

Weekly vigils to mark women's march

Next Wednesday, March 8, women from 63 countries around the world will begin a march that will end nine months later in New York City at the United Nations.

The World March of Women is meant to highlight two important concerns of women: poverty and violence. This event is sponsored in Canada by such groups as the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Religious Conference, Catholic Women's League, Canada Asia Working Group, Ten Days for Global Justice, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, Presbyterian Church of Canada, United Church of Canada, Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada as well as NAC, the Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, and the National Anti-Poverty Organization.

Locally, at a coordination meeting initiated by the Sisters of Saint Martha, it was decided that Antigonish will mark the World March of Women with weekly vigils. The first vigil will be held on International Women's Day, the day the march begins, on Wednesday, March 8 at 12 noon at Antigonish town hall. All women and men who support the goals of the struggle against poverty and violence are invited to attend the vigil. Each Wednesday following, a vigil will be held from 12 noon to 12:30 at the town hall for 33 weeks leading-up to the final day of the World March of Women 2000, October 17.

Each of the Antigonish vigils will be sponsored or 'godmothered' by community groups working in areas related to poverty and violence against women. Each group will prepare a short pamphlet for the vigil for their week and bring their members out to the vigil. Groups are encouraged to link their individual week to a significant or

historical date related to women's and social justice issues. The Sisters of Saint Martha have chosen to prepare for the vigil on the week of July 29 which coincides with the date 100 years ago of the founding of the Congregation. Groups interested in 'godmothering' a vigil, contact the any member of the initiating group to chose a date.

The organizations on the Initiating Group of the World March of Women 2000 in Antigonish include The Sisters of Saint Martha, The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, The Antigonish Women's Association, the Antigonish Coalition for Economic

Justice, the Coady International Institute, The United Church Women of St. James United Church and the Anglican Church Women of St. Paul's Anglican Church. Individual members are: Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, Sr. Joan Walker, Sr. Elizabeth Riopelle, Sr. Arlene MacKinnon, Isabelle Steele, Ed Miller, Joanne Tompkins, Sr. Anne MacLellan, Catherine Irving, Sachi Shimo-Takahara, Sr. Mary Eileen MacEachern, Rev. Katherine Bourbonniere and Sr. Mary Dolores. For more information or to 'godmother' a vigil, contact the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice at 863-6965.

The Casket
March 4/2000

Act for Change godmothers march

The second vigil in the World March of Women will take place today, Wednesday, March 15 at 12 noon in front of the Antigonish town hall. This week's march is sponsored by the Antigonish youth group Act For Change.

Act For Change is "godmothering" this vigil which draws links with the World March of Women's agenda highlighting poverty and violence against women.

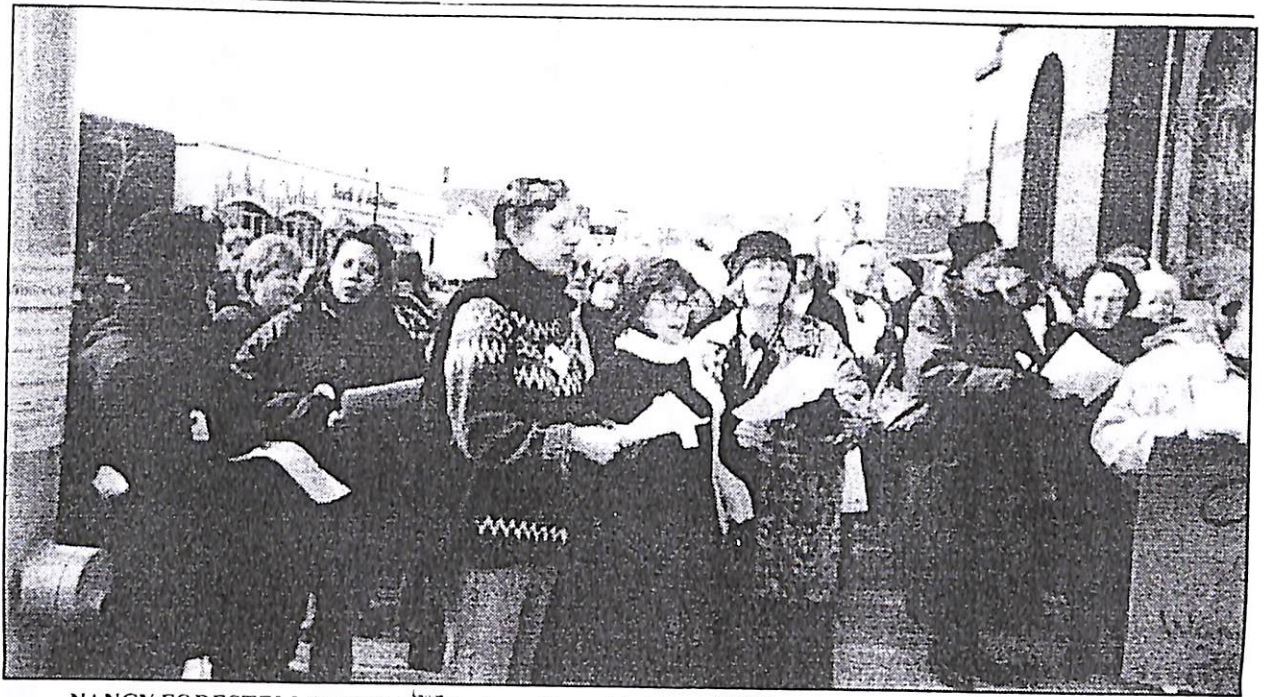
All women, men and children are invited to attend the vigil to show support for both the World March of Women and Act For Change youth group.

Organizers note that this week is March break week for school students, and they are expecting a number of young people to support this event.

The first vigil for the World March of Women 2000 was "godmothered" by the organizers who include the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Antigonish Women's Association, Coady International Institute, United Church Women and Anglican Women. It was opened by Mayor Ronald MacDonald on International Women's Day (March 8). That event brought together over 100 participants who joined together in songs and words to launch the World March of Women.

Community groups interested in "godmothering" one of the weekly vigils are asked to contact ACEJ at 863-6965.

The Casket
March 15, 2000



NANCY FORESTELL (centre) and Barbara Hayes (right) were among the over 40 people gathered outside Antigonish town hall for World March of Women 2000 last week. Each week a different group acts as "godmother" for the Wednesday noon-time vigil and addresses a topic dealing with poverty and/or violence. Last week representatives of the Nova Scotia Nurses Union talked about the negative impact of user fees on provincial health care. The March 29 topic will be the provincial government's clawback of the federal child tax benefit.

Noontime vigil addresses tax benefit 'clawback'

Today (Wednesday) the World March of Women noon-time vigil in Antigonish, under the coordination of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, will focus on the child tax benefit clawback.

Joanne Tompkins of ACEJ said that in some provinces, including Nova Scotia, the national child benefit monthly payment of \$40 or \$50 per child paid to all families is being "clawed back." The amount of the payment is deducted from the income of families receiving social assistance.

"This means that a federal government benefit designed to help all families with young children is stolen by the provincial government from those most in need," Tompkins said.

The World March of Women focuses on the struggle against poverty

and violence. March organizers regard the child benefit supplement clawback as an example of a government policy that specifically targets women and children.

All women and men interested in the struggle against violence and poverty are invited to attend the rally at noon at Antigonish town hall on Wednesday.

Each week, a different group serves as "godmother" or coordinator of the vigil and addresses topics dealing with poverty and/or violence.

Any community groups interested in becoming involved in the World March of Women 2000 can call Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert of the Sisters of St. Martha at 863-3113; Katherine Reed of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre at 863-6221; or Joanne Tompkins of Antigonish Coalition of Economic Justice at 863-6965.

The Casket
March 29/00

Community gathers for social awareness

Over 40 women and men gathered in the sunshine outside Antigonish town hall at noon last Wednesday for the third vigil in the Antigonish World March of Women 2000.

The Nova Scotia Nurses Union - St. Martha's Hospital Local served as "godmother" for the vigil. Union representatives discussed threats to the health care system posed by user fees.

"The provincial government has recently floated the idea that a small user fee be charged for health care services," Joanne Tompkins of the Antigonish Coalition of Economic Justice, said.

"This would probably hit hardest at working families, wage earners, people on fixed income, the poor, and senior citizens, as well as those with chronic illnesses," she said.

Tompkins said the government's rationale for user fees is that people who can afford to pay for health services should pay.

"This is contrary to the concept of our Canadian system of universal health care, which says that we all pay into the system and all use it as needed," Tompkins said.

Critics of privatized health care systems argue that implementation of user fees is the first step in eroding universal health care. Loss of a universal system means replacing it with a two-tier health system where people of greater financial means will receive better access to the system and better health care.

"In other parts of the country, Canadians have reacted swiftly and strongly against the introduction of user fees," she said. "(User fees) are seen as



SR. JOSEPHINE KAISER (CMS), (foreground) was one of over 40 people gathered in front of Antigonish town hall last Wednesday to learn about the negative effects of user fees on the provincial health care system. Local religious and social action groups are sponsoring the weekly town hall gatherings, called World March of Women 2000, to raise awareness about issues of poverty and violence. This week the provincial government's clawback of the federal child tax benefit will be addressed.

the first step dismantling our entire system of Medicare."

At last week's vigil, representatives of the Nova Scotia Nurses Union distributed information about user fees and pointed to the link between user fees, the erosion of universal health care

and the impact on women, working families and the poor.

The overall theme of the World March of Women 2000 is the struggle against poverty and violence.

"This third vigil against a threat to our medicare system squarely raised the

issues of the feminization of poverty and access of the poor to health care," Tompkins said.

This week, vigil organizers will address the provincial government's clawback of the federal child tax benefit.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



CARLA BRYDEN of the Bergengren Credit Union spoke on behalf of the Canadian Autoworkers Union at the World March of Women 2000 weekly vigil last Wednesday at 12 noon.

Weekly vigils raise consciousness of issues

by Monica MacKinnon

At least one organizer of the World March of Women 2000 weekly vigils in Antigonish finds community support and leadership is growing through the Wednesday gatherings.

"[The vigils are] helping people become more comfortable with public protest and standing up" to policy and practices they don't agree with, Joanne Tompkins of Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice said.

Tompkins said the vigils, held each Wednesday at 12 noon at the town hall, are breaking down single issue positions and bringing together groups involved in social and economic justice.

"[The vigils are] building leadership within the town through people sharing and coming forward to help," she said.

Among the groups involved in the vigils are ACEJ, the Canadian Autoworkers Union 2107, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, the Coady International Institute, local Christian churches and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Last Wednesday Carla Bryden of the Bergengren Credit Union spoke at the vigil on behalf of CAW 2107.

Bryden highlighted the importance of unions in the new global economy.

"Unions make a difference, fighting back makes a difference," she said. "Seventy-nine percent of unionized women have a pension plan while 31 percent of non-unionized women are covered. Seventy-eight percent of unionized women have medical coverage. Forty percent of non-

unionized women are covered. Seventy-two percent of unionized women have a dental plan. Thirty-eight percent of non-unionized women are covered."

Bryden also noted that unions help women achieve social and economic equality, especially in areas of wages and benefits.

The Wednesday April 26 vigil is sponsored by Project Accompaniment, the Canadian solidarity group that helps Guatemalan refugees and exiles return to their post-civil war country.

April 26 marks the second anniversary of the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi who was bludgeoned to death with a concrete block. The assassination took place two days after release of the report Guatemala: Never Again, the Recuperation of Historical Memory Project. The report resulted from the Catholic Church's three year investigation into human rights violations during the 36-year armed conflict in Guatemala.

The report is filled with recounts of the physical, sexual and emotional violence launched against women and children.

