1993-1994

Violence against women issue for public agenda

Real government commitment needed

By Lucille Harper

THINKING FOR women's organizations working on issues of violence against women is an election issue.

Women have been struggling for the past 20 years to put issues of violence against women on the public agenda. We have named the violence in our homes — with battering, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse of women, child sexual assault and abduction. We have named the violence in the workplace and the streets — sexual harassment, stalking, sexual assault, date rape, pornography. We live in fear in a society which treats women as second-class citizens, exploiting our bodies and our labour. Women continue to be paid 66 cents for every dollar men earn. Women do most of the child care, elder care and labour in the home and are more likely to be underemployed, unemployed and work at part-time jobs without any benefits.

Women have historically turned to each other for help and support and, although our battles and gains have been trivialized and largely written out of the history books, our foremothers have passed down to us a legacy of grassroots organizing. And we have taken up this legacy and women together to challenge the status quo institutions which oppress us. In working for change, we challenge the legal system which has repeatedly found ways to excuse and minimize sentences to men convicted of beating or sexually assaulting women, the medical institutions which dominate women's complaints and tranquilize us twice as often as men, educational systems in which institutionalized sexism teaches young women to alienate themselves and curb their curiosity and intellect, to the point where their self-esteem drops from a high at age 10 to a demoralizing low by the end of junior high school, and financial institutions which view small business loans to women risky, at best, while throwing millions of dollars into theme parks and billionaireing unions.

In working together for change, we have acknowledged women's experiences and reality and used women's values of sharing, caring and nurturing to develop egalitarian models for working together in our organizations. Women's organizations have pioneered the use of consensus decision-making. We have created feminist therapies to empower women in healing from the emotional and psychological wounds inflicted by male violence. We have organized women's centres, transition houses, sexual assault centres, help lines, second-stage and low-income housing organizations, and support groups for incest survivors, recovering women and adult children of alcoholics.

SUCH SERVICES for women have become an integral part of our community network of service agencies. Women's centres offer a prime example of how services developed by women for women fill a community need, while enhancing and supporting existing community services. For many women, their first point of entry into the community service system is through their local women's centre. Every woman coming to a women's centre brings an individual and complex structure of issues, needs and expectations. Women often come during a period of transition or crisis in their lives. They need a safe place to disclose situations of sexual assault, sexual abuse, battering, sexual harassment, marriage breakdown or unintended pregnancy. They need to know they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously. Women's centres place a primary focus on assisting women to develop strategies to meet their needs holistically.

Most women's centres in Nova Scotia operate in rural areas where services to women are limited. Demands for their services are high. On average, a women's centre annually responds to 1,000 calls for information, support, peer counselling, referrals, advocacy and accompaniment. Violence against women in our society is escalating. The need for services is greater than ever.

Women's centres, along with other organizations working on issues of violence against women, have been chronically under-funded. Government underfunding of these organizations must be understood as a perpetuator of violence against women. The federal government spent some $[illegible] million to send the Canadian Armed Forces on Operation Aquarius to Somalia. Women on a trip across the country to gather information about violence against women. This information had already been documented. The panel was told by women from across the country that we need funding for our work. While monitoring platitudes about taking action to stop violence against women, our government is cutting funding to the women's organizations which are [illegible] in our communities to end [illegible] violence against women.

Nova Scotia [illegible] through the Sexual Assault Women's Program [illegible] program funding has [illegible] per cent including [illegible] per cent cost-of-living [illegible] since 1988. The [illegible] federal government promises another 10 per cent decrease next year.

Although women's centres in Nova Scotia deliver services which fall under the provincial jurisdictions of health care, education and social services, they receive no provincial funding. Unless provincial funding is forthcoming, many of the services women depend on will cease to exist.

It is time to call upon both our provincial and federal governments to make real their commitment to equality and justice for women by adequately funding women's centres and other women's organizations working on issues of violence against women.

Lucille Harper, of the Nova Scotia Association of Women's Centres, is writing on behalf of the Nova Scotia Women's Election Lobby.

Rose Vaughan Trio Concert

Teens Develop ABCs of Relationships

by Dawn Currie

During the coming weeks, members of the general public will be able to observe a colourful poster which will appear at several sites around the community. The poster is the creation of local teenagers involved with the Adolescent Health Project, and promotes the "ABCs of a Good Relationship."

