

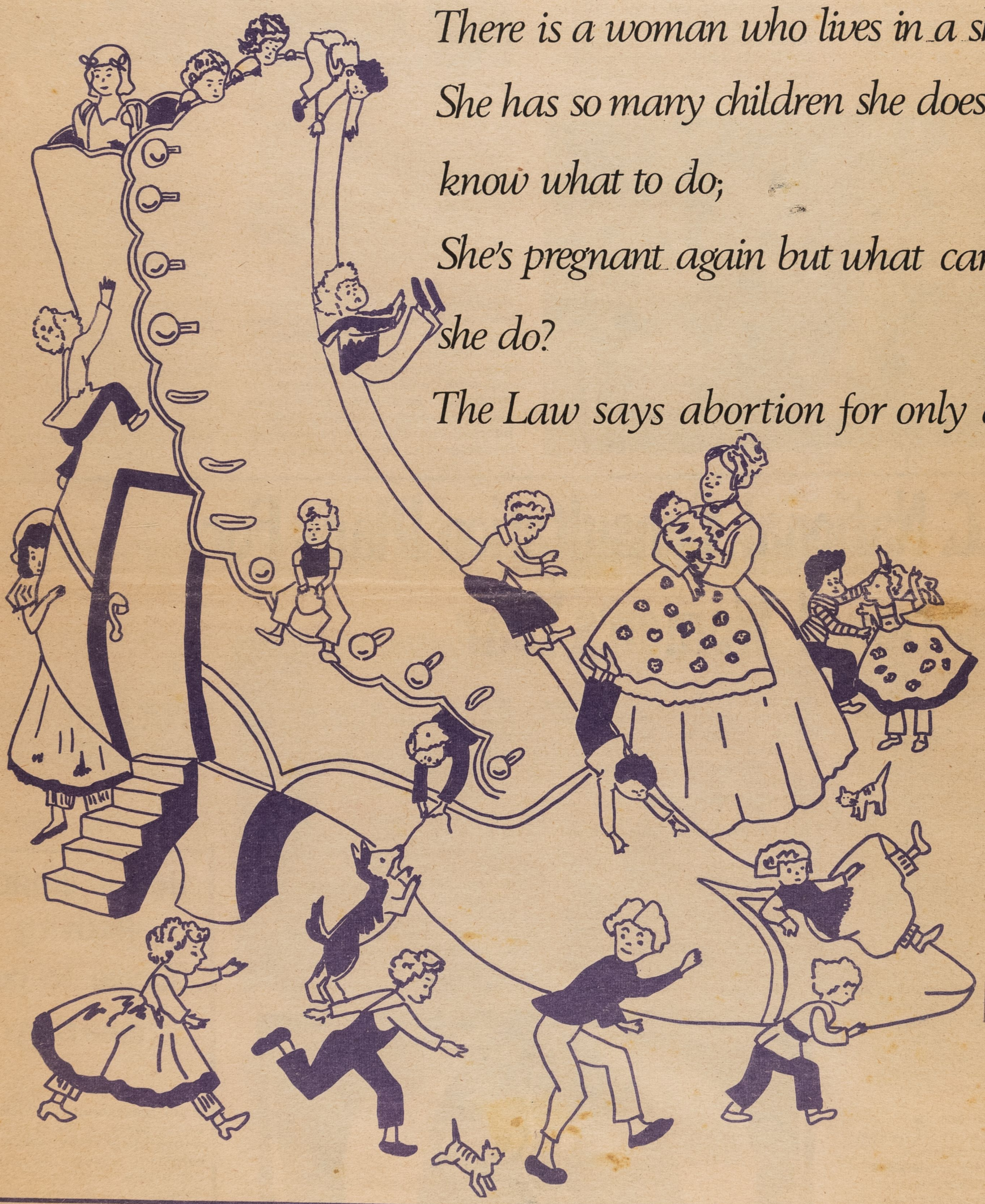
Abortion is a woman's

# Right to Choose



Issue No 5

20 cents



*There is a woman who lives in a shoe,  
She has so many children she doesn't  
know what to do;  
She's pregnant again but what can  
she do?*

*The Law says abortion for only a few!*

**Contents:**      **Abortion in the US**  
                         **Aboriginal Women**



# Editorial

International Women's Year 1975. Next year, the campaign for women's rights will be highlighted. Our contribution to the activities of International Women's Year will be a national conference dealing with abortion and contraception and aiming to give the campaign for the right of women to control their own bodies a boost nationally.

We see that the right of women to control their own bodies as a fundamental right that women must fight for and by winning this right women will take a huge leap forward to real equality.

In learning important lessons from



International Women's Day march, 1974

our sisters overseas we see that the most effective opposition to the "Right to Life" campaign is to keep the whole abortion issue in continual focus. We see this as the way to win more and more support. The planned conference will play an important role in achieving this aim. It will mean much publicity for the abortion campaign, it will bring together supporters of the campaign to repeal the abortion laws and for freely available safe contraceptives on a national scale, to discuss the future direction of the campaign, and it will build a campaign that is capable of winning the right of women to control their own bodies.



May 11 Abortion march

As Jessica Star pointed out to us during her recent tour of Australia, the way women in the US won the right to abortion up to the 24th week of pregnancy was by widespread and continual activity of the abortion rights campaign in organising tribunals, conferences, demonstrations and speaking tours.

The fact that a large majority of Australians support at least some form of liberalisation of the abortion laws is significant. The problem is how to encourage and organise this support into a political force which can actually change the present situation. By bringing the abortion campaign to the forefront during International Women's Year we can demonstrate to other women that we

have got the power to change things if only we get together.

We realise that to be successful we have to be active and visible and we must make use of every opportunity to get our views across. A large and visible movement can exert continual pressure on this issue.

To make the planned conference a real success any support or help you can give would be welcomed. To really publicise this conference well we need women who could distribute leaflets. There are also badges to sell, and posters to be put around. Helping us to build this conference and the abortion campaign will mean success.