All women and men interested in the struggle against violence and poverty are invited to join the weekly vigils which will culminate on Tuesday, October 17, vigil, the United Nations Eradication of Poverty Day. For more information on World March of Women 2000 and the vigils contact Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, csm, 863-3113; Katherine Reed at 863-6221; or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.

World March of Women

2 0 0 0

Vigil considers poverty, union

The World March of Women's vigil outside the Antigonish town hall continued last Wednesday despite poor weather. The focus of the vigil was the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and their effect on structural poverty around the world.

Some people are concerned with the IMF's ability to structure and schedule loans and transfer payments, placing governments in situations where they are crushed by heavy debt payments.

This allows almost no opportunity for the country's own GNP to be reinvested into such essentials as health care, education or development, Joanne Tompkins, spokesperson with the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, said.

"Women bear the brunt of these policies as women make up 70 percent of the world's poor," she said.

In this year of Jubilee in the Roman Catholic Church, many countries are calling for forgiveness of IMF debt as a way to move toward global equity.

World Trade Organization and IMF talks in Washington in the past days, drew grassroots protestors from unions, church groups, women's groups, as well as environmentalists and students. Tompkins said these people are

protesting the WTO and the IMF because they are the vehicles through which poverty is structured into the economic system.

This week's vigil, focusing on women's need for unions, will be godmothered by the CAW 2107.

"Around the world, nationally and locally, unions provide better and safer working conditions for workers," Carla Bryden, member of Local 2107 CAW, said. "Particularly with increasing globalization we see the erosion of unions and with it comes the erosion of health, safety and environmental standards and often a decrease in the benefits for workers."

She said when unions are strong, the working conditions for workers are improved. "That's important for women workers," she said.

The World March of Women 2000 focuses on issues of poverty and violence related to women. All women and men interested in the struggle against violence and poverty are urged to attend the weekly vigils held each Wednesday at 12 noon.

For more information contact Sister Brendalee Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113; Katherine Reed at 863-6221; or Joanne Tompkins or 863-6965.

Vigil raises awareness of women, poverty

Community members continue to meet in front of the Antigonish town hall each Wednesday at noon for the World March of Women vigil.

About 27 people gathered last Wednesday to learn about the Nova Scotia government's clawback of the federal child tax credit from families on social assistance.

Speaking on behalf of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, which hosted last week's vigil, Katherine Reed said that Nova Scotians can fight the clawback by writing letters to elected representatives and government officials.

"Tell everybody who'll give you the time of day," she said. "This (clawback) is hurting our children."

The organization "godmothering" the Wednesday, April 5 vigil is the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

CRIAW, one of the national sponsors of the weekly vigil, focuses on violence against women, on local, national and global levels. Local CRIAW representative Ellen O'Reilly said much information is available about violence against women in Canadian society, but the political will for change is lacking.

"Over the past 20 years, governments have commissioned or funded literally hundreds of studies about violence against women," she said.

One high-profile example is the 1993 Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, a \$10 million travelling commission that issued a national action plan with over 100 recommendations.

"Government has taken no action on the majority of the recommendations in these hundreds of reports," O'Reilly said. "Particularly in the areas of economic equality and housing, which are fundamental necessities for women escaping abuse."

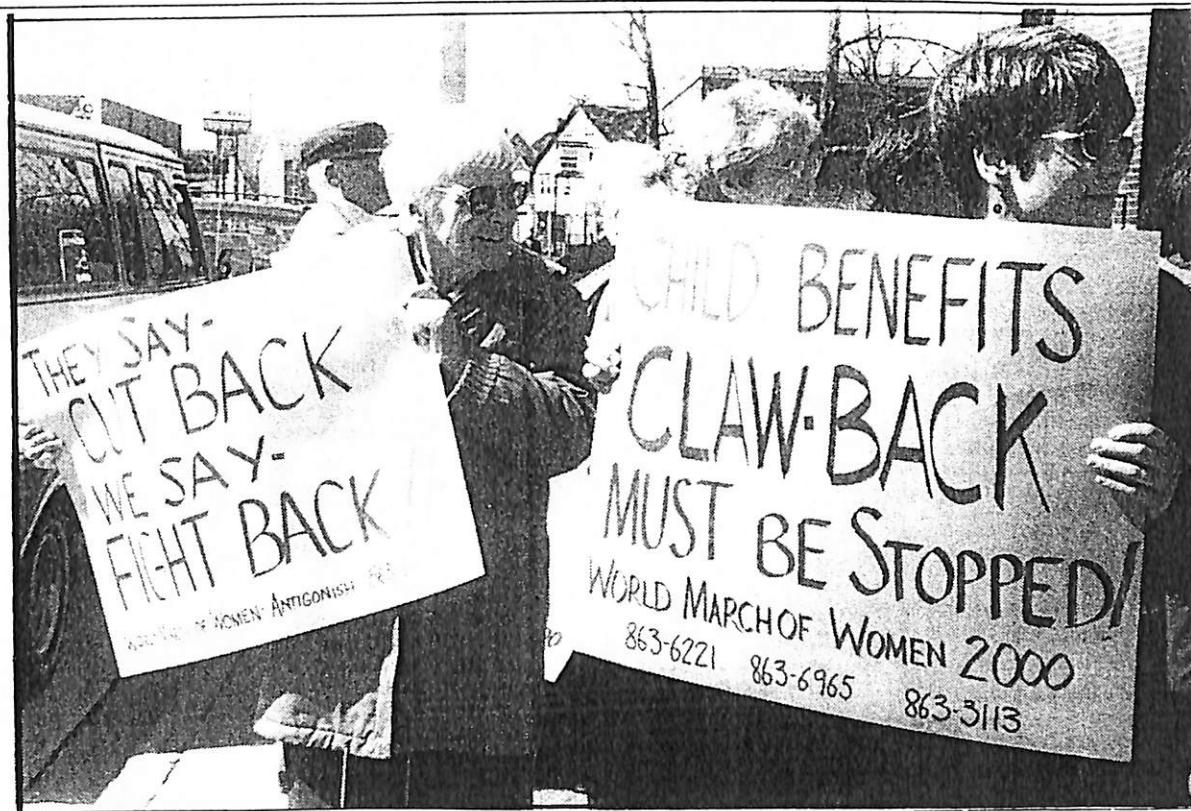
The World March of Women is a global initiative organized by the Federation des Femmes du Quebec. Women from over 139 countries will march to the United Nations, arriving on October 17, the day for Eradication of Poverty. In the 33 weeks building up to October 17, a partnership of organizations are working to raise awareness about women facing violence

and poverty.

Antigonish weekly vigils are held Wednesday at 12 noon in front of the town hall. All women and men interested in the struggle against violence and poverty are invited to join the vigil.

Any groups interested in

"godmothering," hosting, a vigil or learning about the World March of Women can contact Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert, csm at 863-3113; Katherine Reed of the Antigonish Women's Resource centre at 863-6221; or Joanne Tompkins of ACEJ at 863-6965.



SR. ANTOINETTE CHIASSON (left) and Amanda Workman were among the 27 people gathered at the town hall in Antigonish last Wednesday for the weekly World March of Women vigil. The vigil is an attempt to raise awareness about violence and poverty faced by women in the modern world.

Catholic groups support march

In a recent joint statement of clarification, four major national Catholic organizations: Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference and Catholic Women's League of Canada, reaffirmed their support of the objectives of this year's World March of Women. "These objectives are to end violence against women and poverty," the groups affirm.

In their statement the groups were represented by: Susan McNamara Scott, President, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace; Msgr. Peter Schonenbach, PH, General Secretary, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; Sister Gloria Keylor, SP, National President, Canadian Religious Conference; Mrs. Sheila Pellerin, National President, Catholic Women's League of Canada.

Women make up 70 percent of the world's poor and represent the majority of the world's refugees. The groups point out, "They are also victims of rape in wars around the world — and on the streets of Canada. Catholic social teaching calls us to transform the world in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. That is why we are supporting the objectives of the World March of Women, although we also understand that other Catholics in their prudential judgement may not completely share our approach. We however believe that the March, involving 4,190 groups from 153 countries, represents an historic worldwide grassroots cry for justice, and that its momentum will improve the lives of girls and women around the world — from Mexico to Nigeria to the Philippines."

A spokesperson for the groups points out, "The issues at stake are critical." The world demands of the March include the following: to cancel Third World debt; to end loan conditions that force countries to cut education, health and basic services; to end sweatshop conditions in free trade zones; to ensure food security for countries; to end all trafficking in women and girls; to prosecute those using rape as a weapon of war.

Development and Peace funding played an important role in ensuring that women in developing countries could be fully involved in the World March of Women 2000, so that this great effort would help them bring about real and lasting change in their own countries.

The world demands contain no reference to abortion. One demand contains a reference to a woman's right "to control her body and reproductive function." This is a broad demand including issues of forced sterilization and forced marriages. (The text follows the wording supported by the Holy See at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, with the caveat that it did not assume "reproductive health" to include abortion.) In the international context we can agree with this demand, with the clear qualification that we do not support any use of this demand, or any aspect of any other demand, to support abortion.

The groups' spokespersons says, "The Canadian Women's March Committee

has prepared a document called, A Time for Change, which sets out 59 demands or means of implementing the objectives of ending violence against women and poverty. Our four organizations have not approved or signed this document."

The spokesperson elaborates, "The second last demand in the Canadian document (#58 under the section of the document that encourages active citizenship) calls for "quality publicly funded abortion services." In response to inquiries our organizations have received about this demand and the demands under the section on lesbians, we wish to underline that support of the general objectives of the World March of Women 2000 does not mean support for each and every one of the specific Canadian demands. In particular, we wish to make it crystal clear that it does not include support for abortion or alter the profound commitment of our organization's to respect, promote and protect human life, especially the unborn who are most vulnerable.

"We believe that Canadian Catholics should not allow themselves to be shut out of the March of Women because some groups decide to press for demands that are clearly unacceptable to us. The basis of Catholic participation should be the long-held Church teaching on respect for human life from its very beginning to its natural end, the preferential option for the poor, marriage as an equal

partnership between husband and wife to whom the transmission of life is entrusted, solidarity with the oppressed, and the equality of men and women.

"As Catholic groups, we engage in the March in a spirit of respect for

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SR. ETHEL COADY, csm, was among the approximately 20 people gathered for the weekly World March of Women 2000 vigil outside town hall in Antigonish.

meeting

Continued from page 11B

will bring greetings from their respective levels of government.

A presentation on the unrelated bone marrow registry program will be given on Saturday afternoon.

Representatives of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Toronto, will have their sharing fair items (items made through the Sharing Fair project, sponsored by the Sisters, to better the lives of women in developing countries throughout the world) for sale during the weekend.

Approximately 200 members representing a membership of 5,897 are expected to attend.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



COLLEEN CAMERON (left), Sr. Rita MacLellan, csm, and Sr. Irene Doyle, csm, were among the over 45 women and men gathered in front of the town hall last Wednesday in support of an end to poverty and violence against women and children.

African N.S. women's group in march

Over 45 people gathered outside the town hall in Antigonish last Wednesday to support an end to violence against women and children. Colleen Cameron of Development and Peace in Antigonish spoke about the Catholic Church's support of World March of Women's work to end poverty and violence around the world.

The World March considers global issues of poverty and violence and how they are experienced by women and children in communities around the world. Local groups have been addressing the weekly vigils in Antigonish, raising awareness of poverty and violence experienced by women and children around the world, including Nova Scotia.

Today (Wednesday) the town hall vigil will be "godmothered" by representatives of the Re-entry and Readiness Program for Women from Upper Big Tracadie and Guysborough.

The re-entry and readiness program, a project carried out with the

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, brings African Nova Scotia Women together to work on group building, development issues, cultural awareness and education.

Project coordinator Debbie Ross Munro said throughout the province, African Nova Scotia women face poverty rates higher than the general population.

