

♀ ON OUR WAY

Newsletter of the Women's Center
46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
Telephone: (617) 354-8807

SUMMER 1981

EMERGENCY: HUMAN LIFE AMENDMENT (sic)

By now, most of us have heard about the Human Life Amendment (HLA). This is the proposed constitutional amendment which states:

The paramount right to life is vested in each human being from the moment of fertilization without regard to age, health or condition of dependency.

In other words, a fertilized egg would be granted full legal personhood. This would mean:

- that abortion would be considered an act of murder
- that the IUD and many birth control pills would be outlawed, as each prevent implantation of the fertilized egg
- that victims of rape or incest, women carrying deformed or severely diseased fetuses, women whose own lives would be at risk by carrying to fullterm and women who could in no way support another child, would all be unable to obtain a safe, legal abortion.
- that no women would have any control over her own reproductive life. Women's bodies would effectively be considered state property

If you think that we don't have to worry because the HLA sounds too horrible to be considered, or because a constitutional amendment is too difficult to pass, then think again. The right of every woman to safe and legal abortion was won relatively recently (8 years ago!), and it took a long, hard fight to win. It can be lost again! The anti-choice forces are very organized, very determined and hard-working. Already, through medicaid cutbacks and informed parental consent laws, women without money and young women have been denied access to legal abortions.

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ON OUR WAY is an irregular publication! We would like to have it come out on a more regular basis, but we need your help to do this. Please contact us if you would like to help.



COPING WITH THE REAGAN BUDGET

By late winter, the Women's Center had begun to feel the results of Reagan's cutbacks. Suddenly, our entire VISTA Program (scheduled to begin in April and employ three women to do community outreach and staffing) was scrapped by the Feds. A few days later, we were told that CETA funding also would be taken away. (The Center has depended on CETA funds to pay our fulltime staff since 1975). We then began to ask more and more foundations and corporations for financial help, but soon found that the Center was competing with hundreds of other non-profits across the state for the small amounts of money usually given to women's projects.

So, here we are again, asking all of you to dig deep and contribute as much as you can! There are several ways you can do this:

Match-A-Grant:

We are now trying to attract corporate and foundation funding by asking for matching grants. This money will be given

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And, if it looks like it will be impossible to pass the HLA, the New Right has a couple of bills up its sleeve that will accomplish much the same thing.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

PROTEST - call, write or telegram your legislators. Tell them that you are against the HLA and any other anti-choice legislation, and that you vote. Stop supporting churches and other organizations that want to take away our right to choose.

ORGANIZE - Contact groups (see below) working on pro-choice issues, get written material on the HLA to pass out, educate friends, family, co-workers.

SOME PRO-CHOICE GROUPS: National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Mass. Org. for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL), ACLU, Planned Parenthood, N.O.W., Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, American Jewish Congress, Women's Political Caucus.

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EMOTIONAL COUNSELING GROUP

ECC offers free and low priced feminist counseling/therapy to women in the metropolitan Boston area. We offer one-to-one therapy, couple counseling and work in groups. All of the women in our collective work as volunteers. Most have completed therapy training programs; some hold jobs as therapists in other settings or have private practices; some are now completing their formal training in counseling or social work. Although our members differ in terms of their backgrounds and their approaches to clients, we all share a commitment to a feminist philosophy.

In addition to providing free and low cost counseling services, ECC works as a therapy referral service. We have the resources to answer questions such as "Where can I find a feminist therapist I can afford?"; "Where can I find a therapist who works particularly well with my issues?"; "Where can I get help making a job transition?"; "Where can I find help to break a destructive living habit such as alcoholism?".

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to the Center with the stipulation that we must demonstrate community support by getting dollar-for-dollar matching contributions from the general public. One matching grant of \$500 from the Boston Globe has already been received. Now, we must raise an additional \$500 from public donations. So, please try to send us as much as you can! Any size donation -- large or small -- will help us make the match.

Personal Loans:

Some women have been helping the Center by letting us use their money for a while through interest-free personal loans. The Center is then able to get the benefit of investing this money in an interest-bearing account. Your money will be safe. We will give you a written receipt for the loan and will return your money whenever you ask for it, given a few days notice to complete bank transactions. If you have some money now, but are keeping it for a specific purpose such as a vacation or holiday gift-giving, etc., loaning it to the Center in the meantime is one way you can make that cash do double duty.

