revealed that 36% of Ontario women questioned gave lack of satisfactory child care arrangements as their reason for not being in the work force. Meanwhile, a report by the Canadian Council on Social Development charged that there is "little government control or planning" in the field of day care--only partial funding to centres and subsidies to families defined as needy. Locally, 4 day nurseries scheduled to be built in 1976 were not. On February 12, the Toronto Star criticized lack of commitment to day care by the governments of Ontario and Metro Toronto, commenting editorially, "Families shouldn't have to live in poverty just because mothers are the breadwinners."

The OCSW has a need for new members willing to take up the gauntlet on this issue. If interested, call Cathleen Morrison, 483-4785 (evenings).

VISIT TO LYNNE GORDON--Naomi Black, Brigid Munsche, Loreen Joe, Irma Melville, Lorna Marsden, and Wendy Lawrence met with Lynne Gordon in December, soon after her appointment as Chairperson of the Ontario Status of Women Council. There was discussion of mutual concerns, including day care, family planning, family law reform, equal pay for work of equal value, post-secondary education, and homemakers in the CPP.

FAMILY PLANNING AND ABORTION

When the Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law tabled its report in the House of Commons this month, Justice Minister Ron Basford announced that the federal government has no plans at present to change the law. However, the Ontario Committee continues to join the National Action Committee in calling for removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. (Over half the doctors surveyed by the Badgley Committee took this same position.)

The Badgley Report emphasizes the role of provincial governments in the delivery of health care services, and Premier William Davis reacted by setting up a committee to examine the implications for Ontario. The OCSW has sent a letter to the Premier expressing alarm that all appointments to the committee to date have been male doctors. OCSW recommends that the committee be composed of a range of people concerned with abortion, including nurses, those in family planning counselling and education, women doctors, hospital administrators, and women at risk.

Copies of the Badgley Report are available at \$6.75 from Printing & Publishing Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa K1A 0S9, or at book stores. The OCSW Newsletter presents the following summary of some less publicly reported findings of the Badgley Committee.

Application of Current Law--The explicit terms of the Abortion Law were not well known to the public, women seeking abortions, the medical profession, or hospital boards. 2 out of 3 persons in the 1976 national population survey did not know it was legal under any circumstances to obtain a therapeutic abortion in Canada.

The terms of the Abortion Law do not work equitably because some physicians do not handle the issue of abortion in a straightforward manner with their patients. This heightens the level of stress among patients, and extends the length of pregnancies.

0% of Canadians do not live in communities eligible to establish therapeutic abortion committees. In Ontario, 1/3 of the population is not served by eligible hospitals.

Patient health--Abortions could be effectively handled through the principle of regional centres which would bring together the required resources and incorporate into their functions interdisciplinary research efforts. These means might focus on several problems which emerge from the trends on abortion complications. The long-term physical and social consequences of induced abortion for the health of the patient are unknown.

After a pregnant woman's first visit to a physician, there was an average interval of 3 weeks until the abortion was done, which resulted from direct delays in how physicians and hospitals dealt with these patients. This delay increased the risk of health complications.

Patient description--Women having abortions were younger, more were single, and in general they had a higher level of education. Single mothers in comparison to women who had induced abortions tended to have less education and lower incomes. These distinctive social choices represent fundamentally different ways of life and of reacting to a pregnancy. In patient costs, the combined consequences of either the largest fee charges or the most extensive extra-billing involved patients who were the most vulnerable: young women; newcomers to Canada; and the least well educated.

Contraception--One of the central findings was the lack of accurate information that Canadians had about contraception and the precautions which were necessary in the use of birth control measures. More money is spent on paying for the treatment of women who have abortions than on ways of seeking a reduction in their numbers and in providing more effective programs of family planning and sex education.

A sizable number of Canadians have had no formal instruction on the use of contraceptive means. The physician is seen as the chief source of such information, but a majority of doctors now in practice in Canada have had no formal preparation on these issues.

Learning about these methods from all other sources is haphazard: the work of voluntary associations, churches, schools, and public health units had reached about 1 out of 10 individuals. Overall, 4 out of 10 people looked to physicians, but an almost equal number either did not know about the use of contraception or had been informed, or misinformed, by casual sources. Many administrators of public health units felt that sex education programs were inadequate in their regions--expensive and ineffective. There was seldom any co-ordination between these public health programs and the family planning work done in hospitals. Notable by its absence was the role of the mass media.

A substantial number of women used a contraceptive means when conception occurred. By not using contraception, or by not knowing how to use the means which were tried, many Canadians took chances which had profound implications for themselves and for society.