Weekly half-hour vigils at the Antigonish Town Hall are held each Wednesday beginning at 12 noon as part of the World March of Women 2000. For more information on the vigils contact Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113; Katherine Reed at 863-6221; or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.

World March of Women 2000



TV ONTARIO cameraman Jeremy Major dropped by the World March of Women vigil last Wednesday. Major and the TV Ontario crew were gathering footage for a documentary on the Trans Canada Trail. They attended the vigil along with Theresa Ryan, who wrote a song celebrating the trail.

Vigil continues to highlight justice

As local organizers prepare for the 13th week of the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish, the vigil continues to highlight the struggle for justice. Today (Wednesday) the vigil acknowledges Davis Day, which commemorates the June 11, 1925, shooting death of Bill Davis.

Davis, a New Waterford miner, was shot and killed by the mining company's guards during a strike by Cape Breton miners.

The Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice is "godmothering" this week's vigil to mark the upcoming "Davis Day." ACEJ is highlighting this eastern Nova Scotia example of suppression and the shared history of the struggle for justice.

Organizers are welcoming all members of local communities to continue attending the vigils.

Last week's Wednesday, May 24, vigil was godmothered by Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. Katherine Reed outlined the history and goals of the centre for the over 30 people gathered to support an end to violence and poverty against women.

The AWRC was established in 1983 when a group of women recognized the need for a collective women's voice in the community. The group began working together to identify and address issues faced by women as a result of sex discrimination.

"These founding mothers of the organization also recognized that a resource centre was needed," Reed said. The centre would provide a meeting space, education materials, an office and staff. The staff was needed to support individual women and groups working toward gender equality and to help individual women cope with the consequences of the power imbalance between males and females.

"They established the women's centre with Women's Program funding from the federal government, which was directed at improving the status of women in Canada," she said.

Since then, hundreds of women have used the women's centre for projects and cooperative efforts aimed at elevating the status of women and improving quality of life for the people in the area, she said.

Each year hundreds of women visit the women's centre for support and information to help them heal from trauma, cope with poverty and deal with many different situations in their lives. "They also come to connect with other women, to celebrate achievements, to learn about women's 'herstory,' and to create a vision of a better world."

Reed said May 24 was chosen as the week for the AWRC to godmother the Antigonish vigil because on May 28, 1851, Sojourner Truth gave a powerful speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Sojourner

Truth was an African descended woman, born into slavery in the U.S. in the late 18th century.

At the Women's Rights convention she said, "I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much."

Reed said Truth's words ring true to the people of Antigonish and around the world.

"As women work to address the issues that create women's poverty and violence against women, there is much fear and resistance to our struggle," Reed said.

She also noted that the struggle against poverty and violence challenges the status quo, the way people have always acted and thought.

"[This struggle] challenges all our habits, institutions and social structures. Since we have always lived this way - with this power imbalance between men and women - it is hard to imagine how everything would be different if gender balance was achieved."

The reaction to attempts to change the cycle of gender inequality occurs because change is anxiety-producing, she said.

"But the alternative is far less attractive. We must forge ahead, even though our progress is excruciatingly slow."

Reed also noted statistics that reflect gender inequality in Atlantic Canada.

"Women in Atlantic Canada who work full-time jobs earn 71 cents for every dollar earned by men working full-time," she said.

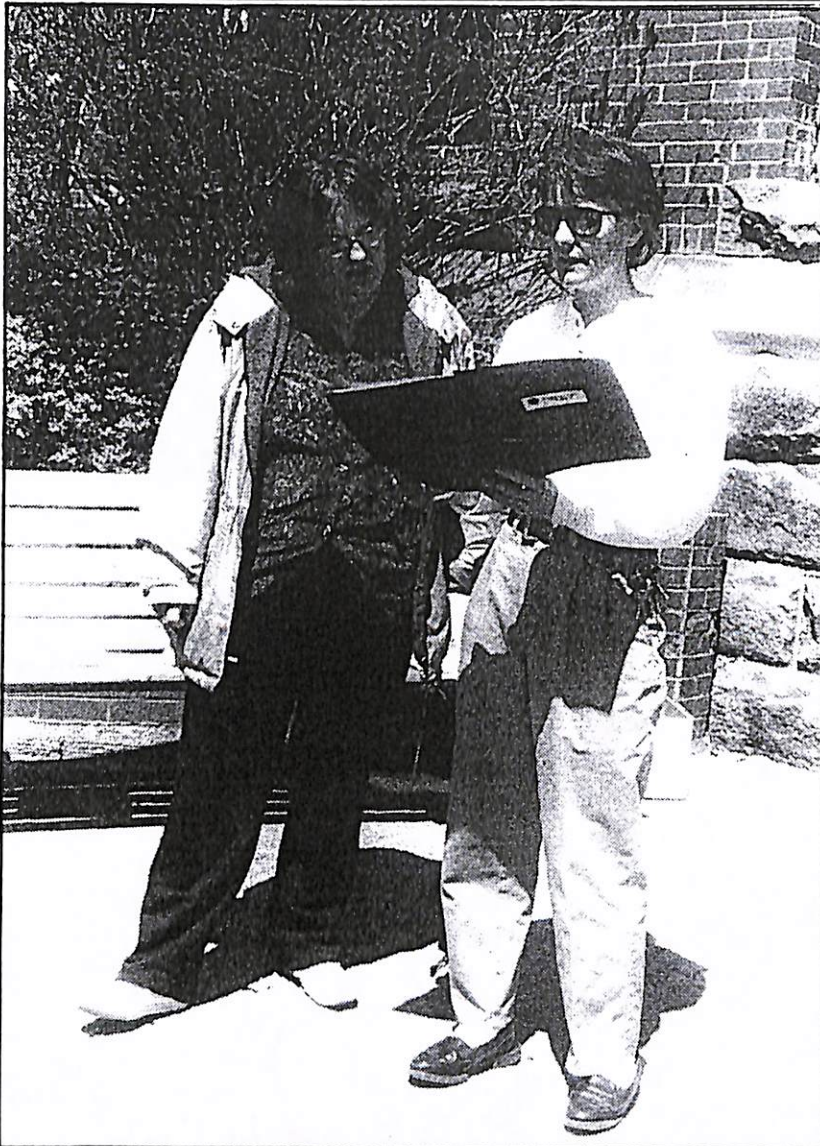
"Women are far more vulnerable to poverty than men are, and we are vulnerable usually for reasons relating to our roles as caregivers, mothers and homemakers. Nearly one in five women in Atlantic Canada lives in poverty. The group of women who are most vulnerable to poverty are single mothers and unattached women. More than 70 percent of single mothers live in poverty."

Among senior women, 53 percent are unattached in Nova Scotia and living on incomes that fall below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off lines.

The number of women living in poverty in Canada has increased 50 percent in the past 20 years.

Despite the slow nature of change, Reed said the AWRC will continue its work. She issued an invitation to the people gathered to become part of this change.

"We hope that you will join us and hold steady a course toward a world in which males and females are free from gender inequality," she said in closing.



*May 24/2000
"The Casket"*

THERESA RYAN (left) and Katherine Reed attended the weekly World March of Women vigil outside the Antigonish town hall. Ryan commented on the role of the National Anti Poverty Organization. Reed presented material from Dalhousie Legal Aid on provincial cutbacks to family benefits.

NAPO representative addresses vigil

Provincial representative with the National Anti-Poverty Organization Theresa Ryan outlined NAPO's history for a group of World March of Women 2000 supporters in Antigonish.

NAPO, an advocacy body for people of low income, grew out of a 1971 conference of anti-poverty activists who met in Toronto, Ryan said.

"[NAPO] is directed by a 22-[person] board of directors. These individuals have experienced or are living in poverty," she said.

Ryan said NAPO's areas of work include the Geneva Convention, Commonwealth Conference, court challenges and the World March of Women.

"We strive for policy changes for the betterment of the poor of our land," she said.

The World March of Women 2000 is recognized locally by meetings held each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:25 p.m. in front of the Antigonish Town Hall. World March of Women is an international coalition of groups working to raise awareness about and address issues of poverty and violence against women.

The Antigonish vigils are hosted by a different group each week. Topics covered since the first vigil in early March include poverty and violence in Guatemala, the importance of unions for women, Black women and poverty, and the support of the Catholic Church's Development and Peace

organization for the World March.

At last week's vigil, Katherine Reed, one local organizer, noted that proposed changes in Nova Scotia's social assistance rates are of concern for people advocating for the poor.

Included in the printed information Reed distributed at the vigil was reference to a 10 percent cutback in assistance for people with disabilities and single parent families. The material, prepared by Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, stated that the cutback means taking "from social assistance budgets that are already inadequate to meet basic needs."

This 10 percent cut translates to a reduction in "all basic assistance rates for food, clothing, miscellaneous essentials, rent and utilities at a time when these costs are going up," the handout stated.

The handout also noted that before implementation of the proposed cuts, Family Benefits rates were 20 percent below the poverty line. "With the cuts, they will be about 30 percent below the poverty line."

People on who receive Family Benefits from community services have been noted that new rates will be implemented in April 2001.

For more information on the World March of Women or the topics of concern contact Katherine Reed at 863-6221, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113 or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



REV. KEITH HAGERMAN of St. James United Church in Antigonish and **Dianne Walsh** participated in last week's World March of Women 2000 vigil at the town hall in Antigonish. Reverend Hagerman spoke about his experiences in Guatemala. Last week's Wednesday March, April 26, coincided with second anniversary of the assassination of Guatemala's Archbishop Juan Gerardi.

D&P scheduled for World March

Today's (Wednesday's) World March of Women will be "godmothered" by the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, which links issues of development, social justice and peace.

Colleen Cameron, a spokesperson for Development and Peace in Antigonish said the World March of Women recognizes D&P as one of the many Catholic organizations supporting the main goals of the March, which seeks to end poverty and violence against women.

Other Catholic sponsors of the March include the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Women's League, the Catholic Religious Conference and the World Union of Women's Catholic Organizations.

Cameron quoted from a D&P news release that supports the efforts of the March.

"The World March of Women is a historic moment in the struggle of women to liberate themselves from the structures that keep them poor,

excluded, violated."

The release said that liberation will affect women today and in the future and transform men and their relationships with women and with each other.

"Every day women in the Third World suffer abuse and terrible conditions of work in free trade zones." The release noted that rape is used as a weapon of war, women are forced in marriages, medicine for sick and malnourished children is unavailable, and women are denied land to grow food for their families, even when their husbands have been killed.

"Until now they have not had a voice to make their cries heard around the world. Third World women need to make their voices heard at this historic moment - and that is exactly what [Development and Peace] is supporting."

The vigils promote solidarity with women around the world. Last week, Keith Hagerman spoke about Guatemala, a country plagued with human rights violations.

Vigils take place each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:25 p.m. in front of the town hall on Main Street, Antigonish. Next week's vigils will be "godmothered" by the women of Big Tracadie, Antigonish County. For more information contact Sister Brenda LeC Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113, Katherine Reed at 863-6221 or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

Black women host weekly vigil



WENDY CAMPBELL of Lincolnville addressed the close to 50 people gathered for the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last Wednesday. Speaking on behalf of the Reentry and Readiness Program for Women from Upper Big Tracadie, Campbell reflected the history of Black women in the past 500 years.

Representatives of the Re-entry and Readiness Program for Women from Upper Big Tracadie and Guysborough hosted the weekly World March of Women vigil at town hall in Antigonish on Wednesday, May 10.

Wendy Campbell of Lincolnville offered both logical and philosophical reflections on the place of Black women in the modern world.

"There are 519,870,000 Black women on the planet Earth," she said. "There are Black women on each of the seven continents, so no matter where you go, she's already been there. She travels with forces greater than herself, her presence is everywhere."

She also noted that scientists have isolated the DNA in human gene cells and determined that everyone comes from one woman.

