

March

by Paula Clarke

Last Saturday, 120 people marched through downtown Halifax in support of abortion rights. The demonstration was part of the national day of action called for by the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), the Pro-Choice Network (PCAN) and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). Rallies, marches, and demonstrations were held in 30 cities across Canada.

The march was initially organized by two members of the International Socialists, but eventually was coordinated under the auspices of PCAN. The rally was attended by a large number of people from various women's groups and labour unions.

CARAL called for a day of action in opposition to Bill C-43, the proposed law which would recriminalize abortion. Even though the bill has not yet been passed by the senate, it appears the ramifications are already being felt. Out of 700 doctors who perform abortions in Canada, 60 have already stopped. Another 150 doctors have threatened to stop if the bill becomes law.

In a recent poll, 87 per cent of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) members are against the recriminalization of abortion. Less than a week after the bill was passed in parliament, a Toronto woman died from a botched, self-induced abortion.

The march started in the Grand Parade and ended in Victoria Park. The protestors were restricted to the sidewalks because the police department refused to issue a permit for the march.

Paula Cornwell, a spokesperson for PCAN, called for support from other minorities. "Once the government takes away a woman's right to control her body, gays and visible minorities are in a much weaker position to fight for their

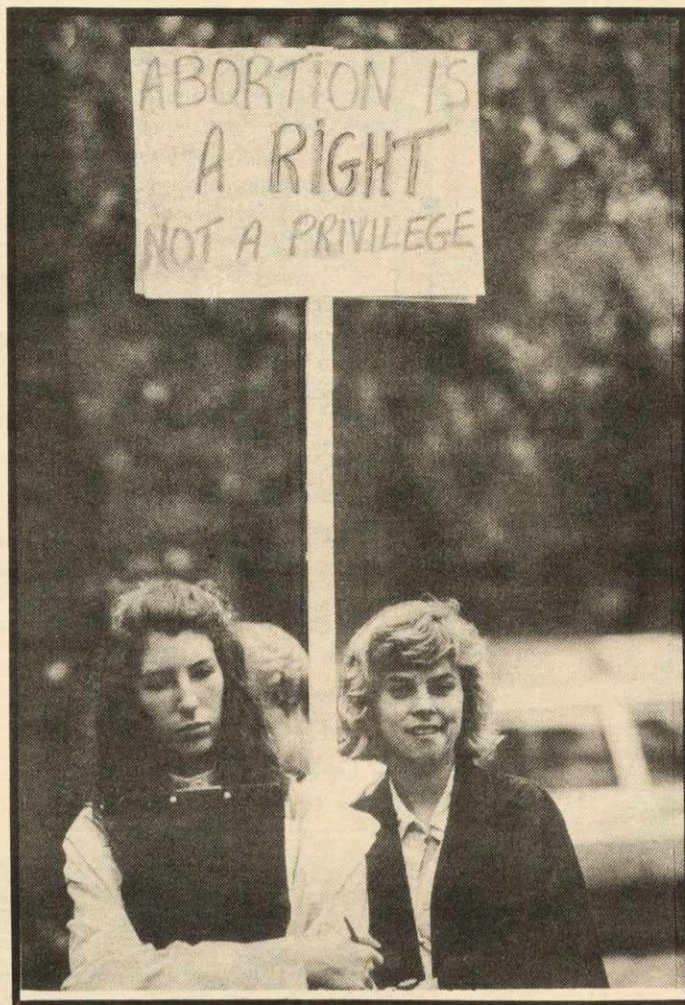


photo: Mark Earhard: Dal Photo

rights. Solidarity among oppressed groups is key to winning human rights for everyone."

Members of the gay community were present at the march. Brent Southin, from Toronto, said that inadequate access to abortion is a homosexual problem as well. "I believe that it is a fundamental right for people to control their own bodies, and as a gay man that has always been a major struggle of mine."

Speakers at the rally included Alexa McDonough of the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party, Nancy Riche of the Canadian Labour Congress, Paulette Sadoway of the Halifax/Dartmouth District Labour Council and Annette Chiasson of the Pro-Choice Action Group.

In her speech, McDonough called on the senate to reject the bill. "We have to cooperate with the devil, or even the Senate of

old farts if need be, to defeat this [proposed] law."

The march was timed to coincide with the trial against Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Sandra Lanz, the supervisor at Morgentaler's Halifax clinic, said that access to abortion in the Maritimes is dangerously inadequate.

"Over 350 women left the Atlantic region last year to go to the Morgentaler clinics in Montreal and Toronto. Our government says that access is adequate in the Maritimes, well, their definition of adequate does not equate with equal or universally insured," said Lanz.

This year, 53 women from Nova Scotia and more than 150 women in Newfoundland have had to go to Montreal and pay for their abortions, she said.

The Morgentaler decision is expected to be handed down Friday morning at 10:30.