Pledges:

This letter from a woman who pledges regularly says it all -- we are reprinting it with her permission:

Dear Women's Center,

You may have wondered about the unusually small checks you have been receiving from me twice a month for some time now. Well, it is the only way I can afford to contribute any sizable amount. By sending two dollars a month, at least that way you get it from me, and painlessly I might add -- a grand total of twenty-four dollars a year. Now, if every woman who supported you would contribute at least that much, I am sure you would be doing quite well.

I hope my minute contribution helps. If and when I can, I will add my services as a volunteer again.

In sisterhood,
Carol Chapman

WANTED:

Volunteers experienced in doing upholstery to reupholster chairs and couches at the Women's Center. Call 354-8807 and leave your name, number and the hours you can work. Thank you.

COALITION TO STOP INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

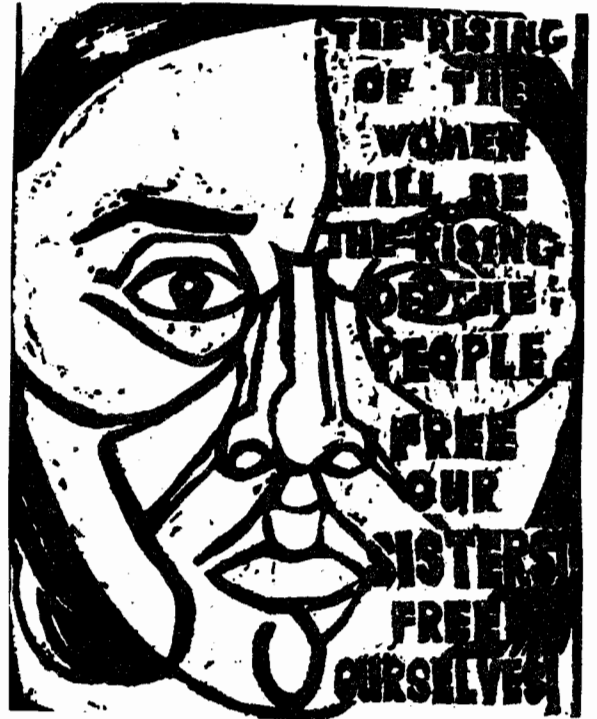
The Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence fights the proliferation of small, maximum-security behavior modification units. We oppose these programs because they represent the vicious merger of the worst aspects of prisons and psychiatry. We successfully blocked the construction of the Worcester ward for women labeled "violent".

Our struggle against the Regional Adolescent Programs is still going on. At the Public Health Council reconsideration meeting last fall, the Worcester RAP was finally granted Certificate of Need (permission to build). The unit will not open, however, until regulations are in place. The Coalition is appealing this decision (oral arguments will be heard sometime in June) and will participate in the regulation hearings. We have not won, but we are still able to delay RAP's opening.

The pediatric/psychiatric unit at U. Mass Medical Center in Worcester will be opening, however. Children will be admitted for any and all causes -- physical illness such as asthma, emotional difficulties, and for being battered. When we suggested that no drugs should be used for any purpose, the Council declared that the unit should just meet the same standards that the Department of Mental Health does! When we asked that each child incarcerated on the unit should have an independent advocate, the Council took this to mean the already appointed case manager. When we urged that short-term stays be strictly enforced (given the deep scars that institutionalization inflicts on young people), the Council decided to review length of stay by diagnosis. The Medical Center need only change the label to insure prolonged commitment. Over one hundred agencies in the region have declared a community need for this service which will cost 1.2 million dollars for eight beds. Young medical professionals and health workers will not learn anything about community health care or preventative medicine in such a setting. It is frightening that this facility that was supposed to "upgrade the quality of health care throughout the state" as well as make medical training accessible to working class students will now be hurting children and wasting community resources. We should continue to monitor the Medical Center - maybe over time we can make it

accountable to us.

