

ONTARIO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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

April, 1976.

NEWSLETTER

COMMITTEE ACTION

SOCIAL SERVICES

In March, Minister of Community and Social Services James Taylor announced new regulations for claimants of benefits under the Ontario General Welfare Assistance Act. As of April 1, mothers may sacrifice their right to assistance unless they accept employment outside the home (whether full-time, part-time, or seasonal) if child-care arrangements are available. Decisions about suitable jobs and child-care will be made at the discretion of municipal welfare officers. This retrograde step was taken under the guise of equalizing the status of male and female welfare recipients. The OCSW Steering Committee immediately cabled Premier William Davis and the Hon. James Taylor: "We protest the proposal that many women be forced to accept work under intolerable conditions. Rather than providing opportunities to poor women, this punitive and callous proposal will reinforce the disadvantaged position of these women and their children in our society. At present there are: (1) inadequate child care for current demand, (2) lower pay and fewer job opportunities for women, (3) inadequate job training opportunities. If mothers now dependent on income support will be required to participate in the labour force, obviously these conditions must be changed. Instituting policies of restricted spending in social services while simultaneously increasing the need for such services appears short-sighted and contradictory. Claims of government savings are questionable. We are outraged at remarks attributed to the Hon. James Taylor which degrade mothering. Child rearing is a meaningful and productive occupation in our society. We believe that parents should have a basic right to assume the responsibility for child care." Copies were sent to Opposition Leader Stephen Lewis and Liberal Leader Dr Stuart Smith, as well as the Globe and Mail and the Ontario Status of Women Council. Chairperson Laura Sabia read the telegram at a public meeting of the Council held to discuss women and welfare. Later in March, Cathleen Morrison presented the OCSW's case against the restrictive new welfare measures at a Queen's Park protest organized by the Mother-Led Union. OCSW action on this continues.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

In the fall of 1975, an OCSW delegation met with the newly-appointed Minister of Labour, Dr. Bette Stephenson, to put forward our continuing concerns under her jurisdiction. Among recommendations were: implementation of "equal pay for work of equal value", equalization of pensions and benefits; other amendments to labour legislation; publication of Employment Standards cases and decisions; improved co-ordination between the Ministry of Labour and its regulatory bodies and agencies; ensuring of fair wages and the right to unionize for government employees by phasing out sub-contracting for services. The case of the Queen's Park cleaning workers was discussed in detail.

Accordingly, the OCSW sent representatives to Minister of Government Services Margaret Scrivener. In February, the group conveyed to the Minister recommendations arising from the situation of the sub-contracted cleaners. Observing that sub-contracting undermines collective bargaining and leads to exploitative wages and working conditions, the OCSW again asked for phasing out of sub-contracting in favour of hiring of service workers directly, with guarantees of genuine fair wage guidelines, equality in job opportunities and remuneration, protection against deterioration of working conditions, and job security.

Pat Lundie and Cathleen Morrison later visited Margaret Campbell, Toronto Liberal MPP, about these issues.

PART-TIME WORK

A letter has been sent to the Minister of Labour asking for a Task Force to study part-time employment. Ev Bayefsky recently attended a Washington conference on the subject. Our sub-committee could use more willing hands; contact Madeleine McDowell at 767-7633.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Until May 15, the Ontario Human Rights Commission is seeking briefs from the public about changes in the Code. It can be contacted at 400 University Avenue, Toronto M7A 1T7.

The OCSW has been studying the Commission's operations for some time, especially in relation to the case of the women cleaners at Queen's Park. A delegation led by Pat Lundie met with the Executive Secretary to discuss the Commission's complaint-handling procedures and statistics-gathering. Joan Laird and Connie Taylor report that the OCSW brief to the Commission is almost ready for submission. It will deal with uniform wording throughout the Code on sex and marital status, the need for a method of monitoring the progress of a complaint under investigation, the educational function of the Commission, and other issues. Research for the brief disclosed that, of over 6,000 complaints made under the Code since 1972, only one case claiming discrimination for sex or marital status reached the Board of Inquiry stage.