Family Planning and Responsibility--The Canadian people, their health institutions, and the medical profession are responsible for the sharp disparities in how therapeutic abortions are obtained in Canada. The social cost has been the tolerance of widespread and entrenched social inequity for the women involved, and an unreasonable professional burden on some physicians and some hospitals.

FAMILY PLANNING AND ABORTION--Badgley Report Summary (continued)

Responsibility--The critical social choices are between 2 sensitive issues, induced abortion and family planning. When effective contraceptive means are appropriately used, the chances of conception occurring are sharply reduced. The occurrence of abortion may gradually rise unless there are effective changes made in the contraceptive practices of Canadians. These changes may be brought about by increased efforts, and new approaches: through research to find more effective and acceptable methods of contraception and by coordinated family planning programs for public education and health promotion. There is clearly a need for greater public effort and more resources to be allocated by all levels of government and voluntary associations for family planning programs. Ways also must be found to reduce the considerable social inequities which are now associated with obtaining therapeutic abortions in Canada.

OCSW MEMBERS' PERSONAL NOTES

Connie Taylor has been awarded a scholarship from the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. She will pursue an M.A. in the sociology of women and education during 1977-8 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Roselyn Stone's work in physical education was featured in a December article of the University of Toronto Bulletin.

Watch for June Callwood's upcoming interviews with Cathleen Morrison and Irma Melville on the CBC-TV program, In Touch.

NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN--40 St. Clair Ave. E., suite 300, Toronto M4T 1M9. phone 922-3246.

Annual Meeting--The Skyline Hotel, Ottawa is the site of NAC's 1977 Annual Meeting, March 18-20, followed by a lobby of Members of Parliament on Monday, March 21. More than 100 organizations from across the country will send delegates to assess this year's work and to plan future action on the status of women in Canada. The week-end will feature workshops, informal reports from delegates, a banquet with a speaker, displays, and the election of new officers. Of course, one of its most important functions is providing an opportunity for women from all regions of Canada to get together informally between the program activities for an exchange of information and views. Groups wishing to join in time to send delegates to the Annual Meeting may still do so if they act quickly by writing to NAC.

NAC Meets Federal Cabinet Members--On February 17, the Executive of NAC took its concerns to Ministers visiting Toronto. NAC stressed that the wage gap between men and women continues to widen, abetted by increases in wages and salaries being calculated on a percentage basis. The Executive members re-iterated their criticism of the Human Rights Bill (now before Parliament) for relying on conciliation in complaints of discrimination, although NAC expressed overall support for the Bill. NAC also called for comprehensive family planning programs, and repeated its demand that abortion be removed from the Criminal Code, since the law is at present unworkable.

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN--suite 415, 151 Slater St., Ottawa K1P 5H3.

The Executive recently stated that it would make equality in employment its priority concern in fighting discrimination against women. It is seeking funds to support its work. Donations (tax-deductible) are being welcomed.

FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Council has begun a study of the effects of taxation on women, following a research paper, Background Study on Women and the Personal Income Tax System, which documents many areas of discrimination. While it will be making recommendations to the government for reform in the future, the Council recently said that a system of joint taxation of spouses in Canada would be premature because spouses are not yet true economic partners.

The Council has also released recommendations on the one-parent family, which, it emphasizes, is "a permanent feature of Canadian society", and subject to much social and economic stress. Now, 1 in 10 Canadian families is headed by a single parent. Of Canadian families headed by women-- $\frac{1}{4}$ million families--60% live in poverty. Based on principles of the economic rights of individuals, the Council's recommendations involve restructuring the labour market, equal partnership in marriage, and adequate social security.

UPCOMING EVENTS

KATE & ANNA McGARRIGLE--The highly acclaimed singer/songwriters from Montreal will give a concert on March 23 at University of Toronto's Convocation Hall. Their second album is about to be released, while the first appeared on the "best of 1976" lists of several popular music critics.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SENECA COLLEGE SEMINAR SERIES FOR WOMEN--continues as part of its tenth anniversary celebration. Topics are "Women as Consumers" (Mar. 2), Fitness (Mar. 9), and Assertiveness (Mar. 16). Each seminar costs \$3 and runs from 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. For more information and to register, phone 493-4144 (Seneca's Finch Campus, 1750 Finch Ave. E., Willowdale).

WOMEN: THE CHOICE IS YOURS--is a day for free discussion, personal consultation, exhibits and films for women considering staying at home, becoming a volunteer, and/or getting a job. It will be on February 28, from 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. in Ryerson's Learning Resources Centre, 350 Victoria St., Toronto. Some child care can be reserved by calling 595-5273.

