

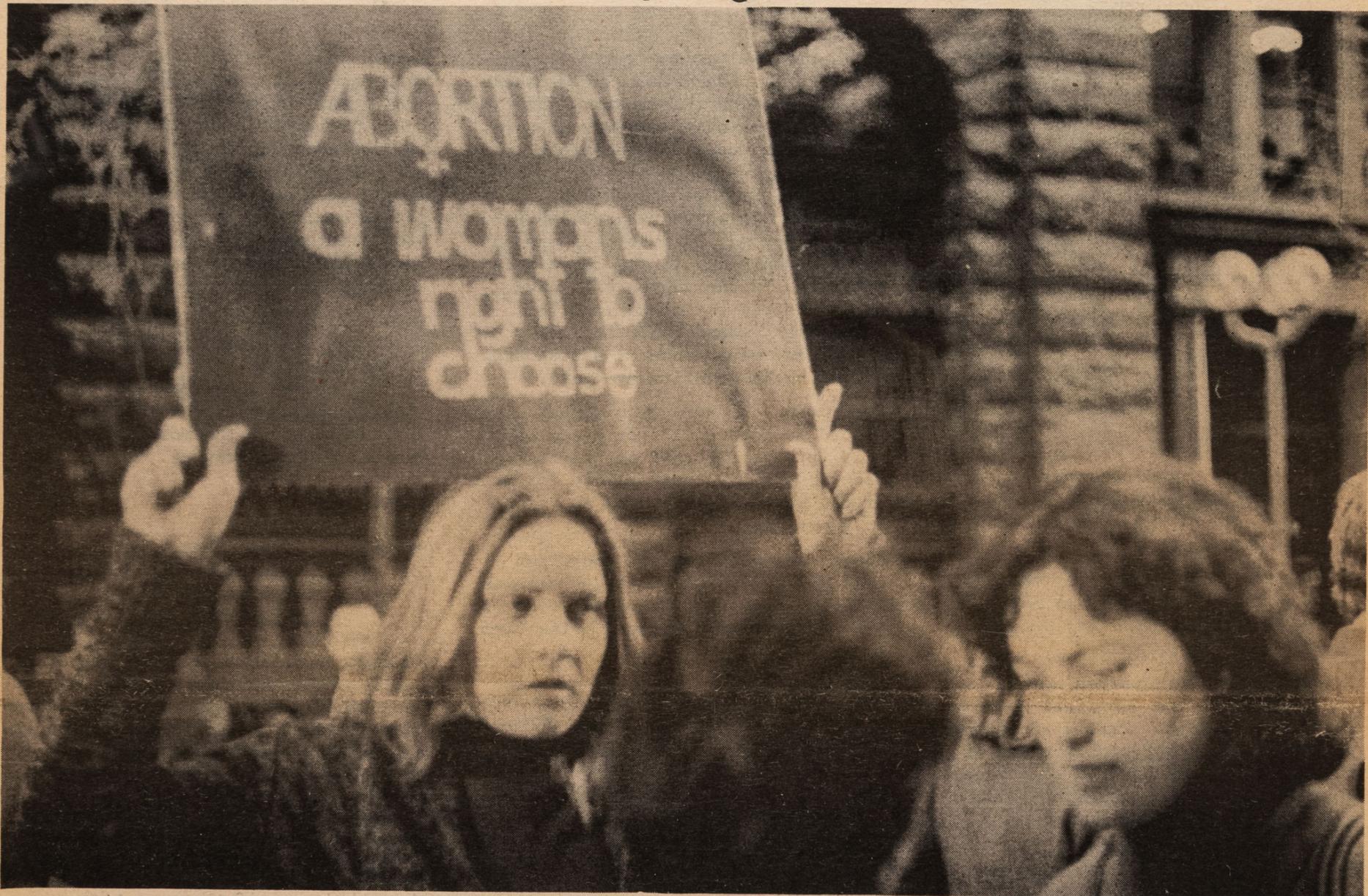
Abortion is a woman's  
**Right to Choose**



Issue No. 17

Spring 1978

25 cents



## FIGHT FOR ABORTION RIGHTS!

During the recent N.S.W. election we saw abortion again presented as a 'moral' question. Under the guise of taking a moral stand some churchmen and candidates sought to further deny women's right to choose abortion. Politicians quickly picked up the cue from the archbishop. Some claimed they would 'tighten' NSW abortion legislation. Others said the situation is good enough already.

We know the situation is not good enough. Women have to travel, often long distances to get safe abortions. Even in the western suburbs of Sydney women appear at hospital casualty departments with botched backyard abortions. Abortion is still available only for women who know where to go.

To make the bad situation worse some medical benefit funds want to remove abortion from the schedule. The Minister for Health, Ralph Hunt has introduced a bill in Federal Parliament to allow this. So far only a couple of Catholic funds have indicated that they will do this in the name of morality. Very few women will be disadvantaged by this measure, since the Hibernian Society only paid for three abortions during 1977. However, HCF in NSW does not include abortion in its cheaper budget schedule. Advertising for this package is being directed at single people and young childless couples. Many more young women may find themselves paying the full cost of an abortion after having paid for medical insurance.

Stephen Lusher, a member of NCP and a Right-to-Lifer wants to introduce a motion in the House of

Representatives to completely remove abortion from all standard medical benefits tables. The Right-to-Life is very actively supporting this motion. They seek to deny women safe abortions by cutting funding. Rich women would be able to afford safe, clean abortions, but poorer women might not.

We will probably see more appeals to morality in the coming International Year of the Child in 1979. The child has been defined in Australia as human beings from conception to fourteen years. This leaves room for plenty of emotional appeals about unborn children - missing faces in the classrooms. The rights of children will be used to deny the rights of women. We must pay attention and be ready to answer that kind of argument.