"And she was Black," Campbell said. "The Black woman comes from Africa, which holds to date the only evidence of humans living more than a million years ago. We can only imagine the sense of freedom our foremothers felt when their naked feet walked the warm earth of Africa."

As the Black woman moved around the globe in the past 500 years, her tenacious spirit has been "her strongest and most constant ally" in her battle against slavery, servitude, ridicule, and sexual and racial discrimination, Campbell said.

"She survives with strong dignity and an admirable lack of self pity and bitterness.

"We the women of the Re-entry Program are proud descendants of our African foremothers [to] whom we look

back and draw our strengths from."

She concluded her presentation to the almost 50 people gathered with reference to the African proverb "bloom where you've been planted."

"Women of African descent in Nova Scotia, against all odds, have indeed bloomed where they have been planted."

A project with the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the Re-entry program brings African Nova Scotia Women together to focus on group building, development issues, cultural awareness and education. Among the work of the Reentry program is personal development, raising self confidence and self esteem among Black women, and addressing issues of poverty.

Shauna Desmond of Upper Big Tracadie offered a spiritual reflection at the gathering, encouraging people to consider the places of money and poverty in the world.

Today (Wednesday), the vigil is hosted by National Anti-Poverty Organization representative Theresa Ryan. NAPO is a grassroots organization that raises awareness about the systemic nature of poverty in Canada and works on actions to eradicate poverty.

World March of Women 2000 is an international movement that works to raise awareness about poverty and violence against women. For more information contact Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert at 863- 3113, Katherine Reed at 863-6221 or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.



SR. ADELE CORMIER, csm, (left), Linda Phee of Antigonish, Shauna Desmond of Upper Big Tracadie and Debbie Ross Munroe of Guysborough were among the group of over 45 people who gathered for the World March of Women vigil outside the Antigonish Town Hall last Wednesday. Desmond, a representative of the Re-entry and Readiness program for Women from Upper Big Tracadie and Guysborough, delivered a spiritual reflection on the nature of poverty. The vigil was hosted by members of the Re-entry program.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

Nurses warn of health care cuts

by Ann Macquarrie

The provincial health care system is in jeopardy if the Nova Scotia government continues to make cuts, said registered nurse Debbie MacIsaac during Wednesday's noontime vigil last week.

The World March of Women 2000 in Antigonish held its 15th vigil June 14, in which changes in the health care were addressed.

Debbie MacIsaac, a registered nurse at St. Martha's Regional Hospital and a member of the Nova Scotia Nurses Union, said not only is there a threat of services being cut, but there are many other health care services that should be offered here. People are forced to travel to larger centres, such as Halifax, for

care that could easily be delivered here, she said.

She added there should be a national drug and health care program.

This week's vigil will mark the halfway point of the 33-week series. The initiating committee, which includes the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the United Church Women and the Anglican Church Women, will be holding a special vigil, looking at what the march has accomplished to date.

All women and men interested in the struggle against violence and poverty are invited to attend the weekly vigils, Wednesdays from 12 to 12:30 p.m. at the town hall.



DEBBIE MACISAAC, a registered nurse, warns of the impact of health care cuts during the World March of Women's noontime vigil June 14. The vigil was "godmothered" by the local branch of the Nova Scotia

The Casket June 21, 2000

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



JOANNE TOMPKINS (right), one of the coordinators of the weekly World March of Women vigils in Antigonish, spoke Wednesday, May 31, about the need to educate people on the history of social change. Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert, csm, another coordinator, and Tompkins' son Carl Miller are also regular participants at the vigils, which are hosted each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:25 p.m. in front of the town hall in Antigonish.

Vigil recalls struggle for fair wages

by Monica MacKinnon

While recent generations of Canadians reap the benefits of earlier struggles for social justice, people often lose sight of the hard work and sacrifice that brings about change.

"We know little of Cape Breton labour history, abolitionism, civil rights and the unions that ended the 80 hour work week," Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice chairperson Joanne Tompkins said.

By noon that day, the UMWA had organized an army of 1,200 miners in New Waterford, determined to restore electricity and water to their homes and families.

"They marched on Waterford Lake power plant and were met by a wall of armed company thugs on horseback. Before the miners could state their demands, the riders charged the front line firing wildly into the crowd."

Although the miners outflanked the company police by running to the woods and cutting off the line of retreat, the coup was not without casualties.

William Davis, a 37 year-old UMWA brother and father of 10 children, was fatally shot through the heart. His funeral was attended by over 5,000 people and the procession stretched more than a mile, the museum pamphlet relates.

June 11 is honoured as Davis Day, a commemoration of struggle and sacrifice for change.

Speaking to over 40 people gathered at last Wednesday's World March of Women vigil, Tompkins recalled the shooting death of Cape Breton coal miner William Davis on June 11, 1925. The 1925 events that led to Davis Day were part of a 15-year struggle for fair wage and working conditions in Cape Breton mines.

Tompkins distributed a Glace Bay Miners Museum pamphlet depicting the United Mine Workers Union of America's fight in Cape Breton.

"In March of 1925, Cape Breton miners were receiving \$3.65 in daily wages and had been working part-time for more than three years," the pamphlet states. "They burned company coal to heat company houses illuminated by company electricity. Their families drank company water, were indebted to the company 'Pluck Me' store and were financially destitute as evidenced by the company 'Bob Tailed Sheet.' Local clergy spoke of children clothed in flour sacks and dying of starvation from the infamous 'four cent meal.' The miners had fought continuously since 1909 for decent working conditions, an eight hour day as well as a living wage."

The museum document says company owners argued that "coal must be produced cheaper in Cape Breton ... If the miners require more work, then the United Mine Workers of America District 26 Executive must recommend acceptance of a 20 percent wage reduction."

The elimination of credit at the company store and reduction of work at the collieries in March of 1925 led to the miners voting 100 percent to strike.

Over the next two months, the company cut off sale of coal to miners' houses and mounted a public relations campaign blaming miners for their predicament. The union lobbied unsuccessfully for intervention from provincial and federal governments. When the union removed the last maintenance men from the power plant at Waterford Lake on June 3, the company cut off electricity and water to New Waterford, including the town's hospital filled with extremely sick children. Despite mayor P.G. Muise pleading for over a week, the company refused to turn on power and water services.

"On June 11, 1925, drunken company police charged down Plummer Avenue on horseback beating all who stood in their path," the pamphlet states. "They rode through school yards, knocking down innocent children while joking that the miners were at home hiding under their beds. It was the last straw."

Knowledge of such history, empowers people to continue to work for change, Tompkins said. However history texts often fail to recount the years of struggle that make up a social movement. People who bring about change are depicted as heroes, larger than life, with more courage, time and knowledge than everyone else, she said.

Language too can fail to acknowledge the struggle and death involved in change. Tompkins said media creates the impression that social change "comes out of nowhere. ... we are greatest when we act alone and benevolent figures grant rights."

"We are taught that Canadian women were given the right to vote and slaves were freed," she said. This language doesn't talk about the "fight" for the right to vote and "the struggle and death that led to the end of slavery."

Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks is seen as starting the Montgomery Bus boycott, as if "suddenly she wouldn't give up her seat" to a white man, Tompkins said. However, Parks spent 12 years working with the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. She was a union activist and teacher.

"She did the humbling and frustrating work of organizing."

The 20th century saw a series of powerful social movements in Canada and the United States. The struggles for fair wages in Cape Breton's coal mines are among the important history lessons of the past century.

The struggle for social change is the struggle of "men against power" and "memory against forgetting," Tompkins said.

Today (Wednesday), the vigil will be "godmothered" jointly by the Anglican Church Women and the United Church Women. Both groups are involved in local projects that help people who are marginalized and offer fellowship for women.

The vigil will focus on the needs of women who face poverty and violence and who sometimes find themselves before the judicial system.

The Casket
June 7/00

World March of Women 2000



CARL MILLER helped organizers demonstrate the numbers of people who participated in Antigonish's World March of Women 2000 weekly vigils since early March. Pencilled figures on a role of white fabric depict the number of people at each noon-time vigil outside town hall. Carl is a regular at the vigils, joining his father Ed Miller and mother Joanne Tompkins, who also serves as one of the vigil organizers.

Vigil reaches half-way point

by Monica MacKinnon

To celebrate the halfway mark of World March of Women 2000 in Antigonish, organizers of the weekly noon-time World March of Women vigils asked supporters how the gatherings have affected them.

The Casket
June 28, 2000

On a handout of 20 comments distributed at the June 21 vigil, a number of people said the vigils reveal how many people in the Antigonish area are concerned about social justice.

"I'm learning how many different groups and organizations there are in

the Antigonish area that care about social issues," one person responded. "The march is putting them all in touch with each other - the unions, the churches, women's groups. It makes us aware of each other and it's heartening to know there are other people who care."

Joanne Tompkins, one of three vigil organizers, said people appreciate both the information supplied at the vigils and the opportunities to meet groups with similar concerns.

"It's two fold - educating ourselves and the spreading the word. We're in solidarity with each other and with the poor," one person said.

Another person said attending the vigil is "making me aware of the fact that poverty is so widespread."

Personal empowerment and the development of social action skills were also identified as results of the vigil.

"It's breaking the isolation because I'm living in the situation of poverty and it's nice to know that other people care ... It feels good to do something. I like breaking the rules by protesting, by wearing signs. You're not allowed to do this normally. The vigils let you step out of line a bit."

Tompkins said the comments reflect not only what vigil participants are doing, but what the vigils are doing for people.

One person responded "[Attending the vigils] helps people learn to stand up publicly - that's hard to do because in a small town like Antigonish we're taught to be very private in what we do."

Groups speaking at the vigil have included the United Church Women, the Anglican women's group, the Nova Scotia Nurses Union, Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice, the National Anti-Poverty Organization, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the Re-entry and Readiness Program for Women from Upper Big Tracadie and Guysborough, Development and Peace, the Canadian Autoworkers Union 2107 and the Canadian Guatemala Solidarity Network.

This week, the 17th vigil is hosted by Ten Days for Global Justice. This Canadian inter-church coalition and network of community-based education and action, is designed to challenge the dehumanizing and destructive forces in society.

Locally, Ten Days has representatives from St. Paul's Anglican Church, St. Ninian's Roman Catholic Cathedral and St. James United Church and workers from Development and Peace.

The first Ten Days program took place in 1973 with an across-Canada tour. Leaders of the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United churches promoted the theme Development Demands Justice. This 10-day trip became known as Ten Days for World Development. In 1996 Ten Days

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



CAROL KELL (left), Joanne Tompkins, Reverend Katherine Bourbonniere, Sachi Shimo-Takahara, Carl Miller and Nancy MacDonald were among last week's participants at the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish. Rev. Bourbonniere, Shimo-Takahara and MacDonald spoke on behalf of the church women at St. James United Church St. Paul's Anglican Church.

World March of Women

The Casket
July 4,
2000

2 0 0 0



MARION MILLER (right), a dedicated volunteer at World March of Women 2000 vigils in Antigonish, will have more time to devote to the vigils since school recessed for summer holidays. In addition to distributing print material for vigil participants, Miller joined Josie England (left) and Carol Kell in song at last week's gathering.

The Casket Labour code can July 4, 2000 limit sweatshops

by Monica MacKinnon

Antigonish can join a national initiative to help workers in developing countries by writing to local Members of Parliament in support of a Canadian Base Code of Labour Practices.

Working on the code are representatives of government, non-government organizations, corporations and churches, including Ten Days for Global Justice, an ecumenical group of Canadian churches.

Ten Days urges adoption of this code in order to end use of underpaid and overworked women in the garment industry, local United Church representative Carol Kell said. This code would pressure developing countries to adopt standards for working conditions and wages in the garment industry, she said.