Over the years we have learned a lot about the interlock of psychiatry and social control. We are exploring different ways of continuing with the work of public education and mobilization. One project, of printing a leaflet that would explain what services are currently in place and what kinds of support is missing in the communities had to be shelved for the time being. We already know that the most expensive and least successful programs are being funded. Less restrictive, community alternatives for troubled people are being scrapped. No one yet knows what shreds of human services will still be in place once the budget process is over. Money is available to cage people in crisis - it is up to US to generate more decent, more effective and more creative ways of responding to each other. Contact us through the Women's Center if you want to help us write, teach and learn about making our communities more safe and more sane.



WANTED:

The Center desperately needs new, or used, carpeting or rugs. Must be clean and in good condition. Large pieces if possible. Indoor-outdoor carpeting also needed. Please call leaving particulars and where carpeting can be obtained: 354-8807.

DAYCARE CUTS

If, after paying for childcare, there is no money left for food or rent, then -- in spite of all the equal employment acts in the world -- women are not free to work. For most mothers of young children who need or want to work outside the home, expensive daycare is as good as no daycare at all.

Parents who do manage to find daycare slots need to know that their kids are receiving quality attention. Daycare workers, underpaid and overworked, already have to struggle to provide that kind of care.

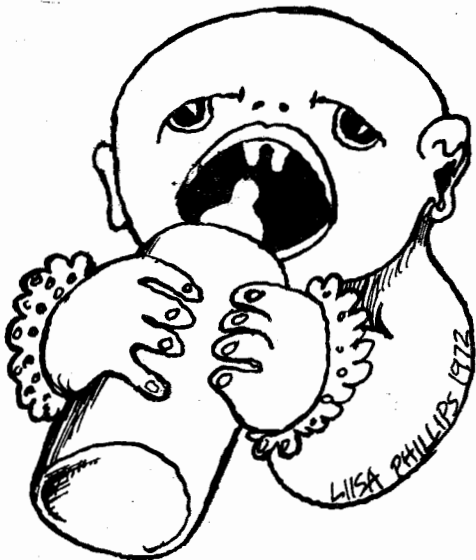
Soon, there may be no such thing as affordable quality (or even no-quality) daycare. The following drastic changes in funding policies are now being proposed at the state and federal levels:

In the Boston Area: fund transfer of \$15 million from DSS to DPW would mean a loss of 70% of AFDC-related slots, \$4 million and 24 programs losing over 60% of DSS-contracted slots. A maximum of \$50 a month for childcare will be allotted to many families relying on AFDC.

Federally: a suggested 20% cut in education funding, and Reagan's Block Grants, would force human services programs into intense competition for money.

The passage of these proposals will have a severe effect on the lives of women and children (as if things weren't hard enough already!)

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Daycare continued...

FIGHT BACK!

--Write to legislators - tell them who you are and what your involvement with young children is, and that you are against:

Federal: cuts in education funding
block grants proposal

State: funds transfer from DSS

Federal legislators:

Senator Edward Kennedy
109 Russel Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
(202)224-4543

Sen. Paul Tsongas
342 Russel Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Local Legislation:

contact: Day Care Coalition
(Saundra Graham)
(617)727-7035

Child Care Resource Center
(617)547-9861

- Organize protests, actions, demonstrations
- Let other people know what's happening.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!!!

Women interested in working on the Take Back the Night march should contact Paula at 776-6354.

WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

WAVAW has had a busy winter, revising (perpetually) our slide show, continuing the educationals for community groups, appearing on radio and TV shows about pornography and violence against women in the media.

As an organization, we are participating in the Take Back the Night Coalition and the formation of the new Boston Women's Coalition. We look forward to making the Women's movement in Boston stronger and more visible.

We are actively seeking women to join us in our work, both during the summer and in the fall. If you are interested in media issues and want to work against sexist violence, please get in touch with us c/o the Women's Center.

Individuals from ECG return the calls of women who phone the center. After a phone conversation or a face-to-face meeting, the client is referred to a therapist in the center or to a feminist therapist in the area who is affordable and appropriate. All information is kept confidential.

ECG meets Wednesdays from 6-9. We are now taking applications for new members. If you wish to use the services of our group or if you are interested in helping other women in the area and feel qualified to do so, call the center, leave your name and number, and we will get back to you.

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MORTGAGE DRIVE - SPRING '81 UPDATE

The Center wishes to thank everyone who so generously responded to our Mortgage Drive during the past months. In 1979, when we began the drive, we owed the bank \$14,787. As of May, 1981, we only have a mortgage of \$3912.

