

**"AN ARROW AIMED AT THE HEART"
THE VANCOUVER WOMEN'S CAUCUS
AND THE ABORTION CAMPAIGN
1969-1971**

by

FRANCES JANE WASSERLEIN

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APPROVAL

NAME: WASSERLEIN, Frances Jane

DEGREE: Master of Arts (History)

TITLE OF THESIS: "An Arrow Aimed at the Heart"
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EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Professor David Ross.

Professor Veronica Strong-Boag
Senior Supervisor
Professor of History

Professor Allen Seager
Associate Professor of History

Professor Robin Fisher
Professor of History

Professor Arlene Tigar McLaren
External Examiner
Associate Professor, Sociology

DATE APPROVED: June 8, 1990

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"An Arrow Aimed at the Heart" - The Vancouver Women's
Caucus and the Abortion Campaign 1969-1971

Author:

(signature)

Frances Jane Wasserlein

(name)

June 8, 1990

(date)

ABSTRACT

This study of the Vancouver Women's Caucus (1968-1971), the first Women's Liberation Movement organization in British Columbia, is based on interviews with members of that group, and participants in the Abortion Caravan of April-May 1970. The surviving papers of the organization, newspapers and magazines, and other documentary sources were used, with the interviews, to provide an account of the formation of the Women's Caucus. The Women's Caucus members engaged in work on a wide variety of issues arising from women's situation in society, among them employment related concerns, the education of girls and women, reproductive choice and access to childcare. To be a Women's Liberationist in British Columbia in the period of this study was to consider the situation of women from a class-based perspective, and Women's Caucus members' experience and study made it clear that women without economic resources did not have equal access to the means to control their own reproductive capacity. The Abortion Campaign and Caravan of 1969-1970 were organized by the Vancouver Women's Caucus to demand the decriminalization of abortion, equal access to health services, and the development of safe and reliable methods of birth control.

The thesis is introduced with a brief discussion of the methodology of the study, and a review of the existing literature on the Women's Liberation Movement in Canada. The first chapter provides an examination of the history of the Canadian movement for reform of laws regulating access to birth control information and products and to abortion. The second chapter comprises a description of some of the members and supporters of the Women's Caucus, their personal and political backgrounds and how they came to the Women's Caucus. The third chapter presents a chronological history of the development of both the Women's Caucus and its work. Chapter Four provides an account of the Abortion Campaign and the Abortion Caravan.

The thesis concludes, in Chapter Five, that the Caravan put Women's Liberationists in the forefront of political organizing centring on access to and education

about abortion and birth control, and in so doing changed the ground on which that struggle takes place. The Abortion Caravan, with its cross country impact, laid the foundations for the 20 year nation-wide struggle for the removal of criminal sanctions on abortion, and the broad based coalition which has consistently and persistently voiced the demands for change.

IN MEMORIAM

Pat Smith (1950 - 1985)

Barbara Hayman (1946 - 1988)

Renate Shearer (1935 - 1988)

Helen T. Wasserlein (1925 - 1989)

She will always carry on
Something is lost
Something is found
They will keep on speaking her name
Some things change
Some stay the same.

Hymn to Her - Chrissie Hynde

DEDICATION

This work would not have been possible without the ready cooperation, and willingness to dredge up both memories and paper, of members and supporters of the Vancouver

Women's Caucus. I dedicate this work to them,
in gratitude for their assistance, and for their contributions to
the Women's Liberation Movement.

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INTRODUCTION

Abortion and birth control have been part of Canada's social and political agenda for many decades. In January 1988 the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged that it is indeed a woman's right to control her own reproductive capacity, recognizing that it "is a profound interference with a woman's body and thus an infringement of security of the person"¹ to use the threat of criminal charges to force a woman to carry a fetus to term. This decision has been viewed as a victory by pro-choice groups who have been working for twenty years for the removal of Criminal Code sections limiting women's decisions about abortion.²

The history of the participation of women's movement-based³ groups in the struggle for the repeal of the abortion sections of the Criminal Code is not well known. In general, the history of popularly based, or grass-roots protest movements in Canada, is, as yet, limited to detailed studies of 19th and 20th century political reform movements and the struggles of working people for collective bargaining rights.⁴ Mid- to late-20th century Canadian social movements have been considered in anthologies, survey textbooks, and monographs.⁵ In general, survey texts of post World War II Canada

¹Chief Justice Brian Dickson, in Shelagh Day and Stan Persky, ed., *The Supreme Court of Canada Decision on Abortion*, (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988), 39.

²"Morgentaler backers jubilant," *The Vancouver Sun*, 28 January 1988, A1; William Boei, "Expect further battles with province, rally told," *The Vancouver Sun*, 29 January 1988, A9; "Crowd Hails Court Ruling," *The Vancouver Sun*, 29 January 1988, A1.

³I make a distinction here between the "women's movement," and the "Women's Liberation Movement". The former being that on-going, and historical, movement of women organizing for women's equality before the law, and equal opportunities. The latter being the movement of women, begun in the late 1960s, with fundamental social, political, and economic change as its goal.

⁴See for example, Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labour in Ontario, 1880-1900*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); William Irvine, *The Farmers in Politics*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1920).

⁵For women in Canada and Quebec, see, Alison Prentice, et al. *Canadian Women: A History*, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) and Le Collectif Clio, *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles*, (Montréal: Les Quinze, 1982), or The Clio Collective, *Quebec Women: A History*, trans., Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill, (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987). On social and political movements, see for example:

concentrate rather more on demographic data, and changes in the labour force participation rate for women, than on the purposes or politics of either the traditional women's rights movements or the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The more recent production and publication of historical and sociological texts with women, or issues particular to women, as their subject reflect a greater interest in and understanding of the need for a deeper analysis of the experience of women including that in their own organizations, and in relation to the state.⁶ By their very nature, survey texts are limited to general examinations of the broad range of subjects considered. Monographs have been written analyzing a particular political programme,⁷ and other volumes are compilations of articles which through their brevity suffer many of the same limitations of survey texts. There has been no comprehensive history written of the Women's Liberation Movement in Canada, nor in any of her provinces. The surveys and anthologies available provide scattered references to some of the organizations which

Walter D. Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, 1932-1961*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Desmond Morton, *The New Democrats, 1961-1986: The Politics of Change*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman, 1986); Lynn McDonald, *The Party that Changed Canada: The New Democratic Party, Then and Now*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1987). Earlier surveys are considerably less satisfying, see for example: Samuel D. Clark, J. Paul Grayson, Linda M. Grayson, ed., *Prophecy and Protest: Social Movements in Twentieth-Century Canada*, (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Limited, 1975). For a particularly superficial, if not atypical, overview of the Women's Liberation Movement see, Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). Although limited to a few brief comments regarding changes in the status of women, this more recent survey offers considerably more respectful comment: J.L. Granatstein, Irving M. Abella, David J. Bercuson, R. Craig Brown, H. Blair Neatby, *Twentieth Century Canada*, 2nd edition, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1986).

⁶Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing For Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); *Women Unite!* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1972); Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Anne Collins, *The Big Evasion: Abortion, the Issue That Won't Go Away*, (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1985); Maureen Fitzgerald, Connie Guberman, and Margie Wolfe, eds., *Still Ain't Satisfied: Canadian Feminism Today* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1982); Prentice and others, *Canadian Women*.

⁷See *Feminist Organizing for Change* as an example.

have formed, reformed, and dissolved in the last twenty years, and descriptions of some of the actions taken on local, provincial and national issues.

Marylee G. Stephenson's 1975 dissertation in sociology, "Being in Women's Liberation,"⁸ is the only lengthy examination of any aspect of the women's liberation movement in B.C., or for that matter, in Canada. The dissertation comprises an analysis of interviews with women who participated in the Vancouver Women's Caucus and the University of British Columbia based women's group during the 1970-1971 academic year. The purpose of the study is to describe the consequences for women, in their personal lives, of their participation in the Women's Liberation Movement. The dissertation does not purport to be, nor is it, an analysis of the political development, organizational history, or actions of either the Women's Caucus or the University of British Columbia based group. In addition, the period of study for this dissertation is such that it cannot offer much information about the Women's Caucus' most active period. Stephenson interviewed nine women who were members of the Women's Caucus. She has used pseudonyms so it is difficult to be certain which of these nine also participated in the current study. "Marta" and "Penny" are identified as two early members of the Women's Caucus from whose comments Stephenson concludes that the political character of the Women's Caucus was "set" at an early state, and

that this definition of political--that politics was social action exercised upon the apparent structures of society (class, economy, etc.), and that personal concerns were not to be dwelt upon--was seen as the only legitimate one. (I sat in on discussion after discussion where opposite views--the "psychological" orientation--weren't put down, they simply weren't heard by focal people.)⁹

As Stephenson's main concern is with the individual changes women experienced, not with the attempt to change society which she identifies correctly as the "politics" of the

⁸Marylee Stephenson, "Being in Women's Liberation: A Case Study in Social Change," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1975.

⁹Stephenson, 77.

Women's Caucus, the dissertation can only enlighten us about "being" in women's liberation organizations, not about trying to achieve liberation for women other than oneself.

Two recent survey texts, *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* and *Canadian Women: A History* illustrate the great need for further research as well as pointing out some of the paths which might usefully be taken. While each volume provides a more than satisfactory overview of the history of women in Canada and Quebec, neither is able adequately to detail the particular history of the Women's Liberation Movement. Both studies lay out a more or less correct schema of the development of new Women's Liberation Movement organizations, and the transformations in the politics and programmes of the older traditional women's groups. Each covers in some detail the changes in demography and economy leading to women's greater participation in the labour force, giving close attention to the decreasing birth rate across Canada, with its political consequences. However, both volumes are authored by women resident in Central Canada, with access to the limited archival holdings of women's organizations to be found Quebec and Ontario. As a consequence, the attention given to developments outside of Central Canada is minimal.

Feminist Organizing for Change "sets out to examine not the issues addressed by the women's movement, but rather the movement itself: its history, its forms of organizing, its ideology, its success or lack thereof in achieving change."¹⁰ While its socialist feminist authors achieve the latter three of their goals, the first is, sadly, unmet. Their study is limited to the Anglophone Women's Liberation Movement, but a heavy reliance on the Canadian Women's Movement Archives, located in Toronto, has as its result that Alberta, Manitoba and the four Maritime provinces are not even mentioned, and only minimal references to events in British Columbia and Saskatchewan are made.

¹⁰Adamson, *et al*, 7.

In addition, the book is an explication of the socialist feminist political programme. The authors do provide some very useful analysis of the process of women's organizations, and an interesting examination of what is identified as the ideology of the Women's Liberation Movement.¹¹ However, the otherwise narrow political focus limits the scope of the historical accounts of both the practice and the theory of the movement in its early days.

This study of the Vancouver Women's Caucus is intended to close a small part of the gap in our knowledge which will be filled by more assessments of the circumstances, politics, organizational forms and consequences of the work of Women's Liberation Movement activists and their organizations in all of the regions of Canada. For women, activists or otherwise, the history of the contemporary women's movement has a special role. It has repeatedly been the experience of activists that battles thought won have to be fought over and over again.¹² It is necessary that the history of those battles be known, in order to avoid repeating mistakes, and to use that knowledge as a tool in the continuing struggle for the liberation of women.

In addition, there are regional biases in Canada which have consequences for the history of British Columbians' participation in national events. It is frequently the case that reporters for and consumers of both print and electronic media assume that the impetus for anything organized on a national scale arose in Central Canada. This is patently not the case: this study will show that the agitation which culminated in the Supreme Court decision of January 1988 had important roots in British Columbia.

This study concerns itself with British Columbia's first Women's Liberation Movement organization, the Vancouver Women's Caucus, and, in particular, its initiation

¹¹Adamson, *et al*, 198-228.

¹²As feminist historians Ruth Pierson & Alison Prentice, in "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History," write: "The first task of the feminist historian, then is the simple retrieval of women from obscurity," in Angela R. Miles and Geraldine Finn, ed., *Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982), 103-118, 110.

and organization of an Abortion Campaign in 1970. It is based on interviews with nineteen members of the Vancouver Women's Caucus, examination of documents of the organization,¹³ and newspaper accounts of its activities.

While it would certainly have been possible to study the Vancouver Women's Caucus without interviewing any of its members, women's own accounts of their experience in this organization have added substantially to the documentary evidence. The historian of popular movements in the 20th century would be unwise to rely on those documents usually considered to be authoritative in their accounts of events. Mainstream print and broadcast media occupy a position of prominence, leading us to assume their impartiality and veracity. As has been amply proven by the investigations of others, mainstream media coverage of progressive movements is biased in favour of the dominant ideas of their time.¹⁴ The historian using oral evidence invites the participants in events to take part in a "collaborative process."¹⁵ Such a collaboration makes possible an historical account which may challenge those versions otherwise considered authoritative. In this study, women's voices add depth and passion to the sometimes dry, or only barely respectful, accounts of the print media.

Though almost twenty years have passed since the Women's Caucus was most active, women who began interviews protesting that they could remember little, proved to be able to recall in sharp detail those events in which they participated. Paul Thompson has identified a "curve of forgetfulness."¹⁶ In the first eight days after an event some

¹³For many years these documents, copies of minutes and newsletters, of discussion papers and correspondence, were stored in boxes in the basement of the Women's Bookstore. Margo Dunn removed these boxes only a few short weeks before the Women's Bookstore was extensively damaged by fire in 1980. They have been stored in Kathleen Hudson's basement.

¹⁴See, among others, Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

¹⁵Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11.

¹⁶Thompson, 110ff.

detail is lost in the recalling, but accounts then remain relatively steady for any number of years afterward. Women's accounts verify each other, and the documentary evidence provides another check on the reliability of their memories. It must also be noted that most of the women interviewed are still vitally involved in political work similar to that which took their time and energy while members of the Women's Caucus. It may well be that this continued involvement has assisted their recollections of events.

The writer of the history of a contemporary movement confronts several dilemmas not usually faced by her peers. The first of these is that the subjects of this history are still alive, and therefore, vulnerable, in a way different from those who are the subjects of other work in this discipline, to judgements made by their community, and by the state, of their actions. Using pseudonyms might alleviate some of the potential problems, but would create a whole new set. It is in describing illegal activities, and criticisms offered of one another that the difficulty is most acute. Each of the women interviewed for this study agreed to have her name used for attribution. In most situations where identification by name of a particular woman or group of women could be problematic, reference citations are to a number of women's interviews, with the names listed in alphabetical order. Where it has been possible to characterize a group of individuals to associate them with an action or a criticism, without identifying each of them, this has been done. The intended consequence is that the participation and contribution of women to the Women's Caucus is recognized and honoured, without putting individual women at risk of harm.

It is in my own support for and participation in the Women's Liberation Movement that the second set of difficulties arises. I became a Women's Liberationist in 1976, some five years after the Vancouver Women's Caucus ceased to exist. Many of the women interviewed for this study were acquainted with me prior to our interviews, and some of us knew each other well, having worked together in various organizations of the

Women's Liberation Movement in British Columbia or participated in coalitions of progressive organizations dealing with particular political struggles in the province during the last fifteen years. These prior acquaintances have been both useful and problematic for the present study. There are two ways in which my subjects knowing me was of assistance in conducting the interviews. First, it seemed likely that it would be easier for women to speak to someone they could reasonably expect to call to account for what she wrote, as I lived and worked in the same community with them. Second, I thought women might feel that my participation in the Women's Liberation Movement would lead me to write an account which would attempt an accurate reflection of them and their activities, as opposed to one which might denigrate or minimize the importance of their contributions. I believe that the women's ready agreement to have their names used is testament to that trust, and to their own willingness to be accountable to their community for their actions and their speech.

My participation in the Women's Liberation Movement has also made it difficult to focus on the conflicts which developed in the Vancouver Women's Caucus, and which led to the disbanding of the organization. The women interviewed for this study did not speak freely of conflicts among themselves, or between the Women's Caucus and other organizations. As such, this study risks presenting an account of the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement in British Columbia which makes it appear that conflict was not a feature of the Women's Caucus, as it was, particularly after the Abortion Caravan. It is because of my support for and participation in the Women's Liberation Movement that I present an account which acknowledges and respects the importance of the contributions of the Vancouver Women's Caucus, but which contradictorily minimizes the conflicts which were an important part of the growth of the group. An historian with greater distance between herself and her subject/object may be better able to account for and describe the conflicts not dealt with in this study.

Came together for one main purpose

The thesis begins with an examination of the history of the Canadian movement for reform of laws regulating access to birth control information and products and to abortion, with some references to the experience of reformers in the United States. The second chapter comprises a description of some of the women involved in the Women's Caucus, their personal and political background and how they came to the Women's Caucus. The third chapter presents a chronological history of the development of both the Women's Caucus and its work. Chapter Four provides an account of the Abortion Campaign and the Abortion Caravan, each of which will be considered in some detail. This campaign was national, with a far-reaching impact. While it is possible to assess any of the many facets of the Women's Caucus work, for example, *The Pedestal*, the working women's groups, the development of a union for unorganized working women, or the groups focussing on education of young women and teachers, this study concentrates on the Abortion Campaign and the Caravan as an attempt to further the history of women's critical struggle for control of their reproductive capacity. As one assessment has already noted, "The Abortion Caravan of 1970 brought the nascent Canadian women's liberation movement to its feet."¹⁷ In so doing it put feminists again in the forefront of political organizing centring on access to and education about abortion and birth control, and changed the ground on which that struggle takes place, as well as the voice which articulated the demands for change. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the significance of the Abortion Campaign, for Women's Caucus, for the Women's Liberation Movement, and for the women of Canada.

¹⁷Maureen Fitzgerald, Connie Guberman, Margie Wolfe in introduction to Kathleen McDonnell, "Claim No Easy Victories: The Fight for Reproductive Rights," in *Still Ain't Satisfied!*, 32.

CHAPTER ONE

EFFORTS FOR REFORM

There have long been advocates for the decriminalization of abortion and for birth control education.¹ However, the arguments used to support these demands have frequently been based in a concern with the need to control the rate of population growth, to save the earth, and to limit the growing numbers of impoverished and exploited people. Canadian feminists, beginning with socialist feminists in British Columbia in the early 20th century, have added that it is a woman's right to control her own reproductive capacity, including resisting forced sterilization, and having access to safe and reliable methods of contraception.² These rights are not yet fully protected for all Canadian women.

The history of efforts for legal reform exhibits both parallel and divergent tracks in the United States and Canada. As is still the case, the 19th century demand for accessible and safe abortion and birth control methods excited a variety of responses across race, class and gender. Class-conscious political activists' demands for change also exhibited gender based distinctions not unlike those of the middle-class reformers whose major concerns were the preservation of their *status quo*. A brief examination of some of the historical literature will provide a context within which the efforts for reform by the Vancouver Women's Caucus, and the support they generated across Canada, can be better understood.

Linda Gordon has described in detail the efforts of 19th century, newly professionalized medical practitioners of the United States, "the regulars," to systematize the practice of medicine, and to constrain the "irregulars" from participation in their

¹See, particularly, McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, for a consideration of the context of this advocacy, on both the left and the right, from 1892 to the present.

²McLaren and McLaren, 13.

lucrative business.³ One of the foci for this regularization of practice is reflected in the debates in medical journals of the period on the moral questions surrounding limitation of births. The preferred, prescribed method of the "regulars" was continence, i.e., men's control of their own "passions" and women's self-denial.⁴

With the 20th century came a new definition of good character, the ability to enjoy sensuous pursuits, in marriage, and a concomitantly greater willingness to consider contraception positively. Gordon argues that economic changes, not technological developments, brought about this ideological shift, "The new society needed citizens who spent rather than saved, in the phallic as well as the commercial sense."⁵ Feminists of the period recognized that the liberated libido was to be the male's, and that women would still, willing or not, quite literally bear the consequences of this first "sexual revolution" of the 20th century.

Nonetheless, Gordon notes women's resistance to the male-centred ideology by describing the evident increase in women's sexual activity, particularly among those women who participated in bohemian, artistic, and non-commerce oriented circles, who were however, still "as powerless as conventional women."⁶ The new ideas of sexual freedom eventually reached the working class majority and were commodified, becoming ordinary behaviour. This was not youthful rebellion, but conformity to a new commercial ideology, Gordon argues.⁷

Women's participation rates in the labour force were changing in response to a demand for more, but not more costly, labour. One of the consequences for women

³Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America*, (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976; repr. Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1977).

⁴Gordon, 180.

⁵Gordon, 181.

⁶Gordon, 194.

⁷Gordon, 200-1.

working was greater privacy and independence living away from their birth families. With commodified sexual freedom and increased privacy came an increased demand for contraception.⁸ As the second decade of the new century passed, and with the advent of World War I, the use of condoms became more frequent, and their advantages as a method of limiting conception, as well as preventing disease, became better known. Many people made it their political work to educate those hungry for knowledge about sexuality, and about contraception.

In the early years of the century socialist activists, like Emma Goldman, dedicated a significant part of their work to education on contraception, on sexual freedom and what was called free love.⁹ The socialists called at every turn for poor and working-class women to have the right to decide whether they bore children. The right to choose a sexual partner without the need for marriage, seen as an unnecessary intervention of the state, constituted the basis of the arguments for free love. The revolutionary socialists could, for the most part, support these demands.

The purity reformers, however, focussed on prostitution because of their fear of venereal disease, not because they abhorred the commodification of women's bodies. These reformers found themselves unable to take up the demand for accessible contraceptives. They were, generally, interested in controlling the behaviour of the "lower orders" so as to achieve their own aims (e.g., prosperity), not in contributing to a society in which people might make informed decisions about what they wished to do themselves.¹⁰

The Progressive period in the United States saw the rise of ever more radical organizations, with more, and more revolutionary, demands. There was more widespread

⁸Gordon, 203-4.

⁹Gordon, 212-213, 219-220.

¹⁰Gordon, 204-205.

support for socialism than in the previous decades. Socialist periodicals were popular, and socialist candidates were elected at all levels of government. In this rapidly changing environment and consistent with the practice, both theoretical and material, of radicals from whom she learned and got support, Margaret Sanger began her work of sex education in the socialist press.

Sanger's history is well known and need not be examined in detail here. In the early years of her work, she moved slowly away from the radical political analysis of her socialist training-ground to the liberal sexual romanticism of Havelock Ellis and the new sexologists she met while in Europe. After World War I, as birth control became more and more socially acceptable, those who dispensed information and products became increasingly professionalized, increasingly regularized. One of the consequences of these developments was that the revolutionary potential of demands for accessible safe birth control methods receded as the professionalization of the distribution of birth control information and materials progressed. Her battles with the government of the United States were eventually won, and the acceptability of birth control established. Margaret Sanger could tour the continent spreading her good word, stopping in Vancouver in 1923.¹¹

The Vancouver Women's Canadian Club reneged on a commitment to sponsor the meeting at which Sanger would speak, perhaps fearing the censure of their moderate membership. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, led by Laura Jamieson and Helena Gutteridge, did organize the meeting. On 2 July 1923, 350 people came to the Women's Building on Thurlow Street. Several prominent Vancouverites were recruited to sit on the platform and to comment on Sanger's remarks. The audience was very receptive to her address, which was similar to others she gave on her North American lecture tours. It was Sanger's contention that life for all would be

¹¹Gordon, 206-244, *passim*.

immeasurably improved if safe and effective contraception were available, children would not live in poverty, and women would be free from unwanted pregnancies. Her passionate conviction moved some members of her Vancouver audience to action, their first task that of organizing support in the community.¹² It was not, however, until 1932 that a birth control clinic was finally established in Vancouver.¹³ A pamphlet Dr Lyle Telford¹⁴ sent to Marie Stopes¹⁵ that year described the aims of the "birth controllers" as being "not childlessness, but *wanted* children, better marriages, freedom for women, and race improvement."¹⁶ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the birth control clinic idea was defended by British Columbia socialists and socialist feminists. They did not involve themselves with those who wished to profit by exploiting the growing market for contraceptive materials, but kept their support strictly in the political and educational realm.

The McLarens argue that the traditional national women's organizations did not take up the defense of birth control for several reasons: first, their focus on gender-, not class-based, political analyses led to a decreased willingness to accept the usefulness to women of limitation of family size; second, they believed that it was not possible to escape the consequences of women's reproductive capacity; third, there were differences among them about the morality of the question; and last, many liberal feminists believed that women's power lay in that very reproductive capacity, and that to make contraception available would "actually decrease the power of women - maternity - while increasing the

¹²McLaren and McLaren, 59-61.

¹³McLaren and McLaren, 65.

¹⁴Elected to the British Columbia Legislature in 1937 as a CCF member, and later the first socialist mayor of Vancouver.

¹⁵One of the earliest, and more internationally prominent, British birth control activists.

¹⁶McLaren and McLaren, 65.

sexual demands of men."¹⁷ Not until the misery of the 1930s' Depression was obvious, did these feminists come to support the demands for birth control.

Birth control was but one more area in which the left asserted that the state ultimately had to step in to provide necessary information and material Indeed, the response of individual movements to the issue of birth control served as a sort of litmus test of their cultural radicalism.¹⁸

The position of women on the left was that rich women were able, through their privileged access to both information and health services, to limit the size of their families, but poor and/or working class women did not have the same possibilities. Therefore, the socialists said, it was the responsibility of the state to provide services which would equalize this difference.

The Depression also brought the protestant churches to vocal support for the use of birth control. In 1930, the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church made a statement approving the use of birth control by its members. The United Church of Canada, in 1936, "formally endorsed the morality of birth control."¹⁹ These decisions by two powerful institutions reflected changes in the attitudes of Canadians not yet mirrored in legislative change.

In other jurisdictions legislative change was a focus of state response to the changed social attitudes toward birth control. In Britain

the government informed local authorities in 1930 that they could provide birth control information through their welfare facilities to those mothers whose health might be jeopardized by additional pregnancies. The United States Circuit Court of Appeal found in favour of the open dissemination of birth control information in 1936, and in the following year the American Medical Association approved contraception as a subject for medical research.²⁰

¹⁷McLaren and McLaren, 67.

¹⁸McLaren and McLaren, 89.

¹⁹McLaren and McLaren, 96.

²⁰McLaren and McLaren, 104.

In Canada, though, it would be another 34 years before it would be legal to distribute information about birth control.

There were, nonetheless, Canadians who were willing to take the chance of prosecution by federal authorities. Among these, Alvin Ratz Kaufman, a eugenicist and Kitchener Ontario rubber manufacturer, believed that the birth rate of the "lower" classes had to be reduced, and that of the middle-class increased. To this end he developed a system of delivery of spermicidal jelly, application plunger and condoms to women all over the country. Believing their work to be completely legal, nurses and other women from communities of all sizes were the sales force for Kaufman's products, earning higher commissions for sales in rural areas than for those in cities. The target market for Kaufman's packages was working-class couples. Although at first Kaufman supported the establishment of clinics, he withdrew that support as he became convinced that the individual approach would be more successful.²¹

Dorthea Palmer, one of Kaufman's sales representatives, was arrested in 1936 and charged under Section 207C of the Criminal Code. It was her acquittal on the grounds that her work served the public good and was therefore not subject to the enforcement of this section of the Criminal Code, the McLarens argue, that effectively began the campaign for reform of the laws restricting access to birth control information and materials, culminating thirty-three years later in legislative reform.²² With the participation of protestant clergymen and doctors in Palmer's trial as defense witnesses, clear indication was given of the increased willingness of middle-class anglophone Canadians to accept the necessity of birth control.²³ Such was not, apparently, to be the case in francophone Canada for some time.

²¹McLaren and McLaren, 106.

²²McLaren and McLaren, 116.

²³McLaren and McLaren, 120.

It was not until the advent of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec that federal politicians deemed it possible to change the Criminal Code. The McLarens argue that this came about because of significant changes in both practice and attitude in Quebec towards birth control.

Between 1959 and 1969 Quebec cut its crude birth rate in half, accomplishing in ten years what had taken the rest of the country over a century. The province entered the 1970's with the lowest birth rate of any province. That lowered francophone fertility effectively and permitted the federal government finally to broach safely the decriminalization of abortion and contraception.²⁴

If this was the case, further proof of the political nature of regulation of abortion and access to birth control is not required. In both Britain and the United States the elected governments were secure enough in their tenure to change the laws during the Depression. There was not an identifiable voting bloc which could unseat them simply on the basis of their supposed "moral" objection to legislative reform on these issues. In Canada then, the impetus to such reform had little to do with the calls for reform and their relative success or lack of success, rather what it had to do with was whether Quebec could be counted on for electoral support.

In the mid-1930s, following the publication of the encyclical *Casti Connubi*²⁵ Canadian Catholics, who had been rather quieter in their opposition heretofore, took up the anti-abortion and anti-contraception positions which Protestants had abandoned.²⁶ Some "thoughtful" Catholic writers put forward the same anti-Malthusian arguments in opposition to the use of abortion and birth control that anglophone Canadian socialists were then using. Because these arguments were founded in the belief that it was necessary to control the rate of birth in less advantaged groups, Catholics found themselves able to support the "rhythm method" as a means of contraception and the

²⁴McLaren and McLaren, 125.

²⁵Cited in McLaren and McLaren, 129.

²⁶McLaren and McLaren, 130.

"grassroots" SERENA movement which used ovulation plotting to determine when it was advisable to avoid sexual intercourse.²⁷

The McLarens' study indicates that Quebec residents began to limit the size of their families, not because they were "following the lead of English Canada; it was rather a case of a people simply adjusting their fertility to meet their current social and economic situation."²⁸ The late 1960s would bring the final proof of the significant changes wrought in the attitudes of Quebecois toward birth control.

The birth control pill was introduced to Canada in 1961.²⁹ Widespread acceptance of its use, despite the continuing legal sanctions, was yet another indicator of the changes in Canadian attitudes toward contraception. The Canadian Catholic bishops' response to *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical, that "the use of birth control was a matter of individual conscience . . . probably did more than anything else to explode the myth of a monolithic Catholic block vote poised to destroy any politician favourable to reform of the Criminal Code."³⁰ This was the final signal the federal politicians needed.

In 1967 the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare had heard evidence and briefs on changing the Criminal Code sanctions against abortion. These arose in part out of an effort by liberal minded thinkers, to bring Canada's law into line with other industrialized nations.³¹ Three bills were presented: C-122, "An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Abortion)" by Grace MacInnis, (NDP) Vancouver-Kingsway; C-123 "An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Birth Control)" by Ian Wahn, (Liberal) Toronto-St Paul's; C-136 "An Act concerning the Termination of Pregnancy by Registered Medical

²⁷McLaren and McLaren, 131.

