

Women's law conference subject

The third Biennial Conference of the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) was held in Calgary weeks ago. The theme of the conference was Women and the Law.

Workshops were held on: Marriage Contracts, Judicial Separation, Native Women and the Law, Property, Separation Agreements and the Property Rights of Common-Law Partners. Other workshops were on: Organizing a Political Campaign, Starting a Business,

Business Interviews and Assertiveness, Credit, Insurance and Pensions.

A panel discussion was also held on Sexual Assault Offences and the proposed changes to the Criminal Code, with speakers from the Law Reform Commission and from the Department of Justice.

The majority of people attending the conference were women lawyers and law students. Although the workshops dealt with Alberta and Federal law various caucuses from across Canada sent representatives so the

legislation of the other provinces was considered.

Much emphasis was placed on the new Matrimonial Property Act which became law in Alberta on Jan. 1, 1979. The effectiveness or appropriateness of the law has yet to be tested in the courts.

Many of the participants in the workshop were in favour of making Marriage Contracts mandatory. This would mean that when a woman gets a marriage licence, she also gets a document telling her all her legal rights and how marriage will affect them.

The keynote speaker was Judy LaMarsh who also attended several workshops. She said that women were "... the darlings of the common law" and were "over-protected and under-protected at the same time."

While changes have taken place in the last 20 years LaMarsh says that the present is a "time of digestion", for there is still much to be done. Judges she said, have "their feet mired in concrete". Important changes to legislation are made in the cabinet, said LaMarsh and she urged women to become more

involved in the political process.

In reply to a question about the number of women running in the coming federal election (6% in '79 as opposed to 14% in the last election), LaMarsh said she thought the drop was due to the fact that the coming election was going to be "tight". Parties are leaving little to chance, and are running sure candidates.

The conference wound up with the drafting of several resolutions to be sent to the appropriate governments concerning changes that NAWL would like to see to existing and proposed legislation.

Finances tough for native women at U



Barb Kelley, a non-status Salish Indian from Harrison Hot Springs, B.C., the road has been tough. A single parent of two children, she is finishing her Education degree this year.

Kelley entered university as a mature student with only a grade 9 education and little idea of how to organize her time to handle five courses and their demands. She says on the whole, she has not regretted her decision, although the temptation to drop out has been strong at times. She currently plans to apply to graduate school and study alternative methods of adult education in the north.

Nearly half of the native women on campus are actively involved with the NSC and Kelley says they are aware of the issues surrounding their people and women in general. One of the club's activities is to encourage high school students to continue their education.

Financial and family concerns often make it hard for native women to cope with the demands of a university education. Says Barb Kelley, president of the Native Students' Club:

Of the 65 native students attending the U of A, approximately 50 are women, many enrolled in Arts and Education programmes. In addition, nearly one third of these women are single parents - which makes keeping

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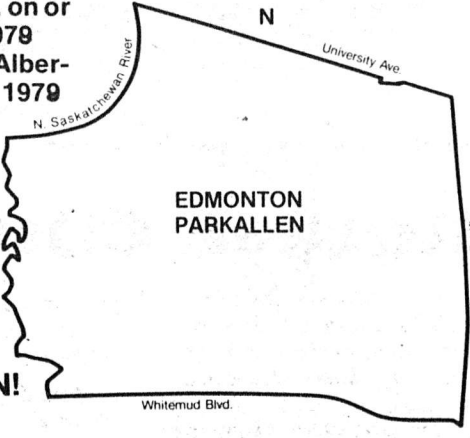
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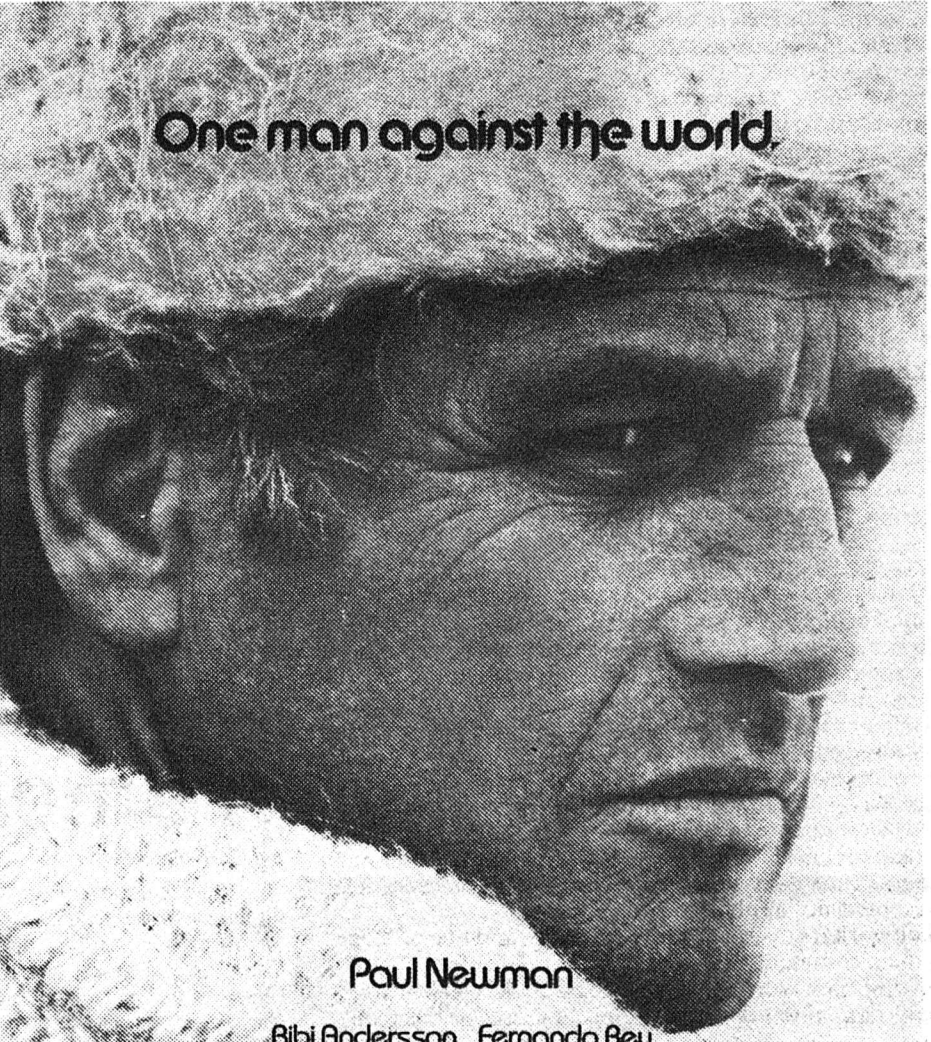
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