

# Battered women face a legal wall of silence

WATERLOO (CUP) — "Under the current legal system, little or no hope exists for a battered wife."

That's the stark conclusion of a study done by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs into family violence.

The report said that a 1975-76 Vancouver study revealed police responded to only 53 per cent of calls concerning domestic violence, although they answered almost all break-and-enter calls.

If a woman is fortunate enough to get the police to respond, states the report, police policy is not to arrest the husband unless the woman is severely injured or the beating has been witnessed by a third party.

All too often the police simply calm down the man and hope for the best, it states. The woman is offered no support because the police officers are not trained to deal with this violence and they know little about agencies that could help the victim.

A battered woman faces many legal barriers if she presses an assault charge, the report continues. Until the necessary papers have been filed to prevent her assailant from harming her and giving her possession of the house, the assailant is free to beat the woman again.

Current laws allow the man accused of battery to go free on bail until his trial. Without legal changes allowing the woman quick access to protection, states the report, she has no choice but to take the children and move out.

The report defined wife battering as violent behavior directed by a man towards a woman with whom the man lives or has lived, regardless of the relationship's legal status. This violent behavior ranged from kicking, biting, choking and punching up to sexual assault and murder.

Although the report estimated that at least one in ten Canadian women are beaten by their husbands or lovers, only 85 shelters or transition houses to help battered

women existed in 1981. These shelters must turn away many more women than they accommodate due to space shortages.

The committee report recommended several changes to the legal system, including:

— The federal government should fund more shelters;

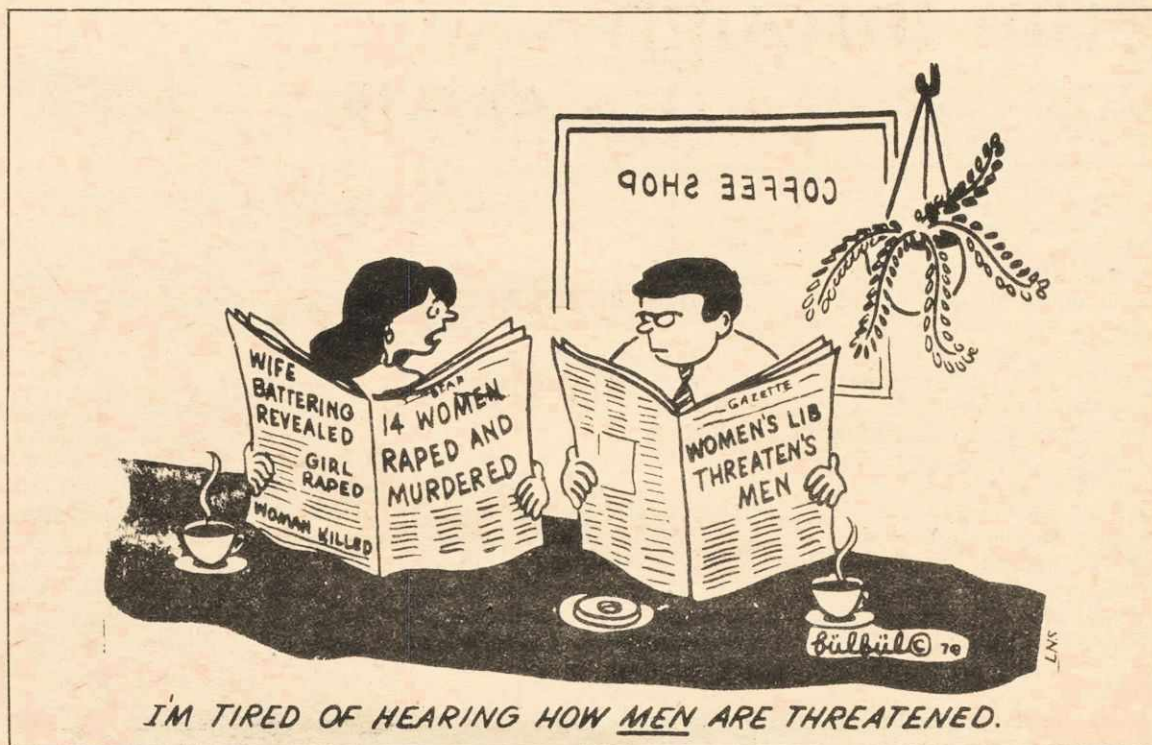
— A certain number of units in housing subsidised by the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation should be reserved for permanent housing for battered women with children;

— The problem and women's legal rights should be publicised through the media and inserts in family allowance cheques;

— The police should be trained to deal with domestic violence;

— Research into treatment of both victims and assailants should be conducted.

The report stressed that wife battering "is a criminal activity and as such is a matter for state intervention."



I'M TIRED OF HEARING HOW MEN ARE THREATENED.

## Conception of life reverses former pro-abortionist's views

by Nancy Ross

During the weekend of October 15-17 the annual conference of the Council for Life-Nova Scotia was held in Yarmouth, with pro-life organizations represented from across the province. The theme of the three-day conference was "Celebration of Life" with focus on "the family as the hope of the future". Dr. Bernard Nathanson from New York City was featured as a main guest speaker.

Dr. Nathanson, who had been instrumental in founding the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) in the United States in 1968, has completely reversed his position on abortion after a series of studies in the area of fetalogy. Dr. Nathanson, responsible for organizing what was considered the largest abortion clinic in the world, which conducted 60,000 abortions

in two years (70-72), now believes that life begins at conception.

He stated that he had felt justified in conducting so many abortions because he had been ignorant of the state of the fetus as a result of his training at the McGill Medical School. As a result of his recent studies in fetalogy he first became aware of life in the womb because of the technology which has produced ultra sound.

Dr. Nathanson said that during his previous campaign to sell abortion to the American public he followed two main strategies. He first coined slogans which are oft-used today such as "a woman has the right to control her own body" and "it's a matter to be kept between the doctor and the woman". Dr. Nathanson stated that he now feels these slogans are hollow.

Secondly, he once encouraged NARAL to identify all opposition to permissive abortion with the

Catholic Church because he knew political attack against this church had been a subtle and extremely powerful force in politics. He stated that this anti-Catholic strategy is still very much alive today with such books written on this prejudice as *The Enemies of Choice*, etc.

Dr. Nathanson, an atheist, states that abortion is not only a Catholic issue but rather a moral issue that affects every nation and should be the concern of all. He says this fact is exemplified in Japan, a country with little Catholic influence which in his opinion is beginning to turn around on the abortion issue.

Dr. Nathanson stated that the abortion laws in Canada discredit the medical profession because of what he refers to as the hypocritical, deceitful pretense that there is a medical reason for abortion. He says he knew in 1968 there were virtually no medical reasons for abortion and he said this is even

more clearly evident today. However, Sharon Harland, President of Halifax Pro-Life Movement, stated there were 1,367 abortions performed at the Victoria General Hospital in 1981 under the pretext of a medical reason.

Nathanson concluded his talk with this statement: "If we fail to take a stand and revoke the abortion laws, history will never forgive us."

Others are now taking such a stand. Fr. Bernard MacDonald of St. Francis Xavier University is such a person. Fr. MacDonald is a prominent pro-life proponent whose on-going dispute with Revenue Canada concerning the use of tax dollars to support abortion programs has received national and international press coverage. Fr. MacDonald will be speaking on this issue Friday, November 5 in the MacMechan Auditorium of the Killam Library at 7:00 o'clock.

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