## W.A.A.C. National Consultation Plans For International Women's Year

On Saturday, September 14, the Women's Abortion Action Coalition from Melbourne and the Women's Abortion Action Campaign from Sydney, held a national consultation at the Sydney women's liberation House. At this consultation WAAC discussed future campaigning for the repeal of all abortion laws and for freely available safe contraceptives, and the conference WAAC is organising as part of the activities for International Women's Year in Australia.

This conference will be held over Easter 1975 and should prove to be one of the highlights of International Women's Year. WAAC sees that the campaign for the repeal of abortion laws as a priority for the women's movement and hopes that the conference will strengthen the national campaign and involve a wide spectrum of women's groups.

The conference will last for days and have several local speakers and at least one international speaker addressing the conference on many aspects of abortion and the campaign to repeal the laws. The first day of the conference will be a teach-in with films, speakers and discussion on the medical, political, legal, historical and personal aspects of abortion. The second day, for women only, will be mainly concerned with the organisation of the abortion campaign. One of the central questions on the second day will be how can we use our collective strength to win the right to choose abortion?

Discussion at the consultation realised the need for more national

coordination of the campaign. Jenny Eastwood, an activist in the Sydney WAAC was appointed to organise the campaign on a full-time basis. It is hoped that her appointment will mean a more integrated and nationally organised campaign.

The consultation also discussed the problems of financing the campaign, publicity for the campaign and the role of campus WAAC groups. The tour of Australia by Jessica Star, the abortion rights activist from the US, that was very successful, particularly in Melbourne, during July and early August this year was also discussed.

In discussing the drive to gain sponsorships for the campaign, the consultation saw as its aim to solicit support from a number of well-known people and gain publicity for WAAC.

The success of the national consultation and the success of the projections of the campaign nationally, in particular the proposed conference on abortion and contraception for International Women's Year, can best be gauged from the feelings of the women involved. Most felt an involvement in positive action and major decision making helped to clarify the possibilities and direct-

ion of the campaign and clear the way for a stepped up campaign for the repeal of all anti-abortion laws and for freely available safe contraceptives.

... TRICIA WHEELAHAN



**Join in WAAC's  
Activity  
Come to our  
meetings**

If you are interested in working for the repeal of the abortion laws, selling RIGHT TO CHOOSE, and helping to organise the National Conference on Abortion and Contraception for International Women's Year to be held in Melbourne over Easter, 1975, come to our meetings.

In MELBOURNE, WAAC meets every Wednesday night at 7.30pm at the Women's Centre, 50 Little Latrobe St. in the city, phone 347 1564.

In SYDNEY, WAAC meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday night of each month at 7.30pm at the Women's Centre, 25 Alberta St. in the city, phone 61 7325.



# Aboriginal Women

All aboriginal women have suffered at the hands of unsympathetic doctors, all of them have bitter experiences to recount about their attempts to get contraceptive advice or an abortion.

A few brief examples of this may serve to illustrate this more effectively.

1. A 17 year old girl still at school went to a country doctor to ask for the "pill". After being lectured on the loose sexual morals of aboriginal women she was told that he would not give her a prescription because "there are already too many abos spreading VD around here".

2. A young woman with 3 small children was referred to a public hospital for an abortion. When she explained to the doctors that she was married with 3 kids, living in a 2 bedroom commission flat, and that her husband was at present out of work, she was told not to tell lies! This woman then insisted on seeing a social worker, and told the psychiatrist that she feared she might batter one of her other children if she was forced to continue with the pregnancy. Finally after repeated visits to the hospital and 2 weeks uncertainty while the doctors came to a decision the pregnancy was terminated. At the same time, without her permission, a Lippes loop was inserted. She was then asked to sign a form of authority.

3. Another married woman with 3 children was referred to the same public hospital when she became pregnant following irregular use of the "pill". She was given a lecture

on effective use of contraception and refused an abortion. This girl was then referred to the Fertility Control Clinic where after talking to doctors and counsellors, she was told that the abortion would cost \$120. Her husband earns \$80/week and could not afford this amount. They were too scared to admit they had no friends who could lend them the money. She never returned to the clinic. She never received any follow-up letters and I as the referring doctor received no notification that they had been unable to help. At 6 months this girl took an overdose of sleeping tablets and was admitted to hospital for a week. She is now still pregnant but with the added worry that she may have injured the baby.

The last two of these cases could just as easily have been poor white women, a fact which seems to have been forgotten by many sisters who feel we have freely available abortion.

## CONTRACEPTION

Some militant aborigines believe a policy of genocide is being practised by some doctors in Australia. When you look at the number of tubal ligations being done on aboriginal women, and consider the difficulty many white women have had trying to get similar operations, it is not difficult to believe them.

It is not uncommon to see women who have no idea at all what operations have been performed on them. Too

often women who have had a number of children come with a story of an "ill explained but essential operation" done after the birth of their last child. When enquiries are made at the hospital concerned it is too frequently discovered that a tubal ligation or hysterectomy have been performed. While it is possible that all these women have been told the technical names for the operation and have signed the necessary forms, it is certain that they did not understand the significance or permanency of the operation. On the other side of this indifference by doctors and hospitals are the women who think an operation they have had will ensure they don't have further children. Imagine their dismay when they realise they are pregnant and that the operation they had was to remove their appendix.

Many tribal communities have strict laws about contraception. This is often forgotten by whites attempting to impose the use of the "pill" or IUD's on young women who are struggling to identify with the culture of their tribal elders. Whether these women are living with their tribal groups or in the city, it does not give people the right to impose their culture. It should be no surprise then when over zealous "family planners" are treated with suspicion!

Even where there is an acceptance of the need for contraception, (the vast majority of aboriginal women in Victoria) the wholesale free distribution of the "pill" is to be deplored. Like all women they are

entitled to an explanation of the available methods of contraception; they are entitled to a thorough examination and time to make a decision about the type of contraception they will use. It should be remembered that there are higher incidences of diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and early heart disease among aboriginal women and these problems may make use of the "pill" unsatisfactory

In rural aboriginal communities it is alarming to see the number of young girls leaving school because they are pregnant. In an education system where they are already disadvantaged it is unlikely they will ever return to any formal education. There are a number of reasons for the lack of contraceptives among these girls, however one of the most important is the lack of money for doctors visits. In country towns where moralistic doctors ask for payment before the patient is seen there is little opportunity for any non-urgent treatment

It is a reflection on me and on the women's movement as a whole that this article has not been written by an aborigine. It means that we have failed to make the issues in our movement relevant to them, and that we have failed to give them confidence that we will also fight against their particular oppression.