"The code also protects Canadians. Some corporations [in Canada] contract out piece work," she said. This work often goes to immigrants, people without unions and/or people with little English and no knowledge of labour standards, she said.

Kell also noted successful efforts to bring Hudson's Bay Co. and Sears Canada to negotiate the industry-wide code. However, she said some groups are concerned the Retail Council of Canada's plan to develop its own labour code will mean a lower standard of conduct.

Addressing members of last week's World March of Women 2000 vigil in Antigonish, Kell said last year Ten Days worked on a Close the Gap campaign to reduce discrepancy between rich and poor.

A handout on Ten Days stated significant progress on the campaign's three goals: promotion of fair trade practices when doing business with developing countries, living wages and an end to sweatshop conditions for global garment workers and encouraging world debt cancellation.

The plea for debt cancellation is an international initiative coinciding with the Catholic Church's Jubilee Year.

Canada's federal budget included 100 percent cancellation of bilateral debts of highly indebted poor countries.

Compared to the debt held by countries like the United States and Germany and agencies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Canada's debt forgiveness is a symbolic action.

However, it serves as a "gesture that indicates Canada's overall support of debt forgiveness for poor countries," Kell said following the vigil.

"The debt keeps building and countries even can't pay the interest," she said. It will never be paid. It only takes money from education and health care.

Kell also noted that fair trade in the coffee industry is growing. Over 40 Canadian having signed license agreements to sell fairly traded coffee, she reported.

"Sales of fair trade coffee have tripled each since Ten Days began campaigning on this issue in 1998. The house of Commons and several provincial legislatures now serve fair trade coffee as well."

Joining Kell to address the approximately 30 vigil participants was Josie England, a local Ten Days representative from the Catholic church.

Today (Wednesday's) vigil is "godmothered" by Women Standing Up, a group of women living on low income in Antigonish. The group produced a booklet to assist people living on low income access the community supports in northeastern Nova Scotia.

For more information on the World March of Women 2000 in Antigonish contact Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, csm, 863-3113 or Katherine Reed at 863-6221.

World March of Women 2000 July 12, 2000

Women Standing Up *The* 'godmothers' vigil *Casket July 12, 2000*

by Monica MacKinnon

The recently released Resource and Advocacy Guide offers people living in poverty information on services in the local area.

Ella Gero of Antigonish said many people living on low income don't know how to find help. "A lot of women don't know about the food bank and St. Vincent de Paul Society," she said.

Gero and Charlene DeCoste, also of Antigonish, addressed the World March of Women vigil last week about Women Standing Up, a group of women living on low income. Sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, as a Status of Women Canada project, the group developed the resource booklet over the past two years.

The group formed because "women wanted to know about the social assistance policy, to learn strategies to advocate for themselves," DeCoste told the crowd of 35 at the vigil.

The biggest problem facing women living in poverty is lack of information and support, Gero said.

Copies of the booklet, published jointly by the AWRC and the Naomi Society, are at the AWRC in Antigonish. It outlines financial, legal and counselling services, employment, child abuse and housing supports and people's rights.

Referring to studies on poverty, Gero also noted "poverty impacts disproportionately on women."

Referring to Citizen's Action Social Watch report, she said between 1980

and 1998, the rate of women living in poverty in Canada went up 50 percent.

Lack of daily necessities like affordable housing, support for family violence victims and people with disabilities, job opportunities, affordable day-care, accessible and inexpensive transportation and education and retraining contribute to poverty, a 1994 article on poverty revealed.

A Women's Health in Atlantic Canada article said women living in poverty are at higher risk for health problems.

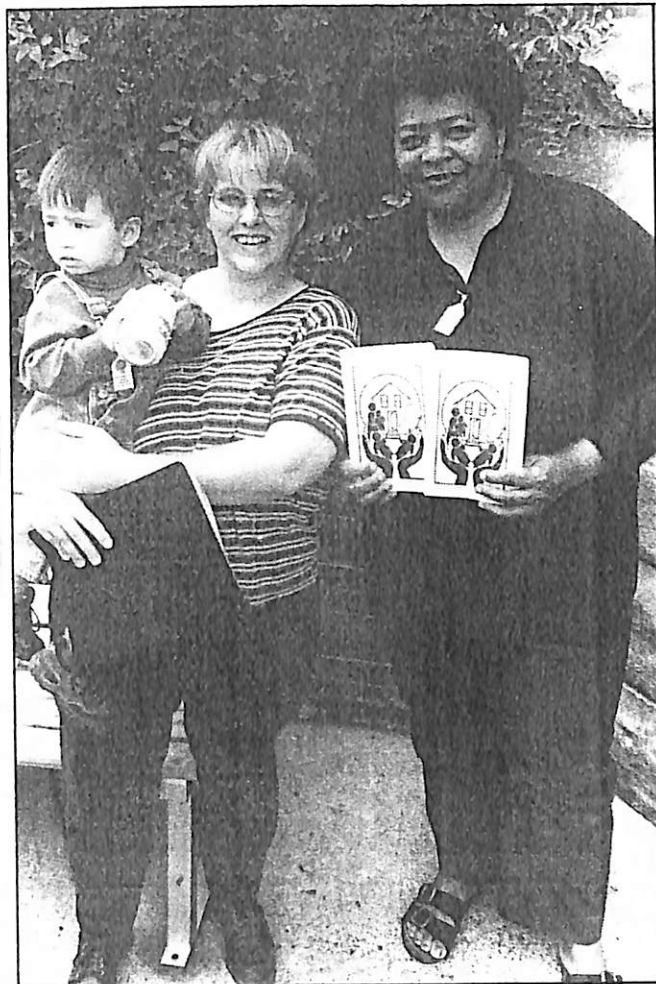
Women under 40 years of age and living in poverty are hospitalized at a rate of 62 percent, double the rate for women of the same age not living in poverty. Women over 40 years and living in poverty are hospitalized at a rate of 92 percent, more than double the rate for women the same age not living in poverty.

Advocates for people living in poverty say the term "child poverty" is a misnomer that distracts people from asking more serious questions about why the heads of families are poor.

The World March of Women vigils are held each Wednesday in Antigonish from 12 noon to 12:25 p.m. to raise awareness about issues of violence and poverty affecting women and children.

The July 12 vigil will be sponsored by Mi'kmaq women of the Afton First Nation community.

For more information on the World March of Women contact Sr. Brendalee Boisvert at 863-3113, Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965 or Katherine Reed at 863-6221.



CHARLENE DeCOSTE (left) and Ella Gero, both of Antigonish, addressed the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last week on behalf of Women Standing Up, a group of women living on low income in Antigonish. Christian DeCoste joined them for the presentation.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



ANGELA YELLOW HAIR, of Afton First Nation addresses the crowd during last week's vigil of the World March of Women.

Aboriginal women address vigil

Native women are much more likely to live in poverty than their non-native sisters, vigil organizer Joanne Thompkins said.

Since Europeans settled in Canada, aboriginals have been subject to unhonoured treaties, being removed from their land, and had to fight to preserve their culture and language.

In spite of this First Nations people continue to be and their presence is a testimony to their resistance and resilience as a people, but not without some consequences.

"If poverty affects non-Aboriginal Canadians, it affects Aboriginal Canadians at much higher rate," Thompkins said. "Rates of unemployment for First Nations communities are three to four times the national average."

"With such high rates of unemployment comes high rates of poverty and the subsequent health and social issues that flow from it."

This week's World March of Women vigil will be 'godmothered' by the members of the Antigonish Worship Group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

The Quakers have a very strong tradition of being engaged in issues related to economic justice. Globally the Quakers are involved with development projects that address poverty in underdeveloped countries. In Canada they support projects in Aboriginal communities - some of which include projects around the fishery.

The vigils are held each week at 12 noon in front of the Town Hall.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



THE WEEKLY NOONTIME vigil, held as part of the World March of Women, was "godmothered" by a member of Antigonish Worship Group of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers. Quaker Sarah avMaat addressed those who came out to support the vigil.

Quakers host vigil

July 27,
2000

Over the years many Quakers have been imprisoned for their strong economic justice support, Sarah avMaat, a local Quaker said.

avMaat's group "godmothered" the July 18 vigil for the World March of Women. She said Quakers have a strong tradition in defending the rights of women and speaking out against governments which are not acting in their citizens' best interests.

"I encourage all of you to challenge hypocrisy and abuses of power," avMaat said.

The July 26 vigil will be

"godmothered" by the Sisters of St. Martha who are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the congregation. The Sisters of Saint Martha have a long history of service throughout Canada and have deep roots in Antigonish. Throughout the past 100 years, they have provided leadership in education, health care and social justice. The Sisters of Saint Martha are also co-sponsors of the weekly vigils that have been held for the past 20 weeks.

The World March of Women vigils take place in front of Town Hall Wednesdays at 12 noon.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

Peace advocate addresses vigil

by Monica MacKinnon

Local peace advocate Tara Callaghan addressed last week's World March of Women vigil, highlighting the work of Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

Designed to address promotion of peace, justice, disarmament and development, Voice of Women is an official non-governmental organization of the United Nations, St. Francis Xavier University psychology professor Tara Callaghan told vigil participants.

"Founded in 1960 ... Voice of Women was born out of the threat of nuclear war," she said.

Over the years, the work of Voice of Women included studies on effects of nuclear fallout through analysis of children's baby teeth. Printed information distributed by Callaghan reported that studies found radioactive Strontium 90 was passed to children through mother's breast milk.

Voice of Women is also working for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, organizing women's conferences and

providing leadership for study groups.

Callaghan said the annual visit to the U.N. by members of Voice of Women is a good opportunity to "learn a lot about the peace activism that goes on at the U.N. It's a good background for work in international peace efforts."

Although Antigonish does not have a local Voice of Women group, Callaghan and Sue Adams act as local contacts to share information about the organization.

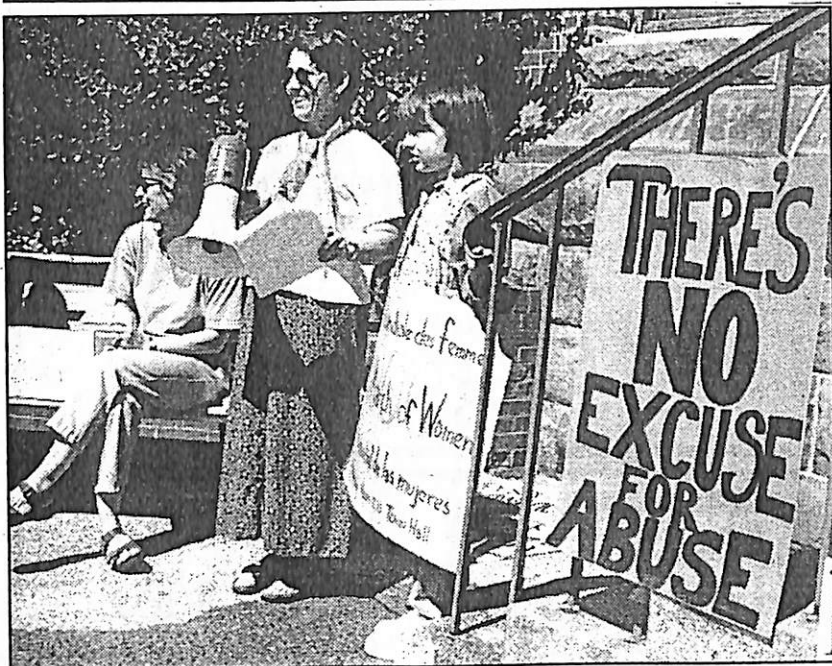
For more information on Voice of Women contact Callaghan at 863-4951 or Adams at 867-3964.

World March of Women vigils are held each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:25 p.m. outside the town hall in Antigonish. This week, representatives of the Society of Affordable Social Housing in Antigonish will address the group.

