

Tory budget spells cuts for women

At first glance the latest budget brought down by Finance Minister Michael Wilson does not seem to hit women as hard as his first budget did. Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that this budget will continue to carry through on the initiatives of the last budget. The value of family allowances will continue to decrease each year; the cuts in payments to the provinces will continue to affect women's jobs and the provision of social services; and the cuts of 5,000 workers in the civil service will continue to mean more women than men will lose their jobs.

Wilson went to considerable lengths in this budget to appear to provide progressive measures for the poor. These provisions are only an illusion of positive change though, since ultimately they are connected to proposals down the road which will be extremely harmful to women. In particular, the refundable federal sales tax credit is presented as a measure which will make the federal sales tax less regressive than it is now. The new proposal is to give a credit of \$50 for each adult and \$25 for each child in families with incomes of less than \$15,000 a year. This should help the poorest families a little. However, the Minister of Finance has made it clear that while he is introducing this now, he is also in the process of restructuring the sales tax so that it will be more encompassing than at present. He has warned Canadians that he will introduce either a value added tax or a business transfer tax. These are taxes which would cover not just merchandise, as the current federal sales tax does, but would include *all* things bought and sold, including

services. These are extremely regressive forms of taxation and will take a greater portion of the income of poorer Canadians (among whom women predominate) than of wealthy Canadians. The new federal sales tax credit, then, will do little to protect the poor from the worst features of the tax system.

It is also highly questionable whether the proposed \$100 million for training and employment of welfare recipients will be a progressive measure. The Minister has suggested that the money be used through the Canadian Jobs Strategy program, which feminist groups have criticised as little more than a wage-subsidy program for employers. It would be far safer for these training funds to be provided through community groups and educational institutions rather than through the training schemes of private employers. Women's groups must work hard to ensure that welfare recipients aren't being forced to participate in any new training programs under threat of losing financial supports.

While the government is not directly increasing cuts to statutory programs this year (U.I., transfer payments to provinces, family allowances, payments to the elderly) it intends to make significant cuts to non-statutory programs, which includes virtually all women's programs which rely on government money. Women's groups are grossly underfunded in relation to the work they do and the constituency they represent.

Cuts in spending to existing programs (not to mention the inability to mount new programs) will mean real hardship to the voluntary sector

and the people they serve.

These cuts are occurring at the same time that the military budget is being expanded by six per cent.

The actual changes in this budget are bad enough, but the promises for future changes are even worse. Wilson has indicated that he intends to restructure our social programs, including unemployment

insurance; that \$100 million will be cut from job training programs; and that a more universal sales tax will be introduced. Women will be hit hard when these measures materialise.

- Marjorie Cohen
Marjorie Cohen is vice-president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

New pro-choice doctor steps forward

Most medical doctors don't have to walk through a gauntlet of angry protesters on their way to work. Nor are they likely to be sent to jail just for treating their patients.

But Nikki Colodny is not an ordinary doctor. And she accepted those risks, as well as the possibility of death threats and pickets at her home, when she decided recently to perform abortions at the Morgentaler Clinic in midtown Toronto.

"I wasn't raised to bend in the wind," says Dr. Colodny, a committed socialist-feminist and long-time supporter of the demand for reproductive rights.

After training with Dr. Morgentaler in Montreal, Dr. Colodny began working four months ago at the Toronto clinic, which has now been open for more than a year. Colodny says her decision to put herself in the line of fire arose from her political background and the gruesome reality she encountered in her private medical practice.

It was not enough to try to get patients through the twilightmarish game of telephone roulette when seeking therapeutic abortions; she also had to try to change the law. So she joined the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics and got more deeply involved



photo by Lynn Lathrop.

Dr. Nikki Colodny arriving for work at Toronto's Morgentaler Clinic: "There's a lot at stake but I feel certain we can win this fight."

in the struggle for repeal of the abortion law and for the establishment of women's health centres that perform a full range of reproductive services.

From there, the next step was her carefully thought out move to work at the clinic. "We have patients who desperately need a medical service which is not