... JANET BACON

## Abortion rights activist gains support for campaign

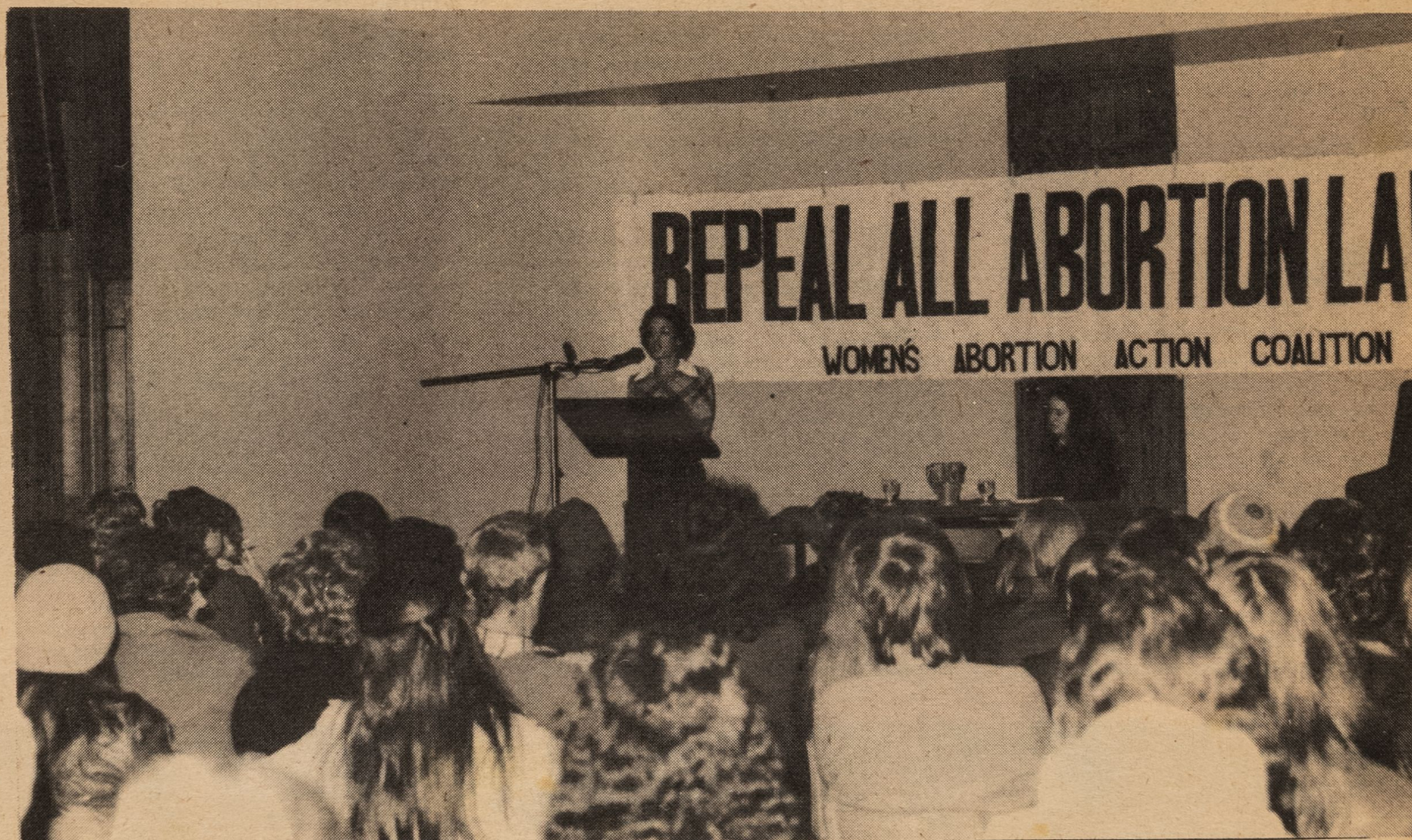
The tour by US abortion rights activist, Jessica Star, has given a real boost on a national scale to the abortion rights campaign in Australia. Jessica's tour provided an opportunity to hear how women in the US organised themselves and how they launched the campaign for the right of women to control their own bodies.

During her tour of Australia, Jessica spoke in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne. Her tour drew much interest from the press with radio and television interviews and reports in most daily newspapers.

The interest aroused on the campuses by the tour drew large numbers to the meetings at which she spoke. At Sydney University 180 people heard her speak, at Monash University 250, and at the University of Queensland 200 people attended an outdoor meeting to hear Jessica speak. The biggest meeting was at Melbourne University where Jessica addressed 500 in the public lecture theatre.

Jessica addressed public meetings in Sydney and Melbourne that were also successful. She also spoke at meetings of women's liberation activists and at meetings of the Women's Abortion Action Campaign in Sydney and Melbourne about the women's movement and the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition in the US.

Jessica's tour of New Zealand was also successful. In New Zealand she spoke at many meetings in cities throughout the North and South islands and on a few occasions debated members of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC).



Jessica Star speaking at public meeting held in Melbourne

She spoke to audiences totalling almost 1,700 at meetings held in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington and Christchurch. In addition, a listening audience of about 40,000 heard her on radio talk-back programmes in Hamilton and Wellington. The majority of callers on these programmes showed support for the cause Jessica represented, either through their own experience of abortion, or simply because they agreed that women have a right to decide whether or not to

continue a pregnancy.

Jessica generated much enthusiasm during her tour of Australia and New Zealand for the campaign for the repeal of anti-abortion laws. She pointed out to activists that we should not stop at reforms of the abortion laws but that we should continue to fight until abortion is solely a woman's right to choose and is freely and widely available.