²⁸McLaren and McLaren, 132.

²⁹McLaren and McLaren, 133.

³⁰McLaren and McLaren, 132.

³¹*Chatelaine* magazine published several pieces calling for reform of the Criminal Code, the earliest of these was Joan Finnegan, "Should Canada Change Its Abortion Law?" *Chatelaine*, Vol 32, No. 8, August 1959, 17, 103-105.

Practitioners," by H.W. Herridge, (NDP) Kootenay West.³² Although none of these acts would pass the House of Commons, Eleanor Wright Pelrine points out that each of them required that a decision to abort a pregnancy not be a woman's own decision, rather that two doctors or a therapeutic abortion committee located in a hospital would provide permission. Consent of the woman's husband would also have been required. Liberal MP Ian Wahn's bill most closely resembled the legislation proposed to the 28th Parliament by John Turner, Justice Minister in Pierre Elliot Trudeau's new Liberal government.³³

The Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs heard testimony during March of 1969 from many individuals and groups, ranging from Women's Liberation Group representatives and professors of law to members of church based anti-abortion organizations and Roman Catholic physicians. It is clear from the evidence that Bill C-150, "Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1968" was intended simply to provide legal protection for doctors who were already performing abortions, and would do little or nothing to ease the situation of women who were forced to seek abortions in the "back streets."³⁴

Anne Collins' journalistic study of the trials of Dr Henry Morgenthaler neglects to note the demographic changes in Canada which may well have produced a willingness to support a reformed Criminal Code with continued votes, but does provide an account of the development of the medical community's lobbying efforts during the 1960s. She argues that since advances in obstetric and gynecological care made it possible for

³²*Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Standing Committee on Health and Welfare. 2nd session, 27th Parliament, 1967-1968. See also Eleanor Wright Pelrine, *Abortion in Canada*, (Toronto: new press, 1971), 31-32.

³³Pelrine, 31-32.

³⁴See particularly the testimony of Professor Alan Mewett, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, in Canada, House of Commons, First Session 28th Parliament, 1968-69, Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 4 March 1969, 350-376.

pregnant women with diabetes or severe heart disease to bear children safely, doctors who had been using vague "medical" grounds to justify abortions suddenly had no protection from doctors who know that few purely medical grounds still existed. The curtain was drawn aside. After decades of what appeared to be quiet consensus on when abortion was appropriate, the medical profession suddenly sought safeguards from legislators to protect some doctors from the consciences of other doctors who did not approve of abortions performed for socio-economic reasons.³⁵

Collins notes that the reluctance of the doctors who had been providing abortions to testify to their practice during the long process of the passage of a resolution of the Canadian Medical Association [CMA] to support change in the Criminal Code may have been linked to their fear of the moral censure of their colleagues which became a focus in the Finkbine case in the United States.³⁶ Collins argues that it was the reaction to this particular case, on so-called moral grounds, which coloured the CMA lobbying campaign of 1963-1966.³⁷ The Association was careful to avoid making its case for legalized abortion on the grounds that it was moral to provide the service, rather they made a case which reflected the *status quo*, abortions should be done by licensed practitioners, in hospitals, with the consent of spouse or guardian when deemed necessary, and "where the continuance of the pregnancy may endanger the life or physical health of the mother."³⁸ This was, essentially, the same as the legislation proposed in Ian Wahn's private member's bill, and the gist of the reformed section of the Criminal Code.³⁹

Prior to this reform of the Criminal Code, women requiring abortions might have obtained them from their doctors, particularly if they were women with the privilege afforded by white skin and relative economic affluence. For women without economic or

³⁵Collins, 17.

³⁶A 1962 case involving a woman in the United States who had used thalidomide, and sought an abortion on learning of the potential damage to the fetus. The woman worked for a newspaper, which ran the story, without using her name, that she was going to have an abortion, and that thalidomide was implicated. On reading the story her physician telephoned telling her the abortion was cancelled. She eventually obtained one in Sweden. Collins, 17.

³⁷Collins, 17.

³⁸CMA resolution, 1966, cited in Collins, 18.

³⁹See Appendix I for the full text of Section 251 [237].

social privilege, safe abortions had never been readily obtainable. Their needs could more easily be set aside by doctors.⁴⁰ It became clear, by late 1970, that the new law had made getting a legal abortion difficult. In addition, women's privilege still stood them in good stead, women on welfare seemed not to be able to get the abortions as readily as others. Access to abortion was not the same across the country, not all hospitals set up the required Therapeutic Abortion Committees.⁴¹ The CMA took another look at the situation and:

Caught in its own trap -- turned by an act of Parliament into the legal and moral gatekeeper of abortion -- the CMA quickly resolved that abortion was a matter to be decided by a woman and her doctor, not by law and the clumsy bureaucracy of committees.⁴²

Collins takes the rather remarkable position that had the Women's Liberation Movement and the anti-abortionists not taken up a vociferous campaign for further legal reform, the law-makers might quietly have decriminalized abortion to satisfy the powerful medical lobby.⁴³ This would have been unlikely in the extreme, given that decriminalization had not been proposed or adopted as a consequence of concerted lobbying by the CMA for the previous three years. It would be many years before the concerted work of women, lobbyists for physicians, and others who supported women's right to self-determination would be successful.⁴⁴

⁴⁰See Doris Power's speech to the Abortion Caravan in Ottawa for an example of the difficulties women on welfare faced under the new law. "Statement to the Abortion Caravan," reprinted in *Women Unite!*, 121-124.

⁴¹"By August 1970, the National Department of Health and Welfare had already issued a report outlining the inequities of the new law. Only 120 of 453 accredited hospitals had set up therapeutic abortion committees. . . . Of the first 500 abortions at Vancouver General Hospital in 1970, only 7 per cent were performed on women on welfare: middle-class women were obviously benefiting most from the amendments." Collins, 20.

⁴²Collins, 20.

⁴³Collins, 20-21.

⁴⁴If nothing else the sharp increase in the number of legal abortions reported in British Columbia alone, in the period 1970-1974, indicates the great need for this service which, it can be said with some certainty, predated the reform of the Criminal Code. In British Columbia in 1970 2,901 abortions were reported, in 1971 7,045, in 1972 8,179, in 1973 9,176, and in 1974 10,024. See Robin F. Badgley, Denyse Fortin

Dianne Dodd has argued that the gender of the reformer had consequences for the kind of position held in regard to the provision of birth control information and products in the 1930s.⁴⁵ It has been much more likely that male birth controllers would be eugenicists, concerned about the state of the "race."⁶ Female birth controllers were more often those who had concern for women's plight, having repeated unwanted pregnancies. The women of the Hamilton Birth Control Clinic "sought to give women reproductive control within [the family]."⁴⁶ Their demands for reproductive autonomy for women were experienced as the threat they were to male authority. These women were engaged in the improvement of the situation of women in their domestic place, and they believed that women, not the church and not the state, had the right and responsibility to decide their own reproductive fate. The middle-class maternalists of Hamilton did not claim access to birth control would be a means of liberation from the institution of the family as did socialist women in British Columbia, but their concern was for women and the conditions of their lives. Theirs were not the "'male' concerns [such as] population control, labour relations, and eugenics,"⁴⁷ but the situations of women.

By the later decades of the 20th century, those 'male' concerns might have been more appropriately identified with those of the medical profession, and the federal politicians who were interested in the preservation of the status quo, and in the protection of physicians from prosecution. Eugenics had faded from the visible political agenda of middle-class socially conscious reformers as the consequences of fascism became

Caron, and Marion G. Powell, *Report of the Committee on the Operation of the Abortion Law*, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977), Table 3, 440.

⁴⁵Dianne Dodd, "Women's Involvement in the Canadian Birth Control Movement of the 1930s: The Hamilton Birth Control Clinic," in Katherine Arnup, Andree Levesque, and Ruth Roach Pierson, ed., *Delivering Motherhood: Maternal Ideologies and Practices in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 150-172.

⁴⁶Dodd, 161.

⁴⁷Dodd, 166.

obvious in the years of World War Two. But throughout that time, women, maternalists and socialists, struggled for the right of women to reproductive control.

The Vancouver Women's Caucus members who took up the political work surrounding the call for accessible, and safe, birth control and abortion services were participating in this same historical struggle. The Criminal Code had been changed, the provision of information about and products for birth control was legal in 1969.

However, accessibility was not ensured; poor women, working-class women, women in rural and remote communities could not yet be said to have control of their reproductive capacity. Women would still die from "back-street" abortions, from abortions they attempted themselves.⁴⁸ It would be those silenced women for whom the Abortion Campaign and Caravan were carried out. The silence was about to end.

⁴⁸Gwytha Pierce, 34, died from the consequences of a self induced abortion at Vancouver General Hospital, 20 June 1970. Vancouver Women's Caucus members organized a demonstration in front of the Federal Building in downtown Vancouver on 24 June 1970. Katie Curtin, "Another woman dead: Free Abortion on Demand," *The Pedestal*, July/August 1970, 12; *The Vancouver Sun*, 26 June 1970, 28.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL"

Women built the Vancouver Women's Caucus, decided on its actions, shaped its politics, and its political debates. The identity of women, their family backgrounds, the similarities and the differences among them tell a great deal about the particular character of the Vancouver Women's Caucus. The Women's Caucus was the first coalition of British Columbia women from many different backgrounds identified with the nascent Women's Liberation Movement. As such, its concerns were chiefly with the place of women in society, and its discussions and debates arose from the experience of the women who were members, and from the different levels of political analysis each of them brought to the organization. As a product of both its members and its context, the Vancouver Women's Caucus public face was a radical one, seen marching in the streets, and its voice one which expressed demands for radical change in society.

The membership lists of the Vancouver Women's Caucus do not survive. It is not possible to ascertain how many women might have considered themselves members of the organization.¹ From the accounts it seems that there were usually 35 to 40 women present at each meeting of the whole Caucus. Committee work involved these and additional women. In an early paper "Decision-Making in Women's Caucus: How to increase participation and involvement" by Pat Hoffer the following comment is made about membership and activists:

In any group from S.D.S. to the W.C.T.U., there will be some members who are more active than others. Some will have more time to spare for group activities, others will have a strong sense of the group's importance and *make* time. Still others will be geographically favoured to spend more time at the central office, or will live near, or work with, others in the movement and thus participate more in the group. Political activity is foreign to many women, which makes it more difficult to become involved.

Emerging from all these differences is an identifiable "core" of members who take on more of the organizing roles and tend to initiate more of the discussions and

¹There are various mentions of a mailing list of 300 women.

issues that the group focuses on. For example, in Women's Caucus, if we gave all the members the complete membership list of over 300 names, and asked each woman to rank those names in order of relevance to Women's Liberation, I would estimate that there would be 90% agreement or better on the top 15 names: the core.²

The women interviewed for this study cannot be said, with certainty, to represent the general membership of the Women's Caucus. Rather, they are a group more representative of the activists, of the "core" as described above.³ Many of these women acted as speakers for the Women's Caucus, both in the print and electronic media, and before high-school classes and community groups. Almost all of them were active in the major areas of work taken up by the Women's Caucus. Active in this sense means: these women participated in the development of plans for actions, the discussion of and writing of position papers on political questions, and the carrying to conclusion of actions.

Margaret Benston recalled:

... again about the leadership. One of the things that you got if you were part of the leadership was more of the shit work. I mean, that's one of the ways that you bought your special position. The people who took the responsibility for doing those sorts of things, tended to be the people who had more ideas and took the organization more seriously. And *The Pedestal* got out not because there were a bunch of leaders who made decisions and then a bunch of non-entities who did the work. I mean, I can remember sitting writing addresses for hours, just dealing with the nitty-gritty of that sort of thing. And doing telephoning and stuff like that.⁴

In Women's Caucus, then, leadership meant a number of different things, one's view depended on one's relationship to this core. Other women remember feeling variously intimidated by and thrilled with what they perceived to be the special competences of women they believed to be in the leadership.⁵

²Pat Hoffer, "Decision-Making in Women's Caucus: How to increase participation and involvement," n.d., mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

³Andrea Lebowitz makes a similar characterization, with rather fewer words, "an implicit leadership. . . people who do a lot and have a big mouth." Andrea Lebowitz, interview by author, 18 October 1986, North Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁴Benston, interview.

⁵Hollibaugh, Roberts, interviews.

The women at the "core," with few exceptions, participated in the political debates of the Women's Caucus. These debates were carried out at working group meetings, at social events, at General Meetings, in various of the lecture series, in the writing of discussion papers. The consequences of these debates decided the public character of the organization, and led to the Women's Caucus' decline and eventual demise.

Nineteen of these women consented to be interviewed for this study. Most of this group attended a July 1986 reunion of the Vancouver Women's Caucus held on the occasion of a visit from England by a long absent member, Dodie Wepler. These women indicated their willingness to be interviewed by responding to a letter⁶ describing the study, which was distributed at the reunion. In the course of the interviews, it became clear that some women at the reunion had failed to indicate their willingness to be interviewed, and others, who had not attended that event, were important to a comprehensive understanding of events associated with the Vancouver Women's Caucus. These women were then contacted, and interviewed. Not one woman approached directly refused to be interviewed. All nineteen women interviewed spoke about their personal histories in more or less detail, describing, in many cases, their family background, their own political experience, some of their personal history and how they came to be involved in Vancouver Women's Caucus and/or its political activities.

First and foremost, the majority of women in the group were Canadians. Of the nineteen women interviewed, thirteen were born and raised as Canadians, five were from the United States, and one from Great Britain. Of the Canadians, only three were born in Greater Vancouver, the remainder were born and lived for some time in other communities in British Columbia (2), Saskatchewan (2), Quebec (2), Alberta (1), Manitoba (1), and Ontario (2). California (2), Washington (1), New York (1), and Michigan (1) were the birthplaces of those from the United States. The woman born in

⁶See letter and *aide memoire* for interviews in Appendix II.

Great Britain came from a small village in southern England. It is a common misconception that, even in Canada, the Women's Liberation Movement was begun by women from the United States. At least in British Columbia, it can safely be said that it was Canadian women who were at the centre of this organizing.

As in the Women's Movement which pre-dated the Women's Liberation Movement and continues into the present, many women involved in the Women's Liberation Movement seem to have middle-class origins.⁷ The Women's Caucus was no exception to this rule. Twelve of the nineteen women interviewed were raised in middle- or upper-class families. They were the daughters of professionals, academics, and managers. The other seven women described themselves as working-class or poor in origin. Of these seven, four women said they had moved up in class, through education and employment.⁸ It is difficult to draw conclusions from this sample about the class origins of most of the women in the Caucus, particularly because most of these women were in the "core" of the group. Participation in the leadership of any organization usually implies a certain level of self-confidence, and a certainty that one could make useful contributions to the tasks at hand. It has been made abundantly clear in research over the last two decades that such confidence and certainty are more likely to be found among women raised with the privileges, limited though they might be for women, of the middle-classes.⁹

⁷See for the United States, Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States*, (New York: Atheneum, 1974) and Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); for Canada, Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?*; and for an international summary, Janet Saltzman Chafetz and Anthony Gary Dworkin, *Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspective*, (Totowa NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1986).

⁸Without taking up the debate about whether class is determined by origin, that is in one's birth family, or by later changes in economic status, this study accepts the self-definition of the women interviewed.

⁹See, for early perspectives on this question, Charlotte Bunch and Nancy Myron, ed., *Class and Feminism: A Collection of Essays from THE FURIES*, (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1974).

All of the women interviewed, and if their memories are reliable, all of the women in the Women's Caucus in its early days, were white. There were no Native Indian, Asian, Black, or other Third World participants. Eight women mentioned religious training. Two were Jewish, although neither seemed to have been involved in the religious practices of Judaism. Three women were educated in the Roman Catholic Church, and two in the Anglican. One woman said only that her family was liberal and Protestant, living in a community dominated by Dutch Calvinists. In no case does race or religion appear to have been a major motivation for political protest.

As was the case in the development of the Women's Liberation Movement elsewhere in North America, the women who began the Women's Caucus were young and relatively well-educated. With the growth of the organization, and in particular, the increase in membership after the Women's Caucus office in Vancouver was opened, this began to change. Older women, and women independent of the universities began to attend meetings and participate in Women's Caucus' activities.¹⁰ In 1970, when all nineteen women were active in Women's Caucus-generated projects, ten were 25 years old or older (6 - 25-29 years, 2 - 30-34 years, 0 - 35-39 years, 2 - 40+ years), five were between the ages of 21 and 24, and four were 19 or 20.

Universities have played a prominent role as the foci for organization of social movements. In its beginnings the Women's Caucus follows this pattern. Of the women interviewed fifteen had obtained some post secondary education. Five were pursuing graduate degrees at the University of British Columbia or SFU during the time of their membership in the Women's Caucus, five were in undergraduate programmes, one had completed an undergraduate education degree, and four had completed graduate degrees. Three of the graduate students were teaching assistants at SFU. Two of those with graduate degrees held faculty appointments at SFU, one with a Masters and the other with

¹⁰Rands, personal notebook, Jean Rands files.

a Ph.D. Three of the five undergraduates did not complete their degrees, one because she had a young child and found it impossible to continue, one because she took a factory job and became involved in her union, and the last because she appears to have decided that her anti-imperialist political activism was her priority at the time.¹¹

Since sexuality, and sexual practice, were to become important, and divisive, issues in the Women's Liberation Movement, the women interviewed were asked to define their sexuality. Four of the nineteen women interviewed identified themselves as lesbians, two while they were involved in the Women's Caucus, and two after leaving the Women's Caucus. Thirteen of the nineteen said they were involved in relationships, either monogamous, serial-monogamous, married, or common-law, with men at the time. One woman was divorced, and another did not directly answer this question.

Only four of the nineteen interviewed were mothers at the time of their membership in the Women's Caucus. By the accounts in the interviews two other women in the early Women's Caucus were mothers.¹² Two women had very young children, and two, with five children between them, had three in high school, and two on their own. Twelve of the nineteen women remain childless.

It is the political positions taken, and the actions those politics informed, which differentiate the Women's Caucus from other contemporary Women's Liberation Movement organizations. Women's Caucus members developed their new organization with a self-conscious class-based perspective on the situation of women in Canada and the world. That such an analysis formed the basis for many of the discussion papers written and distributed by the Women's Caucus is not surprising given the political

¹¹Esther Phillips, interview by author, 20 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording; Cathy Walker, interview by author, 30 September 1986, New Westminster, British Columbia, tape recording; Dorothy Jean O'Donnell, interview by author, 4 November 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

¹²Elizabeth Briemberg, interview by author, 19 October 1986, Burnaby, British Columbia, tape recording.

history of many of the women involved in the early development of the organization. The following nineteen brief biographies describe a group of women who came to their activism in the Women's Liberation Movement already equipped, in almost every instance, with a developed, or developing, understanding of the political and economic nature of social relations in Canada. The Women's Liberation Movement would enable them to extend their analysis to a consideration of the difference gender made in the ability to participate fully in that society.

The group of women interviewed include several who were involved in the Women's Caucus from its beginnings, several who joined while the organization was still located at Simon Fraser University, and others who came to the Women's Caucus after the Vancouver office was opened. The sequence of biographical sketches that follow is determined by the time each woman became involved in the Women's Caucus.

* * *

Twenty-three years old, Andrea Lebowitz arrived at Simon Fraser University in 1965 to take up an appointment as an Instructor in the Department of English, where she is now Senior Lecturer. Lebowitz was raised in an Italian-American family in New York state. She attended Catholic schools, and graduated from the College of New Rochelle. Lebowitz recalls being

... ostracized in the washroom [at college] 'cause I was one of those reds, etc., and interestingly we were also involved in a kind of proto-women's liberation stuff, but what we were into was what has become very fashionable more recently. We were into superwomanism. We were going to be perfect mothers. We were going to be perfect wives. We were going to be perfect housekeepers, but we were going to continue to work.¹³

The College of New Rochelle was operated by French Ursulines, and was "... very socially conscious, ... sort of that Catholic worker wing of Catholicism."¹⁴ She and her

¹³Lebowitz, interview.

¹⁴Lebowitz, interview.

husband became active in student politics at the University of Wisconsin at Madison where they were both graduate students. They had been involved in work opposing the House Committee on Un-American Activities,¹⁵ in the Civil Rights Movement, The Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee [SNCC], and the Students for a Democratic Society [SDS].¹⁶ With her graduate degree in English and her husband Lebowitz moved to British Columbia, and to Simon Fraser University. Lebowitz focussed her energy on her teaching, and on dealing with the consequences of what has been characterized as the "chaos" of the English department reeling under the force of the burgeoning student rights movement, and the volatility contributed by the involvement of very young faculty members in that movement. In addition to her teaching load, Lebowitz was drawn into theatre work at SFU where John Juliani and Michael Bawtree were University Residents in Theatre. Their daring, politically and artistically innovative work as actors and directors brought a new kind of theatre to audiences used to more traditional productions. This was theatre which broke rules, which said the unsayable, which attacked the sacred cows of the traditional, theatre which got attention, and it was hoped, theatre which changed both minds and the world. Lebowitz' participation in the theatre productions foreshadowed her later activism in the Women's Caucus.

In her experience divisions between students and faculty members in some departments were minimal, she said, "in those days there wasn't a lot of them and using."¹⁷ Students and faculty worked together to achieve common goals, without too much attention paid to the differences among them. Lebowitz attended one of the first meetings

¹⁵A committee of the United States Congress first established in 1946 to "make from time to time investigations of (i) the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States, (ii) the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution, and (iii) all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation." Public Law 601, 79th Congress [1946], chapter 753, 2d session.

¹⁶Lebowitz, interview.

¹⁷Lebowitz, interview.

of what became Women's Caucus, but her departmental and theatre responsibilities limited her participation in the Women's Caucus until her return from two semesters on leave in the spring of 1970. Lebowitz had maintained a correspondence with Margaret Benston which kept her informed of the developing Abortion Campaign, and on her return was just in time to do support work for the Abortion Caravan already on its way across Canada and the political debates following it which would divide the Women's Caucus. Lebowitz also became the treasurer for the organization, a position she held until its demise. She organized the distribution system for *The Pedestal*, paid the bills, and kept track of the donations which paid the expenses of the Women's Caucus. Her love of both teaching and performance stood Lebowitz in good stead as one of several women who gave a great many presentations on the Women's Liberation Movement for high school students and community groups.¹⁸ And there were other opportunities for performance as part of the guerilla theatre actions of late 1970 and 1971.

Lebowitz worked with the Corrective Collective, all Women's Caucus members, to produce *She Named It Canada* for the April 1971 Indochinese Women's Conference. By then she was a Canadian citizen, and involved in nationalist and anti-imperialist politics, and wrote to make sure that the several hundred women from the United States attending the conference were aware they were in another country. Lebowitz identifies the Women's Caucus success as residing chiefly in the diversity of their analysis of women's situation, and the certainty that it was structural changes which needed to be made, rather than focusing on individual change. It was the work done to provide information to a very broad range of community groups, the educational work in high schools, that was very important for Lebowitz. In the years to follow, Lebowitz participated in the drive to establish Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. She

¹⁸Lebowitz, interview.

continues her commitment to this work, and in 1989-90 was co-ordinator of the now full-fledged programme.

Marcy Toms, 18 in 1968, was born in Vancouver, and where she remains to this day. She described her family as middle-class, her mother a "life-long liberal", and her father a "life long red Tory -- like a Diefenbaker Tory, and . . . a banker".¹⁹ She remembers two experiences as having changed her life:

. . . one thing was watching . . . the integration of the schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, on black and white TV . . . I can remember it like it was yesterday seeing that little black kid with her pigtails and her white bobby socks walking up the stairs escorted by US marshalls, . . . this huge, huge, huge mob of people and one woman with her hair in curlers and a white kerchief . . . spitting at her. . . And also, having a couple of really good teachers in secondary school, one of whom made me write an essay on self-determination or not for Vietnam.²⁰

Recognizing that she came from a privileged background, and believing in the possibility of changing the world, Toms decided that Simon Fraser University, because it would be possible to "get involved"²¹ there, was preferable to attending the University of British Columbia as was more common for young women of her background. In the fall of 1967 she attended her first anti-war march. Some months later Toms saw an ad or a flyer on campus which said "Are you all alone and way out in left field?" and attended the meeting which formed the Students for a Democratic University.²²

Along with several other students involved in SDU Marcy enrolled in a Sociology course taught by Martin Nicolaus which had only one assignment for the term ". . . to rewrite in modern terms. . . with a contemporary view, the Communist Manifesto."²³ Toms and another woman who was to become involved in the Women's Caucus decided to write a new manifesto for women which ended with the words ". . . women of the

¹⁹Marcy Toms, interview by author, 11 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

²⁰Toms, interview.

²¹Toms, interview.

²²Toms, interview.

²³Toms, interview.

world unite. You have nothing to lose but your apron strings."²⁴ The paper was entitled "The Feminine Action League." Toms remembers that they consciously did not use the word "feminist" because of its associations "with people who are really bitchy."²⁵ They were coming to understand that "what we were doing in SDU . . . wasn't exactly equal to what the guys were doing."²⁶ This academic initiative was followed by the first meeting of the Feminine Action League at which the presence of men was prohibited, the first of many such unprecedented decisions. "What was going on was that we were really just complaining to one another about how crappy the situation was. . . we weren't getting out of [the left wing student movement on campus] what we thought we were putting in."²⁷ Soon thereafter occurred the first meeting of what was to become the Women's Caucus, Toms attended. She described her politics at the time as being not explicitly socialist, as she understands the term now, but as being left-wing liberal. She wanted the world changed, and believed, along with many others, that the university was an important base from which to do that. Toms continued to be involved in the political actions at SFU, and later the left in Vancouver. She is a teacher, and is now in a graduate program at SFU, in Women's Studies.

Margaret (Maggie) Benston was born and raised in Kelso, Washington. She and her twin sister were among the very few working-class youths who went on to university after high-school graduation in 1955. She describes going to university as moving from "working class culture to middle class culture,"²⁸ a process of changing the old and learning new assumptions about the world. Because she was in science Benston was ". . .

²⁴Toms, interview. Unfortunately Toms threw out her copy of this paper only a few months before this interview.

²⁵Toms, interview.

²⁶Toms, interview.

²⁷Toms, interview.

²⁸Margaret Benston, interview by author, 6 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

you know, very much outside and viewed myself as a rebel,"²⁹ and questioning what she learned and saw around her seemed quite natural. In 1959 Benston married, and went with her husband to graduate school at the University of Washington, spending the next five years working for her Ph.D. in Chemistry. The marriage ended with the attainment of the degree. After a two year post-doctoral stint at Wisconsin, Benston started looking for a job. With her training as a quantum chemist it was reasonable for her to expect to get a decent position at a good school, however, as the University of Georgia baldly told her, many universities simply did not hire women.³⁰ Eventually, Benston was hired by the Chemistry Department at SFU where she arrived in 1966. It was not until 1967 that Benston made some connections, through social events, with the PSA department,

... they were the only people around who ... seemed to give decent parties ... and were reasonable people to talk to ... even though I knew nothing about the politics and that made me considerably nervous.³¹

She described herself as being a typical "white liberal," who burst into tears when someone suggested to her at a party that what the United States needed was a revolution. Benston thought then that the loyalty oaths required of academics in U.S. universities were silly, after all "who would want to overthrow the United States?"³² In June of 1967 Benston began a relationship with another faculty member, an instructor in the Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology Department. She was involved, as he was, in the "faculty side of the student movement, [and] there was a sort of burgeoning faculty union during that time. I had enough sense to refuse to be the secretary of it."³³

Benston's politics developed through the next years to encompass the perspective of the New Left. In 1969 Benston, on leave from SFU, spent some months in California,

²⁹Benston, interview.

³⁰Benston, interview.

³¹Benston, interview.

³²Benston, interview.

³³Benston, interview.

at Santa Barbara, and at that time read an article in *Ramparts*³⁴ magazine which in spite of its disrespectful and sarcastic tone piqued her interest in what the Women's Liberation Movement might really be about. On her return to Vancouver she found that women at SFU were organizing what was to become the Women's Caucus, and became involved. It was during the first year of the Women's Caucus that Benston wrote and published "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation,"³⁵ which was to become a classic in the early literature of the Women's Liberation Movement. Benston is now a professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Computing Science and the Women's Studies Program at Simon Fraser University.

Marcy Cohen, twenty-four in 1969, already had a long political history. She was active in the B'nai Brith Youth Organization [BBYO] during high school. Cohen described a trip to Israel at age thirteen as "one of my first political awakenings." She said,

I had been . . . taught that Israel was the land of milk and honey I saw the racism and the contradictions . . . I saw the non-white Jews doing all the labouring jobs, the real class divisions between the different nationalities of Jews in terms of the communities they lived in, and some of them were wealthy and some of them were poor.³⁶

During her undergraduate university training at the University of Calgary Cohen's desire to continue in progressive political work was closely tied to experience in the Student Christian Movement in Calgary and the Student Union for Peace Action in Toronto. SCM was "a non-denominational progressive Christian group. The only thing like it on

³⁴Warren Hinckle and Marianne Hinckle, "A History of the Rise of the Unusual Movement for Women Power in the United States 1961-1968," *Ramparts*, February 1968, 22-31.

³⁵This paper first appeared as "What Defines Women?: The Family as a Production Unit," and then as "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation" a discussion paper used at the Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation, which was published in *Monthly Review*, September 1969, and distributed by the Literature Committee of Toronto Women's Liberation through Toronto's Hogtown Press in a mimeographed pamphlet.

³⁶Marcy Cohen, interview by author, 30 September 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

the Calgary campus."³⁷ Cohen had heard a woman speaker on the civil rights movement, and finding herself emotionally responding, realized that "obviously this was something that touched me somewhere."³⁸ She sought out, joined and became active in the SCM.

Upon graduation in 1966, Cohen worked during the summer in Saskatchewan on a community development project with native people. This project was sponsored by SUPA with whom Cohen continued to work when she moved to Toronto in the fall and entered a graduate programme at York University. There Cohen was exposed to the study of Marxism for the first time. This new information provided explanations for what she "didn't like about university."³⁹ She subsequently left, without a further degree and moved to Vancouver to begin work with the Children's Aid Society in September 1967. After some unresolved confrontations with the supervising psychiatrist about the children in her care, Cohen's dissatisfaction led her back to university, this time to SFU's graduate programme in Education, in January 1969. There she joined the SDU. She quickly realized that SDU was dominated by men much more interested in talking theory than in doing anything concrete. She and other SFU women focussed their desire for action in the Women's Caucus of SDU. In the Women's Caucus Cohen participated in the working group on education, and took a leading role in the Abortion Campaign of 1970. She was part of the group who left Women's Caucus in June 1970 in disagreement with the political direction of the group. After several years of research work on women and technology, Cohen is now teaching several courses in Lower Mainland colleges and universities.