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH--A workshop is being planned for April 30 at Humber College, by the Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre. Contact them at 15 Birch Ave., Toronto (925-1155) for more information.

PUBLICATIONS

WOMEN'S PRESS--280 Bloor St. W., suite 305, Toronto. (962-3904)

Toronto reviews have been excellent for The True Story of Ida Johnson, a first novel by Sharon Riis (\$3.25, paper). Members of the Women's Press will present readings from the book on March 13 at 8:30 p.m. in the Playhouse of University College, University of Toronto. (Entrance off St. George St., between Hoskin & Willcocks St.)

Other new offerings from the Press are:

A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women, by Rasmussen, Rasmussen, Savage, & Wheeler (\$8.95, paper).

What is a Girl? What is a Boy?--by Stephanie Waxman, with photo illustrations; for children at the pre- and early reading level. (\$4.95, paper)

FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN--P. O. Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa. Now available are 3 additions in the "Person Papers" series--The Price of Maternity, Taxation Untangled, and Health Hazards at Work. There is also a study, "Women in the Public Service", which shows the continuing concentration of women in certain lower paid jobs.

Part-Time Work in the Canadian Economy--is a report prepared by Marianne Bossen, the Winnipeg economist. It is available from the Publications Division, Labour Canada, Ottawa.

Towards a Positive Image of Women--is the second Annual Report (to April 1976) of the Ontario Status of Women Council, available from the Council at 801 Bay St., 3rd floor, Toronto. (965-1111)

The Black Woman in Canada--Rella Braithwaite has compiled this book profiling 50 black women who have made major contributions to Canadian society. Order at \$5.95 (+ 15¢ postage) from: Black Women in Canada, 268 Centennial Rd., West Hill M1C 1Z9.

MAKARA--is "The Canadian Magazine by Women for People". The editors are seeking material and subscribers. Cost is \$6 a year (individuals; \$10 institutions)--for 6 issues. Send subscription money and/or copies of manuscripts and artwork to MAKARA at 1011 Commercial Dr., Vancouver, B. C.

Women and Therapy--is the Newsletter of the Women's Counselling, Referral & Education Centre, 15 Birch Ave., Toronto. It costs \$1 an issue, or is free to Associate Members, who contribute \$5 yearly.

Health: The Family Planning Factor--points out the risks of bearing children too early or late in life, too close together, or in too great numbers. The report costs \$2 from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington D. C. 20036.

NEWS BRIEFS

Marc Lalonde, federal Minister responsible for the status of women, said in a speech recently that the salaries of working women are not just used to buy "family extras". He pointed out that 43% of working women are single, separated or divorced, and frequently support dependents.

A Task Force on Affirmative Action has completed its report for the Toronto Board of Education. The Board will discuss the Report in March.

Cecilia Wallace, founder of the Canadian wing of the Catholic feminist organization St. Joan's Alliance, has announced that she will leave the Church because of its attitude to women. Her decision follows Pope Paul's statement that women cannot be ordained.



Latent content in this comic strip? You bet! But for once we're not worried about sexism. We're trying to get your attention: WE NEED GNU HANDS to tackle OCSW projects. There's lots of scope for action right now, so why not join Barb, Joan and Shirley with their stampede--volunteer to work for improvements in the status of women in Ontario. Join us at our March 8 meeting and sign up then. Or, if you can't wait, contact the following:

Day care
Family law reform
Family planning
Employment
Social services
Education
Human rights
Canada Pension Plan
Media
Membership
Mail-outs
Newsletter

Cathleen Morrison
Irma Melville
Pat Lundie
Lorna Marsden
Marjorie Cohen
Connie Taylor
Joan Laird
Brigid Munsche
Loreen Joe
Doreen Birchmore
Marilyn Boynton
Wendy Lawrence

483-4785
294-5762
445-6778
925-1896
653-2488
291-1586
483-6825
533-2194
759-6182
889-7494
494-2391
966-3815

Let's get out of the corral and get hoofing!

ONTARIO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It's time to renew your membership for 1977, or join us as a new member. If you can't give us your time, then at least give us your money (please)!

Send the form below to:

Doreen Birchmore,
175 Brentcliffe Road,
Toronto M4G 3Z1.

I would like to become an OCSW member and enclose \$3 _____

I am already a member, and want to renew for \$3 _____

I am interested in _____

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____

P. S. -- Do we have a complete and up-to-date address for you? We want you to continue reading our Newsletter, so keep in touch. Let us know if you move.

February, 1977