

McGill Women View IWY As The Greatest Snow Job

Canadian women are again getting shoddy treatment by a federal government that has an excellent history of selling women short. The latest and greatest snow job is the government's plans for International Women's Year (IWY).

The United Nations declared 1975 to be International Women's Year, hoping that this gesture would satisfy the increasing number of women who were objecting to the exploitation and discrimination they faced in virtually all sectors of life, employment, education, sexual double standards, child-care, the list is endless. All member countries in the UN were obliged to set aside money for projects that would attempt to tackle women's oppression.

On the surface, it seems like an admirable idea, but looking a little deeper, International Women's Year is ridden with flaws.

The federal government established two departments, the IWY Secretariat of the Privy Council and the Women's Program in the Secretary of State's Department, to take charge of the programme. The people appointed to these departments are mostly well paid civil-servants who have been shielded to a large degree from the hardships that working women face, and aren't really prepared to deal with these problems.

The planning for IWY started off on the wrong note. Rather than consulting those who are most aware of women's needs, like a woman in a lineup at the welfare office or a young mother who doesn't have enough money to feed herself or her children properly, the IWY officials drew up programmes and budget allocations without these considerations.

Of a five-million dollar budget, \$750,000 was allocated to a male-staffed advertising company that came up with the "Why Not" campaign. The main thrust of this campaign was to take out full-page ads in newspapers like the Star and ask mind-boggling questions like "Why can't your daughter grow up to be a doctor or a lawyer?"

Rather than assume that women rarely go into these fields because their parents didn't stop to ask "Why Not?" a more useful tactic would be to ban

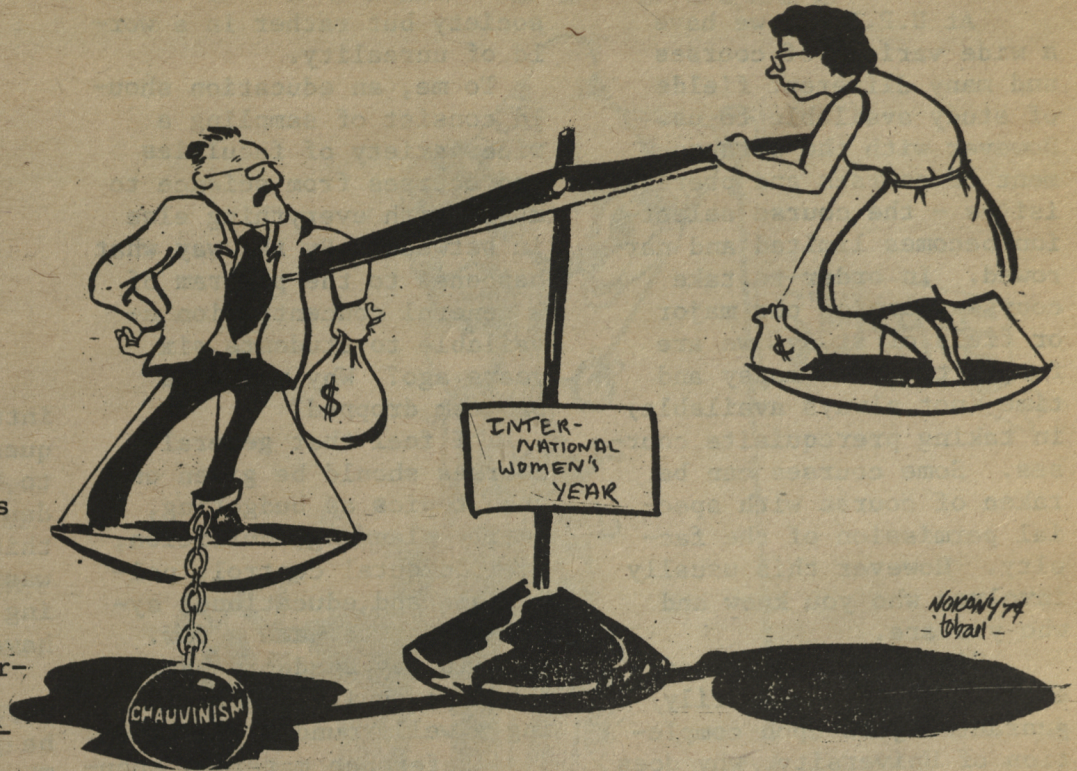
Susie Homemaker advertisements on television and offer children's books that depict little girls as something else than squeamish princesses or fragile creatures that hold tea parties. For an incentive to adult women, IWY could put its money towards scholarship funds in law and medicine facilities.

A half-million dollars was initially intended for a series of four conferences to be held in various Canadian cities to discuss the needs and wants of women. The IWY officials are still bent on "discovering women's problems," forgetting the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1968 that tabled more than 160 recommendations for immediate action, only half of which have been dealt with.

The idea of further discussion is a joke. The needs are clear: subsidized community daycare, abortion on request, maternity benefits, open access to all jobs - what's needed now is action both in the law books and in practice.

A fifth national conference shows the worst gall on the part of the IWY officials. They called on big-business executives and high-ranking civil servants to review their treatment of women in the office, and suggested the promotion of token women to the managing boards of big corporations and top government ranks.

When women's groups across the country protested this waste of expense and energy, saying that the programme would be of no benefit whatsoever to the majority of working



women in Canada, IWY directors modified their plans somewhat to allow for smaller "information meetings" The intention remains the same, though. The discrimination most women face is not earning \$20,000 rather than \$60,000 unfortunately.

In another major programme, a million dollars is proposed to go directly to women's groups in the form of grants, to be spent over two years. For Quebec, \$75,000 was allocated from April 1974 to March 1975, and the same amount is to be allocated from April 1975 to March 1976. When divided up among all the women's centres, the grants will be so small that no group will receive enough money to plan any effective projects for women.

In a national caucus of feminist groups in Thunder Bay this spring, International Women's Year is expected to come under fire and the groups might decide

to officially boycott the IWY grants in protest of the governments half-hearted recognition of women's centres.

Some people are even saying that International Women's Year might be used against the women's movement in future years. Feminists disillusioned with the government predict that in 1976 MP's will slough off reforms by saying women are now equal: "All that sexist business was solved last year, you realize."

The government's campaign is too glossy and superficial to really attack sexism at its roots. IWY is pushing ineffective and unnecessary programmes in order to pacify women who are growing discontented with their position in society. The government has shown that it doesn't take women seriously: it's up to women to take action now.

by Joan Shields

Equal Opportunity

Cost to whom -- men, women children, the community? How can we measure cost -- not in dollars, but in frustration, boredom or guilt? Even the liberated married woman who has achieved a career is still haunted by a sense of guilt because of the attitude of the community at large. The young married woman without children is looked at askance; the young mother who continues in her career is condemned the grandmother is expected to devote her time to her grandchildren.

-What Cost?

If equal opportunity is there -- at what cost do we take it? Come to discuss this theme with a panel of speakers -- professional men and women from the university and from the community and students who will soon be entering the professions.

Meet to ask questions and air your opinions on Tuesday, April 1st at 2:00 p.m. in the Marion Hall Lounge.

L. Newnham
Committee Focus on Campus Women