On March 31, 1979, WAAC groups in Australia will be organising events in conjunction with the International Day of Action called by the International Campaign for Abortion Rights. Now is the time to begin planning a massive show of strength right around Australia. Women will need to work together to show those who would use 'morality' and child care as clubs to beat us with that we will take no more abuse. We must unite and fight back.

Join your local group campaigning for abortion rights. If there is no group, start one! Join the struggle for the demands raised by the International Campaign.

Contraception and abortion are a woman's right!  
No forced sterilisation!

# MEDICAL BENEFITS?

We are used to thinking all our medical needs will be covered by our health insurance. The government has cut back the amount, but still pays some money for each visit to the doctor.

Now there's a threat to the reduced benefit - a threat to women only.

The federal Minister for Health, Ralph Hunt, has introduced legislation to allow medical benefits funds to refuse to pay for abortions.

Even people who oppose abortion agree that it is a medical procedure. When this legislation passes, a fund can disregard the needs of its women members and refuse to pay benefits.

The Hibernian Society has already said it will do just this.

## LUSHER MOTION

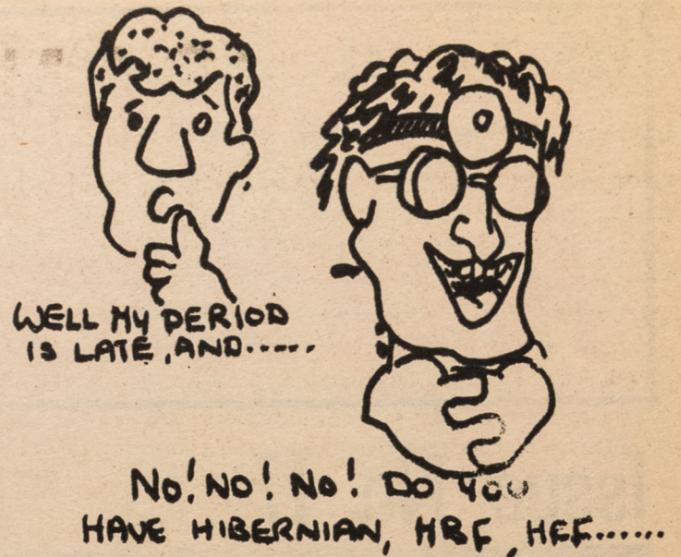
As if that threat is not enough, Stephen Lusher, a Country Party member of the House of Representatives has submitted a motion to federal parliament which could lead to the total removal of abortion from all medical benefits tables. This is what the motion says:

1. "to remove items from the standard medical benefits table which currently permit medical benefits for abortion.
2. to cease the funding of medical benefit schemes through which claims for terminating pregnancies can be made."

If such a law were passed no-one could collect from a medical benefits fund for abortion. Part 2 would take away the government contribution of 40% for all items covered by a scheme which continued to fund abortions.

Here is a case of all women being made to pay for the moral views of a few people. There is no move to take away payments for tobacco or alcohol related diseases.

No fund could continue under those conditions, so no fund would pay benefits for abortions.



In Australia, the majority of people think that, under some circumstances, women should be able to have abortions. If medical benefits schemes do not refund money paid for abortions, poorer women will be disadvantaged twice. First, because they are women and all women are refused re-funds. Second, because they may not have enough money to pay for a safe abortion. Richer women will have enough to pay for doctors' bills themselves, even if doctors raise prices in the absence of a standard fee on which benefits are paid.

Some desperate women who cannot afford doctors' bills or a new baby will turn to backyard abortionists. Backyarders were responsible for most of the horror surrounding abortion in years past.

Clean, safe clinics and abortions paid for by medical benefits schemes have put them out of business. People like Stephen Lusher could bring them back.

Even when abortion is illegal, women seek, and obtain, abortions. Women with money get SAFE illegal abortions. Women without much money get DANGEROUS, frightening illegal abortions. Some live, some die.

Do we want this situation in Australia again?

Help keep abortion a recognised medical procedure so women can choose a safe abortion as an alternative to continuing an unwanted pregnancy.

Health funds are even more cynical than one usually expects of profit-making enterprises. The HCF will not cover abortions under its much publicised Budget cover. So the plan they are pushing for young single people will not cover the very procedure healthy young women are most likely to need. It is the procedure for which the choice of a doctor is all important.

Most healthy people will spend less on doctor bills than on insurance in the next year. It would be better to rely on the government 40% rebate than to spend money for insurance that won't cover the most likely medical expenses anyway.

## FIGHT BACK

Write to: Ralph Hunt,  
Minister for Health,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. ACT. 2600

Write to your local federal member of parliament. Ask them to vote against the Lusher motion when it is discussed in parliament. Tell them abortion is a medical procedure and should be covered on medical benefits schedules. No woman should suffer because of another person's moral views.

Write to your health fund. Ask that the fund continue to pay benefits for abortion, even if the Hunt bill is passed by parliament. It is important to continue coverage of all medical procedures for all Australians, male and female.



# NSW ELECTIONS

During the last week of the recent NSW election, 'morality' was given wide play by the press.

Church leaders had raised the issue during a Mary Whitehouse meeting in Sydney. Members of all parties hurried to assert their good moral stand on the issues of de-facto marriages, homosexuality and abortion. Neville Wran could see no need to change the laws regarding abortion in NSW.



The ALP considers abortion a 'conscience' issue. The politicians can vote according to their own consciences in Parliament, rather than following a party policy. This stand denies women an opportunity to make their own decisions. However, Catholic politicians are not made to violate their consciences and vote to allow women the right to choose abortion.

As usual public opinion is ahead of the stands of political parties. In a pre-election survey of the Yaralla electorate over sixty percent of all voters questioned supported a NSW law allowing a woman to obtain an abortion 'if she so desires'. Young people that is those most likely to need abortions, are most in favour of such a law and those over fifty years most opposed.