FAMILY PROPERTY LAW

Irma Melville reports that a letter to the Attorney-General reiterating the OCSW position in favour of family property law reform has not yet been answered. Proposed changes mentioned in the Ontario Speech from the Throne have not yet been disclosed. Our members are asked to write again to MPPs and the Attorney-General recommending: (1) co-ownership of the matrimonial home; (2) dealing with prop-erty, support and custody in one action; (3) equal sharing of all assets accumulated during marriage, and recognition of the contribution by the spouse with responsibility for child-rearing and home management; (4) abolition of "fault" with respect to support obligations; (5) abolition of dum caste, dower, and curtesy rights. The subcommittee continues with further action.

BATTERED WIVES

In preparation of a brief to Attorney-General Roy McMurtry on battered wives, Connie Taylor joined Trudy Don of Interval House and lawyer Lynn King on a visit to Metro Police Chief Adamson's Executive Officer to discuss police treatment of domestic disputes. As a result, the police will take a sampling of the number of domestic dispute calls they receive. The women pointed out that, although the law does not distinguish between assault by a stranger on the street and assault by a spouse in the home, enforcement policy causes difficulty--a woman wishing to lay an assault charge usually finds it necessary to leave home for the safety of herself and her children. A press release issued by Connie Taylor after the meeting brought inquiries centred on the civil rights of the man in this situation (rather than the wife and children). Further meetings with the police are planned, and work on the brief to the Attorney-General continues.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOLISM

Research by Ruth Cooperstock of the Addiction Research Foundation shows that psychotropic (mood-altering) drugs are prescribed twice as often for women as for men, although this does not seem warranted by comparative figures on visits to physicians: such treatment neglects those causes of tensions and anxieties which are rooted in the social environment. Increasing alcoholism among women is another cause for alarm. Therefore, Doreen Birchmore and Joan Barr are looking into the recommendations on women and health that came out of a conference in Ottawa last year.

MEMBERS' PERSONAL NOTES

At the recent convention of the Progressive-Conservative Women's Association of Ontario, Catherine Charlton was elected second Vice-President. Pat Lundie and Irma Melville were invited panel speakers.

"Now It Can Be Told" Nostalgia--By popular request, we present the official publication of the "Ontario Committee Work Song" composed for the First Annual OCSW Follies and rumoured to have been heard as far abroad as Ottawa. An exclusive news leak allows us to identify the demure Follies kick-line as: Irma Melville, Marjorie Cohen, Barbara Jansson, Wendy Lawrence, and Cathleen Morrison (with her grapefruit).

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OCSW WORK SONG

Tune: "They Built the Ship Titanic"

Way back in '67, we thought we had it made
When the government appointed a Commission to our aid.
Oh, they studied our position, and this is what they said:
"WOMEN WANT EQUALITY WITH MEN."

O equal pay, equal pay;
Women want equality with men.
For singles, for wives, for our daughters--better lives.
(Yes, our) WOMEN WANT EQUALITY WITH MEN.

Now the public isn't ready, our critics loved to say
When we started our committee, and it's still the same today.
Guindon, MacBeth, and Stephenson by trip the primrose way,
And WE"LL STILL CHOOSE EQUALITY WITH MEN.

O equal say, equal pay;
We'll still choose equality with men.
For singles, for wives, for our daughters--better lives.
(Yes) WE"LL STILL CHOOSE EQUALITY WITH MEN.

Fair practice in the work-place, and partnership at home,
Housewives in the Pension Plan, and day care--here we come!
We'll look for a commitment; we'll press until we've won.
And WE"RE OUT TO WIN EQUALITY WITH MEN.

O equal say, equal pay;
We're out to win equality with men.
For singles, for wives, for our daughters--better lives.
(Yes) WE'RE OUT TO WIN EQUALITY WITH MEN.

NEWS FROM GOVERNMENT

PROVINCIAL

The general minimum wage in Ontario is now \$2.65 an hour.

The final report of the Provincial Advisory Council on Day-care is available from the Hon. James Taylor, Minister of Community and Social Services, Queen's Park, Toronto M7A 1E9. Recommendations and concerns involve inter-ministerial co-operation; innovative programme and demonstration project funding (day-care centres with infant care, units for the handicapped and satellite private home care); special problems of native and Francophone people. The Council requests that its records and files be kept within the Day Nurseries Unit. A previous Council report recommended against the lowering of staff-to-child ratios in centres, and remarked on a gap between local needs and provincial policy-making. Early termination of the Council leaves many questions about day-care unresolved.