This tour and the interest it has created will help build the national campaign for the repeal of abortion laws and for freely available safe contraception. Jessica's tour has helped strengthen the ties between abortion activist groups nationally. The tour has proved to have been a major highlight this year in the campaign for a woman's right to choose.

... JENNY EASTWOOD



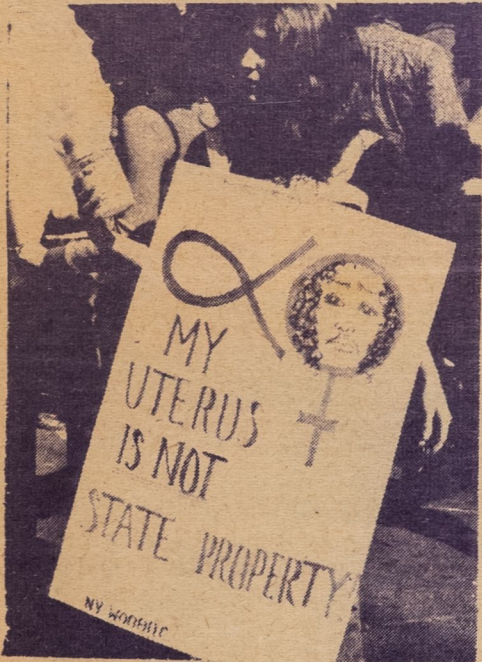
# Abortion in the US

## by Jessica Star

(The following is excerpts from a speech given by Jessica Star, an activist from the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition in the US, during her recent tour of Australia and New Zealand, at a public meeting held in Melbourne on August 8.)

There is hardly a woman alive who has not been faced with the problem of an unwanted pregnancy. Before the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of a woman's right to abortion up to the 24th week of pregnancy, approximately one out of four US women had had an illegal abortion sometime in her life, and an estimated 1,000 women in the US died each year from botched up or self induced abortions.

Every woman who lives in a country with restrictive abortion laws faces a strong possibility of becoming a criminal anytime she exerts some control over her reproductive life.



The international abortion movement comes at a time when we women have rising expectations of our role in society. In the US for example the congress finally passed the equal rights amendment, which is not anything very radical really, it simply says that to discriminate against one sex is unconstitutional.

The only reason it was finally passed after being defeated for 50 consecutive years was because of the

growing movement and the growing upsurge around the demands for women's liberation. What I mean by rising expectations is simply that we women believe that we have the right to be equal.

Well the question becomes, have we really had equality in any society that denies us the right to decide whether to or when to have children.

A lot of people agree with all this, they say yes we agree, women have been discriminated against, we must fight for the emancipation of women, but we shouldn't grant them abortion, because really they should be just using contraception, if they just used contraception the whole problem would be solved. This is a sheer fallacy because the current state of contraception in the world today is such that there is no 100% safe effective means of birth control.

Our movement advocates contraception which the anti-abortion movement does not, and we say that women need to have abortion as a backup measure, both to faulty birth control and to unavailable birth control.

I haven't told the whole story about contraception because there is one perfect method and you all know what it is, its called abstinence or celibacy and this is put forward by many of the anti-abortion people as a realistic solution for any woman who does not want to be faced with the problems of an unwanted pregnancy.

So you see the question of abortion, of a woman's right to abortion and the question of women's sexuality are very closely linked. The Catholic church hierarchy has been putting forth ideologies that say women and sex are for procreation only and that any woman who is going to engage in this dirty little activity ought to be prepared to pay for the consequences.

Reminds me of an old catholic legislator that I had the opportunity to testify before in Massachusetts. We were testifying with many other people about the bill that would repeal or at least liberalise the

abortion restrictions. In the middle of my statement, this pious old Catholic legislator stood up, looked down at me and said: "Young lady, don't you think if you play, you should pay."

I think that there are strong indications that the kind of arguments in favour of fetus rights are nothing but coverups for the real reason we are denied the right to abortion.

are mass imitations of fetuses that are about the size of a cashew nut and they have also been exposed, many of these pictures as fixed up photographs, that have nothing to do with real life.

During the entire show women were only mentioned once. We just become receptacles, once this fertilised egg is there, we don't even exist as far as these people are con-



Anti-abortion billboard in the USA

What underlies this denial is the need to maintain control over women and their bodies, so that the state can decide the question of reproduction and so that the state can continue its ideology of male supremacy and the absolute lie of female inferiority.

Women around the world are challenging these concepts and we're proving them to be untrue. We understand very well that no matter how many formal concessions are granted to us by governments, that until we gain the right to control our own bodies any talk of real equality or women's liberation is nothing but a bunch of baloney.

### THE ANTI-ABORTION CAMPAIGN

I saw an interesting slide show that I just want to mention, because I think that it really goes into what these people think about women. These anti-abortion organisations put together slide shows, which I call sorcerer's shows.

They claim that they're based on scientific fact, but in fact, they

cerned, we just happen to be the receptacle that the fetus happens to be in.

These people want to turn the fetus into a citizen of the country. In the US they're trying to have passed a human rights amendment to the constitution. This would say that a fetus from the moment of conception is a full total human being, a citizen of the country to be protected under law. This would obviously outlaw all abortions.

This is a new innovation in law, it has never been the case that a fertilised egg or a fetus has been considered a human being. When the census paper comes around to take the population of the country, they don't knock on your door and ask if you happen to be pregnant. They don't put down 2 instead of 1. If you're going abroad and you happen to be pregnant you don't have to take out a second passport.

The aim of this amendment and all anti-abortion propaganda is to keep women in the same status as rabbits or cows bearing offspring constantly throughout life until death. All



Actions like these helped to change abortion laws in US.





because women must be punished for sex.

To protect this fertilised egg, you're going to really have to punish women. Women are punished by the anti-abortion laws, we're made to be criminals, we're made to risk death, if we decide to terminate unwanted pregnancies. But if they succeed in passing some kind of law like this amendment to the US constitution, how are they going to protect this fetus?