Results of a survey of 145 voters in Yaralla electorate, Sydney. Yaralla includes the suburbs of Denistone, Melrose Park, Ryde South and Yaralla. The survey was conducted by students in the Department of Government, University of Sydney on the weekend of September 23-24, 1978.

Question: Do you think the state government should pass a law which allows a woman to obtain an abortion in NSW during the early months of her pregnancy if she so desires?

Answers: (given in percentages)

|                     | YES  | NO   |
|---------------------|------|------|
| all voters          | 60.7 | 35.2 |
| under 30 yrs of age | 82.9 | 17.1 |
| 30 - 49 years       | 56.9 | 40.0 |
| over 50 yrs of age  | 46.5 | 44.2 |
| by sex - female     | 59.0 | 32.8 |
| - male              | 61.9 | 36.9 |
| by voting intent -  |      |      |
| - ALP               | 69.5 | 28.0 |
| - Liberal           | 45.8 | 45.8 |

# JOAN SHIELDS TOUR

In August, Joan Shields, an activist from WONAAC (Waac's sister organisation in NZ) in Wellington, toured Australia speaking about the new laws which have drastically restricted New Zealand women's rights to abortion.

Under the NZ Contraception, Sterilization and Abortion Act passed in April this year, abortion is permitted only if the woman is pregnant as a result of incest or is subnormal; in all other cases, she is subject to the decision of four doctors, who generally are members of SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child), and thus opposed to a woman's right to choose.

Joan pointed out that Sisters Overseas Service (SOS) has been helping about 30-40 NZ women each week come to Sydney to get abortions. Inevitably, however, poorer and uneducated women are discriminated against due to the high cost of flying to Australia, as are country women who may have to travel long distances, far from supportive friends and family. Thus the cost, both financially and mentally, is high, even for those women able to come to a clinic in Australia.

## SYDNEY -

In NSW Joan had a hectic series of speaking engagements, ranging from a successful front-lawn meeting at the University of NSW and talks at the Wollongong and Newcastle Universities, media appearances on Caroline Jones' City EXTRA and Channel 7's 11 am, to a speech at the rally in support of Medibank, on Saturday August 19. She also spoke at a public meeting organised by WAAC on Wednesday 16th, which was attended by about 60 people concerned about the repression of women's rights in New Zealand.

All at the meeting felt inspired to fight against the possibility of a similar situation occurring here in Australia.

## BRISBANE

Joan Shields, a representative of the New Zealand Women's National Abortion Action Campaign (WONAAC), visited Brisbane on August 13-15, at the start of a two-week Australian tour.

This tour was invaluable to feminists of this city as it provided us with direct information about the struggle by NZ women to defend their right to abortion and also highlighted the international character of the attacks against women's rights in this area.

During her stay in Brisbane, Joan addressed to campus meetings, met informally with women who have been involved with the campaign for abortion rights, and was the featured guest on 4ZZZ's feminist programme, *Through the Looking Glass*.

At the University of Queensland, forty students attended a lunchtime meeting, making this one of the largest political meetings there this year. Such a response is largely due to the consistent activity of the WAAC group based on campus. The following day, another 75 students heard Joan speak at Griffith University's forum area and decided to send a telegram of support to WONAAC on September 15 when NZ women were staging a national day of action to protest their government's restrictions on abortion.

Whenever Joan spoke, a feature of discussion was the similarity between the anti-abortion situation facing women both in Queensland and New Zealand, which emphasised the need for a campaign like WONAAC is waging to bring women in this state into protest action against the repressive laws here.

The interest aroused by the tour, no doubt contributed greatly to the success of the September 16 rally in solidarity with the New Zealand day of action.



JOAN SHIELDS

## ADELAIDE

Joan Shields had good media coverage for her stay in Adelaide. Most TV channels, a lengthy interview on ABC radio and 5 UV; also covered by the evening press.

She was well received by audiences at lunchtime and evening forums at the Adelaide University and also addressed the ALP Women's Committee. Many people were surprised and horrified to learn of the severity of the NZ abortion laws and promised support for the Sept. 15 Day of Solidarity Demonstration.

## SOLIDARITY WITH N.Z. WOMEN

September 19, is Women's Suffrage Day in New Zealand, the day women there celebrate winning the right to vote. This September 15, women in Australia protested against the denial of another women's right in New Zealand, namely the right to safe abortion.

## SYDNEY -

In Sydney a crowd of about 70 people gathered in Martin Place around 4 pm to show solidarity with their NZ sisters. Leaflets were handed out to homeward-bound office workers, attracted by the speeches and the street theatre provided by Women's Action Theatre. The theatre included an hilarious portrayal of the situation in New Zealand, pointing out the person who really suffers from the restrictions imposed by Church and State - the woman.

Despite wide-ranging press releases, the demonstration was covered by only one television station and by one paragraph in the morning paper. Abortion is obviously one of those taboo subjects in today's media climate.

## ADELAIDE

About 200 people participated in a rally here on September 15 to express solidarity with New Zealand women in their struggle against the brutal anti-abortion laws in that country and also to demand for all Australian women the right to choose.

Anne Levy, a Labor member of the Legislative Council, spoke about the danger of back-yard abortions becoming more widespread. Levy also explained the threat to the availability of abortion posed by the Fraser govern-

ment's changes to health insurance cover and the destruction of Medibank.

Gay Walsh spoke as a representative of the Coalition Against Repression, Adelaide's anti-Mary Whitehouse group, and Debra Altorfer spoke representing the Women's Abortion Action Campaign.

A street theatre group from Salisbury College of Advanced Education performed a play by Myrna Lamb, *But What Have You Done for Me Lately?* The play attracted a large crowd of passers-by, most of whom were sympathetic.

A planned march to the New Zealand Government Tourist Bureau was cancelled because of cold weather and lack of light.

cont. on p.7

# campus action

An Abortion Extraordinary Resolution was presented on campuses throughout Australia for students to determine AUS policy on that issue. That E.R. was passed by a majority of 2:1 and AUS now has a policy that supports a woman's right to control her own body. This means practically that moneys and energies can be used for the campaign, support and dissemination of information.