Esther Phillips, who was 20 in 1969, became involved in the Women's Caucus through her connections to the SDU at SFU. Phillips was raised in a small coastal town

³⁷Cohen, interview.

³⁸Cohen, interview.

³⁹Cohen, interview.

in B.C., her family was poor, and her expectation was that she would marry a fisherman or a logger. She worked for one year before going to SFU. Phillips had a daughter in 1968, and during her pregnancy realized that she was a lesbian. She had not been involved in politics before university, but wanted a better world. It was the contradictions in the behaviour of male radicals in the SDU which drew her to the Women's Caucus. Illness forced Phillips to leave SFU when her child was 1 1/2 years old. During her recovery, Phillips became more involved with the Women's Caucus, frequently giving presentations for school and community groups on the Women's Liberation Movement. For some time the British Columbia Federation of Women was a focus for Phillips political work. Her paid employment is with the City of Vancouver as a Field Supervisor in Parking Enforcement. It is in her commitment to work in recovery groups for women addicted to alcohol that she finds herself fully engaged.

Pat Davitt came to Vancouver from Saskatchewan. She was the child of parents who had immigrated from Europe in the 1920s, settling on a farm in Northern Saskatchewan. The family barely managed to survive the depression, and used to joke that Hitler had saved them from starvation. Davitt's father joined the army, and eventually the family moved into Saskatoon. They were "poor but happy."⁴⁰ Veterans' assistance enabled Davitt and one of her brothers to attend the University of Saskatchewan, where Davitt earned a B.A. in Psychology. After her graduation in 1962, Davitt went with two other friends to Europe. She stayed for one year in England after her friends returned to Saskatchewan. "Having been politicized by the English class system . . .,"⁴¹ Davitt returned to University in Saskatoon with a clearly developed sense of the importance of social democracy. She became involved with the New Democratic Youth, and soon became its president. Davitt, along with other U of S students who were

⁴⁰Pat Davitt [Hoffer], interview by author, 9 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁴¹Davitt, interview.

to be prominent in SFU student politics, was also active in the Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, later to be renamed the Students' Union for Peace Action. After finishing her M.A., and working for some time, Davitt and her then husband moved to B.C. so that he could study ethno-musicology. They had been told about the political activities at SFU by her husband's cousin Marcy Cohen during a visit to Calgary. Davitt attended the first meeting of what was to become the Women's Caucus. She continued to be involved in SFU student politics, took an active part in *The Pedestal*, and many other areas of Women's Caucus work. Davitt is now active in the Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employees Union, and works as a Psychologist at Jericho Hill School.

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the New Democratic Party and the League for Socialist Action [LSA] were proving grounds for Jean Rands' politics. After a politically active youth in Regina, Rands moved to Toronto in 1962, at 17, where she did clerical work for two years. In 1963 she, and other members of the League for Socialist Action, were expelled from the NDP.⁴² In 1967, Rands stood for election as Mayor of Vancouver for the LSA. Rands considers herself committed to women's issues from her early teenage years. In April 1968, before moving from Vancouver to Toronto, Rands appeared at the Royal Commission on the Status of Women hearings, on behalf of the LSA, to speak to its brief which had been presented in Toronto.⁴³ Rands and her partner left the LSA in 1968, after many years of work in various communities for both the LSA and the Young Socialists, the LSA youth organization. She left over disagreements with

⁴²Through the years there have been various expulsions of League for Socialist Action/Young Socialists (and successor groups) from the New Democratic Party. Some provinces have seen a number of expulsions, others none. Ordinarily the expulsions were decisions of NDP provincial councils. Jackie Larkin, personal communication, March 1990.

⁴³"The Status of Women in Canada" a brief submitted to the Royal Commission [on the Status of Women] by the League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere, n.d.. The text of the brief is reproduced in a small pamphlet, which also includes Ruth Blake, "Some Key Reading on the Situation of Women," referring readers to some texts on the history of women.

the LSA's practice of democratic centralism and political discipline. On her return to Vancouver in the fall of 1968 Rands found a job with the Student Society at SFU as a typesetter for the student-produced newspaper *The Peak*. She had worked for the LSA/YS as a youth organizer, and was familiar with both the students and the student politics of the university. Rands was active in the working women's section of the SFU Women's Caucus group, which formed soon after her return. When the Women's Caucus moved away from the university she continued to focus her energies on issues important to working women. *The Pedestal*, the Women's Caucus newspaper, owed its existence, at least in part, to Rands' position that every group needed a newspaper to carry out its educational work, and to draw new members.⁴⁴ Jean Rands now works for the B.C. Teacher's Federation, and maintains her passionate commitment to union protection for working women.

Donna Liberson was born in Winnipeg, and moved to Vancouver at age seven. Raised by her single mother, she left home at fifteen, returned one and one-half years later, and left again at 18. Because it was necessary for her to work through high-school and university Liberson said that she ". . . didn't have much of an opportunity to do anything. . . , [like] enjoy myself at university and be political. That came after, when I was financially able to do it."⁴⁵ By 1969, at twenty-four, Liberson operated her own day care centre after having graduated from the University of British Columbia with her degree in education. The ferment of student politics, and her friends' involvement, drew Liberson in. She went to demonstrations, and attended Women's Caucus meetings. Liberson was to be instrumental in the organization and operation of the Abortion Referral Service. She continued for some time after the Women's Caucus' demise to

⁴⁴Davitt, Briemberg, Roberts, interviews.

⁴⁵Donna Liberson, interview by author, 18 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

participate in guerrilla theatre actions⁴⁶ in Vancouver, and was involved in the group of women who occupied the offices of the *Georgia Straight*⁴⁷ and published a women's issue. She is now the owner of a wholesale merchandising business, specializing in clothing and crafts, and an activist in the NDP.

Cathy Walker, who was 19 in 1969, began her political work in the New Democratic Youth. She joined the NDY on her own; her family had not been members of the New Democratic Party, although she later signed them up. Walker described herself as "one of the working class kids [from Burnaby] who weren't really supposed to get [a university] education."⁴⁸ She began her university education in the science faculty, later switched to PSA, but then quit school, without finishing her degree. Walker was drawn to the Women's Caucus of the Students for a Democratic University because she

... saw it as part of the whole political movement and the student movement, and the general left. I don't think I had done very much thinking on feminist lines really before that, I mean other than just having gut feelings that women ought to be able to do different things than what we were supposed to do traditionally.⁴⁹

Walker was hired first by the Mount St. Vincent University Student Council, and then by the Atlantic Federation of Student Councils to work as an organizer in Halifax from September to December 1969. She met Geraldine Gaskin, president of the Mount St. Vincent Student Council through her participation in the Canadian Union of Students [CUS]. Gaskin hired Walker expressly to introduce the women of Mount St. Vincent, a

⁴⁶Twenty minutes into a lecture by Lionel Tiger, eight women dressed in "tiger skins" bounded onto the stage of the Vancouver Playhouse, announcing they were from the "Socioanthropological [sic] Wives Association," and began to sing "Hold that Tiger." Lorraine Shore, "Women tackle and tame a Tiger," *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 February 1971, 32. Five women were charged with creating a disturbance in the Vancouver Public Library following their uninvited participation in a fashion show sponsored by CP Air, at the Hotel Vancouver. Ed Simons, "5 women deny disrupting show," *The Province*, 15 April 1971, 16. Eventually the women were tried, found guilty, and sentenced to two years probation. Lana Lang, "2 Years Probation for Singing in Library," *Georgia Straight*, 28 May 1971, 7.

⁴⁷*Women's Liberated Georgia Straight*, 8-13 April, 1971; "Straight Responds to Women's Demands," *Georgia Straight*, 20 April 1971.

⁴⁸Walker, interview.

⁴⁹Walker, interview.

Catholic university, to the Women's Liberation Movement. Walker began a Women's Caucus group, using materials from Vancouver Women's Caucus, Toronto Women's Liberation Front and CUS.⁵⁰ On her return to Vancouver, she continued to participate actively in the Women's Caucus, and went on the Abortion Caravan to Ottawa in 1970. Shortly after her return from Ottawa, Walker took a job in a factory, where she got involved in union work. She is now a staff representative and Vice President for Health, Safety and Environment with the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers [CAIMAW].

One of the older women in the Vancouver Women's Caucus, Marge Hollibaugh came to British Columbia from California in 1968 at the age of 46. After her father deserted the family, Hollibaugh and her two sisters were raised by her mother who struggled through the depression to support them. Marriage brought the economic security Hollibaugh had not known as a child. Her husband had become a successful insurance executive. In their middle age, with their daughter grown and on her own, Hollibaugh and her husband decided to get out of the "rat race." Their opposition to the United States' war in Vietnam led to their selling their property, leaving the United States and coming to live in a trailer in Port Moody while Hollibaugh's husband attended SFU. Hollibaugh began to attend SFU classes that interested her.

I had my own car, and I just flew around all the time, anything that was happening I was there, and very quiet. Very, very quiet, because I was sure that anything that I said could be challenged . . . I was too intimidated by all of these spectacular women and it was really the pressure of a couple of them . . . that I became very close to who pushed me into all of the things the first couple of years, and by that time I was I think, pretty well accepted by most of the women on the campus and I had become close friends with quite a few of the women, so that it became easy to [do] . . . whatever they were doing, I was involved.⁵¹

⁵⁰Walker, interview and personal communication, August 1989; Cathy Walker, "Movement Grows in Maritimes," *The Pedestal*, February 1970, 6.

⁵¹Marge Hollibaugh, interview by author, 7 October 1986, Chilliwack, British Columbia, tape recording.

Hollibaugh was one of the organizers for the Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation at the University of British Columbia in October 1969, and for the Abortion Caravan. She was able to travel ahead to Ottawa to organize media and other contacts because a supporter of the Abortion Caravan donated the airfare.⁵² Hollibaugh and her husband were involved with American anti-war groups in Vancouver, and have continued for many years as active leftists. Chilliwack is now her home, where she works on behalf of women, as a board member of the local transition house Society, and in other community organizations.

The New Democratic Youth was the focus of Sharon Hager's earliest political activity in Vancouver. She "rebelled against" her family's conservative background, and joined the League for Socialist Action, a Trotskyist organization, and became involved with the Women's Caucus after she attended one of its early seminars on working women.⁵³ After expulsion from the Women's Caucus in August 1970 Hager continued to work on the abortion issue, particularly through the B.C. Women's Abortion Law Repeal Coalition for which she was co-ordinator for one year. At present Hager is a day-care worker, and continues to be active in the pro-choice movement.

Ellen Woodsworth, acting on her radical family's heritage,⁵⁴ began her political work in a Toronto high school. With other students she organized the Canadian Students for Nuclear Disarmament and, was active in the United Nations Association. For her last two years of secondary school, she moved with her parents to Japan. There she continued

⁵²Hollibaugh, interview.

⁵³Sharon Hager, interview by author, 1 October 1986, New Westminster, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁵⁴Woodsworth is Jean Woodsworth's daughter, Grace MacInnes' cousin, and J.S. Woodsworth's great-niece. Jean Woodsworth has for many years been an activist, she has recently received the Order of Ontario, and is engaged in anti-Goods and Services Tax, and seniors advocacy work in Toronto. Ken Woodsworth is active in Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, and the Canada-China Friendship Association. Grace MacInnes was for many years the NDP MP for Vancouver-Kingsway, and J.S. Woodsworth was one of the original founders of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and a father of social democratic political organizing in Canada.

to speak on peace issues, and made her first trip to China in 1965. She was very excited by what she saw there, "It was the first time I felt happy, truly happy, it was really a revelation . . . exciting and very empowering."⁵⁵ Her school friends' disinterest, not one of them asked her about what her experiences had been, led her to realize the extent of anti-Communism, and to see that as a combination of ignorance and fear.

She returned to Canada to attend the University of British Columbia, and soon became involved in native peoples' issues off campus, and student politics, as well as anti-Vietnam war work. In 1969-70, at 21 years of age, Woodsworth ran the Speaker's Bureau at the University of British Columbia. Woodsworth used this as an opportunity to high-light women's issues on campus. Decisions about speakers were closely observed by "the student bureaucracy, the secretary and people who would really control a lot of the things, checking everything we did."⁵⁶ Even the presence of a few radicals on the students' council did not make bringing in people from the Black Panthers, and the European student movement an easy task. Woodsworth recalled that students at the University of British Columbia did not have the political advantage of the support of a "united front"⁵⁷ of students, faculty and non-teaching staff which she perceived to exist at SFU.

Because of her isolation at the University of British Columbia Woodsworth began to attend Women's Caucus meetings at the Labour Temple. She was drawn to the Women's Caucus

. . . because it was a women's organization, but it was also a Marxist organization which to me was fairly important. To have that kind of comprehensive social analysis, and . . . it was doing practical things, it wasn't just focussed on campus. It saw the necessity of

⁵⁵Ellen Woodsworth, interview by author, 4 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁵⁶Woodsworth, interview.

⁵⁷Woodsworth, interview.

working with students, but also with women. . . . I wanted that kind of an organization. I needed it. I thought that that was where sanity was.⁵⁸

In the years following her work in the Women's Caucus Woodsworth lived and worked in Toronto⁵⁹ and in England, and eventually took up the Wages for Housework campaign as her political focus. Today she is engaged in work with the Women's Economic Agenda on the consequences for women of free trade, privatization and the Meech Lake Accord. Woodsworth's paid employment is as a Social Planning analyst focussing on childcare, for the District of North Vancouver.

Raised in a liberal family in the midst of Dutch-Calvinist Michigan, Anne Roberts was 24 in 1969. She had come to Vancouver to graduate school in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, following a year working as a social worker in Detroit. Although she had been interested in and challenged by the civil rights and anti-war movements of her undergraduate years, Roberts' introduction to political activity came through her relationship with a Pakistani Muslim, who was a political activist, and an academic. When her partner's US visa was terminated, he moved to Edmonton where Roberts joined him after a year's separation. In the fall of 1969 both came to Vancouver, where he was appointed assistant professor in the PSA department at SFU.⁶⁰ Having been unable to find work in the male-dominated world of journalism in Vancouver, Roberts used her considerable energy and talent for writing and organizing in the Women's Caucus, which she joined that same fall. Her particular interests were in the working women's group, organizing speakers for educationals and the production of *The*

⁵⁸Woodsworth, interview.

⁵⁹After setting up one of the earliest specifically lesbian identified collective houses in Vancouver, "New Morning," in Vancouver, Woodsworth moved to Toronto to found, with Holly Devor, *The Other Woman*, a national newspaper with the lesbian content not then to be found in *The Pedestal* or any other newspaper. Woodsworth, interview.

⁶⁰He was hired by Mordecai Briemberg, during his short lived tenure [July 1969] as the democratically elected head of the PSA Department. Briemberg, interview; "Admin. Pushes to Crush," *Georgia Straight*, 16-23 July 1969, 2; and reprinted on the same page of the *Georgia Straight*, Wilf Bennett, "Once-radical SFU department losing its wallop," *The Province*, 11 July 1969.

Pedestal. After her partner's untimely death in 1971 Roberts moved from Vancouver, and returned in 1976. She is now raising two children, and continues her career as a broadcast journalist.

In 1967 Betsy Wood, just divorced, moved back to Vancouver with her four children. Wood was raised in a village in the Eastern Townships of Quebec; her family later moved to Vancouver. She objects to being identified as belonging to a particular class and says that she comes from a "working family."⁶¹ After her marriage Wood lived in several prairie communities, and finally in Edmonton. She became active in the new Planned Parenthood organization where she heard Robert Prittie⁶² talk about Canada having to abstain from voting on an international policy on birth control in the UN because of the domestic policy which prohibited the distribution of information on birth control. She said she realized then that

... everything was political and everything was law. And if you wanted to act, you had to act in those two ways. You had to [have] ... lots of publicity and [be] very political. You really wanted to change the law but you had to beat that political force to make the law change.⁶³

On her return to B.C., Wood took the first job she could find, in the Fire Marshall's Office in Vancouver, and was hoping to obtain a position with a higher salary as soon as possible. Her salary was barely sufficient to support her and her children, one in university and three in high school.

Finding that Planned Parenthood was not in need of volunteers, Wood involved herself in the NDP riding association in West Vancouver. She remembers asking Jack

⁶¹Betsy Wood [Meadley], interview by author, 21 October 1986, North Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁶²New Democratic Party Member of Parliament for Burnaby-Richmond. Wood, interview; and McLaren and McLaren, 134-135: "Robert Prittie, a New Democratic MP, argued that if Canada was to support the use of contraceptives in overseas programs it had to decriminalize birth control. ... For Canada to support the use in the Third World of contraceptives that were technically illegal at home, Prittie pointed out, would provide ammunition to those who accuse the West of 'genocide.' ... In May, 1963, Robert Prittie submitted a bill calling for reform of the Criminal Code."

⁶³Wood, interview.

Davis, then sitting member in Ottawa for the North Shore, a question about birth control and abortion at an all candidates' meeting; both a provincial and a federal election were in the offing. Davis referred the question to Sid Simons, the provincial NDP candidate, saying that he believed Simons could answer the question better. She remembers her anger that her representative in Parliament would not answer this question which was so vital to women. This experience, and discussions in meetings with other NDP members, led Wood to decide that "Jack Davis wasn't representing us and as women that we should really go as a group to Ottawa and represent ourselves to Parliament because nobody was doing it for us."⁶⁴ Two years later, unable to obtain the higher paying job she wanted because it was seen to be a "man's job", Wood joined the Women's Caucus. She was interested in equal pay, and felt resentful that she trained young men for jobs she could not herself obtain. Wood decided that the struggle for equal pay was not "winnable" at that point, and concentrated her efforts on the legal and political struggle around abortion. She went on the Abortion Caravan to Ottawa, realizing, at least partially, her vision of women representing themselves to Parliament. Wood went on after leaving the Women's Caucus in August 1970 to continue work around abortion, and eventually became involved in prisoner's rights work. She is still living on the North Shore, and says now that if she were to be politically active again it would be in the area of health and environmental issues, particularly brain chemistry and schizophrenia.

Liz Briemberg was 30 in 1969. She had two children then, a three year old girl and another in his first year. She had come to British Columbia in 1966 with her husband, who had been appointed to a teaching position in the PSA Department at Simon Fraser University. Briemberg was born and raised in the south of England. Her parents were social democrats, both teachers. The village in which she lived was inhabited by cottagers who rented land from wealthy absentee landlords. She learned about the nature

⁶⁴Wood, interview.

of class divisions very young. Success in school led to scholarships to an urban university where

... I became much more involved in political movements ... I was always interested in history ... as soon as I went to university I drifted into political movements ... first ... with the Labour Party group, and from there went into a socialist group and you know it was at that time that CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] started ... and I got involved in the CND and it just sort of snowballed.⁶⁵

Briemberg was a member of a New Left Club, wrote for and worked with the *New Left Review*.⁶⁶ She witnessed the conflict that led to Perry Anderson, and others of like mind, taking over the editorial leadership of that journal in 1962-63.⁶⁷ Briemberg graduated with a Bachelor's degree in nuclear physics. She recognized then that she had three options, she could work in the nuclear industry, which she could not do being involved in CND, she could teach, which she was disinclined to do having been raised by two teachers, or she could remain in the university, which she was felt unable to do because "I wasn't that good, you know ... you'd have to be top notch to do that."⁶⁸ Under the influence of the principal of her college, Briemberg persisted nonetheless with further education, knowing that being a woman limited her possibilities as a physicist, and after graduation took a diploma in Social Work.

Briemberg met her future husband in England before he left for Berkeley in 1961. She joined him in 1964 when they married. There Briemberg became involved in anti-Vietnam War work, although her activities were restricted because of her status as an "alien" in the United States. On her arrival in British Columbia, Briemberg lived for

⁶⁵Briemberg, interview.

⁶⁶After the split in the Communist Party following the 20th Party Congress, the crushing of the popular uprising in Hungary, and consequent on differences among leftists, the *New Left Review* was begun in 1960. Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: The British Peace Movement*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 331-338.

⁶⁷Briemberg, interview. Anderson's wife was Juliet Mitchell, whose article "Women: The Longest Revolution," was published in *New Left Review* no. 40, 1966. This article would provide many women, including those in FAL and Women's Caucus with food for thought and action.

⁶⁸Briemberg, interview.

some time in Lynn Valley in North Vancouver. There she learned about the kind of isolation women with children experience,

... I got my sense of the horrors of being an isolated housewife with a child My mother had always worked and so on, and I'd never been in a situation like that before and that's when it happened because Mort was away a huge amount of time because he would have all these political meetings and . . . I was just stuck in this little place. I was an immigrant, I didn't know anybody, I didn't have any history in the place, I had no people to call up. I was totally dependent.⁶⁹

Eventually she became involved in a community based organization on Vancouver's East Side, as a volunteer, where she remained until 1969, when "I . . . switched allegiances to get involved in the Caucus."⁷⁰ Briemberg had been given some of the early papers of the Women's Caucus on childcare related subjects by Melody Killian (one of the only other women in the organization with a child), and attended meetings of the Caucus when it had relocated to the Labour Temple office. Briemberg now works as a Family Court Counselor in Vancouver.

Candace Parker attended Women's Caucus meetings during the time she was a graduate student in Sociology at the University of British Columbia. She came to British Columbia from the United States in 1969, after graduating from the University of California at Berkeley. Parker was raised in a small town in northern California in a middle-class store-owner's family. She began university at Berkeley in 1963, later transferred to the University of California at Santa Barbara, and after her second year became involved with VISTA [Volunteers in Service to America] in 1965. She worked for one year in Michigan, on a community organizing project, which set up a community centre and worked on open housing and recreational programs for and with the disadvantaged black population in Muskegon Heights. By the end of the year she was

⁶⁹Briemberg, interview.

⁷⁰Briemberg, interview.

"pretty much fed up with white America,"⁷¹ ended her relationship with a young black man, and with her parents' support went to the University of London for her third year of university. On her return to Berkeley in 1967 Parker became very involved in student politics, and early consciousness raising groups for women. On graduation she applied for graduate school. She wanted to be outside of the United States. Parker's mother was born in Canada and her family connections drew her to B.C.. Parker had been hoping to attend SFU, but was not accepted. She went then to the University of British Columbia. Parker attended Women's Caucus meetings for about one year. She and a writing partner, Sibylle Klein, used their experience in Women's Caucus as a framework for a paper analyzing what they saw as the "reemergence" of the feminist movement.⁷² As the University of British Columbia centred women's group grew and became more active, Parker stopped attending Women's Caucus meetings. Parker has worked as staff lawyer for a trade union, and still practices law from time to time. She is about to graduate from Emily Carr College of Art and Design.

Dorothy Jean O'Donnell, 18 in 1969, came to the Women's Caucus after the October 1969 Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation. She had been elected as a delegate to the New Democratic Youth convention, held across the hall from the Women's Caucus organized conference. She was born and raised in Vancouver. While she attended a Roman Catholic high school, O'Donnell raised "a whole range of ... democratic issues",⁷³ studying and talking about what was happening in the developing US war in Vietnam, and events in Southern Africa and the Middle East. She attended her first demonstration against the war in Vietnam in 1966, and her studies and political

⁷¹Candace Parker, interview by author, 19 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

⁷²Sibylle Klein and Candace Parker, "Developing an Ideology: The Feminist Movement in North America," 6 April 1970, 32 pp., mimeo, Candace Parker files.

⁷³O'Donnell, interview.

activism led her to develop an "internationalist" viewpoint on the world. She came to believe that "We need socialism in this country, not capitalism . . ."74 O'Donnell was elected student senator in her second year at the University of British Columbia, where she went immediately after high school. O'Donnell used the Senate as a forum to continue her political activism, moving motions during her term urging support for the Vietnam Moratorium, and

condemning the racism against Native Indians, and making a number of practical proposals for recruitment [of native students to the University] . . . and that the university had to deal with the problem and set up a commission that went around the province, to inform the Native People of what the requirements were, to get those people who qualified to come to the university.⁷⁵

O'Donnell participated in the debates developed during the educational series "Women as an Oppressed Group," presented at Women's Caucus meetings during the fall and winter of 1969. While she did not initially participate in the Abortion Counselling and Referral Service, after the Caravan and the subsequent departure of a group of women with whom she was associated, O'Donnell was central in the shift in political focus and action for that service. She is now a member of the Democratic Women's Union, continuing her commitment to anti-imperialist politics. O'Donnell is attending law school.

It was *The Pedestal* newspaper which engaged Cynthia Flood's interest in the Women's Caucus. She had arrived, with her husband, in Vancouver in the fall of 1969, at age 29. Flood was raised in Ontario, in an upper middle class family. She took her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Literature, and worked for ten years in the production end of publishing. Flood had no previous political experience,

I had no interest in politics and I thought that the people who engaged in it were generally boring and I could not imagine why anybody would want to [be a part of this] witless activity.⁷⁶

⁷⁴O'Donnell, interview.

⁷⁵O'Donnell, interview.

⁷⁶Cynthia Flood, interview by author, 9 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

The spring of 1970 brought a marked change,

. . . it was certainly one of the most important periods of my life I would say, because I came in contact with these two views of the world: a Marxist interpretation and . . . women's liberation and feminism. And it was just like . . . views you have where the doors open one after another after another so there's more and more and more light.⁷⁷

Outside a movie theatre a Women's Caucus member sold Flood a copy of *The Pedestal*.

A planning meeting for the next issue of the newspaper was advertised, along with a League for Socialist Action [LSA] organized "Forum" with Evelyn Reed. Flood attended both these meetings and joined both the Women's Caucus and the LSA.

Working on *The Pedestal* provided Flood with information about the Women's Caucus and its activities, and with the opportunity to meet and come to know other women involved in its production. Flood's membership in the Women's Caucus was brief, ending with the expulsion of members of the League for Socialist Action and the Young Socialists, in August 1970.⁷⁸ Flood teaches English at Vancouver City College, and has published a collection of short stories. She continues to be involved in work on politically progressive newspapers.

Margo Dunn came to Vancouver in 1967. She had become interested in theatre in Montreal, and came to the West Coast to see if she could make her way as an actor. Dunn described herself as an "overprotected only child"⁷⁹ who graduated from Université de Montréal's Marianopolis College with a B.A. in 1964, at age 20. She went to SFU in 1968 to train as a teacher, and to work with John Juliani, then the theatre resident. For

⁷⁷Flood, interview.

⁷⁸"YS/LSA Excluded," *The Pedestal*, September 1970, 9; "Defend Democracy in Women's Caucus," Joan Campana, Mary Trew, Cynthia Flood, and Linda Meissenheimer, n.d. [August 1970a], Vancouver Women's Caucus files; "Women's Caucus & the YS/LSA: a majority view," First draft by: Liz Law, Esther Phillips, Pat Hoffer, Andrea Lebowitz, Maggie Benston, Charlene Luboff, Syke Elzinga, and Liz Briemberg; final version completed by: Bouk Elzinga, Jean Rands and Anne Roberts, n.d. [August 1970b], Vancouver Women's Caucus files; "Toward Clarity in the Present Discussion," YS/LSA Women, n.d. [August 1970c], Anne Roberts files. See Conclusion for some detail about the expulsion which took place at the 27 August 1970 Women's Caucus General Meeting.

⁷⁹Margo Dunn, interview by author, 8 October 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

financial reasons Dunn transferred into an M.A. programme in English in 1969. She worked as a Teaching Assistant, and continued her involvement in the theatre programme. She was then 25, and had known since she was 15 that she "would never get married, . . . would never take a man's name, . . . would never have children . . . that the lot of women was not a good one."⁸⁰ The political ferment at SFU drew Dunn; she understood that the administration was elitist, and that the issue of transfer credit was an important one to working-class students.⁸¹ She became involved in department committees as a graduate student representative. Through her contact with other women active in those political struggles Dunn began to understand more about "women's lot." She "didn't go to meetings [not] because they were women's meetings, [but because] I hated meetings and I was artistic and creative."⁸² Dunn was among the women who organized the first specifically women's art studio in Gastown,⁸³ and took part in the guerrilla theatre performances many Women's Caucus members organized, while continuing her active participation in the political struggles at SFU. She went on the Abortion Caravan because it seemed to her very important.

I didn't make a decision, . . . it was like I heard about it, [and] yes, I want to go . . . that was my style of thing, it wasn't a meeting. It was where I could do something.⁸⁴

Dunn left the Women's Caucus at the June 1970 Strategy Conference, and was involved for some time in the Vancouver Liberation Front. The years after the Abortion Caravan were difficult ones for Dunn, during which she withdrew from both politics and creative

⁸⁰Dunn, interview.

⁸¹See Chapter Three. One of the key issues of the occupation of the administration offices by SFU students was the students' belief, proven by various documents found during the occupation, that the Registrar of the University was making discriminatory decisions on the admission of students from community colleges in British Columbia. Courses for which students understood credit would be given by SFU were not being transferred.

⁸²Dunn, interview.

⁸³Dunn, interview; "Women Artists' Co-op," *Georgia Straight*, 2-9 July 1969, 6.

⁸⁴Dunn, interview.

endeavour. Dunn is now the owner of a woman's book store in Vancouver, and has taught Women's Studies at Vancouver City College for some years.

* * *

As is readily apparent from the above biographical sketches, these women come from a broad range of political experience. It can be said, however, that for most of them, activity in student and in Women's Liberation Movement politics transformed those who might have been liberal idealists, into socialist idealists, those who might have been social democrats, into socialists and communists. Some moved from the explicitly socialist politics of the Women's Caucus into more "revolutionary" politics in the Vancouver Liberation Front, and Vancouver Women's Liberation. Those women who came to the Women's Caucus as members of the League for Socialist Action/Young Socialists, continued their membership in this avowedly communist, and Trotskyist, organization. Others maintained their faith in the tradition of Canadian social democracy, and were members of and activists in the New Democratic Party. With the decline of the Women's Caucus, beginning in 1971, several of these women revitalized and reformed the NDP Women's Committee.