I think, what they are going to have to do first of all is to build a machine that they can just carry around and point at women that will determine which of us has a fertilised egg, just to begin with. Then they're going to have to put us in national detention centres and keep us there for 9 months and tie us down, because if they don't tie us down we're going to continue to find ways to terminate unwanted pregnancies either on ourselves or on each other.

#### THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IN THE US.

In the US women have won a very important victory and I don't think its just a victory for women in the US. I think it has international ramifications that are going to be felt throughout the world and are being felt throughout the world.

We organised a very physical, powerful national campaign around the issue of a woman's right to choose. We did it in as many ways as we could. Through the legislatures, through the courts, through the streets, teach-ins, community meetings, debates, whatever we could think of to get the issues out.

And we dramatically changed public opinion. In 1968 the National Opinion Poll showed that only 15% of the American people thought that abortion should be an individual choice. By 1972, before the Supreme Court decision, this figure went up to 73% including 56% of the Catholics polled.

This doesn't mean that 73% believe in abortion. Its not an ideology they believe in but it did mean that we had convinced the overwhelming majority of people that this was a

question of individual choice. Just as some women have made the choice because of their own background and their own moral and religious beliefs that they would never have an abortion. We wanted the same right for other women who have decided that they do want abortions.

#### THE US SUPREME COURT RULING

The Supreme Court specifically ruled that during the first 3 months of pregnancy there could be no restrictions against abortion but during the second 3 months of pregnancy the only restrictions could be those having to do with the qualifications of the physician or the place that the abortion is performed. In other words no state, we have the same set up as you do, no state can outlaw abortion up to 24 weeks of pregnancy.



What this has meant is that the third biggest racket, illegal criminal racket, has been wiped out entirely. The first 2 rackets, in terms of size and money are gambling and prostitution. The third was

illegal abortions. The illegal abortionist has been put out of business in the US. I think that is a very important thing to consider.

Also, poor women on welfare are no longer victimised by backyard abortionists: 42% of the abortions being done in New York City, where there are many people on welfare, are being done in public hospitals for free on women who seek abortions and don't have money to pay for it.

#### GETTING AN ABORTION IN THE US TODAY

The prices on abortion varies, people are tremendously exploited generally because of medical procedures in the US. You have to pay for all medicine and its a tremendous rip-off, and when you're dealing with a woman who needs an abortion of course you're dealing with someone who has to have this medical procedure done within a certain period of time and there is a certain amount of desperation and there are doctors who take advantage of that situation.

But there are clinics now that are doing abortions for as little as \$25 to \$50 and keep in mind that our dollar is worth less than your dollar. And the prices for an early abortion range up to about \$100 to \$135.

We will eventually win free medical care and free abortions. But it has made a tremendous difference to the mass of American women who now have the legal right to decide and once they decide they can go to facilities that can perform an abortion safely.

Eighty per cent of the abortions being done in the US under these legalised conditions are being done in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy which is when they are fastest, easiest, and the least expensive.

#### WINNING THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE INTERNATIONALLY

I think that what we did in the US and the decision of the Supreme Court in 1973, is not some kind of miracle that is the result of this wonderful system that we have that has the bill of rights, the constitution and all these other things.

I think that it was the result of building a massive, viable, visible campaign that changed public opinion and made itself into a political force that could force legislators and the justices to change their positions on these laws.

I think it is something that can be repeated in many other countries. I think that what it takes is a real determined organisational effort to get the word out about a woman's right to choose, to get the word out about what we stand for, what our movement is about and what it is not about, and to reach out into the community in as many ways as possible, to convince them that this must be an individual choice.



Women around the world have taken up this demand and this issue precisely because it is such a fundamental issue to all our lives. All women can relate to this question because we are all faced with unwanted pregnancy at some point or another or at least the fear of an unwanted pregnancy.

I don't think women are going to sit by and let these statutes and these restrictions remain on the books. I think that we are powerful enough and that we can organise ourselves well enough and that we are determined enough to fight like hell and win a woman's right to choose.





# Attack on Morgentaler continues

The four year long persecution of Dr. Henry Morgentaler points plainly to a general resurgence of anti-abortion campaign. While the main responsibility for the oppressive anti-abortion laws rests with the Trudeau Government, these parliamentarians involved are getting ample support from "friends of the fetus" groups like the "Coalition for Life." These groups in turn are subsidised by the government through tax exemptions, and generously funded by wealthy businessmen and the Catholic

hierarchy.

Morgentaler's crime is the assistance he gave some 5,000 women in obtaining abortions without medical complication or humiliation. These women had been unable to obtain abortions through the hospital committees necessary for a legal abortion in Canada; many were from Quebec where the majority of hospitals, although publicly funded, are controlled by the Catholic church.

Between October 2 and 7 the Supreme Court of Canada — 10 judges — were to decide the outcome of Morgentaler's case, which will affect over ten million women in Canada. At adjournment, no ruling had been made and no decision is expected for some months. Morgentaler himself faces possible life imprisonment, depending on how the various courts rule on all thirteen charges.

The Trudeau Government is using the trial as a major test of the balance of forces around the abortion issue, and an attempt to push back the growing feminist consciousness of women in Canada and Quebec

The September Canadian Medical Association Journal states that only 259 of the 1,359 hospitals in Canada have established abortion committ-

ees. Without a committee, a hospital cannot perform any abortions. In 1973 there were about 40,000 legal abortions performed, yet according to the McGill University Birth Control Handbook, statistics compiled by Montreal doctors indicate that over 100,000 women obtain abortions annually. The August 29 Toronto Star pointed out that in 1972 6,000 Canadian women found it necessary to obtain abortions in New York state.

According to the latest Gallup poll two out of three Canadians support the principle of a woman's right to choose abortion in consultation with her doctor. Since 1969 women in Canada have been fighting to gain control of their bodies.

...JOY ECCLES



Demonstrations have been held throughout Canada in support of Dr Morgentaler.

## WONAAC Slide Show Available



If any person or group is interested in hiring this very informative and inspiring slide show, (tracing the struggle for abortion and contraception in the US) write to WAAC  
25 Alberta St  
Sydney 2000  
or ring Jenny 61 7325.