Beginning with "A is for Affection, Assertiveness, Awareness," the poster continues through the alphabet to "Z is for zing each letter to encourage the qualities that make for healthy relationships among and between teenagers, their friends, dating partners and families.

The teenagers explain that the poster emerged after a weekend workshop on communication and relationships held last spring with 15 local teenagers in attendance.

Facilitated by psychologist Dr. Chris Trogdon, public health nurse Betty Ann Fraser, a Sr. F.X University nursing student, and project workers Susan Jewkes and Barbara Hayes, the workshop covered such issues identified by teens as being of particular concern: positive communication, issues at dating relationship violence among youth and community and sexual relationships.

Project co-ordinator Susan Jewkes says that over a number of sessions following the weekend workshop, a group of the teens designed the poster using "ABCs" as a theme.

"ABCs are the building blocks of our language and it was felt that they would serve as a foundation for identifying what makes a good relationship as well. It is hoped that the message for positive relationships this poster promotes will be read, enjoyed and practised," she adds.

PARTICIPANTS in the Adolescent Health Project Van Dusenbeck (front, left), Joey MacEachern, Cyril Campbell, Meghan Mulcahy (front, left), Rosemary Curry, Cynthia MacDonald and Annique Doucette have created a poster which spells out the ABC's of a Good Relationship. The colorful posters will be placed at strategic sites in the community to promote the qualities that make for healthy relationships among and between teenagers, their friends, dating partners, and families.

Federal Candidates Talk to AWA

by Dawn Currie

Issues of concern to women were the topic of a discussion among local women and some of the four candidates for the constituency of Cape Breton Highland-Canso in the October 25 Federal election.

As part of this local observance of National Women's Centres Day, representatives of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre attended the candidates to hear their comments on several topics. Progressive Conservative candidate Lewis MacKinnon, Reform Party candidate Jerry Van Berkel and NDP candidate Jerome Bernard joined in the discussion held at the Antigonish Women's Centre on September 23. Liberal candidate Francis LeBlanc had asked his apologies and was unable to attend.

The concerns expressed by women were put forward and each candidate was asked to promote questions during his/her twenty minutes up at the podium and to make further inquiries on the following issues:

- Child care — "how will your party ensure that other child care options are available to all families who need [illegible]"
- Pay equity — "what [illegible] will your party make to the Canadian Equity Act to make it [illegible] for women, and particularly for aboriginal women, racial [illegible] and women with disabilities who are [illegible] to earn pay equity [illegible] for work of equal [illegible]"
- Criminal code — "what steps your party is prepared to do to ensure that women are safe in the home and elsewhere, in [illegible] what will your party's position [illegible] to the current [illegible]"
- Child support — "what measures will your party take to enforce the payment of single mothers and their children's [illegible]"
- Poverty and the women's health movement — "what commitment will your party put in place to support women's [illegible] in health policy development?"
- Prisons — "what outcome has your party put in place to support women [illegible] and sexual harassment [illegible]"

THE QUESTIONS were put to local politicians by members of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre on September 23 in observance National Women's Centres Day. Among those attending the session were Wendy Patagoupoulos (left), Nikki Stewart, Senior Centre Day. Among those attending the session were Wendy Patagoupoulos (left), Nikki Stewart, Senior Governor, Reform Party candidate Jerry Van Berkel, Martha McGlinn and her son Daniel Scoggins, PC candidate Lewis MacKinnon, Judy Wheeler, Ann Hodgin McLaughlin Taylor and Jacqueline Edgar.

THREE CANDIDATES in the riding of Cape Breton Highlands-Canso NDP's Jerome Bernard (left), Reform Party's Jerry Van Berkel and PC's Lewis MacKinnon had a strenuous meeting ground last week when the three discussed issues at the Antigonish Women's Resource Center during National Women's Centers Day on September 23. Liberal incumbent Francis LeBlanc had other commitments that day, and was unable to attend the session.

AWRC Plans Candlelight Ceremony on December 6

In keeping with the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, the Antigonish Women's Resource Center will be holding a silent vigil of remembrance, reflection and solidarity on Monday, December 6, at 7 p.m., at Club 60, 121 Main Street.

This date is the 4th anniversary of the murders of 14 Canadian women at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, on December 6, 1989.

A candlelighting ceremony will commemorate each of the 14 women. The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has confirmed that in the past 12 months, seven Nova Scotia women have been murdered.