It is very important that this mortgage be paid off as quickly as possible. In just 9 years, the Center has paid the bank almost \$11,000 in interest, in return for borrowing only \$18,700 to purchase the building at 46 Pleasant Street. If we were to continue paying off our mortgage on the prescribed schedule, our last payment would have been in January, 1993 and we would have paid the bank a total of \$38,583 -- over twice the borrowed sum or \$18,700.

Today, more than ever, the Center's funds are too hard to come by and women's money, in general, is too scarce to waste by paying mortgage interest. Let women's money benefit women - not increase bankers' profits!

PLEASE HELP US
BURN THE MORTGAGE IN 1981!

(Send contributions to the Women's Center.)

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PEOPLES INDEPENDENT CELEBRATION

Saturday, July 4th at the Boston Commons. Booths, information tables, food, literature and more! 1 - 5 pm. Sponsored by a coalition of Boston area social change groups.

Introductory Steering Committee plans and conducts the "Intro" discussions which happen from 8:00 - 9:50 every Wednesday night at the Center, free and open to all women. Intro meetings let women hear what the Center is and does, and it lets them experience a non-hierarchical structure in a supportive environment, discussing a topic which interests them. We hope the women who come will feel free to connect with the Center's projects, connect with other women and share experiences and ideas with us all.

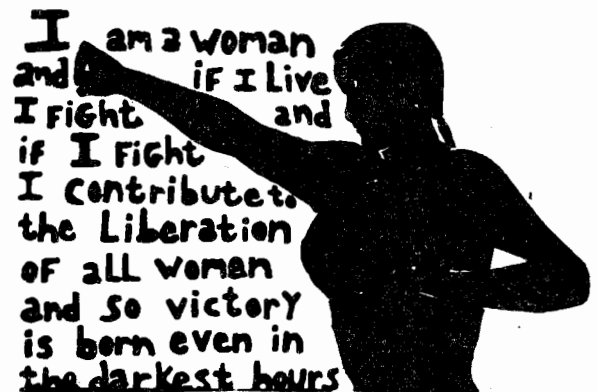
The Committee also organizes small groups. If you want to be in a consciousness raising group or a support group, please leave your name, address and phone number at the Center for us, and/or come to a small groups organizing meeting on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at the Center.

Call the Women's Center, 354-8807 for current topics.

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TRANSITION HOUSE SUPPORT GROUP FOR
BATTERED WOMEN

The Transition House Support Group for Battered Women held at the Women's Center is now in its fourth year. During this time many dynamic, courageous women have graduated from it - to go on to better things. We meet every Monday night at 7:30 PM and every Wednesday morning at 11:30 AM. All battered women are welcome. Participants can go to either or both groups as they please. For more information contact the Women's Center: 354-8807.



cpf/women: a journal of liberation

WOMEN OPPOSED TO REGISTRATION AND THE DRAFT

WORD, a project of the Cambridge Women's Center, first organized in January, 1980, soon after President Carter announced his decision to draft women as well as men. The premise under which the group came together was the mutual opposition of the reinstatement of the draft for anyone; but in particular, to expand on and address the draft and military issues affecting women. Since our beginning, we have directed ourselves toward an emphasis on self-education in order to develop clearer statements regarding the inter-relationships of war, militarism and the oppression of women. Faced with the equal rights/equal responsibilities arguments, we felt that NOW and other women's groups were not providing the women's community with enough support and information to get beyond the equal rights dilemma.

With the new conservative administration in control, it is probable that the Supreme Court will decide that women will not be drafted. In spite of that possible decision, the military recruiting advertisements are encouraging more women to sign up. Therefore, there is a growing need for women's participation in the anti-draft, anti-militaristic movement; to educate ourselves about women's role in the military (past and present) and the effects of war on women.

We are a small group of women varying in background, political experience and beliefs. The meetings generally revolve around discussion of an ongoing or upcoming project. WORD's theory and practice have evolved simultaneously as the group has developed its' views on the issues of war, militarism and women. The structure of the group has remained flexible in order to not limit participation nor information gathering.