## Women's Abortion Referral Service

- for problem pregnancies
- for pregnancy prevention

# CONTROL

Sydney Ring 61 7325 between 6 - 9 pm,

Mon. to Fri. or call at 25 Alberta St.

Melbourne Ring 347 1564 or call at  
50 Lt. Latrobe St.

# Abortion Seminar held in Brisbane

Over the weekend of August 17 and 18, Children by Choice, the Brisbane Abortion Law Repeal Association who run the abortion-referral service in Brisbane called Children by Choice, held a seminar entitled "Abortion - The People Involved."

The seminar was very successful and an important event for the movement to repeal the existing abortion laws. It was particularly inspiring to see such a seminar in Brisbane where the existing abortion laws are so harsh.

The seminar was attended by over 200 abortion rights activists. It was very well organised — programmes, meals, information and an enjoyable social evening — combined with a series of very interesting, educational talks, made the whole weekend worthwhile.

All the talks were interesting and informative. More than anything else the value of the seminar lay in the good quality of the speakers. The different talks covered all aspects of the abortion question. Because they were given by people involved in the abortion rights movement they contained valuable insights gained from direct experience and the most up to date

information.

A valuable aid to the talks were the films and slides shown on the different techniques of abortion. To people who haven't had an abortion or seen one done the slides were very helpful. Seeing what a simple quick and painless operation an abortion helps to demystify the whole process of abortion, making the existing laws and arguments against abortion on medical grounds seem absurd.

A panel of three doctors discussed the medical scene. Dr. Stella Lewis spoke on her experiences working in clinics doing first trimester abortions, using the karmen canula method.

Dr. Andrew Child explained the different methods of using prostaglandins for second trimester abortions and Dr. Khoo examined the case of septic abortions and why they occur.

That same afternoon, Dr. Frank Weston, gave various reasons, from a psychiatrists point of view, why a woman may seek an abortion and the role that a psychiatrist can play in helping and advising a woman

about abortion.

Mr. Greg Wood covered the legal aspects of abortion. He explained the different laws that exist in each of the states of Australia. He pointed out how the Menhennitt ruling in Victoria and the Levine ruling in New South Wales came into existence through test cases and the leeway that they provide enables certain women to obtain legal abortions. He then outlined what he thought would be a suitable law regarding abortion.

On the Sunday morning Beryl Holmes and Simon Rigg gave a history of the Children by Choice Association in Brisbane and the counselling and referral service they have established. Jo Wainer spoke on the Fertility Clinic in Melbourne and produced some very interesting statistics gained from questionnaires given to women attending the clinic regarding such things as use of contraception before and after abortions.

Bridget Gilling talked about the socio-economic situation of abortion. Why some women need to be able to have an abortion and the different attitudes held by soc-

iety towards the abortion question.

The last talk was given by Dr. Potts. He focused his talk on contraception and emphasised that abortion was an important part of any contraception programme that was going to be 100% effective.

No contraception, he explained, was 100% foolproof. What a contraceptive does is prolong the time it takes a woman to get pregnant. The right to abortion is the necessary right of all unwanted pregnancies. He also emphasised the need to educate people about contraception in a way that they will be able to relate to and in a way that will encourage an open acceptance of the value of contraception.

The seminar discussions after the talks were very enthusiastic. Questions and contributions added interesting points to the talks. The whole weekend provided those who attended it with a valuable insight into the present situation, a reservoir of information on the abortion question and important ammunition in the fight to repeal the existing abortion laws.

...JANE BECKMANN



## Switzerland

The Swiss cabinet has drafted a compromise abortion bill that would remove some restrictions on the right to abortion. Under the new bill, a woman would be able to obtain an abortion if the birth of the child would create a situation of "grave distress", if she had been raped, or if the child might be born deformed. In all cases, the abortion would have to be approved by a state-appointed official.

Legislation currently on the books bans all abortions except those certified medically necessary to prevent endangering a woman's life.

The Swiss Union for the Decriminalisation of Abortions has denounced the bill as "hypocritical" and is demanding that women be allowed to decide for themselves whether to have an abortion.

## United States

On October 10, a three-judge panel suspended a new anti-abortion law passed by the Pennsylvania state legislature. The ruling was in response to a suit filed by Planned Parenthood challenging the new law's constitutionality. The law requires a husband's consent for married women seeking abortions, and parental consent for women under 18. The law also outlaws the use of welfare payments to pay for abortions.

The suspension of this law is significant. Similar bills in other states have been struck down by the courts. However, the defeat of this anti-abortion law is not complete - the courts will have to rule on its constitutionality.

Opposition to this law has united many women's, church, and community groups in action. The University of Pennsylvania women's centre sponsored a panel discussion on the law on October 2 in Philadelphia. Fifty activists participated in a picket line in support of the suit outside the court in Philadelphia and in Pittsburgh, the newly formed Abortion Rights Coalition held a press conference on October 10 at which representatives of 13 organisations spoke out against the proposed law.

A rally of more than 200 people marched in Pittsburgh on October 12 in support of a woman's right to abortion. Speakers at the rally emphasised how many women, especially working class and black women, would suffer because of the restrictions the proposed law placed on the payment for abortions under the welfare payments.



Abortion Rights Coalition march in Pittsburgh on October 12



## France

Since the May-June uprising in France in 1968, abortion reform in France has been one of the key issues on which the Women's Liberation Movement has been active. The trial of Marie Chevalier and her daughter for obtaining an illegal abortion and the public declaration signed by 331 doctors last year declaring they would carry out abortions have been two important events for the international abortion rights struggle.

Part of the fight against the antiquated abortion and contraception laws that make abortion illegal in France, that have not been changed since 1920, has been the foundation last year of the Liberation of Abortion and Contraception Movement (MLAC).

The MLAC has set up a number of clinics throughout France. Staffed by doctors, medical students and other volunteers these clinics counsel women about abortion and contraception, and also carry out abortions using the Karman suction method. A recent article and photographs of this method in the French women's magazine 'Marie Claire' has provoked discussion around a strong reaction from anti-abortion forces.

