

In the words of Ms. M. Macdonald, Chairman of the Social Action Committee for the Halifax Transition House Association:

"Ten years ago the first women who struggled to get a transition house in Halifax were certainly up against prevalent attitudes that domestic violence was not a big problem and that in fact there was no need for a transition house because you could not fill it, you could not operate it effectively because there would not be enough women. That has been anything but true. We are generally at full capacity and in fact have an overflow quite often.

The public perception has certainly changed. People do accept that it is a problem now and, I believe, start to see it in their own community and recognize it more often. (Halifax, April 13, 1987)

The problem of sexual assault is a major concern. Representatives of the P.E.I. Rape and Sexual Assault Centre describe sexual assault as a life threatening situation; the greatest trauma a person can experience, short of being brutally murdered. The trauma does not end with the healing of physical wounds. Restoring the psychological well-being of the victim can prove to be a slow and painful process requiring counselling, financial support and safe shelter for women and their children.

The Consulting Committee on the Status of Women with Disabilities told the Committee that:

"Girls and women with disabilities are more likely to be assaulted or abused than non-disabled women, although most services for victims of violence are not accessible to disabled women." (Winnipeg, March 31, 1987)

The very recent Report by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Battered But Not Beaten, estimates that each year nearly one million women in Canada may be battered. A brief submitted by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses states that "much more needs to be achieved in the provision of protection, adequate, affordable housing, choice of employment, affordable daycare, and ultimately a change in attitudes toward women in general and to women who are the victims of assault in particular."

Pornography furthers violence against women by reinforcing the perception that women are inferior and "that men can expect women to be available to service their sexual needs."<sup>7</sup> The Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution argued that "...pornography lowers the status of women thereby contravening the guarantee of equality and striking at the very root of Canadian society which is premised on the dignity and worth of all its members."<sup>(8)</sup>