The development of these politics for individual women had its particularly Canadian context. In the United States, to speak of oneself as a Women's Liberationist, was not necessarily to say that one was also a socialist or a social democrat, someone who believed in the necessity of changing the political economic relations of the society. It said only that one supported the rights of women to participate in society, with all the rights and freedoms available to men in a liberal democracy. However, in Vancouver, in the Women's Caucus, to identify as a Women's Liberationist was quite specifically to identify as a socialist. To be a Women's Liberationist in Vancouver in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to participate in the critique of Canadian political economy put forward by the Women's Caucus. This critique was first made available in a discussion paper,

"The Political Economy of Women's Liberation", by Margaret Benston ⁸⁵ The paper is concerned with the understanding of class, and with the relation of women to the means of production. It posits that

... the roots of the secondary status of women [to men] are in fact economic, it can be shown that women as a group do in fact have a definite relationship to the means of production and that this relationship is different from that of men. The personal, psychological factors then follow from this special relationship to production and a change in the latter will be a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for changing the first. If this special relationship of women is accepted, the analysis of the situation of women fits naturally into a class analysis of society.⁸⁶

It is the attention to a class analysis, and women's place in economic relations which sets the political discussion in the Women's Caucus apart from contemporary North American counterparts in the Women's Liberation Movement.

While the class based analysis of women's position in Canadian society may well have been generally acceptable to Women's Caucus members in the abstract, it will be seen that there arose considerable difficulty in maintaining political unity in action. Women's own histories, and beliefs about methods of change were often in conflict with this analysis. These conflicts were the moving forces behind debates and decisions about actions, and the forces which eventually brought about the end of the Women's Caucus as an organization.

⁸⁵Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation", n.d., mimeo, 8pp., Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁸⁶Benston, "The Political Economy. . .", 1.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN'S CAUCUS: A HISTORY OF ACTION

The Women's Caucus was formed at SFU in September 1968.¹ At that time, the Women's Caucus represented a convergence of several inter-related groups of women who had become concerned with their place in the student political organizations, as well as in the world at large.

Students for a Democratic University [SDU] was formed in January 1968, after the demise of the New Left Committee, which had succeeded the Students United for Peace Action [SUPA] in September 1967.² The new student organization, modelled on Students for a Democratic Society in the United States, supplied an organizing focus for young people at a young university. Most of those active in SDU were students in the Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology [PSA] Department. Many of its faculty were young, recent graduates of Canadian, English, and United States universities,³ and themselves critical of the social and political status quo.⁴

Marcy Toms, a PSA student, enrolled, for example, in a course taught by Martin Nicolaus, who had been a student of Herbert Marcuse, the noted theorist, at Brandeis

¹There is some disagreement among the women interviewed for this study about whether the organization began as a caucus of women inside the Students for a Democratic University (O'Donnell, interview), or simply as a group of women who took the name Women's Caucus. Benston recalled, "We viewed ourselves as connected with the left clearly, but as a separate women's group. And the use of the word "caucus" . . . implied politics, it implied activism, and even if we weren't a caucus of anything, except the human race, it still said more in a relatively neutral way than . . . the Women's Liberation Movement did, so it was quite consciously not a caucus of anything." Benston, interview.

²"SUPA Now at SFU," *The Peak*, 4 January 1967, 6; "SUPA Disbands," *The Peak*, 27 September 1967, 1; "SDU at Simon Fraser," *The Peak*, 31 January 1968.

³Simon Fraser University, Calendar, Vol. I, 1965-66, Simon Fraser University, W.A.C. Bennett Library, Archives.

⁴Toms, Briemberg, interviews. A discussion of the complex political situation, the Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT] censure crisis, the conflicts between faculty and the university administration, and the move to democratize the university is beyond the scope of this study. A history of Simon Fraser University is being written by Dr. Robin Fisher, and will shed some light on this contentious period.

University. A paper written for this course was to articulate ideas which, with others, eventually drew women together to form Women's Caucus.

I had gotten hold of ... a pamphlet that had been written by some women in Toronto who were involved in SUPA, ... It was called "Sisters, Brothers, Lovers . . . Listen. . ." ... some of the women ... decided [to] be partners and write our paper together and we wrote . . . a new manifesto for women and called it the "Feminine Action League."⁵

The SUPA women's pamphlet⁶ prompted Toms and her female friends to reconsider their place in SDU, and to realize that their work was not considered to be "exactly equal to what the guys were doing."⁷ Soon after the student occupation of the Board of Governors' room at SFU, begun 6 June 1968,⁸ some of the women participants decided to call a meeting of the "Feminine Action League" [FAL] and met in early July 1968. Using the example set by the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee's [SNCC] 1966 decision to exclude whites,⁹ the FAL decided to close their meeting to men. Toms described the reaction:

We had to lock the doors because a photographer from *The Peak* . . . who was having a relationship with one of the women who was at the meeting . . . and [two prominent male student radicals], at least those three people were peering around the windows, they were knocking on the door, they were peering through the slit in the door to try to find out what was going on.¹⁰

The Peak published a photograph of some of the women at the meeting, taken before the doors were locked, with the caption "Pussy Power Strikes at SFU." FAL members Patty Harding and Marcy Toms' critical response to this photograph was published under the

⁵Toms, interview. See also Chapter One.

⁶Judy Bernstein, Peggy Morton, Linda Seese, Myrna Wood, "Sisters, Brothers, Lovers . . . Listen. . .," reprinted in *Women Unite!*, (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1972), 31-39.

⁷Toms, interview.

⁸"Council sits on BoG sit-in Stand," *The Peak*, 12 June 1968, 1. One of the actions taken by the occupiers was to turn the BoG room into a "nursery" [sic], which eventually led to the formation of parent run co-operative daycare at Simon Fraser University.

⁹Toms, interview; Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, *The Rebirth of Feminism*, (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1971), 111.

¹⁰Toms, interview.

headline "Pussy Power Strikes Back," bracketed by mirror images of a single breast.¹¹ Notwithstanding their disgust with this response and reaction from men they knew, had intimate relationships with, and worked with, these same women continued their participation in SDU, and were fully involved in the political crisis which enveloped the SFU campus over the next months.¹²

That same summer two women who had not been part of FAL, Margaret Benston and Brenda Morrow, approached Toms and said:

" . . . we think this is a really good idea, to have women meeting together. But we think that we should . . . discuss, instead of sitting around complaining, we should think about some things that we should actually do, on the campus or even off the campus," and so we decided to have a larger meeting.¹³

This larger meeting was held in Maxine Gadd's Kitsilano apartment, and attended by fifteen women. Someone had invited a woman psychologist,¹⁴ to attend and speak. Her description of women as being like flowers, opening in the sun, each different from the other¹⁵ was not well-received, and Brenda Morrow took things in hand, proposing that they talk about what they could do. Reflecting two of the currents in the Women's Liberation Movement, activism and consciousness-raising, and the difference in focus on these currents in this group, only one woman wanted to talk about her how she felt about herself and her relationships, and the other women spoke about how they might change the world. Some women wanted to meet again to discuss their personal concerns, and

¹¹*The Peak*, 3 July 1968, 1; 10 July 1968, 10 (Marcy Toms is misidentified as "Marcy Jones"); and 17 July 1968, 6.

¹²Davitt, interview.

¹³Toms, interview.

¹⁴It has not been possible to determine exactly who this was; it may have been someone working in Student Health Services.

¹⁵Davitt, interview.

others agreed to call a meeting for those who expressed an interest in more overtly political work.¹⁶

Deciding to call their new group the Women's Caucus, a meeting was called for 11 September 1968.¹⁷ In short order, the Women's Caucus was busy making itself known at SFU. In September *The Peak* carried several pieces about the Women's Caucus, one, entitled "Women's Caucus: On Abortion," set out an analysis of the economic and social situation of women based in an understanding of Canadian society as divided by class.¹⁸ This class-based analysis was to continue as a feature of the writing and discussion of the Women's Caucus.

In early October 1968, Women's Caucus wrote to acting-president of SFU, Kenneth Strand, and L.N. Wilson, Dean of Student Affairs, expressing their dissatisfaction with the circumstances of women students:

The Women's Caucus here at Simon Fraser University has become concerned to learn (through unofficial sources) that many women students each semester become pregnant, and are forced by social and/or economic pressures to drop out of school, or to seek the services of either an amateur or professional abortionist. . .

We feel that this situation arises partly from ignorance of contraceptive methods and partly from the fear of going to a doctor to learn about preventive measures, only to receive a long and humiliating diatribe on morality without any help being offered.

. . . we have decided to institute a Birth Control Clinic on campus, under the direction of the Vancouver Family Planning Centre. Discussions with the Centre have been initiated and continue.¹⁹

Strand's response was to shunt the request to use a room in the campus Health Centre off into "proper channels."²⁰ Soon afterwards, Health Services made the McGill University

¹⁶Toms, Benston, Davitt, interviews.

¹⁷*The Peak*, 18 September 1968, 13.

¹⁸Margaret Benston, "Women's Caucus: On Abortion," *The Peak*, 25 September 1968, 16.

¹⁹Women's Caucus, P[at].J. Hoffer to Dr. K.T. Strand, n.d., Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

²⁰K. Strand to Mrs. P[at].J. Hoffer, 17 October 1968, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

student-published "Birth Control Handbook"²¹ available. This generosity was made possible because Women's Caucus members had ordered many boxes of the handbook, and gave those they didn't distribute themselves to Health Services.²²

One of Women's Caucus' responses to the "unofficial sources," which were in fact their discussions at meetings with those same women students, was to place a small advertisement in *The Peak* which read:

Girls - need help? in trouble? Contact the Women's
Caucus Counselor [sic] by letter c/o SFU Student Society or
phone her at 299-6005 evenings for information.²³

This advertisement prompted telephone calls from a large number of women, some from as far away as Alberta and Saskatchewan, seeking information and assistance.²⁴ This effort to provide abortion and birth control information, done before the provision of such information was legal in Canada, was one of several ways that Women's Caucus members carried out their decision to discover where change was needed and to start to make it. The many telephone calls received, and the investigations into the availability of information about abortion, access to the procedure itself, and the growing concern with birth control methods and information provided a focus for the energy and action of many Women's Caucus members for the life of the organization.

The "Women's Caucus Program," written and distributed in early 1969²⁵ provides an overview of the interests, and analysis, of the group at the time. The "Program" begins with an analysis of "society's definition of women," as feminine, and points out that

²¹See Donna Cherniak and Allan Feingold, "Birth Control Handbook," in *Women Unite!*, 109-113 for information on development and distribution of this pamphlet, originally published by the McGill Students' Society in 1968.

²²Margaret Benston, personal communication, 3 June 1990.

²³*The Peak*, 9 October 1968, 6.

²⁴Benston, interview.

²⁵"Women's Caucus Program," n.d. [Spring 1969], Candace Parker files.

We are told that we are in fact in a privileged position. As well as assigning woman a world of her own [the home], society permits participation by women in the world outside the home. We have the right to vote, the right to education, the right to work.

Yet, women who play the essential role of child-raising have their labor accorded no value by society's measure of value--money.

Women who work outside the home make less than 40% of what men make.

Even in the 'womanly professions' women form the lower echelons: we are teachers, not principals, nurses or nurses' aides, not doctors.

We even define ourselves as socially, intellectually inferior to men.²⁶

The "Program" then sets out a brief analysis of, and in some cases, demands for change in, each of the areas Women's Caucus considered central to the oppression of women: "Jobs," "The Right to Equal Education," "The Right to Choose," "Social Responsibility for Children," "Research and Discussion on the History and Present of Women." In the last two sections, "Women Alone?" and "The Women's Liberation Movement," the Women's Caucus addressed the question of the need for autonomous organizing by suggesting, "We cannot rely on others to fight our battles." The overtly political focus is apparent in the concluding paragraphs, with their call for action which united women working in the home and in the work force and women students at all levels. There is also an acknowledgement that women's work together for social change will also affect the lives of men and children.²⁷

In the year and one half between the first meeting of Women's Caucus at SFU and the beginning of the Abortion Campaign, members discussed and wrote about each of the areas of the "Program."²⁸ The Women's Caucus at SFU also held frequent noon time meetings at which discussion centred on areas of interest and concern for women

²⁶"Women's Caucus Program."

²⁷"Women's Caucus Program."

²⁸Among the papers written and prepared for distribution were: Alice James, "Poverty-Canada's Legacy to Women," March 1969; Margaret Benston, "What Defines Women?: The Family as a Production Unit," March 1969; Jean Rands, "The Problem of Priorities," and "A Socialist Perspective for Women," May 1969; Pat Hoffer and Marcy Cohen, "Education as a Priority," May 1969; Melody Killian, "Daycare," May 1969 and "A Strategy for Love," n.d., Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

students, staff and faculty.²⁹ How they found time to do so while participating as fully as they did in the developing political upheaval at SFU is something of a mystery. In November 1968, "the 114," a group of people, including some Women's Caucus members,³⁰ were arrested at the end of an occupation of the university's Administration offices. The occupation climaxed a campaign which had the apparently revolutionary aim of making SFU accessible to those community college students who had been hoping to transfer their course credits to the university. Students, who used the rhetoric of the provincial government about an accessible university as a critical weapon, felt that administration decisions on admissions were blatantly discriminatory and risked arrest to demand changes in the policies and practices of course articulation.³¹

In February 1969 a letter was sent out to determine if there was interest in holding a Western Regional Conference of "radical women" with the theme "Women: Reform or Revolution?"³² One of the members of the Women's Caucus "had recently been in contact with some of the University women's groups across Canada,"³³ and this meeting had apparently suggested a conference for Western Canada. The organizers suggested dates in April or May of 1969 for the conference. As it happened, the planned meeting was not held until Thanksgiving weekend that same year. It seems that a sufficient number of responses were not received in time to plan for a Spring conference. In the intervening period contacts were made with women at other universities and through the

²⁹Weekly announcements were published in *The Peak*, and a calendar of events and meetings was a regular part of mailings to members.

³⁰Among the arrested were at least two Women's Caucus members, Pat Hoffer, and Cathy Walker. There may well have been others, but the names of those arrested are not available.

³¹Dunn, interview.

³²Marge Hollibaugh, Orleen Martin to Dear Friends, n.d. [February 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

³³Hollibaugh, Martin to Dear Friends. . .

New Democratic Youth Conference at Banff in May where it was agreed that a fall conference should be organized.³⁴

It soon became clear that the Women's Caucus would be unable to organize such a conference, or any other action, if it remained located in and focussed on Simon Fraser University. Women's Caucus members who were arrested, or committed to defense work for "the 114," found that their energies were completely taken up; Women's Caucus associated work was being subsumed to that of the political crisis of SFU.³⁵ The time taken by their involvement in the continuing crisis led Women's Caucus members to decide, in June 1969, "to get off the hill and do something in the city that would widen the base of the Women's Caucus."³⁶ They decided that the work of organizing women would be better done from a base in the city, and not from the top of a mountain in Burnaby. To this end, an office was found in the Labour Temple, where a number of trade unions were head-quartered, on East Broadway near Cambie Street. Beginning in July 1969, the Women's Caucus rented a small room for \$30 per month with the use of a meeting room on the lower floor at a minimal rent. Pledges from members and donations paid for the office and telephone.³⁷ In addition, copies of Women's Caucus discussion papers were sold at cost.

One of the first widely advertised public meetings held by the Women's Caucus featured a well known Women's Liberation Movement activist and sociologist at McGill University, Marlene Dixon.³⁸ A tradition of press releases was inaugurated, those to both

³⁴"Minutes of the General Women's Caucus Meeting, May 21st [1969]," Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

³⁵Davitt, interview; "Administration Occupied," *The Peak*, 21 November 1968, 1.

³⁶Hollibaugh, interview. For another account, Marcy Cohen and Jean Rands, "A Report Back to the Simon Fraser Left on Women's Caucus Summer Organizing," n.d. [September 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

³⁷"Liberation today or tomorrow?: Pledge Today," *The Pedestal*, Winter 1969, 3; Lebowitz, interview.

³⁸Dixon had been employed at the University of Chicago, she was fired, and many suspected this event had much to do with her political activism, particularly as a Women's Liberationist. She was then hired by McGill University, and appointed to the Sociology department. (See also, Roberta Salper's

mainstream and alternative media announcing that Dixon would speak "on women's liberation in the U.S. and, in particular, on the family in North America"³⁹ at Fisherman's Hall in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, on 18 June 1969. Dixon also lectured at Vancouver Community College and was interviewed on at least one local radio station.⁴⁰

A radio interview with Dixon brought Betsy Meadley to the Women's Caucus.⁴¹ Meadley was thwarted in her efforts to obtain employment which was designated a "man's job." She had been hired to perform clerical work, and had wanted to bid for a position with higher pay "in the back office,"⁴² that is, where the men worked. Meadley remembered the name of the Caucus, and went to the organization seeking assistance in meeting her goal. In August a demonstration organized by Women's Caucus members, who worked for the provincial government, including Meadley, was held in front of 411 Dunsmuir Street, the provincial government building and location of the B.C. Civil Service Commission, protesting discrimination against women in hiring and wages.⁴³

The Vancouver Province reported:

For what may be the first time since the days of the suffragettes, women took to the streets here Tuesday demanding their rights.

introduction to Dixon's "Why Women's Liberation—?" in Roberta Salper, ed., *Female Liberation: History and Current Politics*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972), 184-200.) Press Release, mimeo, 11 June 1969, Vancouver Women's Caucus files. After leaving McGill "Marlene Dixon joined together with other women in building a party —today, the Democratic Workers Party, whose founding was formally announced November 6, 1979," and continues to work as organizer, researcher and writer in San Francisco. See, among other publications, Marlene Dixon, *Women in Class Struggle* (San Francisco, CA: Synthesis Publications, 1978 and 1980), and for the quote above, the Introduction to that volume by Benita Martínez.

³⁹Press Release, 11 June 1969.

⁴⁰Minutes, Women's Caucus Meeting 18 June [1969], mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁴¹Wood, interview.

⁴²Betsy Meadley, "Report on BC Civil Service Demonstration," "Women's Caucus News," 19 September 1969, mimeo, 4, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁴³"Women's Caucus - A History and Analysis," mimeo, n.d., Vancouver Women's Caucus files; Wood, interview.

About 20 members of the Women's Caucus demonstrated in front of the provincial office building, . . . protesting alleged job discrimination and distributing their publication, *The Pedestal* (free for women, 10 cents for men).⁴⁴

The first of many such demonstrations by Women's Caucus members, it publicized the blatant discrimination against women practiced not only in the private sector, but by provincial and federal government departments as well.

The first issue of *The Pedestal*, distributed at the demonstration, was planned to be available for distribution before the coming provincial election.⁴⁵ The paper began at the instigation of Jean Rands, a long time political activist, who thought it important for a group like Women's Caucus to publish a newspaper as an educational and organizational tool.⁴⁶ As an experienced type-setter, Rands' skill proved invaluable to *The Pedestal*. The newspaper brought new women to Women's Caucus, and served as a focus for others who produced each of its issues, developing friendships as well as their skills in newspaper production.⁴⁷

The headline story on that first front page was "Why Picket Trudeau?" over a story about the participation of Women's Caucus in a demonstration against the Prime Minister at the Seaforth Armouries on Vancouver's West Side. Marcy Toms' article answered the headline's question, pointing out:

The primary reason was structural - it concerned the nature and diverse functions of every institution in our Canadian social system. The secondary reason was Trudeau himself. As an individual he uses women so exploitatively to enhance his personal image and further his political career that he has become a symbol of this sort of exploitation.⁴⁸

Toms went on to indict, once again, the Liberal Government for its inattention to the genuine needs of women for birth control and abortion information and services and for

⁴⁴"Women's group on warpath against 'job discrimination'," *The Vancouver Province*, 27 August 1969, 23.

⁴⁵Jean Rands to Laurel, personal notebook, 28 August 1969, Jean Rands files.

⁴⁶Briemberg, Roberts, Davitt, interviews.

⁴⁷Flood, Rands, Briemberg, Roberts, Davitt, interviews.

⁴⁸Marcy Toms, "Why Picket Trudeau?" *The Pedestal*, Fall 1969, 1.

changes in the divorce laws. As was Women's Caucus' practice, connections were also made between these issues and the limitations on women's full participation in the work force.

That first issue also reported on the successful campaign conducted at the University of British Columbia during the summer session to organize teachers. A panel discussion, organized by the Education Action Committee of the Women's Caucus, was presented at a lunchtime seminar 14 July 1969. Christine Swanson, the first woman appointed principal of a Vancouver school since 1935, spoke on "obstacles women teachers face in becoming administrators." Margaret Benston and Donna Liberson, Women's Caucus members, also participated, discussing "the way the curriculum helps to set male-female roles and expectations, [and the relationship] of women teachers to the position of women in the rest of society."⁴⁹ The response to the panel presentation was positive, and women were encouraged to join Women's Caucus education committee to continue to discuss the problems women teachers faced, and the need for change in educating young people.

Although the Women's Caucus had opened an office in central Vancouver, the SFU Caucus members were still very active at the university. They reported to the student community on the summer of organizing work, and proposed that one of the necessary remedies to the limitations faced by women students would be to encourage research which would add to the "information [about] and analysis of the social situation of women and its historical development."⁵⁰ They would soon have an opportunity to take up that work themselves. In October the PSA Department went on strike, and

⁴⁹Press Release, 7 July 1969, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁵⁰Marcy Cohen and Jean Rands, "A Report Back to the Simon Fraser Left on Women's Caucus Summer Organizing," mimeo, n.d., Jean Rands files.

political strife reigned again at SFU. The Women's Caucus members on campus organized a "Women's Liberation Counter-Course"⁵¹ in support of

The PSA study program [which] had begun to critically examine the history and present of women in industrial society. We must continue this work . . .

It is also vital for us to . . . involve non-PSA women in learning and debating some of the theory that underlies the concept of Women's Liberation.⁵²

Women's Caucus used their educational work as an opportunity to organize women, to encourage them to join the group, and to join one of the sub-groups working on specific issues that interested them.

During that same busy summer and fall, organizing for the Western Regional Conference carried on, and arrangements were finalized to hold it in the Student Union Building at the University of British Columbia on Thanksgiving weekend. Two hundred women were expected and billeting had to be arranged for participants, who came from Saskatchewan, Alberta, Washington, Idaho, and California. The agenda for the conference was ambitious. A letter was sent to participants in mid-September 1969 inviting suggestions for additions to an agenda which the organizers hoped would "retain as informal an atmosphere as possible without . . . degenerat[ing] into a directionless and unproductive discussion."⁵³ The organizers wrote that:

We have found, from our experience, that it is very easy to fall into the trap of abstraction and grand theorizing. For this reason we feel it is necessary to start with concrete situations in organizing women in various working concentrates [sic] and in organizing women on campus. From these real situations we hope to move on to the more theoretical problem concerning women.⁵⁴

⁵¹"Women as an Oppressed Group," " . . . a six week counter-course . . . co-sponsored by PSA-Department-on-Strike-at-SFU and Women's Caucus. Lecture and Discussion every Tuesday at 8:00 PM at 307 West Broadway." Course outline, 7 October 1969, Vancouver Women's Caucus files; "Counter Course on Women's Liberation," course description, n.d. [October 1969], Anne Roberts files.

⁵²Marcy Toms, "Why a Counter Course?" *The Peak*, 1 October 1969.

⁵³Letter, 16 September 1969, Dear Sisters from Orleen Martin and Marge Hollibaugh, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁵⁴Letter, 16 September 1969, Dear Sisters. . .

Women's Caucus members had agreed to hold small group discussions before the conference on working women, women in the family, campus organizing, and education. From these discussions and other research workshops would be prepared. The agenda for the two and one-half day conference included plenary sessions on "Women in the Work Force," "Campus Organizing," "Economic Functions of the Family," "Psychological Oppression of Women," "Women in Social Movements: The Past," "Prospects for Change," and "What Kind of Movement." Each plenary was followed by workshops focussing on specific groups of women, or by general discussion from the plenary group. The agenda also listed suggested readings for each session. Most papers were authored by Women's Caucus members and were centred on the themes identified in the Women's Caucus program, discussions, and work.⁵⁵

Women's Caucus members were excited about the possibilities for the Conference, and eagerly anticipated the opportunity to talk with women from Western Canada and from the United States. One participant recalled her surprise at discovering that, contrary to her expectations:

... the women who came up from the Bay Area, from Oregon and from other places [in] the States were supposed to be ... among the most sophisticated theoretically, and with the most experience. But we had long, long sessions with them, both in plenary sessions and in other sessions and I think that we were way ahead. ... I remember them being very un-critical of some of the basic problems for all women. By that I mean ... we were farther ahead ... in terms of having a class analysis and realizing that a few more or an equal number of women at high echelons ... in a variety of places wasn't going to make a ... difference to all women. ... And so that the issues that were going to be the cutting edge issues for the growth of the women's movement were issues that were primarily things that related to the every day lives of women where they were, in their homes. And I think that we had a much better sense of women and wage labour, and women and unwaged labour in the home. ...⁵⁶

The discussions and workshops at this Conference underlined one of the significant differences in analysis between Canadian and American women. Women's Caucus

⁵⁵Vancouver Women's Caucus, "Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation ... Agenda," 11-13 October 1969, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁵⁶Toms, interview.

members were typically more sympathetic to a class based analysis of women's situation than were their American visitors. The Canadian women reflected their experience with social democratic, and socialist, social and economic analysis, and extended these understandings to women's situations, in their homes and workplaces. From the beginning then, the aim was not simply to reform existing social systems in order to make room for women at the top, but to change fundamentally the political and economic system. Using the experience of women "where they were," the Women's Caucus sought to organize women to take part in changing Canadian society.

This conference also brought forth the first proposal for what was to become the Abortion Campaign. Betsy Meadley stood up in one of the final sessions and suggested that women go directly to Ottawa to demand accessible, safe and legal abortions. She was convinced that

. . . Jack Davis [then MP for North Vancouver-Capilano] wasn't representing us and as women we should really go as a group to Ottawa and represent ourselves to Parliament, because nobody was doing it for us.⁵⁷

She was confident that change in the laws would bring about a social transformation, and that a group that "would push on something winnable" would be more attractive to others. Already a supporter of Family Planning organizations and an NDP activist on birth control and abortion services, Meadley wanted abortion out of the Criminal Code, this was "the thing that could be popular and was political."⁵⁸ Meadley's proposal appeared in a *Georgia Straight* article on the Western Regional Conference. Along side calls to organize unorganized office workers, encourage women's participation in trade unions,

⁵⁷Wood, interview.

⁵⁸Wood, interview.

and to institute accessible child care facilities appeared an announcement that "An intensive campaign to legalize all abortions will be undertaken."⁵⁹

The same Conference called for demonstrations on United Nations Day, 24 October, "protesting discrimination against women in the professions." UN Day provided an ironic reminder of the passage by that organization of "The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women," on 7 November 1967, which specifically prohibited discrimination against women seeking, among other things, professional and vocational advancement. Conference participants were also critical of the practices of "channeling" in education which limited young women's access to courses necessary for entrance into professional, technical and other non-traditional fields.⁶⁰

At noon on Friday, 24 October 1969, about twenty-five women met outside the Engineer's Club in downtown Vancouver.⁶¹ The Club refused membership to women engineers and permitted women entry to the club only after 2:30pm. After about one hour the demonstrators moved a few blocks away to the Manpower⁶² office "to protest their cooperation in discrimination against women in the Work Force."⁶³ The leaflet

⁵⁹Donna [Liberson], "Woman's Liberation Demonstrates Here," *Georgia Straight*, 22-29 October 1969, 17. Above this article is an illustration of a woman clothed in black leather, with bare breasts, long, full, dark hair, a whip and chains draped about her. The use of this graphic image reflected the sexual biases of this "alternative" newspaper. The illustration makes the statement that women demanding change can be characterized as aggressive, and sexually dominant; and in addition offers an image both threatening and sexually titillating to readers, of both sexes, of the article which might have served to trivialize its contents. The 12-18 November 1969 issue of the *Georgia Straight* [8-9] carried a response from Women's Caucus members Catherine Stone and Debbi Sopol who commented, "You were supposed to associate the picture with the women who dared to protest and then write off the whole group as a bunch of dangerous wierdos. Why do people (especially guys) get so upset when a woman refused to play the geisha part? Because women are one half the population and if they are tired of being treated as inferior, then there isn't one human relationship that won't have to change." "Women's Stand Urged Against Discrimination," *The Vancouver Sun*, 15 October 1969, 26.

⁶⁰Liberson, "Women's Liberation Demonstrates . . ."

⁶¹"Women's Caucus News," 14 November 1969, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁶²This was the 1969 incarnation of Employment and Immigration Canada.

⁶³Liberson, "Women's Liberation Demonstrates . . ." See also, "Husband's club unfair - wife," *The Province*, 25 October 1969, 9; "Women Picket Engineer's Club," *The Vancouver Sun*, 24 October 1969, 2..

handed out was entitled "Women Do Work that Men Scorn,"⁶⁴ and made the point that women workers were increasingly to be found in clerical and service oriented jobs, that men's participation in teaching and librarianship was increasing but that women were not "permitted" entry into male identified professions such as architecture, dentistry, engineering and the law. The authors of this leaflet recognized that technology had brought changes to housework, that more and more women were in the labour force, and that the areas of work, both professional and otherwise, available to women were limited. In addition the leaflet stated that "Sex work roles [are the] leading cause of poverty in this country." Identifying systematic, and systemic, discrimination against women, and creating solutions would become the focus of work for Women's Caucus members in unions, and for those organizing unorganized working women.⁶⁵

One of the first public actions in response to the October conference's call for legalization of abortion was the early December 1969 Women's Caucus announcement that it was operating an abortion information service intended to pressure the Therapeutic Abortion Committee [TAC] at Vancouver General Hospital to speed-up processing abortion requests and ensure that women seeking abortions through the TAC had the necessary support. In these public announcements the Women's Caucus avoided potential

⁶⁴"Women Do Work that Men Scorn," leaflet, mimeo, n.d. [October 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files. This demonstration also evinced the first editorial mention of the Women's Caucus in *The Vancouver Sun*, "Nothing Like a Dame," 31 October 1969, 4. After stating that Women's Caucus had a point about discrimination against women, the editorial concludes with this passage: "However, while the women are rightly asserting that they have these capabilities [professional, intellectual and managerial], that they are not mere baby-factories, there is a danger--hopefully not a necessity--of going too far. There seems to be an almost suicidal urge for militant feminists to abandon all make-up, to wear square heels, to deny the joys of flirtation so that a very attractive young female feels compelled to argue that she cannot accept a corsage because it somehow degrades her as a "person". Such a corsage does not deny a woman's capabilities. It merely accepts and asserts the glorious, inescapable fact--a fact that the truly successful woman does not strive to escape--that off the job at least there is nothing like a dame. Equality, yes--unisex, no!"