To learn more about the weekly vigil contact Katherine Reed 863-6221, Joanne Tompkins 863-6965 or Sr. Brendalee Boisvert 863-3113.

The Casket
August 16/2000

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



JEAN CROSBY (centre), director of the Antigonish Naomi Society, addressed last week's World March of Women vigil on issues of poverty and violence. Among those gathered were Katherine Reed (left) and Marion Miller.

Poverty, violence issues for abused women

The Casket
August 30, 2000

"Issues of poverty and violence are easily linked for abused women," Antigonish Naomi Society director Jean Crosby said. "Abuse traps women in relationships where they are controlled emotionally, physically and sexually. One often overlooked type of abuse which also exists is economic abuse."

Crosby addressed the World March of Women vigil last week, outlining typical financial situations experienced by abused women.

"Abused women fear being poor if they leave," she said. "[Abused women] are threatened with having money withdrawn for basic needs."

She also said women in abusive situations are often not allowed to learn money management skills and participate in making adult choices about money.

Women in abusive situations often have to protect their families' finances against the demands of a partner's drug or gambling addiction, she said.

When women leave an abusive relationship, their standard of living

drops.

"In a recent Canadian study, it was shown that in the first year following separation, women's poverty rates are 2.5 times higher than men's, - 45 percent versus 17 percent."

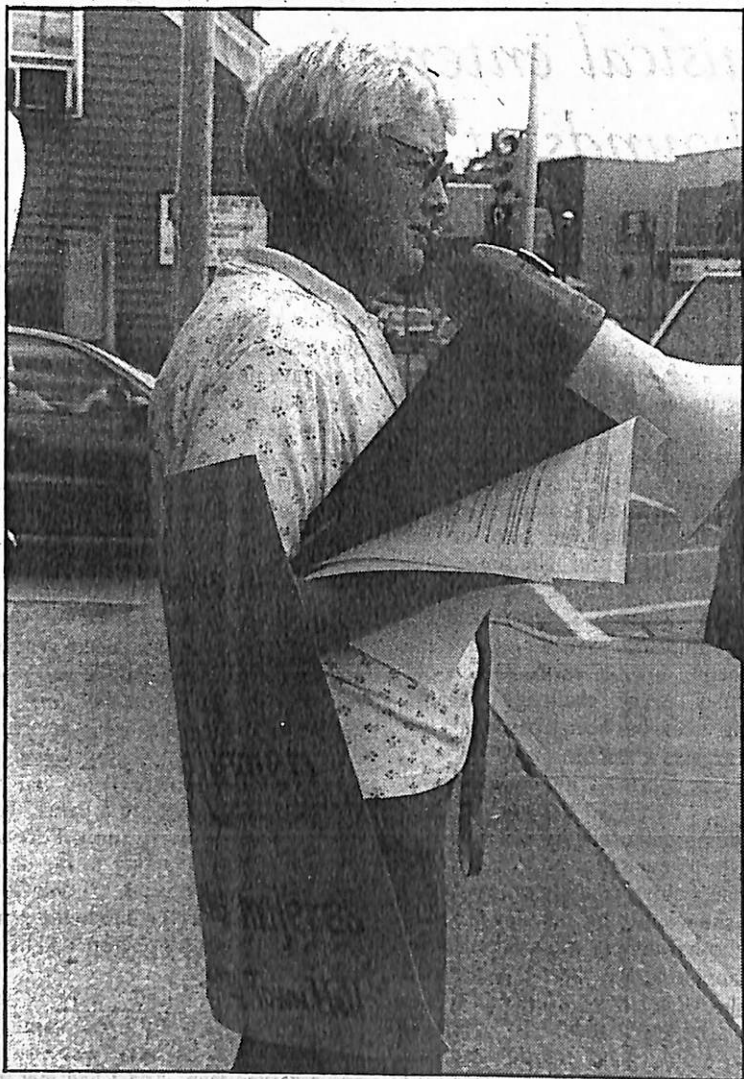
The need for affordable housing, a topic addressed at a vigil earlier this month, is also a concern for women in abusive situations.

"The basic housing need must be met before a woman can fully recover emotionally from living with abuse."

This week's vigil is "godmothered" by the Congress of Black Women, which works on raising awareness, building solidarity and working for change among Black women across Canada.

The World March of Women vigil is held each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:25 outside the town hall in Antigonish. For more information contact Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, csm, 863-3113, Katherine Reed at 863-6221 or Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965.

World March of Women 2000



SR. CLOTILDA MCINTYRE, csm, addressed the group gathered for the World March of Women 2000 vigil in Antigonish last week. Sr. McIntyre outlined an experience of a single mother's bid for more appropriate housing.

Persistence, education can lead to improvements

by Monica MacKinnon

Working with the federal program for rural and native housing and the provincial housing commission in Ingonish taught Sr. Clotilda McIntyre, csm, that persistence leads to improvements.

"Push and push and push [for changes]," she said. "It really works if you keep at it."

Sr. McIntyre addressed the group at the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last week, relating her experiences working with a single mother in the Antigonish area.

In the mid 1990s the woman was living with her teenage daughter in a one bedroom apartment. She was in and out of the hospital and her daughter was using a closet as her study room, Sr. McIntyre said.

Sr. McIntyre approached the local housing commission to advocate on the family's behalf. A larger dwelling was secured and the family's health improved.

"Knowing the facts [about housing] and becoming educated about the needs and the resources [are necessary to affect change]," she said in an interview following the noon vigil.

Katherine Reed of the Society for Affordable Community Housing in Antigonish, the group that godmothered last week's vigil, related 1993 findings about affordable housing in Antigonish.

An Antigonish Women's Centre study revealed that women living in regular market rental housing paid an average of 47 percent of their take home pay on rent, Reed said.

"Women with children living in

regular market rental housing pay an average of 60 percent of their take home pay towards rent. The average rent in Antigonish is well above the shelter maximums allowed by [Provincial] Assistance."

A lack of affordable housing in good repair and with adequate space affects health, school work and employment, she said.

An increase in housing units at St. Francis Xavier University last year have eased some of the burden of too few rental units in the Antigonish area. Reed also noted that community based co-op housing help address the problem of lack of affordable housing in the area.

"This has made an enormous difference to families and individuals who otherwise would have lived for decades in mouldy basements, cramped and dingy apartments, unsafe dwellings and housing that is too expensive."

However, communities and government still have work to do to address the housing needs of citizens who can not purchase or rent adequate housing.

"Canada is the only industrialized nation in the world which does not have a national housing strategy," she said. "Governments have withdrawn from new affordable housing initiatives, leaving people who live on modest and low incomes to make do."

This week the vigil will be godmothered by the Naomi Society.

For more information on the vigil contact Katherine Reed at 863-6112, Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965 or Sr. Brendalee Boisvert 863-3113.

August 2, 2000
The Casket

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



SISTERS OF ST. MARTHA'S, who are celebrating the congregation's 100 anniversary this month, hosted the World March of Women's noontime vigil last week. Sr. Mary Eileen MacEachern spoke on behalf of the order.

Sisters of St. Martha godmother vigil

The weekly noon hour vigil for the World March of Women was hosted by one of the supporting groups last week.

Sister of St. Martha, represented by Sr. Mary Eileen MacEachern, are co-sponsors of the weekly vigils held in front of town hall to speak out against violence and poverty world wide.

"The first sisters had come from areas that were economically deprived," MacEachern said. first hand, even before they took their vows."

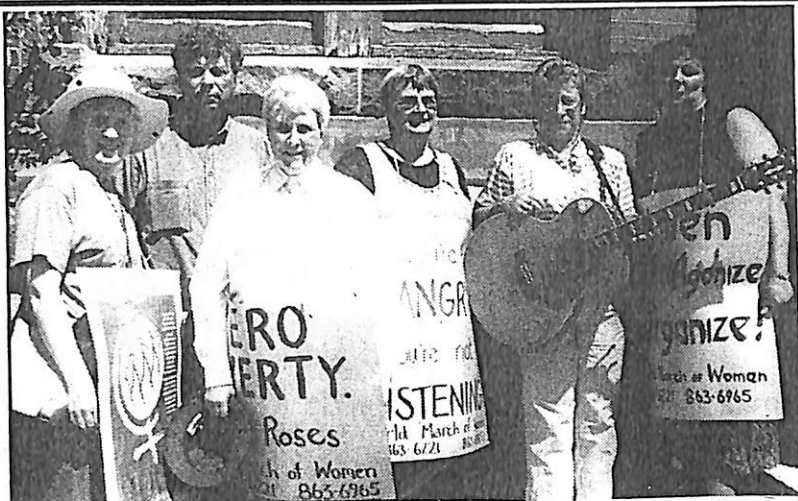
The sisters had always cared for the poor and the sick, by opening hospitals

and nursing schools before there was government funding, and teaching school in areas where there were no teachers, she said.

"We learned that trickle up is much more successful than trickle down," she added.

The World March of Women aims to raise awareness of how poverty and violence impact on women. This week's vigil will be godmothered by the Guysborough County Women's Fishery Enhancement Association. It begins at 12 noon at town hall.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0



SR. JEAN CHISHOLM, csm, (left), St. F.X. Extension field worker John Kearney and Sr. Mary Eileen McEachern, csm, were among the 50 people who joined Lynn Jelleau, Connie Rhynold and Corinne Munroe of Whitehead, Guysborough County, at the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last week.

Guys. fishers address vigil

Representatives of the Guysborough County Women's Fisheries Enhancement Association addressed the World March of Women vigil in front of Antigonish town hall last Wednesday.

"Federal fisheries policies are not designed to support the coastal way of life," association participants Corinne Munroe and Lynn Jelleau of Whitehead, Guysborough County, told the crowd of 50. "Many people here remember poverty in times of abundant fish stocks - today's bureaucracy seems engineered to guarantee a return to poverty for many in coastal communities who rely on fishing.

The Association was formed in 1998 following a series of kitchen meetings held throughout Guysborough County. Its goal is to enable women from fishing families to help their partners through the maze of government regulations and the mounds of paper generated by today's fishing activity.

With the help of St. F.X. Extension field workers the group of women became more involved in studying the potential for development. The group also publishes a quarterly newsletter, The Fishing News. The July 2000 issue includes website addresses, meeting notes and updates, reflections on the fishing lifestyle and comments on Craig

Palmer and Peter Sinclair's book When the Fish are Gone: Ecological Disaster and Fishers in Northwest Newfoundland.

One concern of the association is sustaining the values and lifestyle of coastal communities.

In a newsletter article, Sr. Mary Eileen McEachern, csm, writes, "The whole community rises and falls with the fishery, and all stand to lose their homes, ties and the mutual support of family and friends if the industry cannot adequately support them."

Sr. McEachern is critical of government's favouring large trawlers and draggers above the family-owned inshore fishing boats.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha work with coastal communities in the Canso area of Guysborough County. The congregation also provided funding to help the association by funding such costs as child care, phone calls, travel and employing women part-time to coordinate the association's activities.

This week's vigil is godmothered by Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

For more information on the vigil contact Joanne Tompkins at 863-6965, Katherine Reed at 863-6221 or Sr. Brendalee Boisvert 863-3113.

Women's march plans Oct. 14 closing

The grand finale of the World March of Women weekly vigils is scheduled for Oct. 14 and promises to be a spirited event for Antigonish, vigil organizer Joanne Tompkins said.

The culmination of 33 weeks of local vigils will be a noontime march through the town of Antigonish followed by a reception at St. James United Church from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

"All the groups who godmothered the vigil throughout the winter, spring, summer and fall will be gathering at St. James for food, fun, music and closing activities."

The afternoon will include opportunities to share experiences from the

World March of Women and reflect on the many weeks of coalition building, she said.