On NSW campus at the beginning of second session, a group of women got together to make sure that abortion was an issue that was understood and out in the open, not in the 'backyards' and emotional gutters of people's minds. Joan Shields addressed a well attended and attentive library lawn meeting on Wednesday August 16, and this was backed up by leafletting, education and discussion. The student paper took up the issue in response to



the general interest generated by our group. Abortion articles and letters to the editor (pro and con) ran for 3 weeks. The E.R. was passed 238 to 188 and was the largest attended student policy meeting since the 1976 Anti-Uranium meeting - a credit to the efforts of the WAAC group.

We went to the streets, as part of Foundation Day, selling badges, handing out broadsheets and advertising the public meeting for August.

Working against the Lusher motion, approximately 100 letters were mailed out to parliamentarians registering student opinion.

We feel we had a successful beginning and plan to be active on campus in the coming year.

UNSW's WAAC

## A.U.S. ABORTION E.R.

The Australian Union of Students has for many years, had a pro-abortion policy and since the beginning of the Women's Department of the Union in 1975, it has raised many issues of concern to women, and shown a firm commitment to women's liberation. The effectiveness of the union in this area, over the last two years, has increasingly come under attack. Women on campus have suffered physical, psychological and verbal attacks, not only for being women, but for being feminists and daring to be POLITICALLY active, and to publicly campaign for the rights of women. What was and is happening on campuses is only part of the right-wing backlash against the women's liberation movement in general. It is in this political climate, and with the heightened attacks on women's right to abortion, that feminists on campuses saw the need to debate openly feminist politics, and to re-assert, through our union, a woman's right to choose.

The method of deciding national policy in the AUS, during the year, is the debating on each campus of an 'extraordinary resolution' (or E.R.) A very detailed E.R. was moved by a Victorian campus, which re-affirmed AUS's support for a woman's right to abortion, and sought to use our union as a political arena and resource base to defend the interests of women.

The right-wing reaction to this was to move that AUS have 'no policy on abortion'. This 'no policy' motion reflects a sophistication in the anti-abortionist attacks. Whereas before they have merely argued on the grounds of being against abortion, this year they moved to the more nebulous 'no policy' position - though in fact they are still as much as ever against abortion. Realising, that they can no longer win an anti-abortion position, they know as well as we do, that in fact a 'no policy' stand IS an ANTI-abortion stand. It is a stand IN FAVOUR of the status quo. Women on campus argued against 'no policy' because they saw that it not only denied us access to our own union, but also reinforced the

position that continues to send women either to backyard abortions or the often inadequate abortion services which do exist.

The abortion issue is certainly a controversial one on most campuses as in society generally. Many campuses saw larger general student meetings on this issue than they have had in months. The abortion debate drew out of the woodwork (or more correctly, the colleges, engineering faculties and christian groups) those right wing elements that rarely bother to take much interest in other union issues, but which are fairly easily mobilized by right-wing student politicians, when the time is ripe. Although a victory was achieved nationally through our union in favour of a woman's right to choose the mobilization of the right wing on this issue and the continued attacks on abortion rights and services in the community, show that this vote is only one beginning in what looks like being a particularly vicious battle over a woman's right to choose abortion.



## BRISBANE - WAAC GROUP FORMED

Kay McVey

Following the success of the Sept. 16 rally in solidarity with the New Zealand abortion rights campaign, a city-wide WAAC group has been re-established in Brisbane. With the University of Queensland WAAC, Control and Children by Choice already active, the city-wide group should lay the basis for co-ordinating an effective on-going campaign aimed directly at repeal of Q'ld repressive anti-abortion laws.

To publicise our existence and encourage more women to become involved in the campaign, we are planning a "Film Night for Abortion Rights" on November 22, at 7.30 pm in the Trades Hall. As well as two films, *Women Who Have Had an Abortion*, and *Vacuum Aspiration Abortion*, there will be a short talk on the state of Australia's abortion laws.

WAAC is also organising a protest campaign against the introduction of the Lusher Bill. Initially, we will be picketing the Commonwealth Health Department office in Adelaide Street at the time of the first reading.

To contact Brisbane WAAC, write to:

221 Coopers Camp Road, Ashgrove, 4060.  
or phone 221-4854 during the day.

# News From Canberra

LAST YEAR THE RIGHT TO LIFE WON A MAJOR VICTORY IN CANBERRA WHEN THE GOVERNMENT BROUGHT IN AN ORDINANCE WHICH PROHIBITS PRIVATE ABORTION CLINICS IN THE A.C.T. SENATOR SUSAN RYAN HAS INTRODUCED A MOTION TO OVERTURN THIS PROHIBITION. HERE IS THE SPEECH SHE MADE SUPPORTING THE MOTION IN THE SENATE ON 11 OCTOBER 1978. AS WE GO TO PRESS THE MOTION IS BEING DEBATED IN THE SENATE.

## TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ORDINANCE 1978

### Motion to Disallow Ordinance

Senator RYAN (Australian Capital Territory)  
(3.45)—I move:

That the Termination of Pregnancy Ordinance 1978, as contained in the Australian Capital Territory Ordinance No. 16 of 1978, and made under the Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910, be disallowed.

•••

The Ordinance, in its present form, has been brought in by the Government in order to circumvent the clearly expressed wishes of the people of Canberra and their elected representatives on the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly. It embodies a very bad principle of legislation; that is, to legislate on a grave and controversial matter by the expedient of changing a temporary ordinance brought in for a very restricted purpose into a permanent ordinance which has a much broader and, indeed, a different purpose. In bringing in the Termination of Pregnancy Ordinance 1978, the Government has flouted the democratic principle and reneged on its own promise, given when the Minister for Health (Mr Hunt) said:

We have decided as a government, and quite rightly so, that matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory, matters that have great social consequence and matters that have wide-ranging consequences for the people in this community will be debated, discussed and decided by those people who were elected by the local community. I pay full credit to the way in which members of the Legislative Assembly have faced up to taking decisions

That was a reply by Mr Hunt on this matter on 24 March 1977. He proceeded to say:

I conclude by saying that the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly voted to ban abortions outside the recognised hospitals in the Australian Capital Territory for a 90-day period during which time it will debate the wider issues and take decisions in respect of the way in which abortions will be carried out in the Australian Capital Territory.