⁶⁵"Women's Caucus News," 18 October 1969, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

prosecution by observing, "We would not propose to arrange abortions for anyone. Nor would we propose to recommend an abortion to anyone."⁶⁶

The Abortion Counselling and Referral Service [ACRS], which had been operating for some weeks, was publicly announced so that word of mouth, or more clandestine means of communication, would not be the only way women could find the service. Members of the Women's Caucus had been writing pamphlets about abortion and birth control, speaking out at every opportunity about women's right to control their reproductive capacity, and continuing to answer requests from women for abortion and birth control information. Margaret Benston recalled that there had been:

... a lot of outrage about ... the fact that people died from botched illegal abortions. ... and it had been clear with the stuff at Simon Fraser⁶⁷ that trying to [provide information] surreptitiously was just too scary and that it needed to be done openly and that was the way to make a beginning.⁶⁸

Women remembered the meeting where the decision was taken to open the service as a crowded one, there was considerable tension because women were concerned about the legal implications of what they were setting out to do.⁶⁹ Each woman was free to make her own decision about her participation in this working group. Women in the Labour Temple office referred women callers for information to the ACRS which was open two evenings each week. Only three or four women, who felt able to deal with the constant pressure of providing information and support to women seeking assistance, worked in the Service on a regular basis. Others chose to involve themselves in the

⁶⁶"Abortion Campaign," *The Pedestal*, Vol.1 No.2, Winter 1969. See also "Women's Group Seeks Abortion Law Change," *The Vancouver Province*, 11 December 1969, 22; Mary Stolk, "Abortion Information Now Available to All," *Georgia Straight*, December 3-10, 1969, 11.

⁶⁷See Chapter Three, for description of early involvement in provision of information on birth control and abortion.

⁶⁸Benston, interview.

⁶⁹Benston, Liberson, interview.

equally important, but perhaps less emotionally taxing, political and educational work on the issue.⁷⁰

Among its first acts, the ACRS sent out a questionnaire to doctors in the Vancouver area, hoping "to find out what the medical profession is now doing or is willing to do to change (or eliminate) the existing laws," with the intention of enlisting the assistance of interested doctors.⁷¹ Although it was not to be the case, the group had hoped that it would be possible to include doctors in the organizing they proposed to do to eliminate Criminal Code sanctions on abortion.

During the same week the ACRS was announced, demonstrations occurred against discriminatory hiring practices, in front of the Hotel Georgia where the Human Rights Commission was meeting, the Canada Manpower office, and the Post Office. The first paragraph of the brief presented to the Human Rights Commission by Women's Caucus stated:

The existence of a Human Rights Bill, and this commission, would appear to indicate a recognition by the provincial government that human rights are abused, that discrimination exists. However, on close examination of the act, we are shocked to find that it does not include any concrete measures to change this, at least for women.⁷²

Drawing from their own experiences, the Women's Caucus pointed out that the Human Rights Commissioners, in their other role as members of the Board of Industrial Relations, practiced discrimination against women every day. The brief demanded that "Help Wanted" advertisements be listed without their traditional divisions by sex, and that media and educational systems present images of women and girls as autonomous and capable people. In addition, the brief demanded that changes be made in regulations

⁷⁰Briemberg, Davitt, Liberson, Rands, interviews.

⁷¹"Women's Caucus News," mimeo, January 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files, 1. So far, these documents have not been located.

⁷²"Brief to the Human Rights Commission from the Vancouver Women's Caucus," mimeo, n.d. [3 December 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

and in the wording of the Human Rights Act which would preclude discrimination on the basis of sex in employment and education.⁷³

While Marcy Cohen delivered the brief inside, three women, one carrying a sign saying "1959," wearing a dress and apron, and chained to a stove, another in jeans and boots, with a placard that said "Freedom Now," representing 1969, and the third, dressed in a suit with a fur collar, and a cartridge belt full of shells, carrying a rifle, with a sign that said "1979???"⁷⁴ were outside the hotel. Copies of the Women's Caucus' brief were distributed, and copies of *The Pedestal* were sold. This was one of the first times the Women's Caucus used street theatre tactics. The tableau was intended to inspire in onlookers an understanding of the lengths to which women were willing to go to achieve an end to discrimination, as well as pointing out that things had already begun to change.⁷⁵

On 12 December 1969, a Women's Caucus brief to an area managers' conference of Canada Manpower, presented by Jean Rands, pointed out that Trudeau's "Just Society" was only too likely to be a "Just Men's Society" if discriminatory hiring practices were not changed. "Manpower is of no benefit to women because it accepts and defends the status quo - it collaborates with employers to keep women in an inferior position."⁷⁶ Familiar demands included an end to job classification by sex, training for women, and education against prejudice. The brief also promised protests to be staged at the Post

⁷³Brief to the Human Rights Commission . . . "

⁷⁴Benston, Hollibaugh, interviews; "Women's Caucus News," December 1969, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁷⁵Marge Hollibaugh remembers that her costume as "1979???" with a gun over her shoulder was quite shocking to a male bystander who had been heckling some of the demonstrators. His attention was drawn to her, and he left the street very quickly. Hollibaugh, interview.

⁷⁶Brief to the Canada Manpower Center [sic] from The Vancouver Women's Caucus", n.d. [12 December 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files. "Women Zero on Manpower," *The Province*, 13 December 1969, 11.

Office and on downtown streets which were expected to be full of Christmas shoppers.⁷⁷ Leaflets from the Women's Caucus excoriated the unequal wages paid to postal employees. "Women's work," mail sorting, paid \$1.25 per hour, and "men's work," moving bags of mail in the plant, and operating equipment, paid \$1.50 per hour.⁷⁸ The Post Office claimed that discrimination was not practiced, but that women were hired as sorters because they were "better" at it, and that wage rates were not set by sex. Women's Caucus leaflet pointed out, ". . . out of 2681 women hired, all but 7 are working at 1.25 per hour, according to a Post Office spokesman. Out of 1084 men hired, all but 95 make 1.50." Again, as Women's Caucus usually tried to do, discrimination against women was identified as having serious consequences for all working people,

THIS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST US ALSO THREATENS THE JOBS, WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WORKING MEN, SO LONG AS EMPLOYERS CAN HIRE WOMEN AT LOW WAGES, THEY WILL NOT HIRE MEN AND WOMEN AT DECENT WAGES.⁷⁹

This was not to be the last statement Women's Caucus members made about job discrimination. This and many other issues effecting the working lives of women were the focus for the Working Women's Workshop. In the next twelve months Women's Caucus members would become involved in the developing struggle for equal pay for equal work at Vancouver General Hospital, and within the Hospital Employees Union.⁸⁰ A strike by employees of rental car companies also benefited by the support of women who joined their picket lines at Vancouver's airport.⁸¹ The July-August 1970 issue of *The Pedestal* announced a discussion series at the Vancouver Public Library. The lunch hour

⁷⁷A *Georgia Straight* story reported that it poured rain, and there were fewer than hoped for shoppers and demonstrators, and that leaflets had been distributed in the department stores, 17-24 December 1969, 8.

⁷⁸"The Federal Government is a bigot!" n.d. [December 1969], Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁷⁹"The Federal Government is a bigot!"

⁸⁰"Hospital Workers Demand Equal Pay," *The Pedestal*, February 1970, 5.

⁸¹"Rent-A-Car workers fight for contract, equal pay, Strike Escalates," *The Pedestal*, June 1970, 1.

series was intended to interest women working in offices in the downtown area, and provided an opportunity to discuss concerns of working women in particular, and for women to learn more about the Women's Liberation Movement.⁸² The same issue of *The Pedestal* carried "A Proposal for Organizing: Working Women's Union," which arose from debate at the June 1970 strategy conference organized by the Women's Caucus.⁸³ The union proposed would be one for all working women, no matter what their workplace. By September 1970 Women's Caucus members were supporting workers who had been on strike at C.H. Hosken, a subsidiary of Cunningham Drugs, for five months. The Working Women's Workshop organized a boycott of Cunningham Drugs in support of the women seeking their first collective agreement. Until the end of the Women's Caucus in the summer of 1971, working women's issues continued to be prominently featured in the pages of *The Pedestal*, and both action and discussion continued to draw new women into the organization.

Through the first year of the Women's Caucus increasing numbers of women attended the monthly general meetings, and participated in the growing number of working groups. In addition to the group focussing on education, another was particularly concerned with the discriminatory advertising and hiring practices of Manpower, another would be responsible for the production of *The Pedestal*, SFU Women's Caucus branch continued as an active participant in the politics of that university and another group was formed at Vancouver City College. Regular orientation meetings were held for new members. By August 1969, the Women's Caucus mailing list had grown to some 200 women's names. Jean Rands was pleased to note in a letter to a friend that a large number of those new names were those of housewives and working women, not students. Women's Caucus proved able to attract to itself women who had

⁸²"Discussions on Women's Liberation," *The Pedestal*, July-August 1970, 10.

⁸³Jean Rands, "A Proposal for Organizing: Working Women's Union," *The Pedestal*, July-August 1970, 10.

not been politically active before.⁸⁴ There were frequent discussions at general meetings about organization, or re-organization, with the aim of making the Women's Caucus more effective at reaching out to new members. The general meetings functioned both as educational sessions, and as clearing houses for reports from working groups. If decisions were taken they were made, or ratified, at the monthly general meetings. Minutes were sent to all on the mailing lists, along with infrequent newsletters. The newsletters were eventually replaced by the more regular publication of *The Pedestal*.

Like many women, Women's Caucus members were managing to do many things at one time: meeting, talking, reading, writing, demonstrating, speaking out, and providing women with information and services in different areas. As a direct result of the attention paid to getting media coverage by the Women's Caucus,⁸⁵ during the last third of 1969 the amount of coverage of Women's Liberation Movement related activities, including international events and commentaries, increased noticeably.⁸⁶ Coverage of the activities of Vancouver Women's Caucus was sought for several reasons, not the least of which was to inform women about the Caucus' work, that is, as an organizing tool for the organization itself. Secondly, a broad range of women could be reached with the new ideas. Lacking the kind of economic privilege which accounts for the success of, for example, the Canadian Medical Association's lobbying efforts, women sought media coverage to influence opinion across the country, to set in motion, as it were, the processes of "democracy in action."

For the first months of 1970 Women's Caucus members would be engaged by the work arising from their decision to launch a nation-wide Abortion Campaign, and to

⁸⁴Rands, personal notebook, 28 August 1969, Jean Rands files.

⁸⁵Roberts, Woodsworth, Cohen, interviews.

⁸⁶For a brief summary of the increases in mass media coverage of the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States see Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 74-78.

centre attention on an Abortion Caravan from Vancouver to Ottawa. Like women all over North America, the Women's Caucus organizers recognized the power of the media, while at the same time being critical of the mass media's usually disrespectful portrayal of women.⁸⁷ They wanted to use mass media carefully to build public opinion in favour of reform of the Criminal Code sections on abortion as the Caravan crossed Canada. Like many women who had worked for the rights of women before them, Women's Caucus members knew that if public opinion could be influenced there was a greater likelihood of success. The mass media would reach women with the new ideas, with the descriptions of women's experience, and with the calls to action -- this time on abortion. It was hoped that women would, in this way, come to a deeper understanding of their connections with activists in the Women's Liberation Movement, with women who had been struggling for women's rights since the 18th century, and with other women, just like themselves, all over the country.

⁸⁷See Hole and Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism*, 247ff, and Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, 111-114, for analyses of the place and politics of media in the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARROW LEAVES THE BOW...

For many Women's Caucus members the Abortion Campaign occupied the next four and a half months, to the exclusion of all other concerns. While the decision to take up the Abortion Campaign had been ratified by the general membership of the Women's Caucus, practical and political circumstances made a difference to which women participated in which of the many associated actions as part of this intense and far-reaching campaign.

The proposal for what was to become the Abortion Campaign was initially made in October 1969. While some women did the gruelling, dangerous work of offering information and support to women calling the ACRS, others took up the challenge of the campaign to decriminalize abortion.

The Abortion Campaign

Women's Caucus organized the first abortion rights march in Canada¹ on 14 February 1970 as an opening salvo in its Abortion Campaign, which culminated in a demonstration in the House of Commons on the day after Mother's Day, 11 May 1970. In March 1970 Women's Caucus Abortion Campaign organizers wrote to the Prime Minister and the federal Health and Justice Ministers charging the Government with responsibility for the deaths and mutilations by illegal abortions of thousands of women. They also demanded that research on safe methods of birth control for both sexes, and on improved means of abortion, be state supported, and taught in medical schools. In addition, the Women's Caucus demanded that Section 237 be removed from the Criminal Code, that all

¹*Feminist Organizing*, 46.

convicted under that section, or section 150, be pardoned, and that any pending prosecutions not proceed.² Their letter concluded:

We consider the government of Canada is in a state of war with the women of Canada. If steps are not taken to implement our demands by Monday, May 11, 1970 at 3:00 p.m., we will be forced to respond by declaring war on the Canadian government.

We are angry, furious women and we demand our right to human dignity.³

This challenge summed up an accumulated year and one half's frustration and hard work.

"The General Meeting Report" for a meeting held 26 February 1970, shows that some agreement had been reached on the general outline of the Abortion Campaign. The plan, at that point, included calling for demonstrations across Canada on Mothers' Day, 10 May, as memorial services for the women who died from botched abortions. Responsibility was laid firmly at the feet of governments, both federal and provincial. In order to draw attention to their demands women would organize a "Cavalcade" to leave Vancouver, cross the country and "join local rallies and gain women in every town and city." Campaign organizers planned to demand meetings with the Provincial Health Minister and Attorney General and a "hearing Monday May 11 with Parliament." The report stated:

If 2000 Canadian women were lined up and shot by any other country Parliament [sic] would allow only a matter of hours for the offending country to stop killing these women--before declaring war on that country. THEREFORE, unless abortion is legalized by 4 p.m. Tuesday May 12th 1970, the women's liberation groups throughout Canada will formally DECLARE WAR ON THE CANADIAN GOVT. And actions will follow. Join with us: meet Thursday, March 5 to continue plans and report on research. On March 12, people interested in public speaking meet at 7 to have a workshop to build confidence; general strategy and planning meeting at 9.

ABORTION WEEK -- MAY 10th to 16th, 1970

²See Appendix I for the text of Section 237 (later 251) of the Criminal Code. Section 150 was the Criminal Code section on obscenity, under which the distribution of information on methods of birth control was forbidden.

³Vancouver Women's Caucus, M. Hollibaugh, and B. Meadley to Prime Minister P.R.[sic] Trudeau and The Ministers of Health and Justice, 19 March 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

... -- lets plan on thousands of live women DESCENDING ON PARLIAMENT BLDGS. AND GROUNDS OTTAWA by SATURDAY NITE [sic] May 9th and setting up camp on the parliament [sic] grounds.⁴

These women were not going to quietly go and ask that things change; it was their intention to make demands. The implication that the state was waging something resembling war on the women of Canada was no doubt helpful as an organizing tool. Many Women's Caucus members were anti-war activists as well as Women's Liberationists, and this was a metaphor many would readily understand.

Women's Caucus undertook a prodigious task of organization for an event scheduled to occur in late April. Women across Canada were contacted through an informal network of friendships linking women in various communities. Those with links through national political organizations called upon comrades in other cities to arrange meetings. Women with connections through the Women's Liberation Movement and the New Democratic Youth used them to put together a travel schedule for the Abortion Caravan, slated to leave in late April.⁵ *The Pedestal* proved essential in contacting women across the Dominion. The Winter 1969 issue announced the Abortion Campaign. The front page featured a reduced version of a poster the Women's Caucus sold as publicity and a fund-raiser.⁶ A female image of "Justice" with a balanced scale, and obviously pregnant, was surrounded by the words: "Labouring under a Mis-Conception - Legalize ALL Abortion Now!" In small print under the figure appeared "Ideology Surpasses Love" over the Women's Caucus name and telephone number.⁷

Valentine's Day 1970 saw some 250 people marching from the Court House on Georgia Street to a rally at Victory Square. A reenactment of a TAC meeting

⁴"General Meeting Report - Feb. 1970," n.d., mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁵Vancouver Women's Caucus Campaign Co-ordinating Committee [Vicky Brown, Marge Hollibaugh, Dawn Carrell, and Betsy Meadley] to Dear Sisters, n.d. [Spring 1970], Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁶Minutes of 18 June 1969, mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁷"Abortion Campaign," *The Pedestal*, Winter 1969, 1.

highlighting the differences in treatment for women of different classes was performed on street corners along the route. Passers-by were reported to have been interested in the "skits." Such guerrilla theatre pieces were an essential part of the Women's Caucus political work. The point was to offer people an opportunity to observe an event that usually took place in "private," and to expose the hypocrisy inherent in the treatment of women by institutions.

The march was accompanied by a few persons carrying anti-abortion signs. The effect of one of these signs was blunted by one performer, who played the "butcher abortionist," putting her arm around the shoulders of the man carrying it and holding her placard beside his, her's said "Old Wive's Tales."⁸ An evening meeting at the Hotel Georgia was addressed by Dr. Richard Foulkes, employed as an administrator at Royal Columbian Hospital and an advocate for repeal of the abortion laws. An audience of one hundred heard him conclude:

... until such time as we can prevent unwanted pregnancy the backstop of therapeutic abortion must be available--unfettered by unjustified legal restrictions and by prejudice.⁹

Dr. Foulkes' speech provided Women's Caucus with considerable ammunition for the Abortion Campaign. He spoke bluntly about the deaths of women from botched abortions in North America, and the admission to hospitals across the country of some 20,000 women for treatment of the consequences of incomplete abortions.¹⁰

On 10 March 1970, Dr. Robert Makaroff was arrested and charged with procuring a miscarriage. His case was set over to a date later in March. The Women's Caucus was quick to respond, with press releases, and demonstrations in front of the Public Safety

⁸Jeannine Mitchell, "Abortion March A Success", *Georgia Straight*, 18-25 February 1969, 2.

⁹Jeannine Mitchell, "Abortion Laws are Killing People," *Georgia Straight*, 18-25 February 1969, 11.

¹⁰Mitchell, "Abortion Laws . . ."

Building.¹¹ Dr. Makaroff's work was well known to the women who worked at the ACRS. He could be counted on for safe careful treatment of women seeking abortions. Most importantly, if a woman had no money, Makaroff would still perform the abortion.¹² Later in March Harvey Karman was arrested, with others, at the West Los Angeles Abortion Clinic.¹³ Karman had been doing abortions for some time. As a consequence of his contact with one of the women who was involved in the ACRS, many women who came to the Caucus seeking information and assistance were told about Karman and his Los Angeles operation.¹⁴ Perhaps the loss of these two relatively safe services for women added to the intensity of the Women's Caucus' demands that the Criminal Code be reformed.

A letter was sent to Leslie Peterson, provincial Attorney General, and Ralph Loffmark, provincial Minister of Health requesting a meeting within the month.¹⁵ These men were well entrenched, experienced Cabinet Ministers in the eighteen year old Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett, and hardly likely to take seriously the urgency of the situation. Lacking a response to their letter or to their telegram nine days later, women resolved upon a trip to Victoria. Two went ahead to do advance work for media

¹¹Unfortunately workers at Pacific Press were on strike beginning in mid-February 1970, and continuing until mid-May 1970. So the news coverage of this event locally was very limited. "Protest the Charging of Dr. Makaroff under Canada' Inhuman Abortion Laws!" leaflet, 26 March 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

¹²Liberson, interview.

¹³Mary Reinholz, "Abortion clinic busted - doctors seek arrest to test law," UPS wire story, *Georgia Straight*, 1-8 April 1970, 3.

¹⁴Benston, Hollibaugh, Liberson, interviews. Young women could then fly to Los Angeles at reduced air fares, pay the costs of the abortion, and return home in a weekend. Such abortions were frequently less costly than those that might be obtained in Vancouver or in nearby Washington communities. One interviewee told of a meeting between ACRS women and a representative of an airline which flew into one of the Los Angeles area airports, near the abortion clinic. The sales representative wanted to sell the ACRS on her airline's service.

¹⁵Betsy Meadley and Marge Hollibaugh, Women's Caucus to Hon. Leslie Peterson and Hon Ralph Loffmark, 10 March 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files; "Newsletter-March," mimeo, n.d., Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

coverage and to try to arrange a meeting. On 24 March, Dodie Wepler and Betsy Meadley met with Loffmark, as he said he would probably be too busy for the meeting arranged for the Women's Caucus, the press and himself for the next afternoon. After that brief unsatisfactory meeting Meadley explained to a reporter that she had told Loffmark:

. . . "the British North America Act states the province is responsible for the welfare of the people within a province. And as health minister he should find out why women are not receiving therapeutic abortions on being processed by hospital abortion committees, or why women are not receiving health services which are legally theirs under the present Criminal Code."

[And that] he replied, "That is a political issue and I'll meet you on a political platform about that."¹⁶

The next day, Loffmark did find time to make the meeting, and fifteen Women's Caucus members, some women from the University of Victoria, and several reporters met in the Minister's board room. Unintimidated by the plush surroundings, Women's Caucus members asked why Loffmark was not following the provisions of the Criminal Code in designating hospitals for funding for the provision of abortions. *The Pedestal* reported:

We asked him if he would "approve" and provide funds for hospitals for the specific purpose of doing abortions. He replied: "It is not within my power to do so. There are only two kinds of hospitals: 'accredited hospitals' and those 'designated' by the provincial Health Minister. I have OKed all the facilities I am empowered to 'designate'." We indicated to him that he was quoting incorrectly from the Criminal Code, and that he could approve hospitals for the purpose of that section of the Code (Section 237 b). After debating this, he sent for the Code, discovered that he was wrong, and quickly tried to cover up his mistake.¹⁷

Women's Caucus criticisms moved on to the medical profession. They told Loffmark they believed doctors would instigate or support abortion reform if the College of Physicians and Surgeons was not so conservative. This was, Women's Caucus activists argued, an indication of lack of regard for the health of British Columbians. Loffmark replied that he had no power over the doctors, nor was he willing to make

¹⁶Dorothy Wrotnowski, "Caucus Plans Protest on Abortion Practice," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 25 March 1970, 24.

¹⁷"Women Descend on BC legislature: 'Strangers in the House'", *The Pedestal*, April 1970, 1-3; "Women Confront Loffmark," *The Pedestal*, April 1970, 3.

recommendations to them. The delegation asked that the World Health Organization definition of health¹⁸ be adopted, Loffmark countered by saying that "this was only one definition of health, but, he would not recommend it for use by the Abortion Committees." He was next asked if he could himself define health in general terms. When he said he could not, women asked why he was the Minister of Health. In the end, just before women left the meeting in frustration, Loffmark

. . . told us that we should approach the medical profession rather than the government, and that we needed some leadership to do this effectively. He refused when we asked him to give us this leadership.¹⁹

The delegation was convinced that they had not been taken seriously. Women's concerns were not going to be addressed by Loffmark or anyone else. At 3:15 that afternoon, three groups of women proceeded into the gallery of the Legislature. Loffmark glanced up at them, then turned away, laughing to Attorney General Peterson and other MLAs. One woman stationed herself just above Loffmark's seat, others distributed themselves in other sections of the gallery. Suddenly Loffmark was covered with red tape dropped from above, and banners proclaiming "Abortion is our Right," and "Just Society, Good Life--Kills 12,000 Women in North America each year," were unfurled from under coats and out of bags and hung over the sides of the gallery. Bumper stickers saying "Abortion Now," fluttered down onto the Legislature floor. The startled Loffmark leapt to his feet and called out "There are strangers in the House."²⁰ Marge Hollibaugh remembered what happened next this way:

. . . one woman, as I recall, . . . was kept and lectured sternly, and then released, and nobody was arrested at all. Most of us got our banners wrapped up back under our

¹⁸ . . . the complete physical, economic, social and mental well being of the person," quoted in "Women Confront Loffmark," *The Pedestal*, April 1970, 3. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," quoted in Bette Stephenson [CMA President], "Abortion: an Open letter," *CMA Journal*, 22 February 1975, Vol. 112, 493.

¹⁹ "Women Confront . . .," 3.

²⁰ "Women Descend . . .," 1.

coats, and walked out with the crowd, without even getting stopped. . . . We looked so innocent. We smiled a lot at guards as we walked out.²¹

This action, the meetings and demonstrations, had garnered relatively positive media coverage. The women who organized the Victoria action saw it as a good dry run for other confrontations which would take place.²² They anticipated meeting with Federal government ministers, and standing up to Peterson and demonstrating in the British Columbia Legislature were good practice.

Two evenings later, Pierre Trudeau, on his way to a skiing holiday in Whistler, was challenged at the Vancouver Airport by a small group of Women's Caucus members and supporters, who had decided on the spur of the moment to issue personally the demand for legalized abortion. Trudeau strolled to the fence to talk with the demonstrators, suggesting that "we organize our medical people if we want the law changed. He said: 'Obviously they don't want to do abortions.'"²³

The Women's Caucus next took their demands to the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons. The Council of the College met on Friday, 10 April, and women, complete with sleeping bags, were at the locked office doors early that morning prepared to stay until they were heard. In a brief prepared for this confrontation the women said they had been referred to the Council by both Health Minister Loffmark, and Prime Minister Trudeau. The Council offered to meet with two delegates for ten minutes, Women's Caucus rejected this and demanded that the Council meet with all of them. The police were called, and the women were ejected from the building but not arrested. They sat

²¹Hollibaugh, interview. See also "Galleries invaded," *The Vancouver Express*, 26 March 1970, 2; "'Red Tape' Dangles Near Loffmark's Head," *Victoria Daily Times*, *** edition, 26 March 1970, 1; "Red Streamers Litter Legislature," *Victoria Daily Times*, 26 March 1970, 23; and Clement Chapple, "Legislature All Tangled Up in Red Tape," *The (Victoria) Daily Colonist*, 26 March 1970, 1; Jeannine Mitchell, "Loffmark: some would be offended," *Georgia Straight*, 1-8 April 1970, 1-2. There are no reports from *The Vancouver Sun*, or *The Vancouver Province* because Pacific Press workers were on strike from February 1970 to mid-May 1970.

²²Hollibaugh, interview.

²³Bonita Beckman, "Trudeau Passes the Buck," *The Pedestal*, April 1970, 2. See also Alan White, "Abortion Reformists Picket PM in B.C.," *Victoria Daily Times*, 28 March 1970, 1.

down on the steps and sang for some time and eventually left.²⁴ Two weeks later the women tried yet another method of reaching the physicians.

British Columbian obstetricians and gynaecologists held a conference at the University of British Columbia, 23 and 24 April 1970. Women's Caucus members saw the event as a good opportunity for women to tell doctors directly about their problems with birth control. The request for a panel, however, was refused. Women were told instead they could talk to the doctors during their coffee break, ". . . with the added comment that doctors would not appreciate our wasting their precious time."²⁵ This effort was yet another step in the process leading to the demonstrations in Ottawa. The Women's Caucus had taken their demands to the medical profession, as the Prime Minister had advised, and found them less than willing to listen. Women who had access to information about medical meetings and conferences continued to supply Women's Caucus with dates and places which could be used for demonstrations,²⁶ demonstrations which continued to make the point that, so far, physicians were not interested in openly working with women to change the law.

The Abortion Caravan

Three days later, on 27 April 1970 the Abortion Caravan left for Ottawa. Seventeen women²⁷ in three vehicles, a pickup truck, a convertible, and a Volkswagen

²⁴"B.C. Doctors Call Cops on Women," *The Pedestal*, May 1970, 3; "Women lose abortion bid," *The Vancouver Express*, 11 April 1970, 1; Jeannine Mitchell, "Women Ordered from College," *Georgia Straight*, 15-22 April 1970, 3; "Statement to the College of Physicians and Surgeons," n.d. [10 April 1970], Helen Potrebenko files.

²⁵"The Medical Establishment," *The Pedestal*, May 1970, 4.

²⁶Wood, interview.

²⁷No definitive list of the Caravan's participants has been located. Using women's memories, and mentions of women in articles, I have determined that the following women left Vancouver with the Caravan: Marcy Cohen, Margo Dunn, Betsy Meadley, Dawn Carrell, Ellen Woodsworth, Cathy Walker, Charlotte Bedard, Mary Trew, Bonita Beckman, Mary Mathieson, Barbara Hicks, Maxine Schnee, Dodie Weppler, Hannah Gay, Gwen Hauser, Vicki [Goodman?], and Colette Malo; most of these women were members of Vancouver Women's Caucus, and those who were not were active supporters of and participants in the Abortion Campaign.

van with a coffin on top, set out from the Vancouver Court House at noon. A woman who had recently joined Women's Caucus remembers going down to the Court House,

. . . and watching the takeoff and being very excited by it, . . . and also having some feeling . . . this was a very important thing that I was watching, that it truly was an initiative that was going to have some impact. . . . the Criminal Code had been so-called "liberalized" less than a year and a half before . . . the fact that this word "abortion" was being publicly printed on leaflets and said in people's mouths, and kind of there in the sunshine . . . at the Court House . . . it was very different from any way that I had ever heard the term used or used it myself . . . It was a hidden thing or a dark thing, or a thing that happened to women who had been foolish or mistaken. . . . When I came into the Caucus certainly my own perspective was very much that this is not something I would ever do myself but . . . other women should be able to. . . . that chang[ed] in the course. . . . I was taken by the theatricality of it, a small group was starting off [a] very . . . slender arrow aimed at the heart, which was Ottawa so very far away.²⁸

Another such caravan had set out on its way to Ottawa some 35 years before, only to be stopped by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with guns and truncheons, in Regina. Those On to Ottawa trekkers had carried an important message to give to federal government ministers, they were demanding fair treatment for all during the hard times of the Depression. The Abortion Caravan was theatrical, to be sure, it would get media attention in the cities along the way. But it was also a journey of the heart, the spirits of hundreds of women who could not get into the cars and vans went along with the Caravan, hoping that this time their voices would be heard, and women's demands for change would be realized.