To prepare for the grand finale, workshops on how to make banners will be held Sept. 30 and Oct. 7 to allow participating groups to prepare banners for the Oct. 14 parade. Tompkins also said musical groups interested in performing at the closing activity should contact someone on the local coordinating committee of the World March of Women.

Across Canada and throughout the world activities will be held between Oct. 14 and 17 to mark the closing of World March of Women 2000. Men and women will gather on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and an international delegation will converge at the United Nations in New York, Tompkins said.

For more information on the closing, contact Tompkins at 863-6965, Sr.

Brendalee Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113 or Katherine Reed at 863-6221.

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MEMBER OF THE EDUCATION society at St. F.X. Margo Olscamp addresses those who attended the weekly vigil at town hall in support of the World March of Women Wednesday.

Teachers help eliminate violence against women

Through their role in the classroom educators help to eliminate violence and poverty against women, said St. F.X. education students Margo Olscamp last week's March of Women vigil.

"As educators this is what we're striving for," Olscamp said. "We're the first ones there to educate young people."

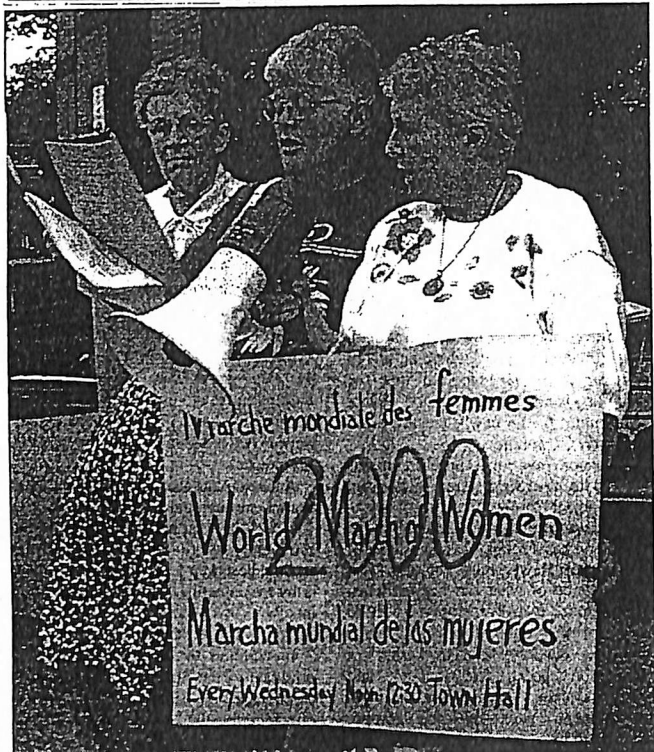
The march, held each week in front

of town hall hopes to connect women's struggles around the world, promote equality between men and women and demand governments improve the quality of life for women.

Next week's march will be godmothered by the Nova Scotia Nurses Union. For more information contact Joanne Thompkins 863-6965, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, 863-3113 or Katherine Reed 863-6221.

The Casket
Sept 20/00

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PEGGY MAHON (centre) addressed participants of the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last week on behalf of the PATH project. Among the 35 people at the vigil were Sr. Ethel Cody, csm, (left) and Sr. Mary Eileen MacEachern.

Violence, economics determine health

by Monica MacKinnon

Research reveals that violence against women is a health issue, affecting women, children and communities, Peggy Mahon of the PATH project said.

"Family violence means a lack healthy communities."

Mahon spoke on behalf of People Assessing Their Health to a group of about 35 at the World March of Women vigil in Antigonish last Wednesday.

PATH was initiated in the mid-1990s with local and provincial groups involved in health and education. Community development projects were held in three eastern Nova Scotia communities asking people to identify the factors that determine health, Mahon explained.

Communities listed a range of issues, including jobs, economics and social supports, as health determinants.

"We're raising these issues [at the World March vigil] about PATH and healthy communities because the issue of economic inequality is related to the health of the community," Mahon said.

The weekly local vigils are part of an international movement to raise awareness about women living in poverty and violence around the world.

Women live in poverty because of economic inequality in society and a lack of social support to help them further their education and economic opportunities, she said.

The World March of Women vigil is "godmothered" by a different group each week. This week's vigil will be "godmothered" by the Coady International Institute. The St. F.X.-based Coady brings together women and men from Canada and other countries to discuss community and international development.

For more information on the vigil, hosted from 12 noon to 12:30 each Wednesday, contact Katherine Reed of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre at 86306221, Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert, of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha at 863-3113 or Joanne Tompkins of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice at 863-6965.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

Poverty, violence, concerns for health

Representatives of the Nova Scotia Nurses Union and mental health services at St. Martha's Regional Hospital addressed a crowd of 50 at last week's World March of Women vigil in Antigonish.

Debbie MacIsaac of the NSNU described the link between poverty and violence and health.

She said people living in poverty are under stress that requires more frequent use of the health care system. However, because of ongoing cutbacks, the system is not meeting people's needs. The burden of care returns to the family, often requiring aging people in poor health to care for one another.

Terry O'Toole of St. Martha's Hospital mental health services spoke about the devastating effects that poverty, violence and societal pressures have on women and children.

"Increasing referrals for depression, anxiety and family stresses continue to keep our clinical staff well occupied in both our adult and child/adolescent teams," he said.

"We endorse the vision of a society that provides adequately for all of its citizens, regardless of gender, and develops on principles of healthy public policy."

Also addressing the vigil was Allison Cais, the provincial liaison for the World March of Women in Canada. She outlined a number of activities that will take place across the province on Oct. 17.

Today's (Wednesday) vigil is "godmothered" by the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice. ACEJ is con-

cerned with local, national and global issues of social justice and supports the World March of Women's work to end violence and poverty against women.

World March of Women 2000 is an international organization to raise awareness of issues of violence and poverty faced by women around the world.

Joanne Tompkins, one of the local organizers, said Nova Scotia communities started holding weekly public vigils to raise awareness about social justice.

"Recently weekly vigils for the World March of Women have started in New Glasgow," she said. "In Truro vigils are being held in front of MLA and health minister Jaime Muir's office to highlight the current cuts to government programs."

After 33 weeks of weekly vigils addressing violence and poverty against women, World March of Women organizers in Antigonish will host a grand march and wrap-up on Saturday, Oct. 14.

Everyone in the community, including all groups who "godmothered" the weekly vigils, are invited to gather at 12 noon at the town hall for the grand march. The group will march through downtown Antigonish and end up at St. James United Church for lunch and wrap-up activities. People will have the chance to reflect on what the local vigils have meant in Antigonish.

For more information on the World March of Women contact Joanne Tompkins 863-6965, Katherine Reed 863-6221 or Sr. Brendalee Boisvert 863-3113.

Local Martha to represent Antigonish at national event

Sr. Josephine Keyzer, csm, of Antigonish will be in Ottawa for the Oct. 15 national wrap-up of World March of Women 2000.

A regular participant in the local World March of Women weekly vigils since March 8, Sr. Keyzer is studying in Toronto this year. Participants in the local noon-time vigils recently mailed a banner to Sr. Keyzer for her, along with others, to carry at the World March finale in Ottawa.

Groups from across Canada will march on Parliament Hill, joining their voices in a call to end violence and poverty against women.

The 33 Antigonish World March of Women vigils will culminate at 12 noon Saturday, Oct. 14. Groups that "godmothered" the local vigils will meet at the town hall and march two kilometres through the centre of town. Each group carry a banner, highlighting the number and variety of organizations that came together each week to raise awareness about poverty and violence against women. The march finishes at the St. James United Church hall on Main Street, where lunch will be served.

Participants are invited to join in small group discussions to reflect on the impact of the vigils in Antigonish and consider future actions.

Joanne Tompkins is one of the local coordinator of the World March of Women vigils.

"The march is over, but the struggle against violence and poverty continues," she said. "We need to build on the awareness that has been raised and keep working together."

She said a tremendous network of church people, union workers, waged and unwaged people, students, religious communities and community groups has been developed during the weekly vigils.

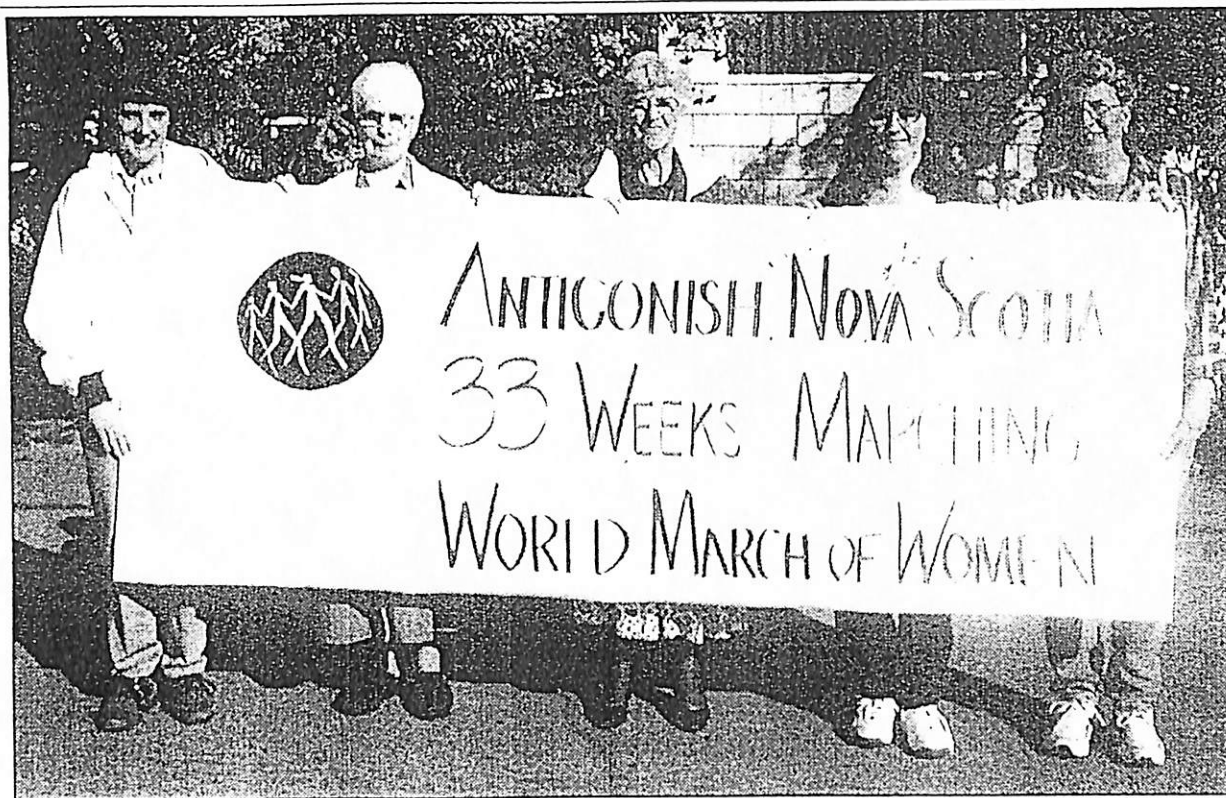
On display at St. James Church during the World March finale will be artwork, poetry, songs and posters developed by participants as they reflect on their experiences of the World March. Activities at St. James are scheduled from 1 to 3 p.m.

Organizers invite participants to bring family members and make the closing a community event.

Other upcoming events addressing women, poverty and violence include a panel discussion at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 17, in the Tin Room at the Coady International Institute. Women from different local, national and international communities will be involved in the discussions.

This is an opportunity for people to reflect on issues of violence and poverty affecting women around the world and the interconnected nature of these issues.

For more information about closing events for the World March of Women contact Katherine Reed of the Antigonish Women Resource Centre at 863-6221, Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha at 863-3113 or Joanne Tompkins of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice at 863-6965.