Honourable senators will understand from those words of Mr Hunt that the Government had promised the people of Canberra that they could decide through their elected body, the Legislative Assembly, the manner in which abortions would be carried out in the Australian Capital Territory. The Legislative Assembly was charged by the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt, with deciding whether there should be independently run abortion clinics or special abortion clinics run by the Capital Territory Health Commission or whether there should be no abortion clinics in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Ordinance to which I am referring now was brought in originally as a temporary measure to prevent the establishment of abortion clinics while the Legislative Assembly debated the issue and came to its own decision on the question. It was brought in as a temporary measure, and the words of Mr Hunt support that. It was brought in originally as a 90-day temporary ordinance so that there would be no development in the matter of establishing abortion clinics while the Legislative Assembly debated the matter and came to a decision. It was quite proper that the temporary ordinance should have been brought in. I had no opposition to it and the Legislative Assembly had no opposition to it.

The Legislative Assembly did fulfil the responsibility with which it was charged by the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt. It did debate the question. Its deliberations were exhaustive and considered. It conducted a public inquiry to which all members of the community had access. As a result, it brought down a report making 47 recommendations with regard to the establishment of abortion clinics in the ACT. One of these recommendations opposed the establishment of privately run abortion clinics. Another one, which was the major recommendation because most of the others related to it, recommended the setting up of a special abortion clinic under the control of the Capital Territory Health Commission and within the grounds of a public hospital. It went into great detail as to how this clinic should operate, how it should be administered, staffing what sort of counselling procedures it should carry out and so on.

The Legislative Assembly recommendation that a special abortion clinic should be set up is an accurate reflection of the wishes of the people of Canberra. For example, in May 1977 an Australian National Opinion Polls survey conducted in the Australian Capital Territory investigated community attitudes towards abortion and the establishment of abortion clinics in Canberra. This survey showed that, in answer to the question 'Do you think Canberra should or should not have clinics where doctors carry out abortions under suitable medical conditions?', 70 per cent of the respondents said yes and only 24 per cent said no. It is interesting to note that in the same survey many of the people who did not favour easier abortion laws did favour the setting up of a special abortion clinic. So the people of Canberra, both through their elected representatives and in reputable opinion polls, have made very clear their wish for a quality medical facility for early term abortions.

But the Government having so forthrightly proclaimed the democratic right of the people of Canberra to decide this issue for themselves, now has completely disregarded their wishes. As I have said, the Legislative Assembly report made 47 recommendations to the Government, concerning mostly the establishment of a public clinic administered by the Health Commission. In response to this, the Government has ignored 46 of the recommendations—the major recommendations—and has acted on only one of the recommendations. The Government has brought in this Ordinance as a permanent measure to prevent the establishment of any abortion clinics, whether they be privately or publicly controlled. It has been claimed that this Ordinance with which we are dealing today does carry out one of the recommendations of the Legislative Assembly report. That is only partly true. It is not a precise expression of recommendation No. 2 in the Legislative Assembly report which states:

That a permanent Termination of Pregnancy Ordinance be made to ensure that private free-standing abortion clinics do not operate in the Australian Capital Territory.

That happens to be a recommendation which I personally support, although that is not the issue at stake at the moment. That recommendation was made and it is true that the Ordinance does partly implement recommendation No. 2. But it goes further than that. Clause 3(2) of the Ordinance states:



Susan Ryan

A registered medical practitioner shall not carry out treatment for the termination of a pregnancy otherwise than at a hospital conducted by the Capital Territory Health Commission.

That is the provision of the Ordinance which is supposed to implement recommendation No. 2 of the Legislative Assembly report. Of course, it does that. Clause 3(2) will prevent the opening of private abortion clinics. I have no argument with that. But it is so worded as to prevent also the establishment and administration of a public abortion clinic as recommended in the Legislative Assembly report. The Ordinance cannot be claimed to represent accurately or precisely even that one recommendation of the report, although it does so partially.

It appears that, rather than respect the democratic decision of the Australian Capital Territory's elected representatives, the Government has made the temporary ordinance permanent. The temporary ordinance has served its purpose. Its purpose was to prevent the establishment of a commercial clinic while the matter was being discussed. That was the only purpose it had when it was brought in. It has served that purpose and, in my view, it now should be allowed to expire. A new ordinance should be prepared and introduced by the Government, incorporating the 47 recommendations of the Legislative Assembly report. Any other course of action should be repugnant to anybody who believes in the rights and responsibilities of democratic government. It should also be repugnant to any senator who has championed the cause of self-government for the Australian Capital Territory. It would seem that the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt, has preferred the advice of Cabinet, a group of men who are not answerable to the people of the Australian Capital Territory, to that of the representatives of the community affected by his decision. Contrary to his earlier undertaking made publicly in the Parliament he has not allowed the people of the Australian Capital Territory to decide on this grave and sensitive issue. For the purpose of stressing to honourable senators the undertaking which was made by the Minister for Health on this matter, I read again what Mr Hunt said:

We have decided as a government, and quite rightly so, that matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory, matters that have great social consequence and matters that have wide-ranging consequences for the people in this community will be debated, discussed and decided by those people who were elected by the local community.

