

News & Views

International News Highlights from 1992

Still Suffering Nonsuffrage in "Liberated" Kuwait

Despite the much hyped "liberation" of Kuwait and the first "free" elections in seven years, Kuwaiti women are still not allowed to vote. In fact, only 14 percent of the country's 600,000 citizens were allowed to vote in last fall's election - men over the age of 21 who can trace their origins in the emirate to before 1920. In addition to fighting for the right to vote in the "liberated" Kuwait, women are pressing for the right to be judges and prosecutors, for equal rights in housing and education and for full citizenship for the children of the 8,000 Kuwaiti women married to naturalized Kuwaitis.

Feminism Dead? Not!

Despite asinine reports in the mainstream media, including Canada's CBC, feminism is not dead. Examples - Gloria Steinem's *Revolution and Religion* and Susan Faludi's *Backlash* few of the shelves and right onto the charts for more than 30 weeks. To top it off, Faludi won the National Book Critics' Circle Award for nonfiction. Other notable contributions: Ellen Chesler's *Woman of Valor* on birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger; Marilyn French's *The War Against Women* and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.

Record Setting March

About 750,000 people took their marching orders and converged on Washington, D.C. last April to demonstrate for reproductive freedom in the March for Women's Lives.

The Truth Shall Prevail

According to polls of yesteryear, Anita Hill lied and Ronald Reagan was a great president. But folks have smartened up. Polls now show that less than half of those surveyed think Reagan was a good president and Anita Hill has made a believer out of the majority of the public.

The "Harm Principle"

Last February, Canada's Supreme Court ruled that obscenity is to be defined by the harm it does to women's pursuit of equality. The harms-based approach to pornography is a world first and breaks the traditional standard of viewing pornography from a male point of view.

Homophobia Gets the Boot

On orders from the Federal Court in October, service in the Canadian military is no longer restricted on the basis of sexual orientation. An Australian government committee recommended that lesbian women and gay men be allowed to serve in the military; the cabinet will likely concur.

News on Campuses

Seven year old Cheltzie Hentz proves you're never too young to fight sexual harassment. For the first time, an elementary school student has filed a sex discrimination complaint. Hentz, of Minnesota, says the Eden Prairie School District failed to implement its sexual harassment policy. She says the boys on a school bus repeatedly made obscene comments and told her to engage in oral sex with her father. The Human Rights Department is investigating.

Quotable Quotes

Women's Rights

"The last time people in this society cared about my rights was when I was a fetus." Stand up comedian Sara Cytron on being a woman and a lesbian.

Date Rape

"If a guy tries to rape you, grab his wiener. Put that razor blade against the base and say, 'Do you want me to cut this off your body?' And remember when they say no, they really mean yes." Comic Ted Bhumberg on the topic of date rape.

Barbie Dolls and Pop Culture

Barbie: "A woman who didn't need high heeled shoes, she had high heeled feet"

Proposals for a new line of dolls spawned by satirical social realism:

"Lesbian Barbie - invisible, Native American Barbie - no longer available since white Barbies have pushed her on the floor, stolen her belongings and killed her; offensive white Barbie celebrated holiday in honour of this. Battered Barbie - burdened with small children, no marketable skills, and no assets; self-esteem sold separately." *Feminist Magazine P.C. Casualties*

The Future

"The only new idea that could save humanity in the twenty-first century is for women to take over the management of the world." Author Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

The "Asshole of the Year Awards" for 1992

- "If the wife comes through as being too strong and too intelligent, it makes the husband look like a wimp." former President Richard Nixon's unsolicited advice to the Clinton campaign via the New York "Times".

- "(They) seemed to be saying 'Here, I've got breasts. Vote for me.'" former Pennsylvania Democratic Party Chair Larry Yatch on women candidates in "Newsweek."

- "Friends, this is radical feminism. The agenda that Clinton...would impose on America - abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units. That's change all right...and it is not the kind of change we can abide in we still call god's country." Pat Buchanan's rant to the Republican National Convention.

Famous Last Words:

"This is supposed to be the Year of the Woman in the Senate. Let's see how they do. I hope a lot of them lose." ex-president Bush in second Presidential debate.

When in Doubt, Blame Women

In Niger, "indecent" women were responsible for the country's drought, according to Muslim fundamentalist clerics in July. As a result, women seen not wearing traditional dress were stripped and beaten by groups of men and boys. The drought continues.

Right Wing Witch Hunt

Equal Rights burned at the stake in Iowa, where a referendum to institute a state ERA was narrowly voted down. Televangelist Pat Robertson argued that it would encourage women to "leave their husbands, kill their children and practice witchcraft."

Access to Abortion

by Valerie Kilfoil

M. spent 14 years struggling to raise her son on her own. She worked at a skilled job that paid her just enough to disqualify her for daycare subsidies.

M. was engaged to be married when she became pregnant last year. She was 40.

Four months into the pregnancy she found out things about her fiancée that she couldn't live with. She said she had no choice when it came to abortion. "I spent 14 years raising a son in poverty. Another baby would have meant 18 years of the same. I couldn't do it all over again."