Catholics choose

by Allison Johnston

Pro-choice Catholic Frances Kissling addressed and explained her organization's position on the abortion issue last week. The lecture was at Henson College on October 9 and touched on the Roman Catholic Church's attitudes towards sex, women, and abortion.

Frances Kissling is president of Catholics for a Free Choice. It is an organization based in Washington, D.C. that was formed in the early 1970's after abortion was legalized in the United States.

Catholics for a Free Choice is a "voice for many pro-choice Catholics". There are 300 Roman Catholic bishops in the United States, and there are 52 million Roman Catholics. From the statistics given in the lecture, only 15 per cent of the Roman Catholics in the U.S.A. support the bishop's view on the abortion issue, which is that under no circumstance may a woman have an abortion. Not even in cases of incest, rape, or risk of physical harm to the woman is the abortion alternative tolerated.

Kissling believes that this strong stand is not based on biblical or spiritual beliefs but is based on "profound male rage at the potential loss of power that our church leaders will experience if women within the church and society are permitted to make this decision."

The lecture consisted of several parts. Kissling spoke about the Church's historical inconsistencies about life and death and killing. She also dealt with the Church's attitudes towards sexuality and women. Her whole focus was to prove her theory that the Church's stand on abortion has little to do with the commandment 'thou shalt not kill', and a lot to do with the patriarchal church system in which men are the leaders and women are not.

Kissling did note that the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope have not taken a stand on when the fetus becomes a person. In 1974 the Vatican issued a statement which condemned all abortion under any circumstance. However, the reason given was not that the fetus was a person at the moment of conception, but rather the fetus had potential for 'personhood'.

Bishops in the United States often refer to abortion as 'murder' and 'killing'. Kissling noted that they are talking not about persons, but fetuses that have potential for 'personhood'. However, killing in war of real persons is "always tragic" but not a mortal sin. In those circumstances there is a loss of real full fledged persons. She went on to refute the argument of guilty life and innocent life by stating that those who go to war do not freely give up their right to life.

Kissling argued that the Church has a fear of "sexuality, the body, and women." Throughout history, the church has made statements on when and how sexual intercourse is or is not to be performed. The clergy in the Roman Catholic Church is celibate, because not having sex makes them somehow holier and healthier and closer to God. Ever since Eve and the garden of Eden, women are at fault, she said.

The religions that are the most adamantly 'pro-life' are those which are male dominated. They are those which have a celibate clergy and those that do not admit women into the clergy. Islam, Judaism, and Roman Catholicism were among those that were named, noted Kissling.

Frances Kissling was asked if the Roman Catholic Church has tried to excommunicate or silence her campaign. She said they have

continued on p. 13

Author claims abortion unsafe

by Amber Creaghan

Less than 30 people showed up for the first in a series of Dalhousie Student Union-sponsored discussions dealing with rights of women concerning legalized abortion.

Ann Saltenberger, the author of "Abortion, Choice or Chance?" and "Every woman has the right to know the dangers of legal abortion", addressed these issues October 9 in the McInnes Room of the Dal S.U.B.

Saltenberger, a single mother from New Jersey, is a pro-life activist. Her opinion was obvious and prevalent in the discussion,

however, the main theme of her topic is undoubtedly an important concern for both pro-life and pro-choice advocates.

Women, in choosing abortion, regardless of moral implications, must be made aware of any medical risks inherent in the abortion procedure, according to Saltenberger.

Saltenberger, as an advocate against the term "safe, legal abortion" refers to it as "the brute force method of pregnancy termination". She says women in this situation are not being given all the facts and doctors who

"promote and profit from abortion" are not concerned with providing their patients with enough information on the numerous and varied possibilities of complications.

A hospital abortion is just as safe as a hotel (room) abortion," says Saltenberger, who goes so far as to draw an analogy between women consenting to abortion and an unaware laborer exposed to dangerous chemicals. "Women considering abortion are consumers...pay your money and take your chances."

Speaking of the "omnipresent risks" association with abortion,

Saltenberger draws from examples of particular cases where complications have arisen either during or post surgery: hemorrhaging, lacerations, perforation or rupture of the uterus, infection, even death are among the hazardous risks of this "unnecessary surgery," she says.

Despite the fact that accurate statistics concerning the mortality rate due to abortion are virtually unobtainable, Saltenberger states without mentioning specific sources that in one year of all abortions performed, 77,000 suffered complications and 29

women died. There is no federal or provincial legislation requiring a doctor to reveal statistics on deaths or injuries resulting directly from abortion.

It is necessary that women know what has happened to other women before consenting to an abortion, said Saltenberger. She suggests it should be mandatory for abortionists, when dealing with their patients, to reveal all pertinent information including relevant case histories. Women have a right to know that "literally tens of thousands of women have been injured or crippled for life; thousands have died."