•••

I point out very carefully that what I expect the Senate and the Government to do is to disallow this ordinance on the grounds that it does not fulfil the undertaking given by Mr Hunt, it does not reflect the wishes of the Legislative Assembly and it does not embody the 47 recommendations of the Legislative Assembly report. Therefore this ordinance which was to be only a temporary ordinance in the first place should be disallowed. During the period of time that this matter will be resolved the Government should develop and present to the Parliament a permanent ordinance which will honour its promise to the people of Canberra that their elected representatives will take decisions in respect of the way in which abortions will be carried out in the Australian Capital Territory.

•••

## QUEENSLAND DOCTORS SUPPORT LIBERALISATION

Kay McVey

A recent survey of doctors has shown significant support for liberalisation of Queensland's archaic anti-abortion laws. The survey, which was conducted by members of the Department of Social and Preventative Medicine at the Brisbane Medical School, polled all registered medical practitioners in the state. 66%, or 2066 doctors, responded.



More than half - 52.3% of the replies wanted to see the law amended to allow wider grounds for abortion. Abortion at the request of the woman was supported by 27.4%, while only 6.3% thought abortion should always be illegal.

Asked to state their opinion on sterilisation, 60.9% responded that it should be available on request to adults.

# worldwide

## BRITAIN

### WOMAN WINS BRITISH ABORTION TEST CASE

By Sarah Roelofs

A husband has no legal rights to stop his wife having an abortion, a leading British judge ruled May 24. During divorce proceedings brought by Joan Paton, her husband Bill Paton had sought a court order to prevent her from obtaining an abortion.

Appalled by the case's implications, the National Abortion Campaign and the women's liberation movement immediately launched a national solidarity campaign in support of Joan Paton. Solidarity pickets and demonstrations were organised in Liverpool, where the case was actually heard, in Edinburgh and in London.

Immediately after Sir George Baker's ruling, Joan Paton had the operation saying afterwards: 'It's my body and my right to choose. I feel super!'

But at what a cost. Accused of murder, reduced to tears throughout the court hearing, damned across newspaper banner headlines as irresponsible, vengeful, vindictive and spoilt, it's no wonder she also said: 'I feel I've been a pawn.' Headlines such as 'Let My Baby Be Born!', 'Husband Loses Abortion Battle,' and 'I've Lost My Baby - Grief of Test Case Husband' were commonplace in the national daily press.

In his ruling, Baker noted that the provisions of the 1967 Abortion Act had been complied with in the Paton case, and the necessary certificates had been signed by two doctors. The 1967 Abortion Act legalises abortion in certain circumstances, with the permission of two doctors. While it does not grant any rights to the father or the fetus, neither does it ensure that women have the right to make the decision whether to have an abortion themselves as this case so blatantly showed.

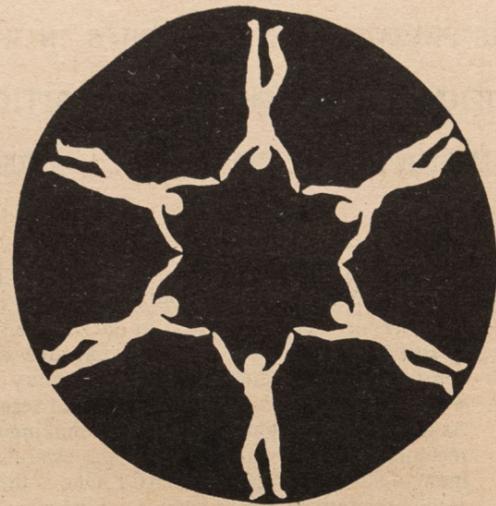
This recent attempt to attack women's abortion rights was not the first, and we can be certain it will not be the last.

Reprinted from Intercontinental Press, Vol. 16, 25, June 26, 1978.

## SOS news

The women of SOS Auckland wish to announce that they have sent their 1000th woman to Sydney for an abortion since the service began operating in January this year.

It seems likely that by the end of the year 2000 women will have made use of the Auckland service, and we can assume that 2000-3000 women in the rest of New Zealand have been sent to Australia by the SOS services in their area. Thus approximately 5000 New Zealand women will have obtained an abortion in 1978 - the same number as obtained an abortion from the Auckland Medical Aid Centre in 1977.



## ITALY

### POPE TRIES TO SABOTAGE NEW LAW

#### ITALY - ABORTION UNDER ATTACK

When Italy's new liberalized abortion law went into effect June 6, the Catholic Church hierarchy immediately launched a campaign to sabotage it by telling medical personnel to invoke reasons of 'conscience' for refusing to perform abortions.

The law theoretically gives women over eighteen the right to abortion on demand during the first ninety days of pregnancy. But it does not require doctors or hospitals to perform abortions. It gives doctors the option of being exempted on moral or religious grounds. Furthermore, abortion facilities are so inadequate that even before the law went into effect, medical and legal specialists were predicting it would not significantly reduce the huge number of back-alley abortions in Italy.

Cardinal Ugo Poletti, the pope's representative in Rome, launched the sabotage campaign in the June 6 issue of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. He reminded Catholics that the penalty for performing or having an abortion is excommunication, and urged all medical personnel - nurses and staff as well as doctors - to 'refuse to be present or carry out professional duties in any medical facilities where abortions are performed'. The pope himself made a statement the next day backing Poletti's injunction.

The passage of the anti-abortion law has therefore not reduced the number of abortions in New Zealand at all. Far from suppressing the desire for abortion it has probably served to further legitimise abortion in the eyes of New Zealand women. To obtain an abortion now all one needs is money; no begging, pleading, play-acting, or unnecessary counselling is required. While money is still hard to come by, and it is iniquitous that New Zealand women should be forced to pay exorbitantly for something which countries like Britain and Sweden provide as part of their national health care system, it is basically a practical barrier. New Zealand women passed the moral barrier years ago, as the

If obeyed, this directive would do away with Italian women's right to legal abortion. A large percentage of the hospitals in Italy are owned and operated by various religious orders, and an initial survey indicated that 90 to 95 percent of the staff in these hospitals would register as 'conscientious objectors' to abortion. In the public hospitals, a large number of the nurses are nuns.