A candle will also be lit in their memory, and for the many women worldwide who have been victims of violence.

All are welcome.

10th Anniversary Celebration

ALL CANDIDATES PUBLIC FORUM - provincial election

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS: Body Image Workshop

SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS THERAPY GROUP

BLACK HISTORY MONTH DISPLAY

NATIONAL WOMENS CENTRES DAY - Champions Breakfast for AWRC Volunteers

Survivors of Sexual Abuse panel discussion

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Women have historically turned to each other for help and support and, although our battles and gains have been trivialized and largely written out of the history books, our foremothers have passed down to us a legacy of grassroots organizing. And we have taken up this legacy and come together to challenge the status quo institutions which oppress us. In working for change, we challenge the legal system which has repeatedly found ways to excuse and minimize assaulters in men convicted of beating or sexually assaulting women, the medical institutions which dismiss women's complaints and tranquilize us twice as often as men, educational systems in which institutionalized racism teaches young women to alienate themselves and curb their curiosity and intellect, to the point where their self-esteem drops from a high at age 15 to a demoralizing low by the end of junior high school, and financial institutions which view small business loans to women risky, at best, while throwing millions of dollars into these parks and life-threatening mines.

In working together for change, we have acknowledged women's experiences and reality and used women's values of sharing, caring and nurturing to develop egalitarian models for working together in our organizations. Women's organizations have pioneered the use of consensus decision-making. We have created feminist therapies to empower women in healing from this emotional and psychological wounds inflicted by male violence. We have organized women's centres, transition houses, sexual assault centres, help lines, second-stage and low-income housing organizations, and support groups for incest survivors, recovering women and adult children of alcoholics.

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Women's centres, along with other organizations working on issues of violence against women, have been chronically under-funded. Government underfunding of these organizations must be understood as a perpetuator of violence against women. The federal government spent some $2 million to send the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women on a trip across the country to gather information about violence against women. This information had already been documented. The panel was told by women from across the country that we need funding for our work. While considering platitudes about taking action to stop violence against women, our government is cutting funding to the women's organizations which are [illegible] in our communities to end [illegible] violence against women. Women [illegible] Nova Scotia have [illegible] through the [illegible] Women's Program [illegible] grant funding has [illegible] per cent (including [illegible] per cent cost-of-living [illegible] since 1988. The [illegible] government promises another 10 per cent decrease next year.

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Project co-ordinator Susan Jewkes says that even a number of months following the weekend workshop, a group of the teens designed the poster using ABC's as a theme.

ABC's are the building blocks of our language and it was felt that they could serve as a foundation for discussing what makes a good relationship as well. It is hoped that the message for positive relationships that poster promotes will be read, enjoyed and practised," she adds.

PARTICIPANTS in the Adolescent Health Project Val Dzierzewski (front, left), Joey MacLachlan, Cyril Campbell, Meghan Mackey (back, left), Rosemary Curry, Cynthia MacDonald and Annique Doucette have created a poster which spells out the ABC's of a Good Relationship. The colorful posters will be placed at strategic sites in the community to promote the qualities that make for healthy relationships among and between teenagers, their friends, dating partners, and families.

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THE QUESTIONS were put to local politicians by members of the Antigonish Women's Association last week when they dropped by the Women's Resource Centre on September 13 to observe National Women's week when they dropped by the Women's Resource Centre on September 13 to observe National Women's Day. Among those attending the session were Wendy Pamphrey-Fox, NDP candidate Sheila Grant, Bedford Party candidate Nancy Van Barkel, Marilla McGuire and her son Daniel Scoggins, PC candidate Lewis MacKinnon, Judy Wilson, Rev. Hodgin McCulloch-Taylor and Jeannine Elsie.

TURNS CANDIDATES in the riding of Cape Breton Highlands-Canso NDP's Jeanne Barnard (left), Bedford Party's Nancy Van Barkel and PC's Lewis MacKinnon held a common meeting ground last week when the three discussed issues at the Antigonish Women's Resource Center during National Women's Day. Lawrence Hay an September 13. Liberal incumbent Francis LeBlanc had other commitments that day, and was unable to attend the session.

priority, and that women's health becomes a major consideration in health policy development."

Prices — "what measures has your party put in place to support women entrepreneurs? What limits does your party [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]