Slogans decorated the vehicles, "On To Ottawa!", "Abortion is Our Right!", and one which proved at least as controversial, "Smash Capitalism!" The coffin on top of Cathy Walker's van was symbolic of the thousands of women who died because of illegal abortions. The "On to Ottawa" trek of the depression years was echoed in the slogan across the hood of Betsy Meadley's yellow convertible. The travellers made their first

²⁸Flood, interview.

stop in Kamloops, where they spent the night in the first of many church basements and ate the first of what would be only too many dinners of chili and salad.²⁹

In a series of meetings before their departure, women had come to some agreement about how things would be done. There would be two spokeswomen, one less experienced than the other. The intention was to have individuals learn and improve public speaking skills and confidence as they travelled. After each day's activities there would be an evaluation meeting and " . . . women would go and talk about how things were going, although . . . we were just so high, we were talking all night long."³⁰ The first eleven days were spent in close proximity, talking, arguing about whether or not "Smash Capitalism!" should be washed off the side of the van. The debate centred on whether or not this revolutionary demand had a place in the struggle for change in the abortion laws. Eventually those who argued that the slogan might alienate potential supporters won the debate. In Regina, the slogan was washed off.³¹

In each city the Caravan met the local organizers on the outskirts, and then drove through the city with women singing and calling out slogans through megaphones. In one or two places along their route, the group would stop and the guerrilla theatre troupe of the Caravan would perform their skit about how doctors responded to requests from women seeking abortion. A reporter for the *Calgary Herald*, writing for the women's pages, described the skit this way:

There was a clanging of pots then four girls [sic] made up to look like white-faced, non-descript doctors entered the room and mounted the stage.

Following them was a pregnant, barefoot girl and two other girls dressed like men.

²⁹It seems that one of the letters sent out by Caravan organizers had suggested that a simple dinner, "perhaps chili" could be provided. The digestions of the women on the Caravan were sorely tested. Dunn, interview.

³⁰Woodsworth, Dunn, interviews.

³¹Dunn, Wood, interviews.

Using these characters, members of the Vancouver Women's Caucus opened their public meeting here . . . with a pantomime depicting the dilemma a girl faces when her pregnancy is unwanted.

Her plea for an abortion to the first doctor resulted in rejection on moral grounds. The doctor stood by, his hands raised in prayer.

The second doctor admonished her for asking, while pointing to a mocked-up version of the Criminal Code. The third doctor, a gleam in his eye, held up a bill for \$500 and the fourth, with a large red heart pinned to his shirt agreed to the abortion, only to be collared by two sheriffs who marched the doctor and the girl off to jail.

Known as "Guerrilla Theatre," this crude but pointed way of getting a group warmed up to the subject will be used by members of the Abortion Caravan as it journeys across the country.³²

This report would have been read by thousands of women. Many of those women would have had encounters with doctors which would have helped them understand the points being made by the guerrilla theatre. The Caravan actors made the point, as they would all across the country, that the experience of women with economic privilege was vastly different from that of poor women. In addition, the presentation of the ordeal of women seeking abortion in this way was perhaps more persuasive than the language of speech-making.

In Calgary, as in other cities along the route, the discussions at the public meeting were lively. Women spoke about the need to control all facets of their reproductive capacity, so that women were not sterilized against their will, so that women who wanted to have children could have them, and so that research would be undertaken on less risky methods of birth control.³³ And each gathering heard women tell about their own experiences with abortion. A generally sympathetic gynaecologist at the Calgary meeting suggested,

. . . the group might make more progress if it pushed other alternatives, like education, harder.

³²Lynne Rach, "Abortion Caravan On Move," and "Pregnant Woman's Dilemma Depicted," *Calgary Herald*, 29 April 1970, 77.

³³Marcy Cohen, interview by author, 30 September 1986, Vancouver, British Columbia, tape recording.

Our [the medical profession's] hands are locked, let's face it. Any change is going to have to come through political action."³⁴

In light of the statements of the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Minister of Health in British Columbia the irony of this statement is readily apparent.

In Edmonton, the guerrilla theatre piece centred on the experience of a woman at the hands of "a back-street abortionist." In Sir Winston Churchill Square, in front of an audience of about 200 people, the "abortionist,"

... put on a blood-stained gown and then showed the crowd his instruments--a knitting needle, a bent coat hanger and an egg beater.

After a moment of deliberation, the abortionist covered the victim with a black cape.³⁵

Witnessing this representation of a woman's death must have chilled the crowd. It was a powerful message the Caravan had to deliver: women die, we must do something to stop the deaths.

After another public meeting, another night in a church basement, the women drove on to Saskatchewan, arriving in Saskatoon on Thursday, 30 April 1970. The report of their arrival was carried in the next day's paper, the front page of which carried news of the United States' surprise invasion of Cambodia.³⁶ The juxtaposition of the deaths of thousands in this latest act of the United States at war, with the war they saw being waged against women in Canada was deeply affecting for the anti-war activists on the Caravan.

The Caravan, now with four vehicles, newcomers having joined the Caravan in Edmonton,³⁷ drove through downtown Saskatoon, "... paus[ing] at The Bay to demonstrate in mime and costume the alleged futility of normal channels open to women seeking an abortion."³⁸ A rally at Knox United Church, attended by 175 people, heard the

³⁴Rach, "Pregnant Woman's Dilemma . . ."

³⁵"Women's protest dramatizes horror of illegal abortions," *The Edmonton Journal*, 30 April 1970, 18.

³⁶"Nixon surprises: orders troops into Cambodia," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 May 1970, 1.

³⁷Woodsworth, interview; "Abortion caravan visits city," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1 May 1970, 3.

³⁸"Abortion caravan visits . . ."

Caravan speaker respond to a doctor's suggestion that "perhaps the fetus has a right to be born" that "too much injustice is perpetuated on behalf of the unborn fetus,"³⁹ and that women had the right to control of their own bodies. The Caravan headed the next day to Regina. Women were certainly not fearful of being stopped by RCMP this time. Instead, unlike the trek of the 1930s, this Caravan was growing. In the two Saskatchewan cities, the Caravan was joined by several other vehicles. It then proceeded on to Winnipeg.⁴⁰

The *Winnipeg Free Press* carried a story on 1 May, in the "women's pages," announcing the arrival of the Caravan, and observing that "At least six members of the Winnipeg group of the Women's Liberation Movement plan to join"⁴¹ the Caravan. The Abortion Caravan held a press conference at the University of Winnipeg on Saturday evening, and the Monday paper carried a relatively long article, incorporating an interview with Betsy Meadley, some information about the Vancouver Women's Caucus, a photograph of some of the women, fists raised in the air, and reprinting in its entirety the letter sent to Prime Minister Trudeau setting out the demands of the Caravan.⁴² At Winnipeg, Marcy Cohen and Dawn Carrell left the Caravan to fly to Toronto, where they were to do media work, interviews on radio and television, and to meet with women organizing for the last leg of the Caravan.⁴³

In Thunder Bay the Caravan's meeting was disrupted by a Catholic group who stood up one after another and denounced the Caravan, and all it stood for. The meeting

³⁹"Abortion caravan visits . . ."

⁴⁰Woodsworth, interview.

⁴¹"Coffin Marks Cavalcade," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 May 1970, 23.

⁴²Barbara Vedan, "Abortion Campaign Not Whole Story;" "An Open Letter to the Prime Minister," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 May 1970, 16.

⁴³Cohen, interview; Margaret Weiers, "Feminists demand no restrictions on abortions," *The Toronto Star*, 6 May 1970, in Marge Hollibaugh's scrapbook on the Abortion Caravan.

ended prematurely.⁴⁴ Outside the meeting room, a young woman of about sixteen who was very upset

... started to scream at [one of the Catholic women] ... "I had an abortion," and ... how horrible it was, and started talking about her own life, and the ... Catholic middle-aged woman said something like, "You slut," and the sixteen year old hit her. ...⁴⁵

As one Caravanner remembered,

... the police came, and we hid the trucks that night. Somebody drove them off to places where they would be safe because we were really concerned about the tires being slashed. ... I remember that night being scared in that church basement, scared that ... goonish men were going to come through and beat us up they had been really quite violently nasty.⁴⁶

After this meeting the Abortion Caravan participants first noticed that they were being "accompanied" by police officers, both RCMP, and Ontario Provincial Police.⁴⁷

On the Caravan's arrival in Sudbury on Tuesday 5 May, women were shocked to read the front page of *The Sudbury Star*, "Guardsmen Shoot Four Students; U.S. Swept by Wave of Protest."⁴⁸ Margo Dunn remembers feeling "devastated" by the news of the killings at Kent State,

Because of having this sense of ... all the churning that was happening to us, feeling we were fighting the state ... and here are people getting gunned down for doing

⁴⁴Women's Caucus Press Release, 8 May 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

⁴⁵Dunn, interview.

⁴⁶Dunn, interview.

⁴⁷Women's Caucus Press Release, 8 May 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files; Walker, interview. Walker remembered "We were closely watched by the police all the way across. In fact when we got to Ontario every ten miles there was an OPP [Ontario Provincial Police] following us, and every day in Toronto we got stopped. ... I don't know that they knew what they were expecting except there was bunch of crazy women with "Abortion is our Right" over their van and a coffin on the roof." In Canada and elsewhere, this kind of surveillance has been a recognized feature of many grass-roots, labour, and other popular or leftist movements. The labour movement in the 19th century, and communists', nationalists' and pro-choice organizations have been infiltrated and watched in the 20th century by *agents provocateur* and/or members of municipal, regional or national police forces, and others in the service of the Canadian state. It may also be that rising tensions surrounding both the anti-war movement in the United States and the public prominence of the Front du Libération de Québec contributed to the watchfulness of the Ontario police forces over the Abortion Caravan.

⁴⁸*The Sudbury Star*, 5 May 1970, 1.

it, . . . it was really devastating, especially for those of us who were identified with the student movement . . . That was really heavy.⁴⁹

That same evening, fifty people attended a meeting at the Mine-Mill Hall, where the guerrilla theatre skit was performed, and everyone discussed their views on the right of women to choose to bear children. Thirty people signed up to participate in organizing a support demonstration, in Sudbury, on the following weekend.⁵⁰

The Sudbury Star's report of the Caravans' stay appeared under a photograph identifying the guerrilla theatre players as Mary Norton, Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman and Helena [G]utteridge. These were not, of course, the women's real names, but pseudonyms used to celebrate activist women forerunners. This tactic also reflected an early decision to prevent particular women being established as experts or "stars" by media.⁵¹ Some resentments were building among women on the Caravan about the prominent place several women had in media reports,⁵² and this effort in Sudbury was perhaps intended to counter this.⁵³

While the Caravan journeyed to Toronto, women in Vancouver were planning to "attend" a meeting of the Vancouver Medical Association. Jean Rands recalls:

. . . we went to this thing expecting that all these doctors would be sitting there in neat rows and that we would be able to . . . do some kind of guerrilla theatre for them. But it turned out it was a cocktail party. There weren't even any chairs, they were all standing up drinking. . . . most of us were prevented from getting in. . . . We made a deal with them that . . . we would stop doing whatever it was that we were doing that they didn't like if they would let Donna [Liberson] speak for ten minutes. And so she did and she made this really great speech, and when she said a few words about the plight of women who were dying from back lane butchers and . . . went on to say that they might

⁴⁹Dunn, interview.

⁵⁰"Pro-Abortion Women's Group Speaks Here on Way to Ottawa," *The Sudbury Star*, 6 May 1970, 19.

⁵¹"Pro-Abortion Women's Group . . ."; Rands, interview; ". . . we quite consciously tried not to establish stars here in Vancouver . . . one of my favourite things that we used to do was we used to all say that we were Emma Goldman, like when we were interviewed by the radio they'd ask your name and you'd say Emma Goldman and they'd never heard of Emma Goldman of course, so they just believed us . . . I used to just crack up every time I heard Emma Goldman on the radio . . ." Rands, interview.

⁵²Cohen, Hollibaugh, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews.

⁵³See also Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, 120-121.

be interested to know that it was just as illegal to conspire to procure an abortion as it was to procure an abortion and . . . that they were misusing our abortion referral service and that the intention was that we would refer women to them so that they could go through the legal abortion procedure, not the other way around. And that if they didn't smarten up and start doing that . . . we were going to buy a full page in *The Vancouver Sun* and list the names of all the doctors that had referred women to us because we'd been getting this information from each and every woman who came to us and most of them were referred by their doctors.⁵⁴

Apparently this event prompted the first conversations among doctors in Vancouver on the topic of abortion. Women speculate that innovation may have led to an increase in the availability of abortions for women approved by the TAC at Vancouver General Hospital, one of the goals of the Abortion Campaign for British Columbia women.⁵⁵ This event would have been reported to Caravanners in one of the many telephone calls that kept the Women's Caucus members and Caravan supporters in Vancouver informed about what was happening on the road.⁵⁶

Disagreements and trying discussions disturbed the Caravan participants all the way across Canada. The political differences among the women would be exacerbated by the stress. The ways these problems were addressed foreshadowed the discord Women's Caucus would face in the aftermath of the Caravan. For example, in Toronto, two women's groups, Toronto Women's Liberation Movement [TWLM] and The New Feminists, had been working to organize support for the Abortion Campaign, participation in the meetings planned for Ottawa on 9 May, and the demonstrations to follow. The New Feminists, self-identified as radical feminists, were at odds with TWLM on the question of the source of the oppression of women. For them the enemy was not so much capitalism as sexism.⁵⁷ Both Dawn Carrell and Marcy Cohen, who did

⁵⁴Rands, interview; I believe this meeting to have been the Vancouver Medical Association's General Meeting, probably held Thursday 7 May 1970, at the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club.

⁵⁵Rands, interview; "Medical Mafia," *Yellow Journal (Vancouver)*, 7 May 1988, 6.

⁵⁶Roberts, interview.

⁵⁷The New Feminists split from Toronto Women's Liberation in 1969, and announced themselves as "radical feminists," concerned with sexual politics, not political economy, *Feminist Organizing*. . . , 66; Bonnie Kreps, "Radical Feminism 1," *Women Unitel*, 71-75; Margaret Penman, "The Feminists go marching on," *The*

much of the media work in Toronto, and others on the Caravan from Vancouver, agreed with TWLM, and were unwilling to work with the New Feminists. This refusal was viewed by some women as an attempt to exclude other women, and themselves, from participating on the basis of their political allegiances, in other words, if one was not a socialist, one's politics were in question.⁵⁸

After a series of public meetings in Toronto, extensively covered in both print and broadcast media,⁵⁹ and appearances on radio talk shows which met with favourable comments from the listeners,⁶⁰ the Caravan was increased in size by a large number of women from Toronto. It set out for Ottawa for the final confrontation.

Before leaving Vancouver the Caravan organizers had sent letters and telegrams seeking confirmation of the attendance of the Prime Minister, Justice Minister and Health Minister at the meeting scheduled for 1:30pm in the Railway Committee Room, on Saturday 9 May 1970. Pierre Elliot Trudeau was preparing for an extensive tour of the Pacific and would not attend. John Turner simply refused to meet the women, and played tennis the morning of the meeting. John Munro, having made a verbal commitment to women in Saskatchewan that he would attend, would be out of Ottawa too at meetings of the World Health Organization in Geneva.⁶¹ It may well have been that Cabinet members were too busy considering how to deal with the "insurrection" they would

Montreal Star, 8 May 1970, in Hollibaugh, scrapbook; Adamson, *et al*, identify the group of women who formed the New Feminists as "radical feminists and lesbians," 50.

⁵⁸Dunn, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews.

⁵⁹Weiers, "Feminists demand. . .;" "300 expected to join abortion march on Ottawa," *The Telegram (Toronto)*, 7 May 1970, 75; "Abortion cavaladers will attend meeting - will PM?," *The Globe and Mail (Toronto)*, 7 May 1970, in Hollibaugh, scrapbook.

⁶⁰Cohen, interview.

⁶¹Telegram from Richard D. Hayes, Executive Assistant for the Minister of Justice, "Minister of Justice will not be available to meet your group May 9th in spite of ultimatums, demands, and threats as set out in your letter of Mar 19th," n.d., Vancouver Women's Caucus files; Telegram from Madeline Lafleur, Appointments Secretary, PMO, PCO, Ottawa, 27 April 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files; Victor Mackie, "Protestors Force House To Adjourn," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 May 1970, 1-2; "Fact Sheet," n.d., mimeo, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

apprehend six months later. A special, secret Cabinet committee had been created on 7 May 1970 "to consider 'steps to be taken in the event the War Measures Act comes into force by reason of insurrection.'" In the April 1970 provincial election in Quebec, while the Liberals had achieved a majority, the Parti Québécois had increased both its popular support and the number of seats in the Legislative assembly.⁶² Undoubtedly the spectre of "revolution" in Quebec made the oncoming Abortion Caravan appear less than important.

The women stayed in a vacant public school,⁶³ and spent the evening discussing their strategy for the meeting the next day. Margo Dunn remembers proposing that some kind of demonstration take place after the meeting because

. . . spirits would be high . . . no matter what. . . And [I] was not taken seriously. . . . I didn't know enough to really push it. But I was really sure about that too. . . . I really knew that you just couldn't walk away from this . . . climactic meeting in the Railway Room after driving across Canada and having these hundreds of women bus to Ottawa, . . . we simply weren't going to go out and have coffee.⁶⁴

Dunn had collected a vacuum cleaner hose, a coat hanger, a can of Drano, and a knitting needle, and written a speech about what women did, or what was done to them, to abort. Her intention was to present the "instruments of abortion" and her speech to Trudeau if he appeared at the meeting.⁶⁵ Though nothing was decided on that evening, the next day was to prove Dunn correct in her assessment.

The day began with a march from the Justice Building to Parliament Hill where another 300 people joined the several hundred marchers. About 450 people were

⁶²"Ottawa began to look at War Measures well before crisis", *The Globe and Mail*, 23 December 1971, cited in Vallières; Pierre Vallières, *The Assassination of Pierre Laporte: Behind the October '70 Scenario*, trans. Ralph Wells, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1977), 24-25.

⁶³This was the Percy Street School, which had been unused for several years. The Company of Young Canadians was using the building for a project to provide recreational and educational services to elementary and secondary school age children in the evenings. Joyce Cameron, personal communication, 12 August 1989.

⁶⁴Dunn, interview.

⁶⁵Dunn, interview.

crammed into the Railway Committee Room for the meeting, others waited outside. Very few Members of Parliament attended. Accounts differ, but perhaps one or two Conservatives, and several New Democratic Party MPs, and no Liberal members attended.⁶⁶ Dodie Wepler began the meeting by recounting the efforts made to arrange meetings with government members. Judy Darcy, from Toronto, then read the list of demands.⁶⁷ Dr Henry Morgenthaler spoke to the meeting, as did Doris Powers, a single-mother active in anti-poverty organizations, from Toronto, and Grace MacInnis, the only woman Member of Parliament, who had tried repeatedly to put motions to the House for reform of the abortion laws. MacInnis and Morgenthaler were both booed, the former for being too "moderate," and the latter for what was seen as his patronizing attitude.⁶⁸ Doris Powers, eight months pregnant, delivered a strongly worded speech in which she said:

As you can see, I am pregnant. . . . I applied for a therapeutic abortion at a Toronto hospital. I was interviewed by two psychiatrists and one medical doctor. . . . I was asked how I got pregnant (my method was terribly unoriginal; it's thousands of years old). Social or economic factors are not considered, only the mother's physical and mental health. . . .

When I was refused the abortion, the doctor asked if I would obtain an illegal abortion. I replied that many women did. He then said, "Well, take your rosary and get to Hell out of here."

. . . . Every pregnant woman, married or single, should be able to obtain an abortion on demand without being compelled to give any reason for her decision. What control can we have over our lives if we have no control over our own bodies?⁶⁹

The energy this speech generated resulted in several hundred women, and few men, who had come to join the Caravan from Quebec, Ontario and the Maritimes, forming up for a march around Parliament Hill, which then became a march on 24 Sussex Drive, the Prime

⁶⁶Dunn, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews. According to a CP wire story, David Lewis (York South-NDP), Gerald W. Baldwin (Peace River-PC), Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville-NDP) and Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway-NDP) attended, "Caravan reaches Ottawa," *The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 11 May 1970, 20. Maxine Schnee, "Women's Liberation in Ottawa," *The Peak*, 13 May 1970, 2.

⁶⁷Schnee, "Women's Liberation . . ."

⁶⁸Dunn, Hollibaugh, interviews.

⁶⁹Doris Power, "Statement to the Abortion Caravan," reprinted in *Women Unite!*, 122, 124.

Minister's residence. Some women wore signs around their waists reading "This Uterus is not Government Property."⁷⁰ Much to their surprise they met little resistance from the guards at the driveway to the Prime Minister's residence. But on entering the grounds, those at the front of the phalanx encountered other security people who were not so willing to let them pass. A scuffle ensued; someone called for the marchers to sit down as there was concern about the many children present. This had the unfortunate effect of stopping the march short of the front door of the house, and leaving people sitting on the lawn in something of a quandary about what to do next. Someone came out and told the crowd they were on private property. He was booed and ignored. Then Gordon Gibson, Trudeau's assistant, who was unknown to Easterners, but familiar to those from British Columbia came out. Kathryn Keate wrote this description:

He doesn't tell us who he is or what his position is. "Just thought I'd come out and see what I can do," he tells us glibly. More hisses and boos. . . . He asks us to leave, calling us "ladies" (!) and addressing one of our leaders as "Miss" in a very now-now-girls tone of voice. The boos and hisses are thunderous. He leaves, somewhat embarrassed.⁷¹

After some consultation, Margo Dunn, having talked the police into letting her go up onto the porch, read her speech, and described the ways in which women use the coat hangers, knitting needles, cleaning solutions which were placed on top of the coffin left on Trudeau's front porch. As heavy rain began to fall, a very much saddened and subdued crowd then left 24 Sussex Drive.

The next day, and far into the night, women discussed what the strategy would be for "The day we declare war on the Canadian government." While the women were excited to be in Ottawa, to be the first national action women in the Women's Liberation Movement had organized, they were also very concerned about what would happen next.

⁷⁰"Crowd Favoring Abortion Invade PM's Residence," *The Sudbury Star*, 11 May 1970, 37, this story appeared under a photograph of Gayle Nystrom, wife of NDP MP Lorne Nystrom, wearing such a sign.

⁷¹Kathryn Keate, "'Out from under, Women Unite!'," *Saturday Night*, July 1970, 17.

⁷²Keate, "'Out from under. . .'"

They did not have a great deal of time in which to discuss the finer political points, nor was it easy to come to agreement among several hundred women about what would be done.

It was to be a long night. Women who went out to get beer were stopped, taken to the police station, threatened with charges, and let go. Near midnight, three plainclothes policemen entered the school and began to go through women's sleeping bags and baggage. Claiming they were from the Board of Education, they were exposed as liars, and retreated. But, police still circled the building.⁷³ The surveillance and intrusion by police added to the fears women already had about being arrested, all of which was fueled by the recent murders at Kent State University. Women were afraid.

By 1:30 a.m. Monday, decisions still remained to be made. Women split into groups by city, and tried to decide how they thought the action in the House of Commons should go. Should they chain themselves to the gallery seats? If they did not then would they not be heard because they would be ejected? Who would go inside? What would happen outside? What if there were arrests? Women felt the haunting presence of the thousands of maimed and dead as a consequence of abortion, of those refused abortions, of all the women of Canada. They wanted to do the most effective thing, and they were apprehensive.⁷⁴ Women agreed Parliament was to be disrupted. Then they had to decide who would go inside.

The discussion in the Vancouver circle was very difficult indeed. Serious disagreements arose about how many women would go inside, and who they would be. Several vocal and visible Caravan leaders felt uncertain about what Betsy Meadley might say and did not want her to go inside. They thought that Meadley had "talked down the

⁷³Walker, interview; Keate, ""Out from under, . . ."

⁷⁴Keate, ""Out from under, . . ."

socialists" in Toronto, and had "gone over to the Feminists."⁷⁵ Women who had experienced the difficult defense work for the 114 people arrested at SFU in November 1968 were adamant that solidarity among the women who might be arrested was paramount. The question was decided after an argument about the expense of travelling back and forth across the country for trials, and the necessity to limit the number who might have to travel. Meadley's position as a mother with children was used to justify her exclusion. Others were single with no dependents. Ellen Woodsworth, Marcy Cohen, and Dawn Carrell would be Vancouver's representatives. Betsy Meadley was crushed. The differences brought into sharp focus that evening fuelled conflict which would result in considerable change in Women's Caucus in the coming months.⁷⁶

While these demonstrations and discussions were going on in Ottawa, women in cities across Canada were on the streets calling for the removal of Section 237 from the Criminal Code. The anglophone group, Montreal Women's Liberation Movement and some women from the Front de Libération des Femmes Québécoises, marched, with RCMP escort, chanting "Abortion is Our Right!" and "Trudeau, assassin, liberate all women."⁷⁷ In Vancouver, the Women's Caucus led demonstration was well attended.

⁷⁵This latter comment referred to Wood's perceived agreement with the political analysis of The New Feminists in Toronto. Wood, interview.

⁷⁶Wood, Woodsworth, Walker, Cohen, Dunn, interviews.

⁷⁷"100 Women Protest Canada's Abortion Laws," 11 May 1970, *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*, 2. Francophone women had declined to participate in the demonstrations in Ottawa. The Front de Libération des Femmes Québécoises issued a press release in Montreal on 8 May 1970 stating: "Le "Women's Caucus" de Vancouver de même que d'autres mouvements canadiens de libération des femmes iront manifester sur la colline parlementaire, demain, le 10 mai, pour exiger la légalisation et la gratuité de l'avortement. Le Front de Libération des femmes Québécoise explique sa position.

Camarades, nous refusons d'aller manifester devant un parlement dont nous ne reconnaissons pas les pouvoirs qu'il s'arroge sur le Québec. Cependant, nous sommes solidaires des femmes du Canada, puisque étant femmes, nous subissons la même oppression. . . . Dimanche le 10 mai, nous manifesterons au parc Lafontaine pour obtenir l'avortement gratuit et sur demande pour toutes les femmes. Nous avons les mêmes aspirations: nous voulons faire passer la terre de la fatalité à la liberté. P.S. Pas de Québec libre sans femmes libérées." Reprinted in Veronique O'Leary, Louise Toupin, *Québécoise Deboutte!: Tome 1, Une anthologie de textes du Front de libération des femmes (1969-1971) et du Centre des femmes (1972-1975)*, (Montreal: Les éditions du remue-ménage, 1982), 71. See also "FLF won't be along, but backs English," *Montreal Star*, 8 May 1970, in Hollibaugh Scrapbook.

Several hundred demonstrators made their way from Stanley Park to the Court House, carrying banners, chanting slogans, pausing at St Paul's Hospital to do guerrilla theatre.⁷⁸ In Calgary, the Women's Union used the lobby of Foothills Hospital as a stage for a "pantomime" telling the story of a woman seeking an abortion and encountering obstacles. This followed a vigil for women dead and maimed by illegal abortions in Riley Park earlier on the cold rainy afternoon.⁷⁹ Edmonton Women's Liberationists marched from the legislative buildings to a rally in Sir Winston Churchill Square carrying placards saying "Abortion is our right," "Children deserve to be wanted." No invited provincial politician attended.⁸⁰ A procession headed by six women carrying a coffin moved from City Hall to Memorial Park in Winnipeg, and then to the Legislative Buildings where the coffin was left as a reminder to legislators of deaths from illegal abortions. Here to the one hundred marchers carried placards, and listened to speeches, including the brief to be presented in Ottawa by the Abortion Caravan. A brief conversation was held with the Education Minister who responded to a demand for sex education in schools that "there were no facilities in Manitoba for training teachers to give sex education."⁸¹

On Monday morning, 11 May 1970, women rushed all over Ottawa trying to find the "proper" clothes to wear. Hats, gloves, dresses, skirts and blouses, panty-hose and shoes that were not boots were sought out. Legs were shaved, hair done up in unaccustomed styles. Chains had been purchased so that women could anchor themselves to seats in the galleries of the House if attempts were made to eject them. Women doing advance work for the Caravan's arrival had made the necessary

⁷⁸Photograph, *Georgia Straight*, 13-20 May 1970, 3.

⁷⁹Lynne Rach, "Abortion Reformers Invade Hospital," *The Calgary Herald*, 11 May 1970, 30.

⁸⁰"Marchers urge special clinics for abortions," *The Edmonton Journal*, 11 May 1970, 22.

⁸¹Susan Janz, "Coffin carried to protest abortion deaths," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 May 1970, in Hollibaugh Scrapbook.

arrangements for a number of passes for some of the "visitors" to the Members and Opposition galleries, the others would go into the public galleries.⁸²

When all was in readiness, a large group of women, wearing black headscarves, walked around the Centennial Flame, singing songs, calling out slogans, and carrying a symbolic coffin. Singly and in pairs, appearing not to notice the demonstration, the women chosen to go into the House entered the building, took seats in the galleries, and waited for the appointed moment to stand and speak out. Several people on motorcycles kept their eyes on the doors into the House of Commons, ready to follow any cars bearing arrested demonstrators away. Bail had been arranged for each of the thirty-six women participants. Other women sat on benches around the gardens, pretending not to know one another, making sure that all was going according to plan. Everyone was excited but apprehensive.⁸³

As women took their places in the galleries above, question period was in progress. They heard a question put to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp. He was asked what he was going to do about "a large group of hoodlums, queers and just plain fools from the Canadian side of the border,"⁸⁴ who had crossed at Douglas, south of Vancouver, in a symbolic invasion of the United States. An inquiry was promised. The NDP MP for Toronto-Greenwood, Mr Andrew Brewin rose next to ask the Minister of Justice if he would "initiate a study of the adequacy of the present law and the need for further amendments removing the whole subject [abortion] from the realm of criminal law?"⁸⁵ A little while later, during a question about whether the CRTC would renew a radio station's licence, "interruptions from the galleries

⁸²Cohen, Dunn, Hollibaugh, Walker, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews.

⁸³Cohen, Dunn, Hollibaugh, Walker, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews.

⁸⁴Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 11 May 1970, 6793. This was done as comment on the United States's invasion of Cambodia.

⁸⁵Commons, *Debates*, 11 May 1970, 6793.

began."⁸⁶ A woman stood and began to deliver the "declaration of war."⁸⁷

Commissionaires moved to silence and eject the woman. Another stood and began to speak. The Speaker of the House called for order. "The disturbance continu[ed]." In the dry language of Parliamentary procedure the Speaker asked that the "protesters" be removed from the galleries:

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Since we are having an easy afternoon I wonder if we might not continue with our question period. Is it the wish of hon. members that we call Orders of the Day? Orders of the Day.

The Clerk Assistant: Government Order No. 1. Consideration of the Business of Supply.