JOANNE TOMPKINS (left), Sr. Arlene MacKinnon, csm, Sr. Rita MacLellan, csm, Vangie Babin and Carol Kell are among the local participants in the World March of Women 2000 vigils sending a banner to Sr. Josephine Keyzer, csm, to carry in the World March grand finale in Ottawa Oct. 15.

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

Coady members host vigil

The local World March of Women 2000 drew one of its largest crowds last week with over 70 gathering for the Wednesday noon vigil "godmothered" by the Coady International Institute.

Coady Institute participant Sr. Agnes Fernandez of India reminded the crowd that women in many countries are experiencing violence as they fight for their birthright and freedom.

She also noted that in war-torn nations, most casualties are women and children. However, human rights violations against women are hidden and not brought to the attention of the international community, she said.

Sr. Fernandez said that in the face of injustice and violence against women, people must be a voice for women and create just societies.

Literature distributed at the vigil stated that while women play important roles in socio-economic development, especially in developing countries, culture or tradition often keep them

from owning resources that can improve their status.

"Due to this plague, women continue to be subsistent farmers mostly using rudimentary traditional farm implements for agriculture. This does not only drain women energetically, which leaves them prone to diseases, but it has successfully led to their social and economic impoverishment."

The literature also noted that hereditary rights in some cultures lead to empowerment of men at the expenses of their female partners and girl-children are often denied access to education and other welfare initiatives.

"Consequently, there are more illiterate females than males in almost all third world communities. As a result of illiteracy, women remain largely unaware and oppressed in such societies, often helplessly.

"Since traditionally societal set-ups have successfully turned into women providers for the society, sustainers of

life and survival, there still remains a bleak future for the economic and political empowerment of women."

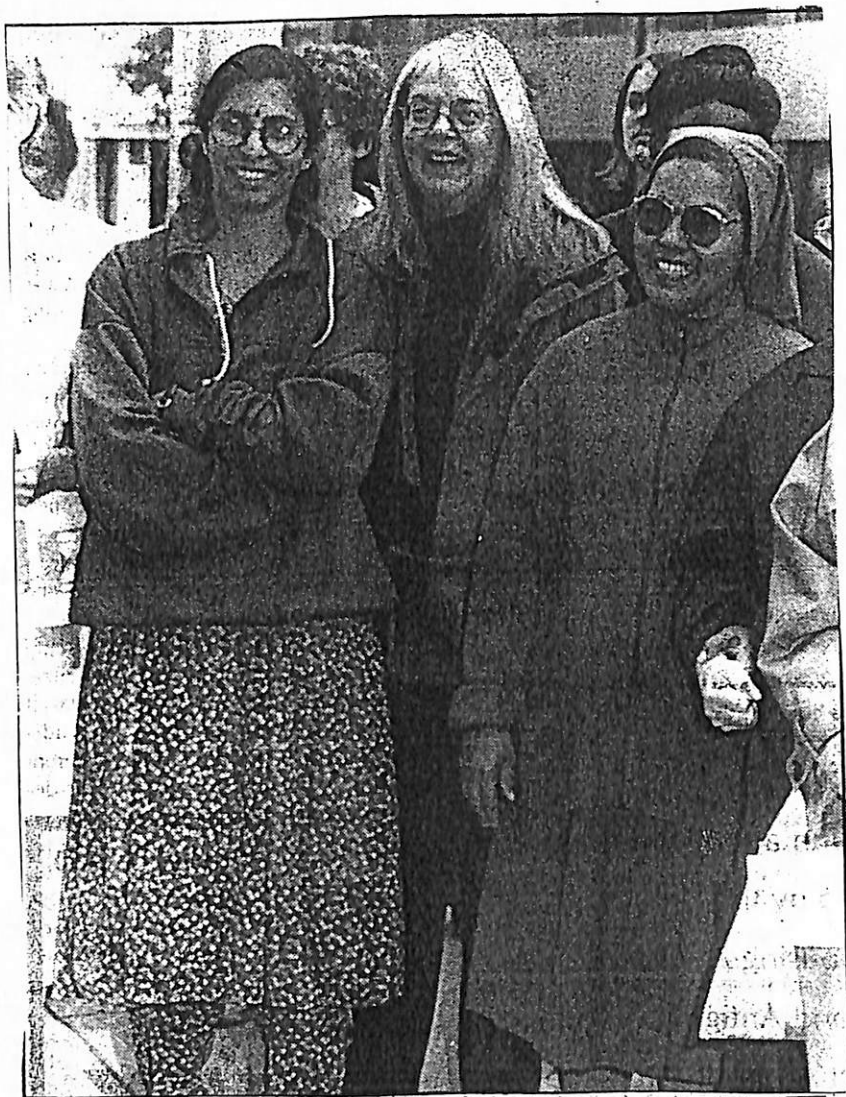
Sr. Fernandez said people around the world are called to work for an end to the suffering brought on by these injustices.

"We are called to wipe away their tears," Sr. Fernandez said. "We are invited to be peace makers. Let us be a beacon of light and break the chain of slavery."

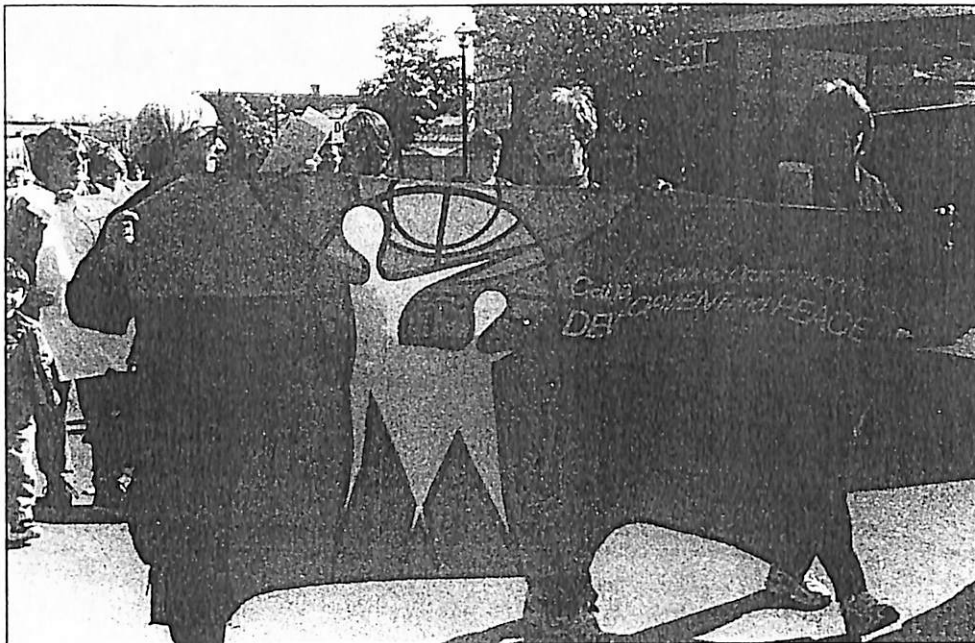
Also addressing the vigil were Coady participants Sarah Garap of Papua New Guinea who read an original poem and S. Geethajohn of India who sang.

This week's vigil will be "godmothered" by the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union. Groups that "godmothered" weekly vigils in the past months are invited to send representatives to a banner-making workshop Saturday, Oct. 7, 1 to 3 p.m. at the CACL on Kirk Street. Large banners will be made for the grand finale Oct. 14.

Vigils are hosted each Wednesday from 12 noon to 12:30 p.m. in front of the Antigonish town hall. For more information contact Sr. Brenda Lee Boisvert, csm, at 863-3113, Joanne Tomblins at 863-6965 or Katherine Reed at 863-6221.



COADY INTERNATIONAL Institute participants S. Geethajohn (left) and Sr. Agnes Fernandez (right), both of India, addressed the World March of Women 2000 vigil in Antigonish last week. Olga Gladkikh, manager of Canada-based programs at Coady, was among the over 70 people gathered for the vigil.



COLLEEN CAMERON (left), Judy Kawaja and Josie England carry the banner for the Catholic Church social justice group Development and Peace at Saturday's World March of Women parade through the town of Antigonish. Over 90 people followed a police escort from the town hall, along Main Street, St. Ninian Street and Church Street to St. James United Church.



SR. ANNE MacLellan (left), csm, Sr. Arlene MacKinnon, csm, and Sr. Isabel MacEachern, csm, were among the sisters of St. Martha represented at Saturday's World March of Women closing march in Antigonish. Other church-based groups represented at the march were the Anglican Church Women, the United Church Women and Development and Peace.



MEGAN SIOUX Lafford of Afton First Nations was among the over 90 people who joined Saturday's closing World March of Women 2000 activities in Antigonish. Lafford's poster board recalls the memory of her grandaunt Annie Mae Pictou Aquash of Pictou Landing who was killed in the native uprising at Wounded Knee in the American southwest. Her death was never satisfactorily explained.

Vigil ends, poverty, violence continue

by Monica MacKinnon

Although local World March of Women vigils wrapped up last week, the community is a long way from saying goodbye to poverty and violence, Katherine Reed of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre said.

Groups and individuals who participated in the vigils want to continue the education process and join in actions that address poverty, violence and inequality in the community, Sr. Brenda Boisvert, csm, said.

Reed, Sr. Boisvert and Joanne Tompkins of the Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice organized the weekly vigils over the past 33 weeks, in conjunction with the international World March of Women. Designed to raise awareness about poverty and violence faced by women around the world, local vigils were addressed by over 24 groups that deal with issues of poverty, violence and inequality.

Local vigils, held every Wednesday at noon from March 8 to Oct. 11, concluded Saturday with over 90 people marching through town. About 80 people gathered after the march to discuss how the vigils affected the local community.

"The vigils were consciousness raising and coalition building," Tompkins said. Different groups learned from one another. "[People are now able] to challenge prevailing views that equity already exists and that this is as good as it gets."

The organizers agree the vigils, which drew crowds of up to 70 each week, served to unite a number of previously disconnected organizations that work to address issues of poverty, violence and inequality.

Groups and agencies represented over the past eight months included the Anglican Church Women; United Church Women; Development and Peace; the Sisters of St. Martha; unions; 10 Day for Global Justice; the Coady International Institute; Black women's groups, women in the fisheries; educa-



ANGELA YELLOW HAIR (left) and Denise Googoo of Afton First Nations community carried a banner in Saturday's World March of Women wrap up in Antigonish. Over a dozen groups were represented in the march that concluded the weekly Antigonish vigils to raise awareness of violence, poverty and injustice experienced by women around the world.

tional groups; organizations that address economic justice, affordable housing and anti-poverty initiatives; the schizophrenia society; health organizations; and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Bringing groups together helps people see the connections between issues like mental health and poverty, Sr. Boisvert said. The variety of groups addressing the vigil helped identify the local faces of poverty.

She also said the vigils offered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha insight into the suffering experienced in the local community because of poverty, violence and injustice.

"For us it was an experience of being in solidarity with a number of groups," she said. "[We were able to hear people] at a grassroots level as they cried out for justice and just ways. Just standing there raised my awareness."

Tompkins also said the vigils served to empower people, especially in a small town where being part of a public protest is difficult.

"Seeing so many concerned people coming out for 33 weeks...broke down the isolation among groups."

The vigils helped to build solidarity in the community for further action,

including activity to address upcoming welfare cuts, she said.

Reed said the vigils supported the initiatives of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, which has a history of working with women facing situations of poverty and violence. "The vigils gave us a fantastic opportunity to educate the community about the issues."

Participants in Saturday's discussion said they are interested in meeting

monthly to share information and identify actions that can be taken to alleviate poverty and violence.

Other groups around the world are also wrapping up their World March activities. Groups represented at the local march included unions, church and social justice groups and Mi'kmaq First Nations.

THE CASKET, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2000

World March of Women 2 0 0 0