FEDERAL

Bill C-52--passed in December 1975. It provides equal pension rights in the federal public service, RCMP, Armed Forces, and for MPs.

Bill C-20--has since equalized the position of women in citizenship.

Bill C-71 (Criminal Code amendments)--Women have cause for concern about the provisions for rape, where "of previously chaste character" still applies to the victim, and corroboration of evidence is required.

Bill C-72 (Canadian Human Rights Act)--While action to guarantee the human rights of Canadian citizens is commendable, NAC and the Federal Advisory Council have suggested changes in the government's proposals. Of particular concern are provisions on employment, powers of the Human Rights Commission, protecting individual privacy, and the Indian Act. (See NAC)

NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE, 121 Avenue Road, Toronto M5R 2G3; phone 922-3246. Annual Meeting--From April 23-6, NAC delegates and observers will be in Ottawa to consider "After IWY--What Next?" Workshops will set priorities for this new phase in pressing for women's equality in Canada, and a Parliamentary lobby will follow. Dr. Katie Cooke will address the meeting on the theme "Women Hold Up Half the Sky". OCSW nominations for next year's NAC executive positions are: Lorna Marsden (President), Cathleen Morrison (Secretary), Audrey Orr (Treasurer). Marjorie Cohen and Wendy Lawrence will represent us as voting delegates, while among other members planning to attend are Shelley Finson, Irma Melville, and Connie Taylor. Human Rights--A NAC delegation headed by Laurell Ritchie met in February with Minister of Justice Ron Basford to encourage changes in the government's Bill C-72. They stressed weaknesses in the proposed legislation, such as: emphasis on conciliation, lack of strong enforcement mechanisms, and loop-holes for employers regarding equality of remuneration.

NAC's position advocating removal of abortion from the Criminal Code was also raised; the Minister pointed out that the Badgeley Commission will report this summer on the state of abortion in Canada.

Another NAC delegation met Minister of National Health and Welfare Marc Lalonde to review social security policy. Elizabeth Burrows claimed that capital seed money is an "essential precondition" for adequate children's services, but was told that such funds will not be forthcoming federally to assist in the development of children's services. NAC representatives also promoted tax revisions (including increased but taxable family allowances), broader access to child-care programmes, and improved support services to single mothers.

COALITION AGAINST THE CUTBACKS--15 Birch Ave., Toronto. 925-3137

The OCSW has endorsed this group in its fight against decreased provincial social services. The Coalition sponsored a protest rally at Queen's Park on April 3.

YWCA--The Y is providing a home for free "Well-Being Interviews" in which a woman can speak with an interviewer about herself--"concerns, hopes, dreams, fears, angers"--and receive encouragement. Telephone follow-up is part of the project. For information or an appointment, call the Y at 762-8169 (west); 466-9878 (east); or 487-7151 (north).

Tutors are needed for sole-support mothers upgrading their English and math in a Y programme. If wishing to volunteer, call Deb Dufresne at 482-6398.

RAPE CRIMES CENTRE--P.O. Box 6597, Station A, Toronto; 368-8383.

Speaking to an OCSW meeting, Diane Webber appealed for more volunteers to work with the centre, especially over the summer. (Training is provided.) The Centre is continuing to ask for police sensitivity training about rape. Long-term funding is a problem; the staff of plus 25-40 volunteers handles many phone inquiries and speaking engagements. Webber was asked for an opinion of the film How to Say No to a Rapist, and she agreed with OCSW members critical of it. Instead, the Centre workers recommend the pamphlet Rape: The Crime Against Women (\$1.00), and the film Rape Alert, available from the Rape Crimes Centre.

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN--has been formed with the general aim of bringing about a better understanding of women's role in Canadian society. Dr. Pauline Jewett is President. Plans for the non-profit charitable organization are to encourage research by professionals and publish the results widely.

WOMEN'S COUNSELLING, REFERRAL AND INFORMATION CENTRE, 15 Birch Ave., Toronto; 925-3137.--has information related to women's activities and interests; facilities may be rented by groups. Call 925-1154 for information referral.

Newsletter--You may subscribe to the newsy monthly for \$3 (individual) or \$10 (group or institution). Items are also welcome. Write to P. O. Box 189, Station A, Toronto.

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NEWS FROM OTHER GROUPS

METRO TORONTO WOMEN'S CREDIT UNION, 615 Yonge St., #401, Toronto; 960-0322.