The church's campaign gives Italian doctors - many of whom make huge sums performing illegal abortions - an excuse for refusing to comply with the new law. The *New York Times* of June 7, reports that the Rome Medical Association predicted 90 percent of the doctors in the Rome area would register as objectors to abortion.

Reprinted from Intercontinental Press, Vol. 16, 25, June 26, 1978.

## USA

### ABORTION ARSON CASES DROPPED

Claiming, 'there were no substantive leads to follow, no defendants or primary suspects,' the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms division of the U.S. Treasury has dropped investigations of bombings and arson at eleven abortion clinics.

However, information from the National Abortion Rights Action League suggests that the government is not really interested in solving the crimes.

In Omaha, Nebraska, after an abortion clinic was attacked with gasoline bombs, a local paper and several local groups received signed letters reading: 'You'd bomb a concentration camp - why not abortion centers?'

In addition, clinic personnel found that someone had bought gasoline from a nearby store the same night and paid by cheque.

That's one of the cases where ATF says it has 'no leads.'

Reprinted from Militant, July 2, 1978.

McMillan Report of 1937, which conservatively estimated that there were 4000 induced abortions a year, conclusively showed. The passage of the anti-abortion law and the activities of SOS have brought these facts out into the open. Once we crept guiltily and in fear to back-street butchers - now we step openly and confidently onto a plane with other women like us, with the support of sympathetic women in Australia and New Zealand. The anti-abortion law, far from restoring "traditional morality", has actually speeded up the closing of the gap between moral practices and attitudes.

Reprinted from BROADSHEET, *New Zealand's Feminist Magazine*, September 1978.

# NEW ZEALAND

## BACKYARD BUTCHERS BACK

On April 4 in New Plymouth a woman came before the courts charged with performing illegal abortions. This is the first illegal abortion case to be heard in New Zealand since the Auckland abortion clinic opened in 1974 - and closed in 1978. We have gone back to the bad old days with a vengeance. The woman charged uses a very dangerous method of abortion - she places the woman in a very hot bath with Dettol and soap frothed up in it. She then uses an "enema" of the bath water to induce a miscarriage. This is dangerous since if liquid is forced into the uterus under pressure there is a possibility of death resulting from the solution and air entering the bloodstream. The risk of infection is also very high. For this procedure the abortionist charged \$400. She had been operating for some time, but apparently the police finally decided to "bring her in" when they heard of her charging \$140 just for a description of the procedure. (Curious logic - exploiting wallets is worse than endangering lives? )

There are no certifying consultants in Taranaki. A Taranaki woman must travel to Palmerston North to find any - not necessarily sympathetic. The Government has been told repeatedly that women will not obey anti-abortion laws - they never have. In 1936 sepsis subsequent to abortion was the major cause of death among women of child-bearing age in New Zealand and accounted for almost half of the total female mortality in urban areas. The law must be changed before we go back to this sort of situation.

## N.Z. TOUR

In September WAAC activist Peta Stewart went to New Zealand on a speaking tour. The purpose of a representative by a WAAC member was to help publicise the actions held on September 15 protesting against New Zealand's repressive abortion laws and to explain the situation in Australia about the availability of abortion. The tour was sponsored by the Women's National Abortion Action Campaign, the Auckland University Student's Association and the Women's Rights Committee of the NZ Student's Association.

In all, Peta visited six cities in New Zealand where she spoke on campus and at public meetings. The tour received good coverage from national radio and television as well as on local radio and newspapers. Many New Zealand women were surprised to hear about the situation in Australia and the difficulties that a lot of women here face in getting an abortion.

Peta was also able to meet some of the women involved in SOS, the abortion referral service that helps New Zealand women come to Australia for abortions. They congratulated women's groups in Australia for the support they were giving to New Zealand women.

The highlight of the visit, Peta reports, was the September 15 march in Auckland, where over 2000 people turned out to call for the repeal of the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act. "One of the most

noticeable things about the march", she said, "was the participation of a number of people who had never marched before, but who had become so incensed by the refusal of the Muldoon government to take any notice of the fact that a majority of New Zealand people want this repressive act repealed."

The impact of the exchange tours between New Zealand and Australia and the co-ordinated September 15 actions, points to the need for the right to abortion movement in both countries to continue supporting each other's campaigns.



## UPDATE

In a couple of areas sympathetic consultants are recommending women for free abortions under the New Zealand national health system. This saves women as much as \$500 as well as the added distress of a trip to Sydney. Of course, there are not many - in the light of the SOS report, only a very small percentage of women who want an abortion can get one in New Zealand.

## Solidarity with N.Z. cont.

### MELBOURNE

Some 300 to 400 people, mainly women attended the September 15 solidarity rally organised by the Women's Abortion Action Campaign.

The rally met in Bourke Street Mall, where it heard Anne Jackson, a member of the ALP women's committee; Mary Owen from the Working Women's Charter Campaign; E. Morton of the Women's Electoral Lobby; and Liz Ross on the anti-Festival of Light campaign.

A motion was then carried overwhelmingly to march to the New Zealand Government Tourist Bureau, where Eve Stocker of WAAC spoke on the situation in New Zealand and the abortion campaign in Melbourne.

A notable feature of the rally, which was held in inclement weather, was the large turn-out of students, particularly from Monash University. This was a result of the debate on campuses of the AUS motions on abortion.

### BRISBANE

On September 16, about 200 people rallied as part of a nation-wide mobilisation to protest current attacks on

the right to abortion and to demonstrate solidarity with the struggle of women in New Zealand to repeal that country's repressive abortion laws.

The rally was addressed by speakers from Women's rights groups - the N.Z. Women's National Abortion Action Campaign, Women's House, Pregnancy Control, the University of Q'ld Women's Abortion Action Campaign and the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

The five speakers emphasized differing aspects of the fight to gain abortion rights, with the central theme of the need for women to struggle to repeal the laws.