And the disturbance continuing:

Mr. Speaker: In view of the authority accorded to the Chair by the Standing Orders, I direct that the galleries be cleared.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.⁸⁸

The "disturbance," however, did not abate, and at 2:46pm the Speaker suspended the sitting of the House.⁸⁹

After the order to clear the galleries, as women were removed or prevented from speaking, others chained themselves to their seats. One woman was stopped from chaining herself to her seat by a man seated behind her; she took him to be a police officer. All of the women participants expected to be detained, questioned, and arrested. There was some consternation among the Commissionaires when they discovered women were chained to the seats. Chains were cut and women were led to the door.⁹⁰

The women outside had heard the clock tower ring three times and began to give the same speech outside as had been attempted in the House of Commons. They then removed their black headscarves to reveal red ones, signifying anger.⁹¹ They were

⁸⁶Commons, *Debates*, 11 May 1970, 6796.

⁸⁷Schnee, "Women's Liberation . . .," I have not been able to locate a text for this speech.

⁸⁸Commons, *Debates*, 11 May 1970, 6796.

⁸⁹Commons, *Debates*, 11 May 1970, 6796.

⁹⁰Cohen, Dunn, Hollibaugh, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews; Schnee, "Women's Liberation . . ."

⁹¹Cohen, Dunn, Hollibaugh, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews; Schnee, "Women's Liberation . . ."

waiting. Suddenly, they could see the women coming out, tears on their faces, fists in the air, singing "Hold the Fort for We are Coming, Sisters all be Strong."⁹²

The declaration of war was complete. No one was arrested. Several women were detained and questioned, then let go.⁹³ On the steps of Parliament, a placard with the words of Section 237 was burned. Songs were sung. Women were interviewed, some refused to give their names, saying "they represented all the women of Canada who suffered as a result of Canada's archaic abortion law."⁹⁴ And then they departed.

In the days that followed some women returned to Vancouver; some visited with friends and political associates in Toronto and Montreal. All of the Caravanners must have asked themselves and been asked repeatedly why they had not been arrested. Young people were killed for standing fast and demanding their rights in the United States, Cambodia was being flattened by bombs in what was seen as an unjust war. But these Canadian women could disrupt the House of Commons, shouting their demands, and as far as they could see, nothing happened. They could not have known about the preoccupation of the Trudeau cabinet with the political situation in Quebec. But they might reasonably have thought that since they were "just" women, their demands were trivialized and comments on their actions were used as convenient platforms for the political posturing of the Liberal cabinet ministers who had not deigned to meet with the Caravanners. While they may not have thought of themselves in these ways, they did believe themselves to be engaged in a nation-wide educational project, and reading the press coverage of their Ottawa actions must have contributed to a great sense of satisfaction with their work.

⁹²Keate, "Out from Under . . .;" Cohen, Dunn, Hollibaugh, Wood, Woodsworth, interviews; Schnee, "Women's Liberation . . ."

⁹³Brian McKenna, "MPs study ways to curb disruptions," *The Montreal Star*, 12 May 1970, 1; Gordon Pape, "Women yelling for abortion halt Commons," *The Montreal Gazette*, 12 May 1970, 1-2.

⁹⁴Ben Tierney and Peter Calamai, "Screaming women force halt in Commons," *The Edmonton Journal*, 11 May 1970, 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

...AND THE TARGET IS HIT

Women on the Abortion Caravan had come to Ottawa to demand change in the Criminal Code, and that women have access to safe, legal abortions. The government appeared to ignore them. They stood in the House of Commons and shouted to be heard. Across Canada, on national television news broadcasts,¹ and on the front pages of newspapers in almost every Canadian city, the Abortion Caravan's action in the House of Commons was reported.²

The early stories, printed in the west on 11 May 1970, were relatively straightforward accounts of the action in the House of Commons.³ The next day's reports and editorial comments focussed on both the disruption of the House of Commons as an attack on Canada's democratic institutions, and the possible forgeries of gallery passes. There had been demonstrations in Washington, D.C., Toronto, and other North American cities protesting the United States invasion of Cambodia, and the killings at Kent State over the previous weekend; parallels were drawn between these actions and the Abortion Caravan demonstration in Ottawa. Editorial writers,⁴ with few exceptions, appeared to agree that whether changes in the Criminal Code were necessary was not important in the face of "demonstrations which fail to respect law and order and civilized human

¹Cohen, interview.

²The headline editors of one newspaper misunderstood what had happened. *The Evening Telegram* in St. John's, Newfoundland ran its version of the CP wire story under the headline, "Anti-abortionists force Commons adjournment;" 12 May 1970, 3.

³Tierney and Calamai, "Screaming women . . .;" Ben Tierney and Peter Calamai, "Free-Abortionists Bring House To Halt," *The Calgary Herald*, 11 May 1970, 1.

⁴"Contempt for Law," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 May 1970, 6; "Abortion Protest to MPs Not Likely to 'Fade Away'," *The Sudbury Star*, 13 May 1970, 4; "Abortion," *The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton, N.B.)*, 13 May 1970, 4; "Abortion: the State's Choice or woman's?" *The Toronto Daily Star*, 13 May 1970, 4; "Who needs enemies...?" *The Vancouver Sun*, 19 May 1970, 5; Douglas Fisher, "This noise of women gags voice of reason," *The Vancouver Sun*, 19 May 1970, 6.

decencies."⁵ MPs rose in the House to state that their signatures had been forged on passes to the galleries, and one said he would have the RCMP investigate the forgeries.⁶ Justice Minister John Turner insisted the protesters did not "seem to understand the democratic process."⁷ On the contrary, the Abortion Caravan was an attempt to use the "democratic process" to make women's voices heard across the nation.

The women from Vancouver felt they had done what they set out to do, they made the country take notice of women's demands for accessible, legal abortions. They made their way home, most returning by the end of the month. However, they also had to cope with the consequences of the differences which had emerged with the Caravan, and with some changes in Vancouver.

During the Caravan's journey the Abortion Counselling and Referral Service work had been taken over by women convinced that the only way to provide this service was not to give information about abortions and availability, but to politicize women through assisting them in their attempts to get favourable decisions from the Therapeutic Abortion Committee at Vancouver General Hospital. The women now doing this work reasoned that since the Criminal Code had been reformed, illegal abortions had become almost impossible to get, and when they were available, the cost had increased beyond almost any woman's means. In addition, women would have to travel much farther away than before.⁸ One evening fourteen or fifteen women arrived at the ARCS seeking assistance. With the encouragement of the Women's Caucus workers everyone agreed that going to Vancouver General Hospital the next day and occupying the offices of the psychiatrists' while demanding that appointments be made might be a useful tactic. The difficulty in

⁵"Threat To Democracy," *The Calgary Herald*, 12 May 1970, 4.

⁶Ben Tierney, "House to Review Security," *The Calgary Herald*, 13 May 1970, 13.

⁷John Turner, quoted in Ben Tierney, "Abortion protest may lead to tighter rules," *The Edmonton Journal*, 12 May 1970, 13.

⁸Abortions now being less available in Vancouver because of the arrest and pending prosecution of Dr. Robert Makaroff, and in Los Angeles because of the arrest of Harvey Karman. See above.

getting through the TAC had become getting appointments with the medical personnel who were supposed to provide the approval and certificates necessary to get a legal abortion. After women occupied the offices for several hours, appointments were arranged. Soon after this intervention, abortions began to be performed at VGH on a more regular basis, and the women who had championed the occupation believed themselves in some measure responsible for the increased availability of the service.⁹

Some of the women who had gone with the Caravan to Ottawa found themselves no longer able to work in, and in some cases rather forcefully excluded from, a service they had worked hard to develop and sustain. The chief difference between the women now operating the service and those who had begun it seemed at the time to be that the latter group believed it important to give women information with which they could make decisions for themselves. The former group was perceived, by the latter, to be committed to politicizing women, which was seen to be asking women to tow a particular line in order to get assistance. Those who favoured the confrontational tactic of the occupation believed themselves to be putting the tools for change into the hands of women seeking abortion, and that the provision of information without an attempt to politicize was patronizing.¹⁰

In the midst of dealing with mounting conflict among their number, Women's Caucus members continued to challenge the government's refusal to ensure safe and legal abortions for all women. On 29 May 1970, they attended a press conference organized for Prime Minister Trudeau's return from his Pacific tour, and demanded attention. The Prime Minister responded to the accusations that he was not concerned about the plight of women who could not afford abortions by pointing out that the law was unfair to a lot of

⁹O'Donnell, interview, and personal communication, May 1990.

¹⁰Hollibaugh, Liberson, O'Donnell, Wood, interviews.

people, and that his ministers would be "looking into it," but that he did not feel that there would be any change forthcoming.¹¹

In June, Trudeau was again in Vancouver, and an assistant, Vic Chapman, telephoned a Women's Caucus member early in the afternoon of Sunday 14 June, saying "I'm with the Prime Minister's office and we were talking about you on the plane. We thought a representative group of your members, say six or eight, should meet with the Prime Minister." Women wondered if the request had been made to rectify the refusal of Ministers of the government to see the Caravan in Ottawa.¹² The meeting was set for 10:30 that same Sunday evening.

Having spent the afternoon figuring out how to keep the meeting in their own hands, a group of about forty women arrived at the luxurious Bayshore Inn. Developing a strategy to deal with this meeting was difficult, as the differences among the women were great.¹³ They put the importance of a successful confrontation with Trudeau ahead of their disagreements and following the agreed upon strategy, they presented their demands. Film of the meeting records Trudeau asking whether women wanted doctors "to be free to do abortions." Women answered in the negative. He then asked, "Then you

¹¹"Shout of 'murderer' greets prime minister on return," *The Vancouver Province*, 30 May 1970, 1; Dave Ablett, "Trudeau tangles with abortionists," *The Vancouver Sun*, 30 May 1970, 2; *The Pedestal*, June 1970, 1.

¹²Cohen, interview; "Another installment in the true-life saga: The Return of Trudeau," *The Pedestal*, July-August 1970, 1-3; Jack Wasserman, a *Vancouver Sun* columnist commented on this meeting the next day: "Reason for the unreal meeting between the prime minister and the shrill-voiced militants from the Women's Caucus late Sunday night was that the PM figured they'd been given short shrift when the women went to Ottawa and couldn't get an audience with any member of the cabinet. He was privately very angry that members of his cabinet had made themselves unavailable in Ottawa and issued orders to his staff to arrange the meeting in Vancouver. "I guess I'll have to be the fall guy," he told them." *The Vancouver Sun*, 16 June 1970, 29.

¹³Women were already writing the position papers to be presented at the strategy conference to be held in seven days. See below.

want a law to force doctors to do abortions when they don't wish?"¹⁴ Trudeau's focus on doctors, to the complete exclusion of women, seems like deliberate obtuseness.

However, his position was quite clear, the reform of the Criminal Code he had begun in 1966-67, and realized in 1969, was undertaken in order to protect doctors, and only to protect doctors.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the women in that room at the Bayshore were infuriated by Trudeau's unwillingness to consider the situation of women, to acknowledge that what women wanted was to be able to make their own decisions. The women stood, began to sing "Hold the Fort For We are Coming," and walked out of the meeting.¹⁶ This would be the last apparently unified act of what had been the Vancouver Women's Caucus.

As an attempt to deal with the growing awareness of the political differences in Women's Caucus a "Strategy Conference" had been called for 22 June 1970. In preparation for the meeting many papers were written defining various positions on what individuals or groups of women thought Women's Caucus should do.¹⁷ A large group of

¹⁴CBU-TV news archive, film footage, Vancouver, British Columbia, 15 June 1970. The film also shows that a number of the women attending the meeting were apparently dressed in nightgowns, pajamas, and housecoats. Some had their hair in rollers, and covered with scarves. This costume was worn to point out the lateness of the hour, and to make theatre of the event. Some of the Women's Caucus members present found this attire offensive, and this added to the already growing tensions. Cohen, Wood interviews.

¹⁵See Stephenson, "Abortion: An Open Letter," for correspondence which supports this point. Trudeau agrees in his response to Dr Stephenson that the reforms proposed in 1966-67 were based on the recommendations of the CMA. The debates in committee and House concerning the Criminal Code reform, and the statements of most physicians and legal experts who appeared also make it quite clear that the major concern in the reform was to protect doctors, and to legitimize physicians' practice of providing abortions where they judged the circumstances were appropriate. *Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Standing Committee on Health and Welfare*, 2nd session, 27th Parliament 1967; *Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 1st session, 28th Parliament, 1968-69, particularly evidence of Professor Alan Mewett, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, 350-364.

¹⁶CBU-TV, 15 June 1970.

¹⁷Anne Roberts, "Politics and Women's Caucus: Are they necessary?"; Carole Mortenson, Jean Rands, Maggie Benston, "Individualism vs A Mass Movement"; Pat Hoffer, "Decision-Making in Women's Caucus"; Mary Trew, "A Proposal for Action"; Jean Rands, "Towards an Organization of Working Women: Discussion paper for working women's workshop"; Isolde Belfont, Mary Borsky, Joan Campana, Katie Curtin, Cynthia Flood, Sharon Hager, Diane Schrenk, Mary Trew (Young Socialists), "The Way Forward: How to Build A Mass Movement for Women's Liberation"; Nikki Bergseth, Sharon Boylan, Cynthia Flood,

women would leave Women's Caucus declaring that they had revolutionary work to do elsewhere.¹⁸

The exodus left those in Women's Caucus who were particularly concerned with organizing around abortion, and those who wanted to focus on organizing unorganized working women,¹⁹ and on developing a broader range of targets for action. Some of the former women were members of the League for Socialist Action, a Trotskyist group. Their position was to focus on abortion, and to construct a single-issue campaign for Women's Caucus. The others believed that a single-issue focus was too draining, and would not draw in women. At the conference it was decided, by a vote, that a multiple-issue strategy would be followed. It was the hope of those women who favoured a multi-issue approach that this vote signalled a continuation of the coalition of women with different political analyses that the Women's Caucus had been. However, this was not to be, the disparate goals of the women still active in the group would soon rend it asunder.

At subsequent meetings through the summer, those who wanted the Women's Caucus to focus on abortion kept bringing up this question. Finally, the other faction decided that something had to be done as they felt the group was being stopped from doing anything by this tactic which required endless, repetitive discussions about a decision which in their view was clear and final.²⁰ Again papers were written.²¹ A

Pat Hoffer, Anna Ingre, Jean Rands, Diane Schrenk, "The Pedestal: Report and Proposals," Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

¹⁸Maxine Schnee, Dodie Weppler, Marcy Cohen, D.J. O'Donnell, Margret [sic] Douglas, Janis Nairne, Judi Darcy, Ellen Woodsworth, Gwen Hauser, Dawn Carrell, Collette Malo, Margo Dunn, Jody Berland, Willa Marcus, Vicki Brown, Lena Karlstedt, Sharmon Kanee, Barbie Beckerman, Gail Madill, Bonita Beckman, Sue Claus, Marge Hollibaugh, Betty Madill, Sue ?, "The Rising of the Women Means the Rising of the Race," Vancouver Women's Caucus files. The Vancouver Liberation Front was the focus of political activity for these women, for varying lengths of time. "Woman's Liberation Leaves Women's Caucus," *Yellow Journal (Vancouver, BC)*, 16 July 1970, 4; Kay Alsop, "Sisters under the skin, but they don't see eye to eye," *The Vancouver Province*, 26 August 1970, 26; Cohen, Toms, Dunn, interviews.

¹⁹Cohen, interview.

²⁰Benston, Davitt, interviews.

meeting was called to consider a motion of expulsion of any women who were members of "democratic centralist" organizations. The principles of democratic centralism require that members of such groups reach decisions by democratic processes and then promote and carry out those decisions under the direction of an elected leadership. In addition members of such organizations were "not allowed to disagree publicly . . . with YS/LSA positions; whose membership and decision-making meetings are closed and whose allegiance is apparently to the YS/LSA."²²

Clearly discussions must have taken place outside of the regularly constituted meetings. A decision to consider expelling any women from a women's group was one not easily taken. But at a meeting held 13 August 1970, a straw vote was taken to determine whether there was support for the consideration of a motion to expel the YS/LSA members.²³ Women's Caucus was not alone in their dilemma. All over North America, women's groups were engaged in a struggle with women who were also members of groups of the Fourth International, Trotskyists.²⁴

A resolution to this effect was approved at a meeting held 27 August 1970.²⁵ Those who were expelled, and women sympathetic to them, formed the Vancouver Women's Liberation Alliance, which focussed on abortion.²⁶

²¹"Women's Caucus & the YS/LSA: a majority view," "For Unity - Against Expulsion," "Defend Democracy in Women's Caucus," "Toward Clarity in the Present Discussion," Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

²²Law, *et al*, "Women's Caucus & the YS/LSA: a majority view," 1.

²³Mentioned in all of the papers associated with the expulsion struggle.

²⁴See Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, 129-134, for a description of the "SWP/YSA Crisis" [Socialist Workers Party/Young Socialist Alliance] in the United States.

²⁵Benston, Davitt, Flood, Hager interviews; Dear Sisters from Women's Caucus, letter, 30 August 1970, Vancouver Women's Caucus files.

²⁶Ironically, many of the sympathetic women left The Women's Liberation Alliance ten months later because "The Alliance is not now, nor will it ever be, a truly autonomous organization as long as the YS/LSA [Young Socialists/League for Socialist Action] continues to exert its overpowering influence on the Alliance membership." Letter to the Editor, "Trot-Trot-Trotsky Goodbye, *Georgia Straight*, 1-4 June 1971, 6.

Some see the expulsion as having been the end of Women's Caucus.²⁷ This appears not to have been the case. The Working Women's group carried on, doing educational work, and supporting striking women workers. In October 1972 the Service Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada was formed.²⁸ A coalition of Women's Caucus, Women's Liberation, Voice of Women and other activist women organized The Indochinese Women's Conference in April 1971. *She Named it Canada*, a comic book format history of Canada, was produced as an educational tool for women from the United States coming to Canada to meet with eight women from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.²⁹ Women from Women's Caucus rejuvenated the New Democratic Party Women's Rights Committee. Women continued guerrilla theatre style interventions in Vancouver's public life, at fashion shows, at lectures.³⁰ In 1972, A Woman's Place was begun which mid-wifed a rape crisis centre, a transition house, a women's health collective, and a women's bookstore. As Women's Caucus aged and eventually ended, it served as a source of energy and skill for several women's services and institutions which exist to this day.

* * * *

The perhaps predictable reaction by media and politicians notwithstanding, the Abortion Caravan brought into the homes of the vast majority of newspaper-reading, television-viewing Canadians the reality of abortion in a manner unprecedented in Canada. While reports of trials associated with Criminal Code infractions, including reporting on the experiences of women who sought abortions from back-street practitioners appeared from time to time, with the Abortion Caravan the kind of coverage

²⁷Hager, interview.

²⁸Rands, interview.

²⁹Roberts, Dunn, Woodsworth, Davitt, Benston, Hollibaugh interviews. The Indochinese women came to North America to meet with women from the United States, women's liberationists, and family members of U.S. soldiers, to discuss a means to ending the war.

³⁰Liberson, interview.

changed.³¹ It was the intention of the Abortion Caravan to call into question the authority of the state, including the medical establishment, and through drawing the attention of the media to their actions, to lead Canadians not simply to shake their heads in sympathy, or disgust, but to question that authority themselves. Women all over the country spoke out about the humiliation experienced by those pleading for abortions, and stated, unequivocally, that such humiliation was a consequence of dependence. The Abortion Caravan represented, in a practical way, a repudiation of that dependence. The women who shouted in the House of Commons, who walked to 24 Sussex Drive, who sang songs, and who spoke out in public meetings, served as a model to all Canadian women. They signified the possibility of defying the sexual status quo. They tried to expose the state's unresponsiveness to women's stated needs, and to point out that women working together could make a difference.

Some may view the Abortion Caravan as a failure, perhaps a futile gesture. The House of Commons did not immediately remove Section 237 from the Criminal Code. The Prime Minister did not take up the struggle for women's access to safe, legal

³¹An examination of the number of stories indexed, and their headlines, in the *British Columbia Newspaper Index* shows that the first entry under the topic "Abortion" appears in 1954. From that year until 1967 when stories about Criminal Code reform proposals appear with some regularity, the number of stories cited goes up and down dependent on whether any arrests and/or trials for abortion related offences were underway. In the period 1954-60, there are 8 citations; 1961-20; 1962-5; 1963-22; 1964-1; 1965-15; 1966-5. The index covers the four daily newspapers in Vancouver and Victoria during this period, and the entries noted are for all of these papers together. In the 1967-69 period coverage increases, with interest in the Criminal Code reform process, and the publicity for and reaction to *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical which commented on birth control and abortion. In 1967 there are 39 citations, in 1968-43; and in 1969-40. Then in 1970, after the reformed Criminal Code has been in place for six months, and even though the Vancouver dailies were on strike for the period 15 February 1970-15 May 1970 (coinciding almost exactly with the time of the Abortion Campaign), the number of citations rockets upward to 215, more than 50 stories for each paper in that year alone. In addition, the majority of the stories are about community concerns about abortion, some about newly organized anti-abortion groups, and some about the British Columbia Women's Abortion Law Reform Coalition. Many of the citations refer to the progress of Robert Makaroff through the courts, and the subsequent hearings and decisions by the British Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons. In 1971 there are 134 citations under this entry, which decline may be attributed to the dearth of stories about arrests and trials, there being, apparently, none. British Columbia Provincial Library, *British Columbia Newspaper Index*, "Abortion," 1954-1971, microfilm, W.A.C. Bennett Library, Simon Fraser University.

abortion. The doctors did not publicly state that they would do what they could to ease women's access to this vital medical service. Yet, it is a mistake to underestimate the importance of the Abortion Caravan, and the Abortion Campaign. In effect, a West Coast group, the Women's Caucus had organized a nation-wide consciousness raising group. They used the techniques they had learned with each other, and from women all over North America, to offer every woman in Canada an opportunity to learn that there were other ways than the old ones.³² They said that women did not have to bear unwanted children, did not have to die, that it was law, and not justice which determined that women could not decide for themselves. While MPs and newspaper writers were railing about the attack on the institutions of democracy launched by the Abortion Caravan, women, those who supported the right to self-determination, were questioning, again or for the first time, whether those institutions represented them, and their concerns.

It took eighteen long years to realize the goal of the Abortion Campaign. Encouraged by women's actions, and successes, learning from one another what worked

³²See Adamson, *et al*, 44-45; Jo Freeman, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Its Origins, Structures, Impact, and Ideas," in Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975), 448-460; and Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp 84-101 *passim* for discussions of the origins and uses of consciousness raising groups. In this particular context Catharine MacKinnon notes that consciousness raising is the method of feminism, and has written, "As feminist method and practice, consciousness raising is not confined to groups explicitly organized or named for that purpose. In fact, consciousness raising as discussed here was often not practiced in consciousness-raising groups. Such groups were, however, one medium and forum central to its development as a method of analysis, mode of organizing, form of practice, and technique of political intervention.... Pervasively implicit in these substantive insights is feminism's method of knowing about the world in its epistemological and political ramifications. Consciousness raising ... strikes at the fabric of meaning of social relations between and among women and men by calling their givenness into question and reconstituting their meaning in a transformed and critical way.... Feminist epistemology asserts that the social process of being a woman is on some level the same process as that by which woman's consciousness becomes aware of itself as such and of its world.... As a way of knowing about social conditions, consciousness raising by contrast shows women their situation in a way that affirms they can act to change it. Consciousness raising socializes women's knowing. It produces an analysis of woman's world which is not objective in the positivistic sense of being a perfect reflection of reality conceived as abstract object.... It is collective and critical. It embodies shared feelings, comprehensions, and experiences of women as productions of their conditions, through being critical of their condition together.... Seen as method, this process gives the resulting analysis its ground as well as its concreteness, specificity, and historicity."

and what did not, the pro-choice coalition grew from the Abortion Caravan and the consciousness-raising it accomplished.

APPENDIX I

THE CRIMINAL CODE

SS. 251 [237]

REVISED STATUES OF CANADA 1970, CHAPTER C-34

- (1) Every one who, with intent to procure the miscarriage of a female person, whether or not she is pregnant, uses any means for the purpose of carrying out his intention is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for life.
- (2) Every female person who, being pregnant, with intent to procure her own miscarriage, uses any means or permits any means to be used for the purpose of carrying out her intention is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for two years.
- (3) In this section, "means" include
 - (a) the administration of a drug or other noxious thing,
 - (b) the use of an instrument, and
 - (c) manipulation of any kind.
- (4) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to
 - (a) a qualified medical practitioner, other than a member of a therapeutic abortion committee for any hospital, who in good faith uses in an accredited or approved hospital any means for the purpose of carrying out his intention to procure the miscarriage of a female person, or
 - (b) a female person who, being pregnant, permits a qualified medical practitioner to use in an accredited or approved hospital any means described in paragraph (a) for the purpose of carrying out her intention to procure her own miscarriage, if, before the use of those means, the therapeutic abortion committee for that accredited or approved hospital, by a majority of the members of the committee and at a meeting of the committee at which the case of such female person has been reviewed,
 - (c) has by certificate in writing stated that in its opinion the continuation of the pregnancy of such female person would or would be likely to endanger her life or health, and
 - (d) has caused a copy of such certificate to be given to the qualified medical practitioner.
- (5) The Minister of Health of a province may by order
 - (a) require a therapeutic abortion committee for any hospital in that province, or any member thereof, to furnish to him a copy of any certificate described in paragraph (4)(c) issued, by that committee, together with such other information relating to the circumstances surrounding the issue of that certificate as he may require, or
 - (b) require a medical practitioner who, in that province, has procured the miscarriage of any female person named in a certificate described in paragraph (4)(c), to furnish to him a copy of that certificate, together with such other information relating to the procuring of the miscarriage as he may require.
- (6) For the purposes of subsection (4) and (5) and this subsection
 - "accredited hospital" means a hospital accredited by the Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation in which diagnostic services and medical, surgical and obstetrical treatment are provided;
 - "approved hospital" means a hospital in a province approved for the purposes of this section by the Minister of Health of that province;

"board" means the board of governors, management or directors, or the trustees, commission or other person or group of persons having the control and management of an accredited or approved hospital;

"Minister of Health" means

- (a) in the Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, the Minister of Health,
- (a.1) in the Province of Alberta, the Minister of Hospitals and Medical Care,
- (b) in the Province of British Columbia, the Minister of Health Services and Hospital Insurance,
- (c) in the Provinces of Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, the Minister of Public Health, and
- (d) in the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories, the Minister of National Health and Welfare;

"qualified medical practitioner" means a person entitled to engage in the practice of medicine under the laws of the province in which the hospital referred to in subsection (4) is situated;

"therapeutic abortion committee" for any hospital means a committee comprised of not less than three members each of whom is a qualified medical practitioner, appointed by the board of that hospital for the purpose of considering and determining questions relating to terminations of pregnancy within the hospital.

- (7) Nothing in subsection (4) shall be construed as making unnecessary the obtaining of any authorization or consent that is or may be required, otherwise than under this Act, before any means are used for the purpose of carrying out an intention to procure the miscarriage of a female person.

Quoted in Shelagh Day and Stan Persky, ed., *The Supreme Court of Canada Decision on Abortion*, [Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988], 28-31.

APPENDIX II

AIDE MEMOIRE

Can I use your name for attribution, and/or if others mention you in their accounts of their experience? If not, how may I refer to you?

How did you join the Women's Caucus? When?

Were you at the first meeting at Pat Hoffer's on 4th avenue with the lady psychologist? Who else was?

Were you at SFU? Were you involved in politics there?

SDU at SFU: Board room sit-in 1968, day care centre.

Student strike, PSA, etc.

What previous political experience did you have: organized, party politics, US/Canada?

How would you describe the woman you were then? Class background? Sexuality? Married/single? Education? Employment?

What particularly attracted you to Women's Caucus? The actions? The issues?

Describe your activity in Women's Caucus. Committees, caravan, educationals, abortion information service, employment issues.

Describe how Women's Caucus worked. Your perceptions of the structure, both as set up, and in practice. Elitism?

Caravan: what was your involvement? What did women set out to achieve with the caravan? What is your assessment of the action? Spring 1970

Most of the media coverage in 1970 is about actions associated with abortion. What else was going on?

Were you involved with the Indo-Chinese women's conference? April 1971.

Where were you on the expulsion of the YS/LSA? Your assessment of the Women's Liberation Alliance? August 1970

Where were you on the women who left to form the Vancouver Women's Liberation Front? When did that happen?

Do you recall the strategy conference in June 1970? What happened there?

Lesbians: Did you come out before/after you joined Women's Caucus? How was lesbianism dealt with by Women's Caucus, as an organization and by individual women in the group.

Heterosexuals/Celibates: How was lesbianism dealt with in VWC?

What's your impression of media coverage: was it important, considered in the kinds of events/actions that were undertaken? What's your impression of the coverage itself?

What was VWC reaction, or your own, to the RCSW process and recommendations?

Did you read women's liberation movement literature, articles, books, etc., from US or Toronto? If so do you remember which ones. Were there pieces, or women, who were particularly influential for you or the Caucus?

Marlene Dixon's speech at Fish Hall in June 69. Do you remember, what was that like for you? What was the meeting like, other's reactions.

What demonstrations did you participate in?

What was VWC's influence or attempt at influence in provincial party politics? Federal?

Did you work on *The Pedestal*?

Fall 1969: Regional Conference Women's Liberation Movement at University of British Columbia. Did you go? What do you remember about it, your sense of what happened there, and your perceptions of others. What was VWC's role at that conference. Where did other women come from?

What's your overall assessment of the Vancouver Women's Caucus? Its actions, its politics, its methods of organizing.

Do you have recollections of particular women, their place in the organization, their politics and influence?

How did VWC come apart?

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

27 July 1986

TO: VANCOUVER WOMEN'S CAUCUS REUNION

Re: History of the Women's Liberation Movement in British Columbia 1968-1972.

I am in the process of doing research, for my M.A. in History from S.F.U., on the origins of the Women's Liberation Movement in British Columbia. The Vancouver Women's Caucus, its members, activities and history is central to this history.

Included in the archives (actually a whole collection of cardboard boxes) of the Vancouver Women's Bookstore are the early records of the V.W.C. which will help me sort out what happened, when and who did it. In addition, I am reading the newspaper reports of the activities of the V.W.C., and organizations which grew from it, for a sense of time, and how the media reported on the Women's Liberation Movement during the period I'm looking at.

I need your help. If I am to write a history of this time which will be useful to us all, I need to have a clearer sense of what women's experience was, of the perceptions you have about what happened then, and why. I need to be able to check my understandings from the documents with your experiences. To that end I ask that you consider assisting me, and all those who might come to read this history.

There are two things I'd like from you.