The overall situation in France regarding abortions is similar to that in other countries with restrictive abortion laws. A few women who know how to can get abortions but the majority of women aren't free to choose an abortion.

Only one hospital in France carries out abortions openly and most hospitals have no clear policy on performing abortions. Some refuse to do any abortions, others will only do an abortion if it is an emergency.

With debate coming up soon in the national assembly on draft reforms of the antiquated abortion and contraception laws the situation in

France is of interest to all people involved in the abortion rights movement.

A victory for abortion law reform in France will be a significant advance for the whole international abortion law reform movement.

## Belgium

The October issue of the mass-circulation French women's magazine Marie-Claire has been banned by the Belgium government, and copies of it have been seized. The Christian Social government headed by Leo Tindemans objected to an article in the magazine explaining how abortions can be performed harmlessly and painlessly under proper medical supervision. Abortions are illegal in Belgium.

## Britain

The Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign which has groups of supporters in cities throughout England, Scotland and Wales, is planning to hold its second national conference on November 23 and 24 this year. The conference will be held in Nottingham.

The conference will discuss three areas of the campaign in Britain:

1. WACC's approach to the Lane report,
2. The Abortion Act,
3. Demands around facilities for abortion, contraception and sterilisation on the National Health Scheme.

In Britain the anti-abortion forces are organising to obtain some kind of amendment or adjustment to the present situation regarding the availability of abortions. They have begun a letter writing campaign aiming at putting a lot of pressure on British MPs. WACC is organising its own counter campaign of letter writing.

In Glasgow because of political trends that could possibly lead to a Scottish parliament or assembly, WACC is organising a national campaign for Scotland to ensure that if a Scottish parliament is set up, a restrictive abortion law is not passed.

WACC sends out a regular newsletter covering international and local news of the campaign.

## Ireland

While women in many western countries are struggling, demonstrating and demanding the repeal of abortion laws, Ireland is still only at the stage of debating whether married women should be allowed access to contraceptives.

An amendment to the Criminal Law Act passed in 1935 made it an offence to sell, import, or advertise for sale any contraceptive in the Irish Republic, which has led to a growing black market in the illegal sale of contraceptives.

In Dublin the present Government has drafted a bill - the Control of Importation, Sale and Manufacture of Contraceptives Bill 1974, which would legalise the sale of contraceptives by licensed chemists, but only to married people.

A recent national survey in Ireland showed that 59.6% of Irish women of child bearing age, and 57.2% of men favoured a repeal of the ban on the sale of contraceptives.

The Irish Times called the debate "a shoddy carnival" and "...the manifest silliness of the bill was that the right to purchase contraceptive devices would be confined to married people." Another newspaper the Irish Independent stated "...even by the standards of Irish politics, it would be difficult to find a parallel to the bungling, lack of judgment, and sheer hypocrisy of the protracted debate."

During the debate it was mentioned that about 2,000 Irish women went to England every year to have abortions.

Needless to say the bill, after one adjournment, was soundly defeated.



Irish women are still denied the right to even obtain contraceptives.

## Italy

One of the priorities of the feminist movement in Italy is the abortion campaign. What they want is the repeal of abortion laws. The official sources admit to 2,000 deaths a year from illegal abortions but feminists claim that some 20,000 women are maimed or die as a result of illegal abortions.



# New Zealand Abortion Clinic

## Attacked

The Auckland Medical Aid Centre, an abortion clinic, has been open since May this year. The centre is the only medical establishment providing one to one counselling and clear information on all aspects of abortion procedure. Women who come to the clinic seeking an abortion are treated as responsible people within a non-judgemental environment, provided by a predominantly female staff and the centre is run on a non-profit making basis.

However, anti-abortion forces are mounting a campaign to close the clinic. The Labour MP for Porirua, Gerard Wall, has introduced a private member's bill seeking to restrict abortions to public hospitals.

Dr Wall claimed that a concern for women's health had prompted him to introduce the measure. The 'rationale' for the bill is that public hospitals are the only institutions with adequate back-up facilities for dealing with complications which can arise in abortion cases. It has since been pointed out that other more complicated abortions are being performed in private institutions and if a risk of any significance is involved should it not apply overall, instead of just to one minor procedure.

The most ridiculous - if unintentional - undoing of Wall's 'health' argument was the decision of the Labour caucus that members would have a 'conscience' vote, just as the sell-out attitude of the Australian Labor Party, when making a decision on the health of women.

The first major public response to the Hospitals Amendment bill was a public meeting of over 500 people in Wellington on September 6. This meeting was addressed by a broad range of speakers, representing feminist groups, organisations seeking abortion law change, doctors' organisations, Protestant churches and political groups. The medical director of the Auckland Medical Aid Centre, Dr Rex Hunton, was the main speaker. He also addressed similar meetings in other main cities in New Zealand during the following week.

On September 13 protest activities took place in several cities: In Auckland over 500 people packed the Town Hall concert chamber to hear Dr Hunton and other speakers. In Dunedin, Hamilton and Christchurch women organised the signing

of petitions against the Hospitals Amendment bill and in support of the clinic. And in Wellington 420 people marched through the city streets to a rally outside the Town Hall. Chanting 'Out With Wall's Bill', the marchers gained a lot of support from people along the street.

But the anger aroused by the Hospitals Amendment bill, and the breadth of opposition to it, was to be exceeded by the protests in the wake of the September 16 raid on the abortion clinic. Police swooped on the clinic and seized the records of the 500 women who had been patients there, ostensibly on the basis of complaints laid by members of the public. Even such leading anti-abortion doctors as Dr M.D. Matich, chairman of the Council of the Medical Association of New Zealand, and Dr A.M. Rutherford, spokesman for the Royal Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, expressed concern at the violation of individual rights represented by the seizure of the clinic's medical files.

Other individuals and groups which made protests to the government and police included the Auckland executive of the Medical Association of New Zealand, the NZ Psychological Society, the national president of the Association of Social Workers, the Nurses Reform Association, the Auckland branch of the Family Planning Association, and the Humanist Society.

The strength of protest against the police raid has alarmed anti-abortionists. The president of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), Dr Diana Mason, stated that she felt the police raid had damaged the chances of the Hospitals Amendment bill being passed and had damaged her movement.