WOMEN'S SCHOOL

Spring classes at the Women's School have ended, for the most part. The Collective and the teachers will be evaluating the term in a day-long retreat at the end of June, and some discussion of the fall term and curriculum has begun.

During the term, the collective began a series of personal and political discussions about class that has brought us closer to each other and to our own classism. In June, we will be doing a racism workshop facilitated by the Committee for Anti-racist

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Education of the Boston People's Organization We hope that these discussions will help us become a more integrated, politically effective organization.

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LESBIANS UNITED IN NON-NUCLEAR ACTION

In the past, LUNA has done study and some political work on nuclear issues. Last June, after a draining encounter with the Seabrook blockade and occupation, LUNA ceased meeting. I am interested in a meeting to discuss LUNA: its current inactive status, what it might be and why it might become. Any other such interested women, please leave a message for me, Liza, on the Women's Center message board. It has been a year, sisters. How long can we afford to wait?

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LESBIAN MOTHERS

The Lesbian Mothers group meets weekly on Thursdays from 8-10 PM. We are an open group, primarily for supportive discussions on a wide range of topics. Some women come regularly each week; others come much less regularly. We especially appreciate the children's room being available for those women who bring their children. In addition to the discussions, we have a list of lawyers for referrals for custody and divorce cases. We have also raised a custody fund to help pay legal fees for

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BOSTON AREA RAPE CRISIS CENTER

The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center has doubled its membership recently and is now 42 women strong.

We still maintain a 24-hour answering service, staff the office, handle the phone, pick up messages, and return calls. Our line, 492-RAPE, is as busy as ever.

In addition to our basic crisis service, we are available as an information center -- many of the calls we receive are requests for information of various sorts. If we don't know the answers, we do know who may.

An ongoing part of our effort is maintaining contact with other organizations, groups and sources of help in our community and surrounding areas. We try to keep an active file of just what is available to women, their families and friends in a variety of areas (legal, medical, social, educational, emotional, etc.).

Frequently, our center receives requests for public education. Rape Crisis women have spoken to high school classes, dorm groups, community and women's groups, college groups, as well as a variety of legal, medical and social service groups. We have staffed tables at health fairs and career fairs. Many of these are challenging and most are fun to do. It's always great to meet people face-to-face, to discuss our common problems and struggles, to share information and to set common goals.

Although financially we subsist on speaking engagements and donations, an occasional fundraiser is always helpful. Mid-May of this year, we were the beneficiaries of a special night of rock and blues bands at the Metro Club in Boston, which should stave off the phone company for a while and allow us to invest in some eighteen-cent stamps.

More and more, women are becoming conscious of the insidious links between racism and sexism, violence and rape in our society. In this atmosphere, the feminist adage, "the personal is political" becomes all the more important. The women in our group have made a beginning in this area by having anti-racism activists Tia Cross and Tina Render organize a full day workshop for us during which we explored our own feelings of and about racism and discussed some of the social/economic causes and effects. It was quite a day, moving and encouraging. A good start.

Our additional project worth mentioning is our Monday night group. This is a ten-week

support group for women who have been raped. Although the current group is closed to new members, we at Rape Crisis hope to have another in the Fall, Winter, Spring, etc. (Interested women should call and leave their names and numbers or addresses so that we can contact them when the next group starts.)

As we enter times in this country, in this community, that are going to be even more difficult, and when resources are ever more scarce, the climate frightening and the threat to the rights we've won and the gains we've hoped for and worked towards grows, it's important to say that there has never been a more critical need for unity and strength. The Cambridge Women's Center, its projects, and all people's projects are precious resources and we at Rape Crisis rededicate ourselves to safeguarding them.

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Lesbian Mothers continued...

custody cases - and we will have to continue to have fundraisers to be able to keep doing this.

We also hope to plan another lesbian mothers conference in the fall, with workshops on custody, coming out to children etc.

We recently planned the Mothers Day March in support of Atlanta's Black children so that we would be able to express our concern and outrage about these murders.

To keep the weekly discussion group going, to keep raising money for the custody fund, to plan for the conference and to plan some activities to have with our children - all take a tremendous amount of commitment and energy that sometimes feels impossible to sustain. But with the support of new women joining the group and also with the support of the rest of the lesbian community, we hope to continue.