1. Do you have files, journals, copies of minutes, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, other documents in your basement, under your bed, in your file cabinet, in boxes someplace? Would you be willing to have me read these documents? I'm interested in just about anything on the Women's Liberation Movement from the period 1968-1972, for the present work, and 1972-1976 for the next piece I plan to do.
2. Will you talk to me about your experience in the Vancouver Women's Caucus, or any other Women's Liberation Movement organization or group? I will probably be doing these interviews in early September. If there are problems with attribution or confidentiality, we can sort out how to deal with them. Your experiences and understandings will be valuable to other women.

There is a list available that you might sign if you know already that you'd be willing to participate in this project. I'll be in touch with you soon. If you sign now, you won't have to remember to contact me. My name, address and telephone number are below.

Now a little about me. I have been an active feminist since 1976 in Vancouver. Most of the work I have done has been centred around work against violence against women. I've worked on International Women's Day Committees, with the B.C. Women's Studies Association, with Vancouver Rape Relief, with Bread and Roses, with Battered Women's Support Services, with AUCE Local One at UBC, with TSSU/AUCE Local Six at SFU, with Women Against Violence Against Women/Rape Crisis Centre, with the

Women's House Saving Action and others. I am presently a graduate student at SFU in History, and am about to be 40 years old. I've lived in Vancouver for 26 years.

I think that it's very important that the history of the Women's Liberation Movement be written, and considered. It is important that the work that women have done to make change be recognized and respected. There are lessons for us all to learn from this history, and I am hoping to contribute something to those lessons, and perhaps to spark a continuing debate about what happened, and why. In addition, I think we can make sense of how and why the Women's Liberation Movement is the way it is in the late 1980s by looking at what happened in the beginnings. This is the task I'm asking you to participate in. If you are willing, please call, or write to me, and I will get in touch. There is a machine on my phone, let me know the best way to reach you.

Thank you for giving this all some thought, and I hope to hear from you.

APPENDIX III

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1967 January Student Union for Peace Action [SUPA] begun at Simon Fraser University.
- 1967 February Royal Commission on the Status of Women appointed.
- 1967 September SUPA Canada disbands. New Left Committee established at Simon Fraser University.
- 1968 January "Sisterhood is Powerful" slogan first used by Kathy Amatniek in leaflet prepared for the "Burial of Traditional Womanhood" demonstration by Radical Women, a New York organization, at a Washington DC Anti-Vietnam War demonstration.
- 1968 January 22 Students for a Democratic University begun at Simon Fraser University.
- 1968 February Canadian Association of University Teachers investigation of tenure system and procedures for appointments of department heads at Simon Fraser University begins.
- 1968 March "Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement," newsletter begun by Jo Freeman in Chicago.
- 1968 April 15 Hearings by Royal Commission on the Status of Women begin in British Columbia.
- 1968 May Canadian Association of University Teachers censures Simon Fraser University.
- 1968 June *Notes from the First Year*, published by New York Radical Women.
- 1968 June 3 Sit-in at Simon Fraser University Board of Governors' meeting room. Room is used as a child care centre.
- 1968 June/July Feminine Action League meets at Simon Fraser University.
- 1968 September 11 First meeting of Women's Caucus at Simon Fraser University.
- 1968 October 4 Women's Caucus proposes Birth Control Clinic for Student Health Services.
- 1968 October 9 Women's Caucus runs advertisement in *The Peak* inviting women "in trouble" to telephone one of the members for assistance. Many do.
- 1968 November 20 Occupation of Administration Offices at Simon Fraser University by students.

- 1969 February Planning for Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation begun by Women's Caucus members.
- 1969 March 27 The *Vancouver Province* publishes first piece on the Women's Liberation Movement at Simon Fraser University, it is an interview with Margaret Benston.
- 1969 Spring *The Women's Caucus Program* is drafted, printed and distributed.
- 1969 May 21 First public meeting of Vancouver Women's Caucus is held at Fisherman's Hall.
- 1969 June 18 Marlene Dixon addresses Vancouver Women's Caucus public meeting at Fisherman's Hall.
- 1969 July Women Artist's Co-op formed.
- 1969 July Women's Caucus takes office in the Vancouver Labour Temple.
- 1969 July 16 Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology Department at Simon Fraser University placed in trusteeship.
- 1969 July 17 First meeting of Women's Caucus at Labour Temple.
- 1969 August 8 Seaforth Armouries demonstration against Prime Minister P.E. Trudeau.
- 1969 August 26 First demonstration organized by Women's Caucus, at Provincial Office Building, 411 Dunsmuir Street, against discriminatory hiring and promotion procedures.
- 1969 September First issue of *The Pedestal* published.
- 1969 September "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," by Margaret Benston, published by *Monthly Review*.
- 1969 September 24 Strike at Simon Fraser University begins: some students and some faculty in Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology department support strike. Women's Caucus members organize off campus "counter-courses" in support of strike.
- 1969 September *Chatelaine* publishes article on women's liberation movement, "After black power Woman Power," mentioning "a fairly strong group in Vancouver (they've organized a day-care centre)."
- 1969 October 11-13 Western Regional Conference on Women's Liberation held at University of British Columbia, Student Union Building. Organized by Vancouver Women's Caucus, and attended by women from both Canada and the United States.
- 1969 October 24 Women's Caucus organized demonstration at Engineer's Club protesting refusal of club to allow women to be members or enter club, except through special door during limited hours.

- 1969 November Planning for Abortion Campaign begins.
- 1969 December 3 Women's Caucus organized demonstration outside hearings of provincial Human Rights Commission at Hotel Georgia.
- 1969 December 11 Abortion Counselling Referral Services announced publicly by Women's Caucus.
- 1969 December 12 Women's Caucus submit brief to Canada Manpower on discriminatory hiring practices.
- 1970 January Vancouver Women's Caucus educational, "Education of Women" at Labour Temple.
- 1970 February *The Pedestal* publishes monthly.
- 1970 February 14 First Canadian demonstration calling for abortion on demand, organized in Vancouver, by the Women's Caucus as part of Abortion Campaign.
- 1970 February 27 Abortion Caravan announced across Canada.
- 1970 March 8 Women's Caucus organized celebration of International Women's Day.
- 1970 March Working Women's Workshop, part of Women's Caucus, supporting women on strike at rental car agencies.
- 1970 March 10 Dr. Robert Makaroff charged with "procuring a miscarriage," and remanded to 19 March.
- 1970 March 19 Organizers of the Abortion Campaign send letters to federal government ministers and to the Prime Minister asking for meetings in Ottawa, and for change in the abortion law.
- 1970 March 25 Women's Caucus members meet with Minister of Health Ralph Loffmark in Victoria, and demonstrate in Legislature.
- 1970 March 26 Women's Caucus organized demonstration outside Public Safety Building in support of Dr Makaroff, and in opposition to his being charged.
- 1970 March 26 Prime Minister Trudeau challenged by Women's Caucus members on his stand on abortion while he changes planes at Vancouver International Airport.
- 1970 April 10 Women's Caucus demands meeting with B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons executive. Eventually ejected from building with threats of police.
- 1970 April 27 Abortion Caravan sets out for Ottawa.

- 1970 May 7 Women's Caucus members disrupt meeting of Vancouver Medical Association and deliver sharp message about referrals for abortions.
- 1970 May 9 Caravan meets in Railway Room, Parliament Buildings. Afterwards marches to 24 Sussex Drive, residence of Prime Minister.
- 1970 May 11 Caravan supporters enter House of Commons, while demonstration proceeds outside, and demand that Parliament reform the Criminal Code, decriminalizing abortion.
- 1970 May 30 Women's Caucus members break up press conference held by Prime Minister Trudeau as he passes through Vancouver, returning from Pacific tour.
- 1970 June 14 Women's Caucus members invited by Prime Minister to meet with him at Bayshore Hotel, make demands about decriminalization of abortion.
- 1970 June 20-21 Vancouver Women's Caucus Strategy Conference. Called to provide forum to address sharp differences in strategy among groups of women; some of whom want to take up a single issue focus on abortion, the majority of whom want to continue the diversified multi-issue work. Another large group of women leaves the Women's Caucus to work for a time within the Vancouver Liberation Front, as Women's Liberation.
- 1970 July 1 Women's Caucus moves to 511 Carroll Street.
- 1970 July Educational series at Vancouver Public Library begins, running through August.
- 1970 August 7-9 High School Women's Workshop held, organized by Women's Caucus.
- 1970 August 27 Members of Young Socialists and League for Socialist Action expelled on passage of motion for expulsion by Women's Caucus.
- 1970 September 12 Boycott of Cunningham Drugstores proposed, Working Women's Workshop of Women's Caucus central to support for striking women workers.
- 1970 Summer Women's group formed at University of British Columbia.
- 1970 September 17 Dr Robert Makaroff sentenced and jailed on abortion related charges.
- 1970 October War Measures Act.
- 1970 November 21 National Conference of the Women's Liberation Movement, Saskatoon.
- 1970 December 7 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women released.

- 1971 January Planning for the April 1971 Indochinese Women's Conference begins.
- 1971 February 23 Rosemary Brown named ombudswoman for Royal Commission on the Status of Women at University Women's Club meeting.
- 1971 April 1-8 Indochinese Women's conference, held at University of British Columbia, organized by coalition of independent women's liberationists, Women's Caucus members, and members of Voice of Women.
- 1971 summer Working Women's Workshop separates from Women's Caucus; *The Pedestal* published by a Collective.
- 1972 April A Woman's Place opened. The next women's centre.
- 1972 October Service Office and Retail Workers' Union of Canada begun.

Manpower Against Women Grads

Reprinted from *The Peak*, SFU Student Newspaper

On November 5th, the campus director of Canada Manpower, Mr. Roberts, met with campus members of Women's Caucus to discuss job potential for women graduates of Simon Fraser, and answer questions about alleged discrimination against women graduates.

Roberts claimed that women graduates were considered for all jobs suitable for women. He admitted, however, that at the present time SFU Manpower accepts "men only" job orders. When asked for examples of jobs "unsuitable for women" he replied: geologist (because "you can't have a girl going out on survey parties with a gang of men") and chartered accountant.

Roberts' reasoning behind "men only" C.A.'s is that due to out-of-town audits, travel arrangements might be difficult and it would be necessary for the company to pay for separate hotel accommodations for men

and women. It was pointed out by a woman in the Caucus who has worked as an auditor for a C.A. firm, that all accountants get separate accommodations anyway and that perhaps the real concern was fear that women would not be able to compete well enough in that world.

When asked if Manpower would accept job orders that said either "whites only" or "whites wanted", Mr. Roberts said "of course not" and later explained that Manpower legally could not discriminate on account of race, color or creed.

When it was pointed out by one of the women that, according to a new federal law, discrimination on account of sex was also illegal, Mr. Roberts said that he recognized the problem and that from now on SFU Manpower would not accept any job orders that specified "men only".

He said however that Manpower would continue to take job orders that said simply "men wanted" and then would allow any qualified woman to apply.

When asked why job orders specifying "whites wanted" were discriminatory, even if Indians could apply, and those specifying "men wanted" weren't, he gave a number of reasons. One reason was that he simply didn't see specifying "men wanted" as discriminatory and a second was that his handbook said that he couldn't accept "whites wanted" but didn't say anything about women.

Among the other facts that came out during the discussion were:

1. approximately 75% of job orders are from firms interested in economics and commerce graduates and almost all of these jobs are given to men, and
2. only nine women BAs were placed this semester; these nine were placed as social workers at a salary of about \$500.

Women's Caucus also asked whether, if all jobs are in fact open to women, the bulletin board listings could be classified by other criteria than "male" or "female". Roberts' response was no; the major reason being given as "convenience".

At the end of the meeting, Roberts' final comment was "Had I known this was going to be such a hot seat I wouldn't have come."

Protest Contests

On October 23, the Executive Council of the Simon Fraser Student Society passed a motion giving Women's Caucus the responsibility of selecting a protest candidate to stand the "Miss Canadian University" contest.

The contest is a part of the Waterloo Lutheran University's Winter Carnival. Each campus across Canada is invited to send their beauty queen to Waterloo on the 18th and 20th of January.

Although some campuses, such as University of Alberta, Edmonton, have decided to boycott the contest in protest of the sexual objectification of women, Women's Caucus at Simon Fraser felt that it would be more constructive to send a candidate. The task of the protest candidate would be to explain to other candidates and the public what beauty contests mean, and why it is that women are subjected to participate in them.

Janiet Jolley, a student at SFU, will represent Simon Fraser at Waterloo. When presenting arguments to the Student Council, as to why a protest candidate should be sent, Janiet said: "Women are being discriminated against at every level in this society. The university is complicit in this

discrimination. Women graduates find that they have spent four years at university only to become a secretary or, at the very best, to become professionals doing the same work as men but being paid as little as one-half of men's salaries. The only way women can be recognized in this system is if they are particularly attractive, and that is why we must protest a beauty contest. It perpetuates the system which denies women their identities as intellectual beings."

On November 25th, the Chairman of the Queens Committee in Waterloo wrote a letter to the Simon Fraser council which welcomed "any representative from any university, protest or otherwise". However, the committee would like to know what form the protest will take. As Women's Caucus does not have an itinerary, the possibilities for action have not yet been fully discussed. Watch for further news in the papers around January 20th.

NEW SEMINAR SERIES

Two seminar series on women will be sponsored by Women's Caucus beginning in January. A six week course "The Education of Women: How we learn to be inferior" will be given every Wednesday at 8 p.m. in the Labor Temple, beginning January 13.

A series "Feminine Mystique or Real Oppression?" will be given once a week at 8 p.m. for North Shore women at the West Vancouver Community Centre beginning the third week in January.

An earlier six week course, given through October and November, on "Women as an Oppressed Group" was well attended. Kathleen Aberle, Simon Fraser University anthropologist, opened the series with a general survey of women's roles. Mary Norton, a member of a B.C. suffrage group, was a special guest at the final session on Women in Social Movements.

For more information on either course, call the Women's Caucus office (879-7722) any weekday between 11:30 and 3:00 or Tues. or Thurs. evenings.



WHAT DOES THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT DO FOR WOMEN?

This exchange of letters took place in September, 1969.

SUMMARY OF LETTER FROM ALICE JAMES
To the Director, Human Rights Branch,

Dear Sir:
In a large advertisement in Saturday's Province newspaper you state that the Human Rights Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sex in seeking or advertising for employees, yet this same newspaper still accepts advertisements that do precisely that, and even put them under the appropriate heading - Help Wanted Men and Help Wanted Women so that the newspaper also contributes to the discrimination. What can be done about this?

In Vancouver, the Engineers' Club, the University Club, the Vancouver Club, The Terminal City Club permit members to issue to their premises any male they wish but at lunch time no female may be

invited. Does this not "discriminate in providing accommodation, services, or facilities where the public is customarily admitted"?

the reply
Dear Mrs. James:
Re: Human Rights Act
This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of September 1st, 1969. A copy of the Human Rights Act is enclosed for your guidance.
In answer to your statements and questions may I refer you to clause 7 of the Act which makes no reference to sex and to clause 11(2) which refers to social organizations.
Sections 14, 15, 19, 20 and 22 provide the answers to the questions in the last paragraph of your letter.
Yours sincerely,
John C. Sherlock
Director,
Human Rights Act

PEDESTAL needs help

THE PEDESTAL is published when possible by Vancouver Women's Caucus. Type is set by Peak Publications Society, SFU, and printing is by union labor.
Staff this issue include Diane Shantz, Oona Wapler, Joan Randt, Eleanor Laundy, Alice James, Mary Steen, O. O'Donnell, Betsy Meadley, and Maggie Benston.
THE PEDESTAL needs writers, artists, sales people. See us at 307 W. Broadway, Rm. 4, phone 879-7722.

NEWS BRIEF

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — 5,000 women demonstrated with slogans such as "Free Our Sisters" protesting treatment of seven women members of the Black Panthers who were imprisoned in May along with 7 other members.

NEW YORK — Last week 500 women met in congress to unite women to discuss their strategy and tactics in carrying out "The Unfinished Revolution for Women's Liberation".

ANTIOCH, Calif. Nov. 7 — Women Inc., a women's caucus of the Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers, picketed installations of the Fibreboard Corporation, protesting sex discrimination in hiring, firing and promotion. Women Inc. has a court case pending against Fibreboard, charging sex discrimination under Title 7 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

They are demanding:

- 1) an end of sex discrimination.
- 2) extension of protective laws to men. (these laws were used as an excuse to discriminate against women.)
- 3) shorter work week.

NEW YORK — Women reporters from New York Post who had decided not to do by-lines on wives of famous men invoked a clause in their contract that benefitted both men and women at the Post, which stated that a by-line can be withheld for any reason.

When they refused to do a story on Mrs. Gil Hodges, wife of Mets manager, the women were fired for gross insubordination. The union demanded to meet with management and the women were reinstated in face of threat of a strike. [Management was going to ask an arbitrator whether a political issue as "unimportant" as women's liberation could be justified reason for withholding a by-line.]

TORONTO — 50 women stormed City Hall and staged a sit in last week demanding equal pay for equal work for women workers at City Hall and were bodily removed by police.

MONTREAL — 132 women were arrested after staging a sit-down to protest the recent anti-demonstration by-law passed by Montreal City Council.

Miss Doyon, only woman lawyer for the defense, submitted that the by-law is unconstitutional because it violates the Canadian Bill of Rights, which guarantees freedom of speech, assembly and association.

Police had stopped 300 McGill men from a planned march without incident on Friday afternoon.

The march and sit-down was called by the Front Commun des Quebecaises — which had its origins in a course on oppression of women taught by Marlene Dixon, a McGill sociologist and women's liberation activist. The demonstrators staged an impromptu mock Miss Grey Cup contest and chanted "Liberte" and "Vive la greve illegale des policiers" (long live the illegal police strike).

Vancouver Women's Caucus sent a telegram of support.

NEW YORK, Oct. 17 — More than 125 women, medic personnel, attorneys, social workers, writers, clergy and others a plaintiffs in a Federal Court Action to declare the New York State abortion laws unconstitutional.

liberation today
or tomorrow?

PLEDGE TODAY

You give, give, give — to everyone except yourself.

Give to yourself by supporting Women's Caucus, for it is groups such as this that will free women from drudgery, depression and economic dependence that make us second class citizens.

You give to your family, your church, your union? Why not to a group with your interests at heart?

Pledges on a monthly basis are most appreciated. This enables us to know where the money for the rent, telephone, office supplies, pamphlets, the Pedestal, etc. is coming from. Only about \$40 per month is now pledged.

We have around 300 members.

100 members x \$1 pledge = \$100 per mo. income

100 members x \$5 pledge = \$500 per mo. income

200 members x \$5 pledge = \$1,000 per mo. income

Can you imagine what \$1000 per month income plus our woman power could do!!!

What progress we could make if the pledges started rolling in today. To progress we need a FULL TIME organizer to speed our operations up!

We would like to publish The Pedestal monthly — this would cost about \$150 per month.

When do you want liberation? Today or tomorrow? Pledge today with post-dated cheques. Freedom this year. Pledge today — \$1, \$5, \$10 per month and for the ones who can afford it a healthy donation today.

Give to yourself by giving to Women's Caucus

If you can NOT contribute money now, that's OK too — Just keep coming. We need people too.



By ELEANOR LAUBLEY and ALICE JAMES

On Friday, October 24th, "United Nations Day," the first of planned annual demonstrations was held, protesting discrimination against professional women and working women in general. U.N. Day was chosen because on November 7, 1967, the General Assembly unanimously passed a "Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women," which among other things stated "the right, without discrimination on grounds of marital status or any other grounds, to receive vocational training, to work, to free choice of profession or employment, and to professional and vocational advancement."

Demonstrators started to gather shortly before noon in front of the Engineers' Club and soon about twenty women were marching up and down in orderly fashion and giving out leaflets to those who would take them.

The leaflet entitled "Women Do Work That Men Scorn" pointed out that men were entering and controlling so called "female professions" but that women still faced discrimination in entering "male professions" causing the percentage of women in the professions to drop from 19.1 percent in 1921 to 15.5 percent in 1961. It also pointed out that women are discouraged or forbidden to take training for so called "male jobs" and that this process starts in earnest in high school.

Apparently the demonstration sparked some discussion inside the Engineers' Club. Generally there was amazement that anyone should question their right to their privileged position and self-satisfaction that they had the power to remain privileged. A few saw the inequity and the inequity of the situation and proposed changes but were quickly silenced.

At 12:45 the demonstrators marched to the Manpower offices to demonstrate against their policy of directing women away from male (i.e. higher

paid) jobs. The management at Manpower sent one of their women out to reason with us and to try to tell us that they could not do anything about the situation and that we should accept poorly paid female jobs. At one point we were forced to move down the street because of blasting under the street but we did not mind holding up our signs in front of "The Executive Club".

At both the Engineers Club and Manpower, businesses which occupied the same premises objected to our presence. However, at the first place a female employee refuted what her boss had just told us and at the second place we were able to question the hiring practices of the firm.

The demonstration was given generally good publicity by the press. Partly as a result of previous similar demonstrations elsewhere in Canada the recent white paper on taxation proposes that social club fees no longer be considered a business expense. This would discourage the proliferating number of "men only" social clubs attached to work situations.

The proposal for this particular protest was first made in the professional women's workshop during the recent conference. This workshop was attended by 12 professional and university women from B.C.,

Washington and Oregon.

The discussion centered around the peculiar problems of the professional woman and how these might be overcome.

Chief among the problems is the isolation which she feels, being surrounded by male professionals and male institutions (such as the legal system and the medical establishment). We agreed it was necessary to make contact with women in professions, to support those already aware of the issues, and to persuade and educate those who are not.

To implement this it was proposed that a progressively oriented woman's caucus be formed in each profession and in each area. Additionally it is imperative that we raise the level of consciousness of women, particularly of young women in schools, and make them aware of problems they encounter once they enter the professions.

We felt that it was also important for women generally to attain economic independence and since professional employment is one way to do this, we proposed to pressure colleges, professional schools, and employers to accept more women, through lobbying, picketing, and educational activities. As the first of these demonstrations we agreed to use UN Day to picket professional schools and organizations which discriminate against women.

Silence Is Golden?

The Western Regional Conference called by Vancouver Women's Caucus brought 150 women from Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C., Washington State, Oregon and California to discuss organization of Women's Liberation in Canada and the U.S.

The conference sponsored a variety of topics for discussion and evoked varying opinions on how women fight their oppression.

The Pedestal is printing in serial form the main topics presented at the conference and is inviting contributions from members in other areas who took part in the conference. The first in the series of conference reports is the following talk by Betsy Meadley, of Vancouver Women's Caucus, on the problems of women office workers.

Clerical workers in the past have been discriminated against psychologically and economically, leaving us in a poverty position where we felt so oppressed we dared not speak out against our oppression. However, we now realize Silence is not Golden, but silence has been our enemy — and we are no longer willing to be silent.

We are angry about our oppression. We are angry that we carry the "work load" and in many offices quite often the "think" load, yet are paid as poorly paid laborers.

We, if female, are referred to in offices as "Betty" but males are referred to as "Mr. Brown". Women are guilty of using the "Mr. Brown" routine on men because they know the man likes it — and it puts the male in a superior position, thereby making him feel better about himself and thereby easier to get along with.

However, in future each clerical if called by her first name should in turn call the male by his first name.

The use of the female's first name and the male's first name is only one of the many ways of psychologically oppressing the female. Next comes the stenographer, who 9.5 p.m., 5 days a week, year in and out types letters, and at the bottom of each letter types the male's initials in capitals while her own (she actually has to shift down on many typewriters in order to do this) she types in small letters, i.e. RBJ/bs (Robert Blair Jones/betty smith). Not all countries practise this. Therefore, in future — Stenographers! — capitalize your own initials too. You are equally important!

It may be only a "small thing" but remember it's little drops of water that make the

mighty ocean, and it's the "little things" that have held us back for so long—

We are expected to wear nylons (minus rural), dress suitably and keep our hair done — all on about \$300 per month. And what if we have dependents? Poverty!

But be a lady, don't mention that you can't feed your children, pay your rent or the baby sitter, just keep on smiling because that is what you are expected to do.

And if you work in a government office — don't get the silly idea that you will have an equal opportunity at positions offered. Even if you can do the job be prepared to see it go to a male. He may have less education, have less orientation towards the position — but he is male and will be able to show some stereotype qualification — whether that qualification is of value to the position is not important.

And what if you should be "un-lady-like" enough to apply for the male positions? Well, sweetie, set your wheasties for you're in for a long battle — but you will win — if you can fight long enough. The going is rough, but if you work in any office that has a union you are pretty safe.

Government offices are ideal places for clerical females to speak out from — for no government is willing to admit to the public that such discrimination exists.

Instead of being paid more because we have extra skills such as typing and shorthand, we are actually penalized by being channelled into clerical positions at poverty incomes from which we can never escape. Once in a clerical capacity of any kind, there is some kind of mad rumor around that "girls who type

can't think".

Of course if you cannot type you may not be able to find any work.

In many government offices women actually carry men's work load, but many are too oppressed to speak out and claim the pay they deserve. Worse still are the females in offices who do not see that they are oppressed and are happier to be treated as "ladies", than receive the pay they deserve.

Here are some examples of B.C. Civil Service discrimination against females and clerical workers.

In the spring of 1989 when the raises came through here's how they were "fairly divided".

I.C. Liquor Control Board Office
Van. — Clerical increases
Gr. V level & above — 14%
Gr. IV & below — 7%
I.C. Consumer Taxation branch Van.
(all with approx. same education)
Auditors — 12% increase (men)
Inspectors — 10% increase (men)
Clerical — 4% increase (women)

We draw your attention to the fact that 14% a high salary yields a greater increase than 4% a low salary. The men get richer and the women get poorer on that type of increase system. Are we going to stand for this? It really hurts to be a clerical worker, busily doing your work load and think load and seeing males in the same department doing half your work and think load yet receiving double or triple your salary. Why?

Simple. All management have to do is "classify" females into female classifications such as Typist, Stenographer, or Clerk and it gives them license to pay poverty salaries yet at the same time let you do often more work than males.

"Female Classifications" should be constantly attacked. Eat your wheasties, sweetie, and let's start the attack TODAY!



Today, on the eve of Christmas, department stores are filled with miniature stoves, vacuum cleaners, electric mixers, and other small-scale household appliances — all of which really work: "Just like Mommy's" — and many of them are even manufactured by the makers of their adult counterparts. And if this isn't enough to delight any little girl there are the many variations of Barbie dolls, each with a multitude of clothes changes.

Delighted or not by this array of Christmas toys made expressly for the female child, a little girl cannot help but find herself closer to the realization that someday, she too, would grow up to be a consumer — "Just like Mommy".

Women Artists' Co-op

Are you interested in doing leather work, pottery, bakka, candle making, sculpture, painting or photography? A group of ten women (which hopefully will expand) have formed the Artists' Co-op on 137 West Street. For \$60 a month, they have rented the entire third floor of a building where they plan to develop a cohesive program for women artists.

Donna Liberson, a member of the group, said "We have decided to pool all of our resources to pay the rent and to set up various projects. We want to try to do as much as possible by ourselves. We won't get builders to come in, for example, when we need a table built."

According to Pat Hoffer, another member, "We are going to first of all share our knowledge of the crafts with other interested women. But secondly we want to develop forms of art which are more directly related to political

thought and women's liberation. This means that the bakka we do will be more relevant to things that are happening in society. In order to do this co-operatively we will begin to discuss with other women what it means to be artists."

The first public showing at West Street will take place on Dec. 11 and 12 when the co-op has agreed to hold a Vietnam auction. Artists have contributed various items which will be auctioned on Dec. 13 to raise money for the Vancouver Committee to end the Vietnam War.

Women Organize In NDP

By D.J. O'DONNELL

The NDP convention, October 28 to 31 in Winnipeg, was the scene of a confrontation of some importance on the woman question.

Granted the New Democrats have done better than the other parliamentary parties on the question of women's political role. The NDP fielded 22 women candidates in the last federal election, the Conservatives 4 and the Liberals 1. There is still much to be done, however, within the party itself, to end forever the auxiliary role women have been forced to play in politics.

All too many New Democratic women have been secretaries, membership chairmen, hospitality committee members. Men continue to hold the top executive posts, council positions, in short, the policy-making power of the party.

The convention was presented with a motion to increase the women's committee seats on federal council to

25. (The federal council is the policy-making body of the party). It has 100 members, of whom nine were women in 1968-69 [5 women's committee appointees, 1 B.C. youth representative, 3 elected at the last convention].

Our argument took two basic forms. The first was that the NDP had accepted the principle that, while the whole party should serve the working class, it is necessary to have its representatives function as such in the party (through trade union affiliation and trade union delegates), a) because they have special interests and problems only they can fully understand, and b) because they must function with effective power lest the NDP obscure its commitment to working class interests.

As with labor, it was clear to us that the whole NDP must consistently and clearly struggle for women's rights in society at large. We argued, therefore,

that we as women must have special representation, a) to speak to our particular problems and interests, and b) to serve to effectively criticize male chauvinism within the party.

Our second form of argument was very much in the spirit of the *Ratkins Manifesto* which says, "The New Democratic Party must be seen as the parliamentary wing of a movement dedicated to fundamental social change." We pointed to the history of anti-Vietnam war activities in Canada. The NDP did not, in the early days of the war, take a strong principled stand and as a result became irrelevant to the building of the large Anti-Vietnam-War movement. A movement of major proportions is being built around Women's Liberation, we pointed out, and if the NDP does not rise to this challenge it again will become irrelevant.

The counter-argument of course was the rugged individualist one, that you

fight male chauvinism by proving your "human excellence", and that the "special status" which would be accorded to women by giving them power *qua* women would inhibit genuine political growth or something. When this argument was made by a young Ontario woman just before the vote the result was 266 to 265. We lost. A later resolution increasing Women's Committee seats to 15 got 388 votes, 62% of the vote but still fell short of the required two-thirds. No direct change was forthcoming from the NDP power structure though a residual "conscience" vote elected six of the twenty federal council members women.

More importantly we made our presence felt, and articulated the demands of an increasing number of Canadian women who will no longer accept this Just Men's Society.

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Note on Sources: It is the intention of the author to deposit her research materials with the Archives of the W.A.C. Bennett Library at Simon Fraser University as soon as possible, thus beginning an archive specifically for the Women's Liberation Movement in Vancouver and in British Columbia. Transcripts of interviews, the audio tapes themselves, and documents of the Vancouver Women's Caucus in the possession of the author will be included. Where subjects of interviews desire, interview transcripts will be edited, and audio tapes will be sealed for some period of time. Other's will be encouraged to deposit their papers in the same archive.

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