

Immigrant Women's Centre  
24 Major Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
May 10, 1977

Dear Friends,

We are circulating this statement to explain why we are not joining the May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights which is organizing with the slogan "Abortion - the right to choose".

At the Coalition meeting of April 27, we expressed the position outlined in our statement below and, in typical racist fashion, it was rejected by "majority vote". We want to expose these women who claim to represent the interests of all women: who even after they were told explicitly that their leaflets would not be circulated to Black women, stood by their position.

We are asking all immigrant groups and individuals who support us to endorse our statement. We also ask other women's groups who feel that their interests are also expressed in our statement to add their endorsements.

ERICA MERCER

for Immigrant Women's Centre  
924-7161

or Black Education Project 533-1167

#### ABORTION AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The May 28 Coalition for Abortion Rights equates the "right to choose" with ABORTION, when many of us, both immigrant and native-born, are forced to have abortions because we cannot afford to have the children we want. Immigrant women have always experienced coercion either by being forced to have children (by denying us birth control information and abortion services), or by being prevented from having children (through genocidal birth control practices in the Third World, as well as against Black women in the USA and Native Peoples in Canada). For us, the "right to choose" can never be only the right to abortion, but must also be the right to have all the children we might want.

We, therefore, demand of the Canadian Government:

#### 1. FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND

- Until contraception is fully safe and we don't run the risk of damage to our health, we need to abort freely without harassment about "multiple abortions"; without having to beg a handful of "therapeutic committees" throughout Canada and Quebec to take our "exceptional case" into consideration; and with free access to abortion counselling in our own languages
- Because as immigrant and as women we have always been poor, we want abortion to be fully covered by OHIP (with no doctor's fees added) and fully available to women who can't afford OHIP

#### 2. FUNDING FOR CLINICS AND RELATED BIRTH CONTROL SERVICES IN ALL IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN WHO USE THEM

- We want the money to control the programs ourselves because the lack of it has always meant government programs which force us either to have more children than we want or to not have those we do want

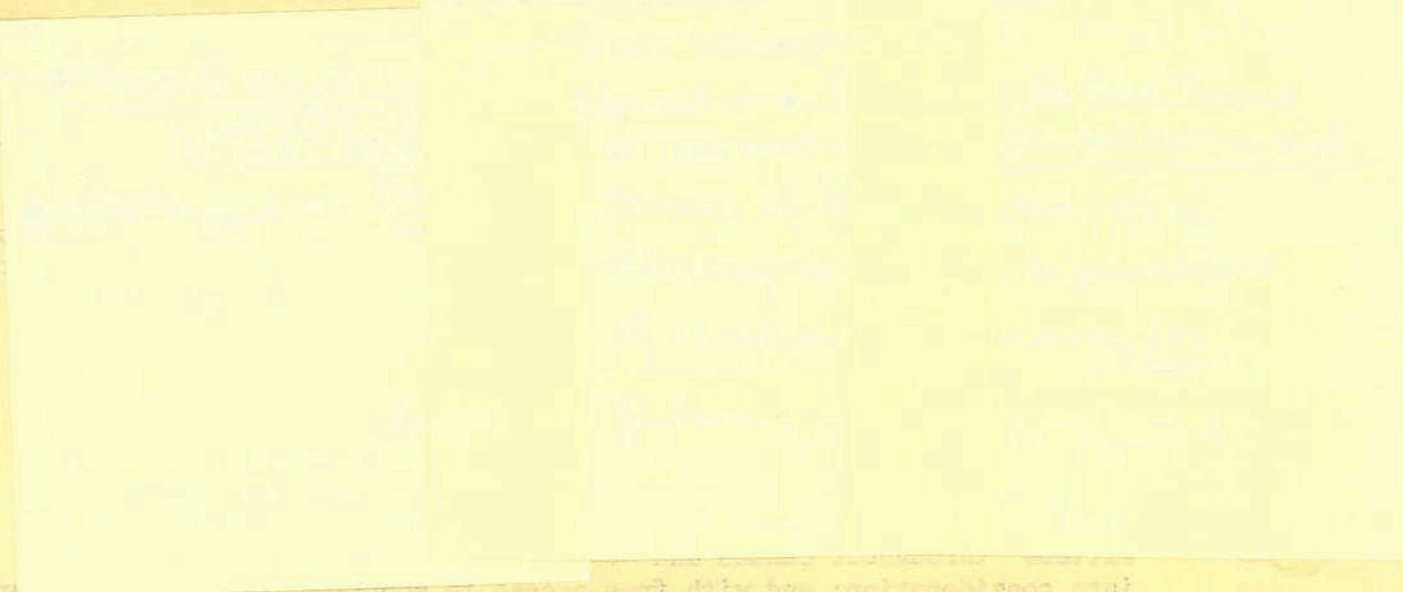
- We want services which recognize that immigrant women often refuse contra-  
ception because our experience has taught us to be suspicious of the methods  
available, and not because we are "backward"
- We want contraception to be free of charge and available to women of all  
ages in their own languages

Finally, to ensure that we are in a better position to choose freely, we demand  
of the Canadian Government:

- \* 3. LIVING WAGES WITH FULL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW FOR ALL OUR WORK BOTH IN THE  
HOME AND OUTSIDE
- 4. FULLY PAID MATERNITY LEAVE WITHOUT LOSS OF SENIORITY OR BENEFITS
- 5. FUNDING FOR 24-HOUR CHILDCARE CONTROLLED BY US WITH PAID STAFF BOTH IN OUR  
NEIGHBORHOODS AND IN EVERY SWEATSHOP WHERE WE ARE FORCED TO WORK

In making these demands, we speak with the same voice as the Quebecoise, who in  
their "MANIFESTO" of March 1977 said:

"For us the struggle for free abortion on demand is  
part of a larger struggle against all forms of op-  
pression and exploitation which we experience daily.  
We are fighting not only to refuse unwanted pregnan-  
cies, but also for the right to bring all the chil-  
dren we wish into the world without being forced to  
have abortions because of our jobs or living condi-  
tions".



...and with these women we have always been poor, we want  
...to be fully covered by GMP (with no doctor's fees added)  
...and fully available to women who want it.  
...THE STRUGGLE FOR BETTER AND BETTER HEALTH SERVICES IN ALL IMMIGRANT  
...COMMUNITIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND MEN THEM  
...-- We want the power to control the program ourselves because the lack of  
...it has always been government programs which force us either to have  
...more children than we want or to not have those we do want.