"When people talk about choice, they don't really understand that in reality, there is no choice. It's not a matter of having an abortion or not having an abortion. It's a matter of having a hungry child and no food to feed him," she said. M. quickly found out although she had no option other than abortion, it was not easy to have one in Atlantic Canada. On Prince Edward Island, there have been no legal abortions performed since 1982. An estimated 200



women each year leave the province seeking abortions. The Prince Edward Island government will reimburse women for the money they spend on an abortion, if a panel of five doctors agrees with their reason for having one.

Newfoundland has one doctor who performs abortions at a hospital in St. John's. These abortions are paid for by the province, but a woman must have the approval of a gynecologist, a psychiatrist and a social worker as well as counseling by a registered nurse. Clinic abortions are not covered by the province's health plan, though women have access to a Morgentaler clinic.

Nova Scotia women have the most liberal access to abortions. Ten hospitals perform abortions and they are paid for by the province. There is a clinic in Halifax that has been the centre of a legal battle between the province and Dr. Henry Morgentaler. The province tried to prevent the clinic from opening. Dr. Morgentaler won his case in provincial court but the Nova Scotia government has appealed to the Supreme Court. *Continued on page seven*

Screaming No!

by Tammy Yates

I took a self-defence course recently. We practised screaming "No!" and talked about ways to avoid/get away from dangerous situations. More than anything, the course reinforced my confidence. Talking about this afterward with some friends - and demonstrating my new found skill in throwing a pretty good punch - they commented that perhaps I was a bit too confident. They reminded me that I still wouldn't [pdr ,iv] pg s yjtrsy yp s epif-nr syssvlt/ zo fodshtrr/

Projecting confidence may well prove to be my most effective weapon. An attacker lurking in the bushes is not likely to bother a woman with a "Don't mess with me walk." Of course, studies tell us that the majority of attacks do not come from strangers, but from someone the victim knows (e.g., The UNB/STU Unwanted Sexual Experiences Survey reported that almost 93 percent of victims knew their aggressors). IN these cases, confidence is an even more important weapon - a guy is far less likely to assault me if he knows I'll fight back/report him.

Now in fairness to my friends, I think they were suggesting that I should be careful not to be "overly" confident and put myself into dangerous situations. Here again, I believe a good dose of confidence will by my best defence. A confident woman is observant of her environment and takes precautions to avoid danger. A confident woman is assertive enough to ask someone to walk her home/t other car. A confident woman reports someone following her or any other incident. A confident woman says "No!" when she feels uncomfortable.

We all have the right to a safe campus, but we have not been active enough in demanding change to improve our personal safety. In the United States, there is now federal legislation which require all universities receiving federal money, either directly or indirectly (i.e., through operating grants of student aid), to report annually to student, faculty and staff on the number of reported assaults on campus. Referred to as the "Clery Law" after the New York family who lobbied for its passage after their daughter was brutally raped and murdered in her university residence room, I believe this legislation is a positive step toward raising awareness on the issue of violence on campuses. Some critics may argue that this type of legislation does nothing to prevent further violence and will simply add to the fear and hysteria many women feel. Again, I disagree.

It is important to note that the Clery Law does not

allow for sensational media exposes, rather it demands factual and honest reporting of incidents of violence on campuses. WE have the right to know this information so that we may adequately defend ourselves. We are mature women and can handle the facts - Hey, they even let us vote now! Furthermore, a mechanism which insures that assaults are accurately publicized would help alleviate the problem of terror-filled rumours that regularly spread around campus.

As to whether or not legislation of this type can prevent further acts of violence, I believe it can. Many incidents go unreported to Security/Police because the victims feel nothing is accomplished by telling. If these survivors knew that the pertinent facts of their assault (i.e., when, where, how - not names) would be publicized so that other women could better defend themselves, I think more women would start speaking out. As well, if Security/Police were aware of these assaults, they could take measures to improve their own prevention practices.

UNB is desperately in need of work. Our campus is not safe. Fortunately, this issue is being raised and there are hopes/plans for improvement. What can be done? A comprehensive safety audit of campus should be conducted to identify problem areas. As well, an effective safe-walk program needs to be established - one that is highly promoted and uses males and females in escort teams. Furthermore, the University must alert us when incidents of violence are reported to them so that we can better defend ourselves. We have a fight to know the danger we face.

Finally, regular self-defence courses should be offered so that every woman has the opportunity to learn how to avoid danger and how to protect herself if necessary. Hand in hand with this is the need for educational programs. Men and women both could benefit from healthy discussions on the realities of living in our violent society. Women need to be reminded that we are worth defending. Men need to be taught that all forms of violence are unacceptable. Prank phone calls are not funny - they terrify us. Being followed is not flattering - it is frightening.

At the self-defence course I took, the instructor asked each one of us to give one reason why we are worth defending. I hold them, "I am worth defending because I am too busy to waste my time being a victim!" I do not want to live my life in fear. The University Administration and the Student Union have responsibility to ensure our safety on this campus. It is time for us to demand a safe campus.