

Pro-choice anti-abortion groups battle in N.S.

By MICHAEL DANIELS

The abortion debate has received wide media attention outside the Atlantic region through controversies surrounding it, but abortion groups in Nova Scotia continue their efforts to educate the public on key issues despite a lack of publicity.

While attention has been focused in the past year on the legal battles in Ontario and Manitoba over Henry Morgentaler's abortion clinics in those provinces, two groups here in Halifax have been actively petitioning the politicians.

Nova Scotians United For Life (NSUL), a pro-life organization, sent a petition to the provincial

legislature.

Canada's abortion law states that abortions may be performed only in accredited hospitals with the approval of a therapeutic abortion committee. Approval is given only to those cases where the pregnancy endangers the life or health of the woman.

The provincial government's response has been cautious.

"The provincial government has been unwilling to take responsibility to tighten things up here," said Terry Hare, past president of NSUL.

Hare says the provincial government thinks abortion is within federal jurisdiction.

Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) lobbied during the recent federal election, sending postcards to the candidates to make them aware of the pro-choice position.

Kit Holmwood, a CARAL member, says CARAL is uncertain of the national results of their program until they hear the proposals of the newly-elected federal government. Holmwood says the Halifax NDP candidate's response was favourable. Other Halifax candidates did not respond, with the exception of Howard Crosby.

"The PC (candidate) in Halifax West said he wanted to let the issue stand as it was," said Holmwood.

Although little publicity has come from Nova Scotia newspapers, both groups think they have benefited from the recent Morgentaler controversy.

Henry Morgentaler, a Montréal physician, was arrested in 1983 after a much-publicized raid on his Toronto clinic. This month he and two colleagues will stand trial on charges of performing illegal abortions.

For the pro-choicers it was a triumph in making their concerns public.

Holmwood says the Morgentaler case has made people aware the abortion law was applied unequally across the country.

For the pro-lifers the triumph lay in the court's decision to press charges.

"It is refreshing to see those in authority enforce the (abortion) law," said Hare. "... the man has got to be stopped when he oversteps the law."

NSUL is pressing for stringent enforcement of an abortion law which they say is "unenforceable."

"Abortions are generally rubber stamped," said Hare.

CARAL holds the opposing view, saying the abortion law actually "denies abortions to many Canadian women who need them."

"Some of the hospitals don't have abortion committees," said Holmwood. "Getting an abortion depends on where you live."

CARAL is involved in educating people, especially teenagers, in sexual matters, typically contraception.

Holmwood says teenagers are poorly informed about effective contraception techniques.

"There is a lack of information, especially among the younger people," Holmwood said. "They have to have that information."

In 1981, teenagers accounted for 29 per cent of total abortions in Canada.

Terry Hare of NSUL contends that the majority of abortions are among women between ages 20 and 40 who are informed enough on contraception to avoid unwanted births.

Hare says the real problem is the widespread application of birth control pills overshadowing natural and more effective contraception.

CARAL is planning a pro-choice week in Halifax during Sept. 24-30 to inform people on family planning.

NSUL is preparing their petition to present to the federal government where they hope to receive better results.

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York strike averted at 11th hour

TORONTO (CUP)—Students at York University will have to go to school after all, as administrators and faculty reached a tentative agreement Sept. 10 which averted a possible back-to-school strike.

The one-year contract gives York's 963 full-time professors and librarians a wage increase of 6.5 per cent. The administration and union voted not to seek a longer contract because they are uncertain of the effects on York of a report by a commission examining the future development of Ontario's universities.

The Bovey commission—named after retired entrepreneur Edmund Bovey—is expected to release its report this November.

Wages were not only the only issues in the dispute. Hollace Rinehart, chief negotiator for the faculty association, said control of tenure,

promotion and an affirmative action program were all involved.

"We were concerned about a very aggressive administration that was encroaching on traditional faculty prerogatives, such as appointment processes and tenure," Rinehart said. "They (the administration) thought the faculty could be pushed around."

York's dispute was watched with interest by University of Toronto faculty members, who are considering the possibility of forming a union.

The contract must still be ratified by both parties. York faculty have been unionized since 1976.

Meanwhile in other campus labor news, faculty at Dalhousie University are in negotiations and a strike seems possible. The professors' contract expired last spring.

Prostitutes' clients should be prosecuted—Giffin

By DAVID OLIE

Laws dealing with prostitution should be toughened and include prosecution of prostitutes' clients, says Nova Scotia attorney-general Ron Giffin.

Giffin, speaking at a Dalhousie Law School forum Sept. 13, says his department cannot take decisive action on prostitution because the criminal code is under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Asked whether he would legalize and license prostitution, Giffin said, "I don't intend to propose it," adding in jest, "at least until after the next provincial election."

Giffin said he is also concerned about the problem of pornography, including the expansion of it via video tapes and satellite television.