

2000
July 20/78Abortion

1. Enclosed are a number of copies of the call for an international abortion action next spring. This call is an excellent way to pose a concrete action on abortion which would be not only bi-national, but international in scope. And the date allows plenty of time for planning.

Copies of the call were sent by the NAC to a few addresses of women's groups across Canada, but the mailing was very selective. We have printed up extra copies of it to ensure wider distribution. Please ensure that this call is placed in the hands of all of the relevant women's groups. Direct contact with the NAC British coordination can be established through the address on the call. We should begin exploring actively the possibilities for such an action. Please keep the Commission informed as to progress on this question.

2. The Commission has recently adopted a programmatic statement on abortion which will be voted on by the Bureau shortly. Given the 'differences' on this question which appeared to exist prior to the fusion, it was felt that such a text was important. It will be mailed out (limited number) with this circular and later be printed in the internal bulletin. If you have any copies, let us know.

International Women's Liberation Discussion

There will be an item on the Labour Day plenum agenda on this document which is intended to open up the discussion in a full way. The report will make proposals for structuring the discussion in the branches and will also begin the discussion on two points of difference: child care and caucuses. We will also be printing an internal bulletin with a selection of texts from other sections
ling with these two questions

Communication with Branches

We have asked a couple of times for reports on the women's liberation work in your area, with very little feedback (although two branches did produce material on the child care situation in their province which is much welcomed). It is very difficult for the Commission to prepare discussions on national perspectives for the plenum, newspaper articles, if we don't get reports. As you all know, the country is highly regionalized and if we don't hear from you, we simply don't know what is going on.

At the plenum we will have a discussion on this area of work in a workshop. Each branch should prepare a brief report on the work in their area, which takes into account the objectives which we set in the last plenum tasks and assesses our progress. If brief written reports can be made available prior to the meeting, then it may be possible to have a discussion, rather than having to spend all our time on updates.

If you think there's a little frustration at this end, it's true--it makes our political work very difficult to carry out.

Also, a number of requests for preparation of feature articles by women comrades in a number of the branches were sent out. So far we have had no reply.

c/o IAC, 80 GARDEN ROAD, LONDON N W 1, ENGLAND

The International Campaign for Abortion Rights was founded at a meeting in London on 10 June '79. The first activity of ICAR will be to organise the international day of action originally called for by the international feminist meeting in Vincennes, France in May '77. Please send information about the abortion, contraception and forced sterilisation situation in your country, so we can spread the information internationally. The next ICAR meeting will be on 23 September '79 in Brussels, Belgium. Please translate this information (if necessary!) and publicise it in your country.

MINUTES OF INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON ABORTION RIGHTS, 10 JUNE 1979

Present were representatives from : France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, Spain, USA, Switzerland, Italy and Columbia (resident in Belgium).

1. Date of international day of action

It was suggested that the international day of action on abortion should be in early April 1979. This would give countries time to organise and to gather support from the women's movement and in the labour, students movements etc.

Agreed to have the day of action on 31 March or 7 April '79, exact date to be decided at next meeting in September, after consulting national groups.

2. Slogans

The demands of the abortion movements in each country were discussed as well as the overall situations. It was felt that the demands for the day of action would have to be general and that each country could elaborate on them to make them more relevant to their specific situation.

Agreed that the international demands for the day of action will be:

CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION ARE A WOMAN'S RIGHT!! NO FORCED STERILISATION!!

3. Coordination

It was decided that one group (country) would have to take responsibility for coordination - this would include preparing mailings and sending out information. Other groups would take on responsibilities later, eg publicity, etc.

Agreed that Britain would be responsible for general coordination at first (pending approval of IAC).

Agreed all groups will help to finance the work. Each group represented at the next meeting should be asked to contribute 10 pounds (sterling) or 100 Fr. (French) or the equivalent. Each group should make a regular financial commitment to cover the cost of mailings, phone, etcetera.

4. Organisation of international day of action

There were two suggestions. One suggestion was to have one international demonstration somewhere in Europe. The second suggestion was to have actions in countries throughout the world, countries that couldn't organise alone could participate with a neighbouring country. After discussion it was agreed to hold simultaneous actions throughout the world. This would involve many more people than one international demonstration. Suggestions to build up international solidarity: bring international speakers to address rallies, picketing at different embassies.

Agreed to send names and addresses of contacts in other countries (especially Latin America, Africa, Asia) to Britain (IAC), to involve as many countries as possible.

5. Statement

The statement about abortion from the Vincennes conference (1977) was discussed and it was agreed to send it out with these minutes for discussion and suggestions, to be the basis of an ICAR statement.

6. Next meeting

Next meeting of ICAR will be held on Saturday 23 September '79 in Brussels, Belgium. The address and information for the meeting will be sent out in late August. The meeting will discuss: the date of the day of action (31 March or 7 April); an

INTERNATIONAL MANIFESTO ON ABORTION

This manifesto was written at the international feminist conference in Vincennes in May '77. At the meeting of the International Campaign for Abortion Rights in London on 10th June '78 we agreed to discuss this manifesto and to talk about it at the next ICAR meeting. (Brussels, 23rd September '78)

Even today, in Europe in 1977, more than 4-5 million women are forced to resort to clandestine, illegal abortions each year. This means subjecting themselves to deplorable sanitary conditions, to an exhausting and demoralizing search for a "good address", to the impression of being a criminal, and therefore to desparation.

- Even today, in 1977, a good number of women die following these clandestine abortions, although we know that abortions performed under good conditions have a very low mortality rate.

- Even today, women who have had abortions or who have had abortions or who have helped other women get abortions are treated as criminals and hauled into court, as in Dabigny, France, in 1972 and Aix, France in 1977. Women are subjected to terrible repression and incertain regions of Switzerland are even locked up in psychiatric hospitals for having dared request an abortion, or else they are fired from the public services, as in West Germany.

- Even today, in Europe, the right to abortion, the right of women to free disposition of their own bodies, and the right of free choice as to whether or not to have children are not recognized.

- In Spain, Portugal, and Ireland abortion is considered a crime and punished as such. The repression is even fiercer against women who demand their rights.

In Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Italy, and West Germany abortion is still forbidden, but the regime prefers to ignore the problem and tolerates the practice of abortion as a general rule.

Finally, in Britain and France a liberalization of the abortion laws has been wrested from the regimes by virtue of the struggles of women, but these laws remain quite inadequate and incomplete and can always be placed in question; the resources needed for their application remain virtually nonexistent.

In short, the right to abortion is nowhere fully recognized.

- Even today, in America, Africa, and Asia the regime imposes forced sterilization or contraception on women. It denies them any right to free disposition of their own bodies, any free choice of whether or not to have children.

- Even today, information on methods of contraception remains a class privilege.

- Even today, the lamentable working conditions imposed on the women of the working class cause many miscarriages. Here again, women are denied free choice of whether or not to have children.