Responses also came from government circles; Justice Minister Finlay publicly expressed that he was deeply disappointed and surprised that the clinic either was compelled or felt it had to close. New Zealand Prime Minister, Rowling, cautiously commenting on the government caucus meeting that discussed the raid on September 19, said; "... a number of caucus members were not entirely enthusiastic about the way things appeared to have happened... He acknowledged that such police actions were repugnant to many people.

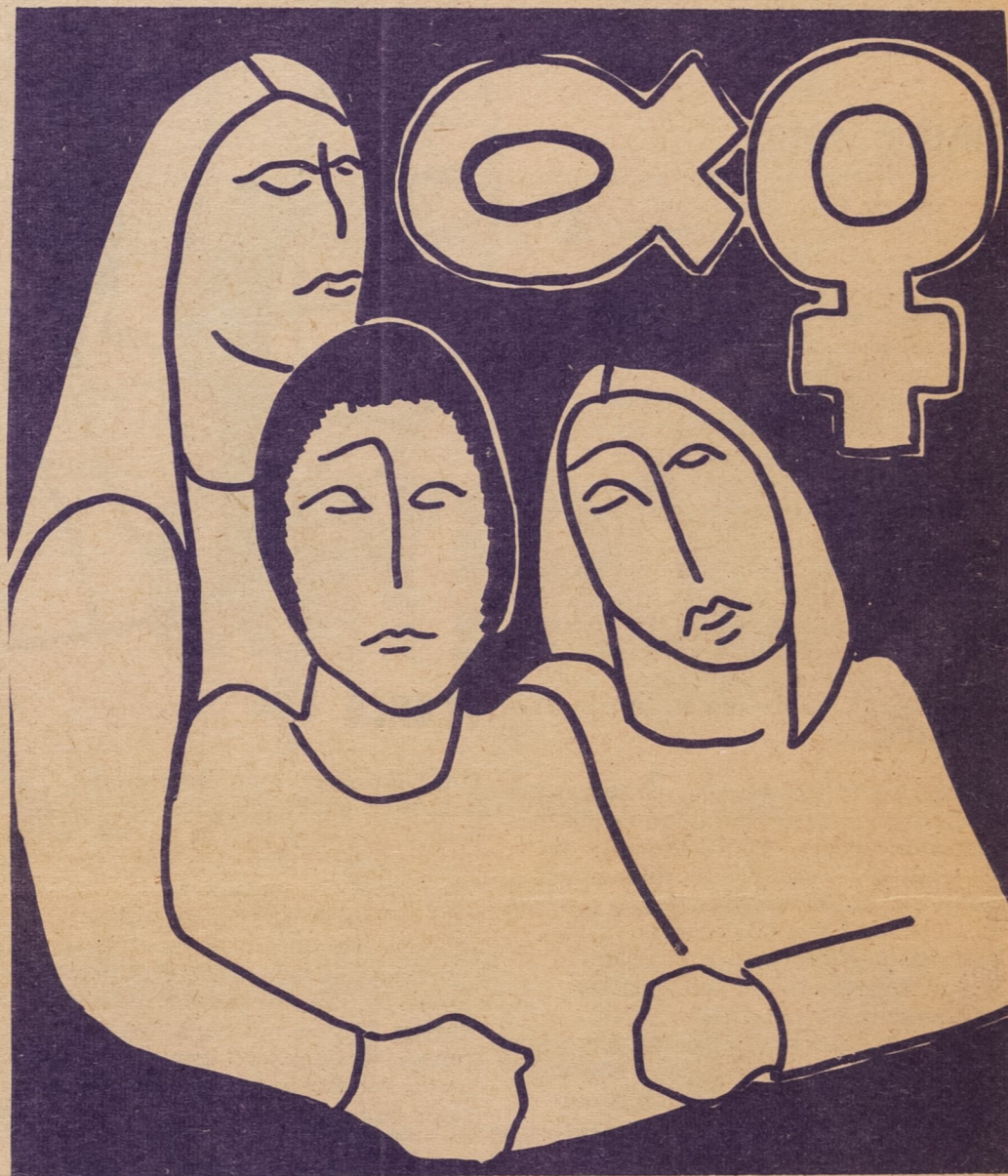
In addition to the protests by organisations, demonstrations against the raids took place in many cities. On

September 18, 300 people picketed the Auckland police station in a protest called at only a few hours notice. In Wellington on September 20 a picket was held at lunchtime outside Parliament while a deputation visited the Minister of Police. One of the speakers Cath Tizard, wife of the Deputy Prime Minister, said she spoke as a feminist and as a woman with a public life of her own, and that it was time for people to stand up and be counted on this issue'. On the same day in Christchurch 500 people marched behind banners reading 'Save the Clinic! Oppose the Bill'.

5000 strong 'Rally for Life' procession in support of the bill took place, organised by the Catholic-dominated Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. A group of clinic supporters spontaneously formed a counter-march, and with their numbers swelled to over 200 kept up vigorous chanting throughout the rally which followed the procession. Perhaps the high point came when the SPUC organisers called for one minute's silence 'for the unborn child'. This prompted the loudest one minute of chanting: 'A Woman's Right to Choose!'

And in Wellington in the evening a

... TINA HARSANYI



### National Conference on Abortion and Contraception Melbourne, Easter, 1975

see page 2

## Subscribe

Subscriptions to Right to Choose are \$2 for 10 issues. Right to Choose covers news and analysis of the abortion struggle both in Australia and overseas. It aims to keep people informed of what is going on in the movement and to put forward our central idea that abortion should be a woman's right to choose and hers alone. Its publication is not regular due to the physical limitations of our campaign, but you can help to improve it and increase its regularity by subscribing or by giving some sort of financial support.

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## BADGES

W.A.A.C. has produced new badges. They are purple and white with the silhouette of the woman (right) and the words "abortion is a woman's right to choose".

Badges are 20 cents each and can be ordered from W.A.A.C. 25 Alberta Street, Sydney 2001. There is a 20 percent discount for orders of ten or more.