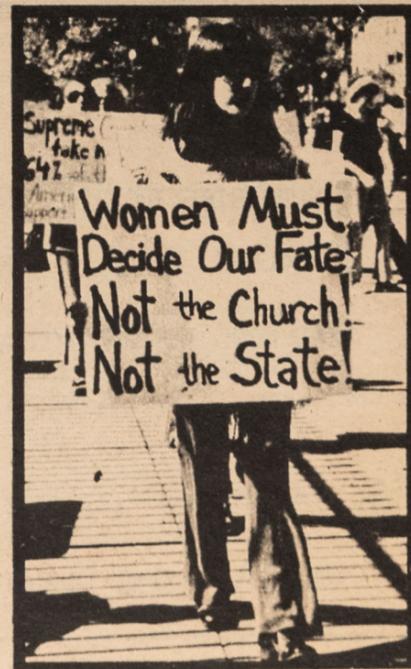
The occasion also marked the public launching of the Women's Abortion Action Campaign - a city-based group aimed at involving large numbers of women in the fight to repeal abortion laws.

At the conclusion of the rally about 50 people moved off to picket the N.Z. Tourist Bureau.

One notable feature of the demonstration was the peaceful way in which it was conducted - such that the police were given no excuse to break in and arrest women and the media were given no excuse to ignore the basic demands

of the rally - as had both happened on a previous women's liberation rally. The challenge made on September 16 was a nation-wide political challenge against repressive abortion laws.

Sue Kelly - WAAC



# 1st 10 YEARS

A WOMEN'S LIBERATION HERSTORY PROJECT.

We are putting together a documentary record of the first ten years of the Women's Liberation Movement in New South Wales, and will lodge it in an appropriate library. A group in Canberra will cover the A.C.T.

We are also writing a book about those ten years, 1969 - 1979, which will contain some documentary records and some personal recollections.

We need help -

Do you have any relevant documents? If so, can we have, or borrow them? If we can have them, please send to:

P.O. BOX 221, GLEBE, 2037.

or, RING : Sue Wills - 569.4372  
Penny Ryan - 82.1809  
Sue Bellamy - 660.7524  
Joyce Stevens-

If we can borrow documents, please let us know what you have.

DON'T SEND US ANYTHING YET THAT YOU WANT BACK.

We also need money, to purchase basic filing equipment and cabinets, and to pay for copying.

Please send help in the form of donations, ideas and information to the Box Number or ring. Address all correspondence to *The First Ten Years*. (Cheques payable to 'The First Ten Years'.)

## HELP!

### WHERE TO GO FOR HELP WITH AN UNWANTED PREGNANCY.

If you suspect you are pregnant, obtain a pregnancy test from a chemist or the Family Planning Association. Sometimes an early pregnancy test gives a false negative - that is it says you are not pregnant when in fact you are. Therefore if you do not have your period very soon after a negative pregnancy test, go and get another test and seek medical advice from a doctor or health clinic. Once your pregnancy is confirmed, seek help quickly, the earlier you have an abortion, the safer it is. There are Abortion Counselling and referral services in most states - ring them for help.

Australian Capital Territory - The Abortion Counselling Service is run by the Women's Centre Canberra - 47.8070

New South Wales - Control is a Women's Liberation referral and counselling service in Sydney - 231.2777

Northern Territory - Ring the Rape Crisis Centre in Darwin - 21.2557

Queensland - Children by Choice is a referral and counselling service - 371.5477

Queensland Control is a referral and counselling service run by Women's Liberation in Brisbane - 52.1444

South Australia - Women's Liberation runs a referral service in Adelaide - 223.1005

Tasmania - Hobart Abortion Information - 34.8520

Victoria - Women's Liberation runs a referral service, Melbourne - 662.1037

Western Australia - The Abortion Information Service (AIS) runs a referral service, Perth - 384.2425

A counsellor will talk over your situation with you so that you can then decide what to do. If you decide to have an abortion, the counsellor will refer you to a clinic to suit your needs.



### WOMEN ARE -

- \* expected to take full responsibilities for children
- \* denied safe, freely available contraception and abortion
- \* expected to dress to please men
- \* used by advertisers to sell products
- \* paid less than men
- \* have fewer job opportunities than men
- \* expected to cook, wash, clean, etc.
- \* expected to do 2 jobs - run the home - outside job

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

Organise against women's oppression. Many groups under the title Women's Liberation are doing just that.

WOMANSPEAK is an Australian feminist magazine designed to reach beyond the Radical Media Belt. It contains articles on current affairs, women and unions, women and the arts, on health and much more. It also publishes fiction, poems, and letter columns open to all women.

\$4.00 (for 5 issues)  
WOMANSPEAK MAGAZINE,  
P.O. Box 103,  
Spit Junction, 2008.



If you are interested in working for the repeal of abortion laws, selling *Right to Choose* and helping to build the campaign, contact your local WAAC group at your Women's House or Women's Centre.

- Adelaide - 12 Eden Street, Adelaide. SA 223.1005
- Brisbane - write to 221 Coopers Camp Road, Ashgrove, 4060 221.4854 (daytime)
- Melbourne - 165 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, 3000 662.1037
- Sydney - 62 Regent Street, Chippendale, 2008 699.5281

Printed and published by J. Mowbray, 69 Edith Street, Leichhardt, 2040 for Women's Abortion Action Campaign, 62 Regent St., Chippendale, 2008.

## Subscribe!

I SUBSCRIBE TO RIGHT TO CHOOSE. ENCLOSED IS \$2.00 FOR 4 ISSUES.

I ENCLOSE \$ \_\_\_\_\_ FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

SEND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WAAC.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

POST TO: WAAC, 62 REGENT STREET, CHIPPENDALE, NSW, 2008.