It is open Thursday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. to accept deposits of \$5 and up. Loans of \$100 to \$500 are available to women.

SELF-START--is a new free job-counselling service in Scarborough, 4028 Sheppard Ave. E. (near Kennedy); 291-2186. Hours are Mon. to Thurs., 9-5; Friday, 9 to noon.

3 OF CUPS--20 Scadding Square, Toronto; 532-9047.

Open Saturdays, 8-12 midnight, this women's coffee house offers feminist entertainment. Admission is \$2.; \$1 for members.

EVENTS--AROUND AND ABOUT

WOMEN ON THEIR OWN--Humber College Centre for Women will hold a day-long session of workshops, discussion and entertainment around such topics as handling finances, coping with loneliness, creative widowhood, legal problems, etc. It will begin at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 15, at Runnymede Neighbourhood Learning Centre, 569 Jane St. Fee is \$10, though allowances can be made if necessary. Baby-sitting is available. Please register by May 1 with Humber College, P. O. Box 1900, Rexdale M9W 5L7; phone 676-1200, extension 541-542.

FEMINIST WEEK-END--A women's collective is organizing this as "a time to reflect on our political work and lives". It will be held May 21-3 at Cedar Glen Camp, Bolton. A fee includes meals and accommodation; day care can be arranged. Please register by April 30 with Eve Zaremba, 30 Sword St., Toronto; call Chris or Sally at 925-1154 for more information.

QUOTES

--"1975 was a year to reconnoitre. Now we know the terrain. 1976 is our year to move ahead." (Shevidan College Women's News.)

--"Behold the turtle: she makes progress only when she sticks her neck out." (Humber College Centre for Women Newsmagazine)

--CUPE President Grace Hartman-- recently criticized the federal anti-inflation programme, maintaining that percentage increases always discriminate against women, who are clustered around the low-paying job sectors. She advocated that women workers claim across-the-board dollar wage increases.

BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS, RECORDS, FILMS...

WOMEN'S BUREAU, Ontario Ministry of Labour, 400 University Ave., Toronto M7A 1T7; 965-1537. Fact sheets on women have been prepared and may be ordered singly or in quantity. 6 topics in the series are: education, women in the labour force; child-care; labour unions; labour law in action; basic facts.

BACKGROUND NOTES on Matrimonial Property Rights, and Jurisdiction in Family Law--are free pamphlets from the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa K1P 5R5.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE--A free pamphlet from Agriculture Canada, Ottawa, describes work in all agricultural sectors from farming to research.

WOMEN IN THE CBC--The Task Force report, including recommendations, costs \$3 from Learning Systems Division, CBC, 415 Yonge St., Toronto.

THIS IS OUR WORK--A booklet for elementary grades, presents 20 women in non-traditional jobs. \$1 each, 50¢ each for children on bulk orders over 10 copies--from Newfoundland Status of Women Council, P. O. Box 6072, St. John's, Newfoundland A1C 5X8.

YUKON WOMEN--is a new book by Yukon Status of Women. To order, send \$2.64 to Tracey Read, Box 4456, Whitehorse, Yukon.

WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN MOSAIC--A collection of articles edited by Gwen Matheson costs \$5.95 from Peter Martin Associates, 35 Britain St., Toronto; 363-2071.

THE VISIBLE WOMAN--is a booklet on history, with a bibliography on women's rights. Order at 25¢ each from Federation of Women Teachers Associations of Ontario, 1260 Bay St., 3rd floor, Toronto M5R 2B8.

A MATTER OF CHOICE and THE VISIBLE WOMAN--are 2 films available also from the Federation of Women Teachers.

ONTARIO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN MEMBERSHIP

The OCSW is a Toronto-based group formed in 1972 to press actively for the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women. Affiliated with the National Action Committee, the OCSW is composed of women from a variety of occupations and associations. Work takes place in action subcommittees; general meetings are held six times a year. Although there is no formal membership fee, the OCSW asks for \$3 yearly per person or group, to defray the cost of its activities.

Clip and send to:

Ontario Committee on the Status of Women,
c/o Doreen Birchmore,
Donwood Institute,
175 Brentcliffe 1.,
Toronto M4G 3Z1.

I am renewing my membership and enclose \$3.00 _____

I would like to become a member and enclose \$3.00 _____

I am interested in _____

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____

April 1976