

My favourite colour ...

...is leather.

Eva Pendzich

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International Women's Awareness Day



International Women's Week Supplement

ASWAC works on common issues

by Siobhan Avery

The Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC) defines itself as "a feminist organization dedicated to improving the status of women in Alberta." The concept of a provincial organization arose out of the necessity felt by some Alberta women to bring women together to work on issues of common concern.

The first years of action focused on lobbying the government for an advisory council and a permanent minister responsible for the status of women, affirmative action, increased representation on provincial boards and commissions and changes to legislation. Around 1979 the focus of the organization began to shift to the work, activities, skills, strengths fears and anger of Alberta women.

Now, the primary aim of ASWAC is to educate and create support for women so they can develop their own confidence and strength to organize to improve the position of women in our society. Currently, ASWAC is working with the Maintenance Enforcement Action Committee, formed by women who are concerned with the fact that 85 per cent of court-ordered payments for child support are ignored, leaving the onus on the single mother to find and persuade the father to pay.

The Action Committee recommends a system similar to Manitoba's Central Registry under which fathers mail cheques to the court. Upon failure to do so, the court is responsible for enforcing the payments. ASWAC is expecting some kind of proposal to result from the spring sitting of the Alberta Legislature.

ASWAC receives funds from the Federal Secretary of State while the provincial government funds an annual conference and specific projects. ASWAC acts as an umbrella organization. Because it is the only officially recognized provincial women's organization, it has access to resources such as an office and full-time staff — that other groups may not. Therefore, ASWAC acts as a network between other groups, sharing resources with them.

The provincial government has its own organization called the Women's Secretariat which, like ASWAC, works for the improvement of the status of women in Alberta. However, the two groups work in different ways and fulfill different roles. The Secretariat is a government department and ASWAC is concerned with issues of a less political nature.

ASWAC operates on a diversified, non-hierarchical structure. An office is maintained in Edmonton by the two full-time staff members: an office co-ordinator and an organizer who travels throughout the province meeting women and groups they are involved with. A board is formed annually at the fall

assembly, and consists of women from different regions of the province who volunteer to direct their energies into ASWAC for a year or two. The board works as a collective with the staff, holding open meetings two days every six weeks somewhere in the province.

There is also plenty of opportunity for the individual involvement of Alberta women, as their membership is the most crucial aspect of ASWAC. If a woman is concerned with a particular issue, ASWAC can not only provide her with support but assist in finding ways to act on the issues, including forming a group for collective action.

The office maintains a wide variety of print resources on women's issues which can be used by members as well as an extensive bank of "people" resources who may be contacted in connection with specific interests or problems.

The Newsletter is another opportunity for individual involvement.

Focusing on relevant topics and news (such as conferences and legislation) and inviting input on an "Ideas" page, the newsletter is a vital communicative and education forum for ASWAC.

The membership itself generally consists of women who wish to take action within their own lives to improve the status of women. Individual situations and isolation from other women make it difficult for many members to participate in visible action and to take on additional responsibilities, but they are a vital part of ASWAC as it is important to maintain a link with what women are doing.

Staff-person Amanda LeDougetel believes that ASWAC will be necessary as a voice for women for a long time. "The concept of pro-choice does not refer to abortion alone. Women need more choices within their lives: jobs, the places they live, the resources available for child care — we are working to



Graphic: Marie Clifford

further the choices open to women."

Persons interested in ASWAC

may contact the office by phoning 424-3073.

Gateway explores employment prospects for U of A graduates

Dedication pays-off for law students

It is clear from all accounts that the primary concern of today's university student is his/her employment prospects upon graduation. Not necessarily concerns of how quickly he/she will enter the ranks of the envied Yuppie, but rather, "will I be able to get a job to support myself. Will I be able to work in my chosen career." These concerns more than any other, influence students when they select the faculty to enter in university.

This issue, the Gateway begins a series that will explore the employment situation for graduating students in many of the faculties on campus. For example, how many students gain employment when they graduate? Are employment prospects improving? What career choices are there for students unable to work in their chosen faculty. Today, the faculty of Law.

by Susan Sutton

Law graduates from the U of A are getting jobs. Maybe not in Edmonton or Calgary, but they are getting jobs.

Budding lawyers spend one year articling with firms before being called to the bar. Of 160 graduates from the 1983-84 class, only two have not been placed.

"It's tight," says Leonard Pollock, a professor specializing in family law at the U of A. "In the early '80s, students would be kept on by the firms they articulated with. Now the firms are saying 'if we can't keep the students, we don't want to give them articles.' But you can always get a job if you're prepared to go outside Calgary or Edmonton, if you're willing to go to the boon-docks. In Vancouver or Toronto you might spend a couple of years



Lawyer Leonard Pollock

driving a taxi first."

Pollock said students could also article for companies or the government, as well as law firms.

He feels there are too many "average" students in law today. "A firm wants to hire a winner," he said.

A winner, according to Pollock, has incentive, dedication, and reasonable marks, in the 6 to 7 range. He stressed that "These are people who are getting 7s and 8s in arts."

Asked for advice he would give to prospective law students, Pollock said he "would discourage anyone, if they weren't in it for the right reasons."

"Those who are really interested will do it. If you're doing it for money or status, forget it, because you're not motivated properly. You'll never get rich as a lawyer," he said.

He went on to say "if you think it might be interesting, if you like dealing with people, and if you can

put together a coherent sentence, then the water's fine."

He also stressed that law is not just for arts students. "There's room here for people who are in, say, science, as well."

In addition to warning that one rarely becomes wealthy as a lawyer, he warned against other misconceptions about law.

"Don't think you'll sit around discussing philosophical concepts about crime and punishment. It's

not glamorous. You'll be digging around in musty old volumes to find the rules and principles of law that apply to real life."

So it appears that the hard-working, dedicated law student will find employment. Students may have to work "in the boon-docks" for a while, or even set up private practice, but there are jobs to be had. Pollock concluded by saying that, "those who don't get placed haven't really hustled."

Lister Hall complaints

by Mark Olyan

According to Joe Corrigan, President of the Lister Hall Students Association (LHSA), "residents of Lister Hall are finally realizing that they're getting ripped off."

"So far," said Corrigan, "150 people have moved out and they have to pay a 15 per cent penalty to do this. What ultimately upsets people? The room and board just doesn't add up. At Lister Hall, all money must be paid by January 25... that's up front money. The students are angry at the lack of competitiveness and the cutting of hours."

A source in the LHSA who wished not to be identified, admitted "there have been all the usual student complaints this year and some other (new) problems. People think the costs are too high, and some say \$3535 is just too expensive for what they get (room and board). Also, we got a few problems about the noise, but really this hasn't been a big problem so far."

"There are the usual complaints about the food," said the source,

"and of course, the change in cafeteria hours was a big issue."

On February 5, students in Lister Hall boycotted the meal as a protest against what they felt were excessive prices, low quality food and poor service hours.

Corrigan, called the boycott "very successful" and remarked that "out of 900-1100 people who usually eat dinner there, only 35 people chose to eat in Lister Hall during the boycott."

According to the LHSA source, "by cutting down on our hours of serving, for example by serving lunch on weekends from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., instead of 1:30 p.m., our labour saving was in the amount of \$50,000. This is very substantial."

"When you have a cafeteria," understated the Lister Hall source, "there's always going to be a few problems."

Gail Brown, Director of Housing and Food Services, refused to comment on the students' complaints saying only, "I cannot comment at this time... it would be unfair to discuss this issue."